

WP 5 NATIONAL SURVEY – Main Findings

National VET System: general framework in Italy

In Italy the State has exclusive legislative powers over most of the main issues, including general rules on education (Article 117¹ of the Constitution) while the Regions have exclusive legislative powers over vocational education and training, apart from tasks connected with the European Union, and parallel legislative powers over general education, although the State is responsible for establishing the basic principles.

In particular:

- a) general education falls under the exclusive competence of the State for general rules, minimum public service performance levels and fundamental principles of legislation at regional level;
- b) vocational education and training, which falls under the responsibility of the Regions, although minimum public service performance levels remain under the responsibility of the Provinces and local authorities are responsible for providing school buildings and other facilities.

IVET System The Italian education and training system is divided in **pre-primary school** (not compulsory)², **first cycle of education**, **second cycle of education**, and **higher education**. Full-time education is compulsory and free for 10 years for all children between usually 6 and 16.

Compulsory education lasts 10 years (i.e. up to 16 years of age) and includes the whole first education cycle and the first two years of the second. Everyone has the ‘right/duty’ to pursue education and training for at least 12 years in the national school system, or until a three or four-year vocational qualification is obtained within the **IVET system** before reaching 18 years of age.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research sets the minimum public service performance levels for education system

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies** sets the minimum public service performance levels for the vocational training system

The **Regions** plan, organize and supply VET

Social partners contribute to design and organise active labour policies and particularly VET policies

¹ Law n. 3/2001 has reformed the Title V of the Constitution, in particular art. 117.

² It lasts 3 years and is for children aged 3 to 6 (ISCED 0)

CVET System

The **continuous training system** (CVET) in Italy is rather complex and fragmented. Roughly, two main typologies of CVET can

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy outlines strategies at the national level and ensures the allocation of dedicated resources

be identified in the Italian system: 1) adult education addressed to all those individuals needing to acquire basic and general skills, and 2) vocational retraining and updating of workers' skills.

Regions elaborate strategies with own resources, including ESF resources

The governance of the CVET system is guaranteed by a number of institutional bodies, including the Ministry of Education, University and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (national level), the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and the social partners (regional level), and the Provincial administrations (local level).

Social partners mainly operate through Inter-professional Funds for Continuous Training, under the control of the Ministry of Labour

Peculiarities in tourism sector

In Italy, the second cycle of education for the tourism sector is organized into two kinds of institutes:

- the technical institutes which forming professionals in the field of tour operating and travel agencies
- the vocational schools for the services sector address with "Wine, food and hotel hospitality".

The courses are organized in a two-year period, equal to all high schools in Italian, in a two-year specialization in the study of materials and techniques and in a last year, that gives the opportunity of access to higher education.

On leaving the school, as well as the choice of the University, students can also choose a training course in which there is the collaboration of firms in the sector. These are the technical colleges (ITS) that make up the figure of the higher level technician for "communication and marketing chains tourist and cultural activities".

In addition to education organized by the State, there are the courses organized by training agencies. These agencies can be public, but more often they are owned by individuals or by different types of organizations. These courses can be financed by the public (mainly ESF) or sold on request.

Monitoring, evaluation, assessment in tourism education and training: methodologies, procedures, instruments

Assessment of the training

The models and the devices used in the assessment of training up to now in Italy have traditionally been inspired by rational-experimental theoretical systems (defined in terms of approaches): only in more recent times, and with greater intensity in the recent years, have we found use patterns related to the phenomenological-constructivist approaches.

In Italy, this model has accompanied the last decades of reflections and practices on the assessment of training. At the same time it

Rational-Experimental Approach

represented the inspiring element for the majority of experiences - often used as a starting point to be adapted and

Assessment models inspired by rational-experimental theoretical systems are characterized by an **assessment logic intended as "set objectives – achieved results"** and understand assessment as a "measurement"

reinterpreted – and an object of fierce criticism. However, as noted by Varchetta and Fontana (2005, page 60)³, it continues to be "very popular in organizational contexts for its qualities of simplifying and accelerating" the assessment process.

Phenomenological-constructivist Approach

Nowadays, the participation of all stakeholders involved in the achievement of the expected results at the end of training interventions is considered crucial from a constructivist point of view to the assessment of training and especially in the tourism sector which is particularly rooted in local contexts

This model assesses "the evolution process of a participant, which is seen as an entity engaged in changing his performing behaviour or his mental models"

Evaluation: the most used procedures and tools

It is now common practice in our country, the development of at least three types of instruments:

- a. a type that refers to the identification of the participants' and enterprises' **perception of the learning outcomes;**
- b. another type that refers to the detection of learning outcomes;

The assessment system generally provides that all the tools for the evaluation of the results destined for the users/customers of the training activities (participants and companies) should be the responsibility of the implementing entities

³ Varchetta G., Fontana A., 2005, *La valutazione riconoscente (Grateful assessment)*, Guerini and Associates, Milano.

- c. a third type of tools for the assessment of employment impacts.

EQAVET and EQARF implementation in tourism education and training

An Italian Reference point for Quality Assurance in VET has been set up, under coordination of ISFOL. It operate under coordination of ISFOL and it has this main goals:

- National Reference Point for Eqavet**
- to inform main national stakeholders about the EQAVET activities of the The European Network on Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQAVET)
 - to provide active support for the development of this Programme
 - to apply methods to ensure and develop quality in VET
 - to raise awareness among stakeholders of the benefits of QA tools and indicators and to coordinate organized national activities.
- Italy has been among the first countries to establish the NRPE

In 2012, The Ministry of Education (MIUR) and the Ministry of Labour approved the National Plan for Quality Assurance⁴⁵⁶, with the aim of providing, in line with the European framework, useful to the improvement and development of the quality of education and vocational training, leaving to the Regions some autonomy to enlarge the scope of application and to add new indicators/criteria. This process should lead to the introduction of new elements that could enable the improvement and evolution of VET activities in the country, coherently with the European indications.

According to the results of the EQAVET secretariat survey and of the external evaluation, Italy is one of the Country that has consolidated its quality assurance approaches and EQAVET has directly contributed to shape the national system (even if the reform is underway)

National rules for EQAVET

The Plan follows the model proposed by the European Recommendation for the Quality and it specifies, for each of the phases contained in the model (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review), the measures already taken and to be taken to adapt to the European model.

⁴ EQAVET, Supporting the implementation of the European quality assurance reference framework: Results of the EQAVET Secretariat Survey, 2012, p.20. Available in the website of the EQAVET secretariat, <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/annual-forum.aspx>

⁵ ICF GHK, *Evaluation of implementation of EQAVET Final report*, (hereafter External Evaluation) 2013 p.51

⁶ REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Brussels, 28.1.2014 COM(2014) 30 final)

The Plan indications are targeted to different subjects in order to specific areas of competence.

The Plan, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Recommendation, has proposed a series of actions that should be implemented to ensure the dissemination of quality both at the system level, both in terms of training organizations. In particular, it requires the revision of the national accreditation model, with reference to the model introduced by the European Recommendation, introducing or consolidating in the management of regional activities, methods, criteria and responsibilities for quality assurance. It also calls for introducing or reinforcing, the use of self-assessment tools and the use of indicators of effectiveness and efficiency of the activity performed (the level of neglect, educational success, the employment rate, the assessment of learning outcomes students, users satisfaction).⁷

NPQA follows the model proposed by the European Recommendation for the Quality

In Italy, the European Peer Review methodology has become known among the main national stakeholders at system and VET providers' level. Consultations have been made with schools and vocational training centres involved with ISFOL in other projects; CIOFS (an important organisation for providing vocational training, which took part in the first Peer Review project) stated their will to apply Peer Review for their Centres.

Best Practices

At Italian level⁸, Isfol with ESF funding, promoted and coordinated the project of "National Network of Peer Review" with the technical assistance of Ciofs-Fp and Cnos-Fap. This network promoted the dissemination and the further application of the Peer Review methodology in a logic of integration between the school and the vocational training system.

"National Network of Peer Review" Project contribute to improvement of European Peer Review Manual

The methodology of Peer Review was applied in the Italian network, based on the principle of reciprocity with the main task of testing the methodology and tools developed under the project.

As a matter of fact, the dissemination and implementation of the Peer Review methodology has become part of ISFOL objectives and activities, such as the Reference Point for quality has the added value of multiplying the dissemination.

⁷ QUALITY AND ACCREDITATION. Comparative analysis between the devices accreditation of Regions and Autonomous Provinces and the European Recommendation EQAVET. July 2013

⁸ Ismene Tramontano (researcher at ISFOL – Quality Assurance in VET National Reference Point) and Maurizio Mosca (Researcher at ISFOL – Equal Opportunities Unit)

EQAVET and EQARF indicators: critical points as to national situation

The main quality assurance mechanism currently in force in Italy is the accreditation of VET providers. The accreditation process is implemented by the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces in coherence with the national criteria outlined in the legislation.

Eqavet implementation Regions set standards relating to both services and expected results to be respected by all those training agencies accessing public funding. The accreditation system is organised as a quality assurance mechanism and covers *ex ante* (minimal requirements are assessed beforehand), *in itinere* (requirements have to be maintained during the performance), and *ex post* (expected results have to be achieved and measured) phases⁹.

There is a general correspondence between the criteria of the national accreditation system and the EQAVET Recommendation

The national accreditation system takes into account five main criteria:

1. Criterion A – Infrastructural and logistic resources
2. Criterion B – Economic and financial reliability
3. Criterion C – Managerial capacity and professional resources
4. Criterion D – Efficiency and effectiveness
5. Criterion E – Link with the regional territory.

It's important to know that.

According to the National Plan on quality assurance, the D criterion (efficacy and efficiency) and the C criterion (managing skills and professional resources) are those that better transpose indicators of European quality into Italian system.

According the REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Brussels, 28.1.2014 COM(2014) 30 final): “Almost all Member States collect data to improve effectiveness and efficiency of their systems and have devised for this appropriate data collection methodologies e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics”. In most cases Member States publish information on the outcomes of available evaluations **but Italy is not between them.**

It's now very difficult to understand if exist critical points in EQAVET application in Italy

⁹ Study on quality assurance in continuous VET and on future development of EQAVET, Final Report, July 2013, ICF GHK

Available specific methodologies, tools and instruments for QA in tourism education and training (with particular reference to funded initiatives)

There has been a gradual development towards a more systemic approach in the field of quality assurance systems in line with a growing adoption in the Italian context of a constructivist approach to the assessment of training, including in the tourism sector, too.

Approach to the safeguarding of quality in VET

This methodological approach to quality, now increasingly being adopted in the Italian context and also in the tourism sector, refers to a multi-systemic dimension of the “quality value”. Its safeguarding involves and refers in particular to processes, products and operators’ performance linked to the implementation of vocational training activities.

A Multisystem Approach

Each component of the client system emphasizes a particular aspect of the overall concept of quality. Client system

In Italy the system processes proposes once again, with the appropriate customizations, the model based on the UNI EN ISO 9001:2000 regulations, which is internationally recognized and is composed of four areas.

Focusing on the implementation processes, a further element of distinction is the coexistence of "key" processes, namely those related to the realization of products/services, with "support" process that is the processes that do not contribute directly to the creation of the final result but are necessary for its achievement.

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The key processes have been identified as follows:

- Skill needs analysis and preparation of the offer/tender;
- Design;
- Provision;
- Evaluation, validation and certification of skills.

From need analyst to QMS supervisor. Each of the professionals involved in the vocational training process are required to demonstrate the responsibilities and skills related to the various processes and its outputs.

The professional profiles involved in the processes are seven

The final product is supported by:

- The training pathway, in turn segmented into plans, analyses, courses and modules
- Services that is acceptance, mentoring and guidance
- Support ensured through the learning objects and media.

The product of a quality oriented learning process is represented by the *Learning Outcomes*

Learning Outcomes whose safeguard ensures the quality and responsiveness of a training project to the real needs of the users (learner users) for training products/services, including the learner's "physical comfort" obtained through the adequacy and quality of the host structure.

One particularly important aspect is that learning outcomes must be "clear, achievable, measurable and appropriate" for the entire client system. They must also be immediately transferable to the contexts in which users perform professional tasks.

A training project, built and operated in a well-designed governance process, represents an added value for all parties involved (stakeholders) which contribute to sustain its "growth", well beyond the expected results, through a virtuous spontaneous process, not intentionally aimed at the participation and growth of all stakeholders.

Social partners
Enterprises/organizations
Public bodies
Employment agencies
Org. that certify competencies
Training providers

The MULTI-DIMENSIONALE APPROACH TO QUALITY

Currently in the Italian context, quality assurance in training activities is also pursued with a multidimensional approach by all those stakeholders interested in learning outcomes. LOs are now the most strategic factor for the development of both individuals and businesses and territories, especially in the service sectors, such as tourism. The government processes guarantee the training product (learning outcomes identified and well defined) through the detection of measurable and quantifiable indicators. Methods and tools to ensure the quality of both key and supporting training processes are laid down in the EN ISO 9001:2000 international standard. Training providers are required to adopt quality methodologies and tools for their training facilities. Those methodologies and tools are indicated in the accreditation systems prepared by the Regions that are part of a National Framework of reference. Currently, in Italy, in vocational training, there are also of training providers accreditation systems put in place by various inter-professional bodies. Nowadays the government of the processes and the quality of the training product (learning outcomes) are pursued mainly through the use of operators that possess the appropriate skills that have been identified, possibly trained and made transparent through the certification.

The key factors are:

- Quality of learning outcomes
- Quality of process
- Quality of training providers
- Human resource quality

The procedures and tools for the certification of training operators' skills, like all other professionals, are those adopted by the certification bodies.

On-field research: questionnaires and interviews results

Questionnaires A total of 21 questionnaires were administered. The following are the main issues emerged from the survey.

Interviewed description The 81% of respondents is represented by training centers while the remaining 19% is made up of universities, public bodies that deal with governance in education, and trainers.

The interviewees were mainly men (57%), aged between 31 and 45 years, involved in the processes of quality management for their organization in 76% of cases.

Respondents believe, almost unanimously, that the quality could be a way to improve their work.

Quality Approach In fact, more than 70% of the organizations in the sample responds to a quality system at a regional level. Slightly more than 65%, in addition, conforms to ISO 9001:2008 system, whose membership is otherwise by accreditation regional completely voluntary since no request by the regional governments for access to training resources funded, if not in as a way of facilitating the recognition of regional accreditation.

It is very good the level of "ease" with respect to the system EQAVET as stated by the respondents. More than 75% claim to be a comfort level at least equal to "3" while more than half of those who claim a level at least equal to 4. Conversely, it is not at ease with the EQAVET about one-fifth of the respondents.

In order to assess the actual degree with of the fundamentals of quality management systems, have been asked a few questions about:

- Rate of investment in improving the services provided (in particular with respect to the share of turnover invested in the training of trainers): all respondents state that part of the revenue is reinvested in training their teachers (in a range that goes from 1 to 5% for a third of respondents, but 26% of the organizations involved declares that this investment fluctuates with a measure which should be 6-10%).
- Rate of students who complete their studies: 67% of the students get to complete the course of study or he/she attended at least 80%, while what we can describe as "low frequency level" (i.e. from 31% to 60%) affects about 5% of respondents. Are equal to zero cases of abandonment of training
- Rate of students who find employment after 6 months of the end of the studies: 67% of respondents were aware of the employment rate of its former students, expiration of 6

The actual degree of sharing with the fundamental of quality management systems has been measured through some questions

months from the end of the training. In some cases, the lack of knowledge of the short-term employment outcomes of their former students, is due to the nature of the training provided (mainly CVET). More than a quarter of respondents said that find employment at least 60% of the students, expiration of 6 months from the end of the training course while nearly half (47%) of the sample quantifies the employment rate of its students on a figure that ranges from 40 to 60%

- Level of relationship with the territory: almost 60% is part of a thematic network with subjects who are concerned with job selection.

All respondents declare that they perform collection activity of the training requirements existing in the labor market. More than a quarter of the responses converge on the instrument of "focus groups with experts in the field" as well as "participation in activities updating". Are on average the most used tools "on desk analysis" (27% of responses).

Quality Assurance

All interviewees organize in a structured way an audit aimed to assess the quality of the service provided by their teachers. Are used, too, modalities that involve more immediately trainers, through direct discussions with them.

All interviewees assess the quality of teachers activities

Respondents also suggest an additional way of fulfillment to perform this kind of evaluation: talks or interviews with the staff who usually attends the class in the training program (coordinator and tutors).

The sample is very involved in the evaluation of the teaching staff and also uses many items that contribute to this evaluation which demonstrates the seriousness with which this assessment is conducted.

The level of use of the 10 indicators EQAVET is closely related to the nature of the subjects. It should be noted that more than 80% of the sample is represented by the training agencies (including a university); it follows that the approach to quality is, obviously, essentially linked to the "micro" dimension. This explains why indicators "macro", such as 1, 7 and 10, are on average less used than others. Among the most used indicators we highlight:

Use of Eqavet Indicators

- The indicator number 4, which relates the rate of completion of the studies undertaken by learners and which is well adapted to the mission of the respondents

- The indicator number 9, in particular the mechanisms put in place to ensure the updating of the educational offer to the evolution of the labor market. This fact is also confirmed by the findings in the survey on the tools by which it is carried out the training needs analysis, which showed a particular attention to this phase, preliminary to the training design.

Equally interesting is to note how much are also used two indicators, n. 3 and n. 4, which are characterized also by the character "macro" but that can also be read in a "micro" dimension.

Were conducted two interviews:

Interviews

- to the Region of Umbria, Service Active Labour Policies - Section Experimentation, in the person of Antonietta Petetti
- to the Italian National Reference Point for EQAVET, in the person of Ismene Tramontano – Head Officer.

Umbria Region

Umbria Region is well aware of the existence of EQAVET Recommendation and the interviewee knows and understands the difficulties of applying this by training agencies.

The training agencies should therefore be supported and guided to the use of this European reference framework. In this perspective, the Region has found it useful to experiment Peer Review methodology, which is a complementary tool that completes the quality assurance procedures that regional accreditation puts in place for the training agencies. It has been defined the standard of skills which must be satisfied by who plays the role of Peer. Based on this standard, Region made two editions of experimental training courses, which were attended by about fifty training agencies in Umbria.

There are some indicators (eg, indicators that measure employment placements) that can be seriously distorted or otherwise affected by context conditions. Surely these indicators are important, but it is necessary to assist them with the measurement of results such as those that converge on the level of learning.

National Reference Point for Eqavet – Isfol

The most significant indicators EQAVET respect to training in the tourism sector

The tourism sector requires a workforce with very particular characteristics, with seasonal peaks and ability to use new technologies to meet the customer's expectations. For this segment, therefore the most important indicators are:

- a. Indicator n. 2, as the professionalism of the trainers is crucial to the quality of training
- b. Indicators n. 5 and n. 6, because they measure training effectiveness with respect to the placement capacity of the workforce
- c. Indicator n. 9 which enables to have a strength-to-date and flexible working

“Best practices” in the tourism sector of application of the indicators of the system EQAVET

The provision of education and training in tourism field is of high quality. Surely many providers have applied EQAVET Recommendation with a bottom up approach: some schools and some training agencies have adopted the methodology of peer review and self-assessment.

Solution that allows to make applicable indicators of the system EQAVET in training in tourism

It must get the message that the indicators are needed not only for the evaluation of input factors but also for the evaluation of the results. The strong message must be to encourage the dissemination of quality of training. The second step is the need to foster an ongoing dialogue between training providers, social partners and enterprises

Advantages and main problems that derive from the application of the EQAVET indicators

Monitoring of 2013 the European Commission says that the implementation of the recommendation EQAVET has certainly led to an improvement in the quality of training. The main critical issues is the perception of quality as a punitive tool rather than as a tool for growth.

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