



**A | P | P | R | E | N | T | S | O | D**  
APPLICATION OF APPRENTICESHIP IN THE VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

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# **REPORT ON ANALYSIS OF THE MEASURES AND APPROACHES OF VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN ITALY**

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1. Understanding of the concept “socially disadvantaged youth” in the partners’ countries:

In Italian cultural context the concept “socially disadvantaged youth” can be easily attributed to youth at risk of not completing school, since school education is considered as the main aspect in the cycle of life.

This connection is inferable from the Report provided by the Italian Ministry of Education on June 2013, titled “Focus sulla Dispersione Scolastica” (“Focus on non-completion of school”): it analyzes the “risk of non-completion” from the point of view of the interruption of school attendance during the academic year. It is called “risk” because after the interruption there is still the possibility to re-enter the student in the education system during the following years. In fact, the Report states that “some students at risk of non-completion, after leaving the education system, can decide to fulfill the right-duty of schooling by choosing an alternative path: the regional vocational education or apprenticeship.”

The definition given by the Report of the Italian Ministry seems to be ambiguous, probably because of the strong importance of the school in the Italian educational system. The State Statistics Institute (ISTAT) gives a more detailed definition identifying in “early school leaving” all the young people aged 18-24 who got a secondary school diploma of first degree but didn’t finish a regional recognized two years vocational training course or other educational activities, such as apprenticeship. However, even in this case the social exclusion of young people is connected to school experience and/or training.

It is actually more suitable to identify the expression “youth at risk of not completing school” with the definition given by NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) consisting of any young person aged 15-29 who doesn’t study or works or takes part to a training path lasting six months.

This description goes beyond the centrality of education and helps focusing on the factors that contribute to determine in Italy higher social exclusion percentages than the rest of Europe. However, this definition allows to divide Italian NEET youth into different profiles in order to find the most effective policies to prevent this phenomenon.

The weakness of the Italian system of apprenticeship is a clear indicator that it’s not NEET but the early school leaving that plays a key role in prevention policies for disadvantaged youth. The recent extension of compulsory education until sixteen years (ten years of compulsory education), and the following reform of vocational education curricula (see Presidential Decree 87/2010), that introduced two years of study before the three years of practice, confirm that exclusion can be contrasted with a solid basic education.

Despite the development of three-year courses in Vocational Education and Training (IeFP), which occurred with the State-Regions Agreement of 27 July 2011, only some regions (such as Lombardy, Liguria and Veneto) have been able to plan a full and varied training programme without State funding. The apprenticeship necessary to get a diploma has been acknowledged only with the State-Region Agreement of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012, but it still hasn’t been adopted by all Regions.

It is clear that the only way to contrast with youth social marginalization is an earlier and faster approach to the world of work as the CEDEFOP (2010) states in his report titled “Guiding at-risk through learning to work”. However many social partners (Employers’ Organisations, Trade Unions, ... ) seems to be convinced that a solid basic education can be the real solution against social exclusion.

2. Short overview on the current state of vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth consisting of:

2.1. Statistical data on the number of socially disadvantaged youth without vocational qualifications facing difficulties in accessing initial VET and employment.

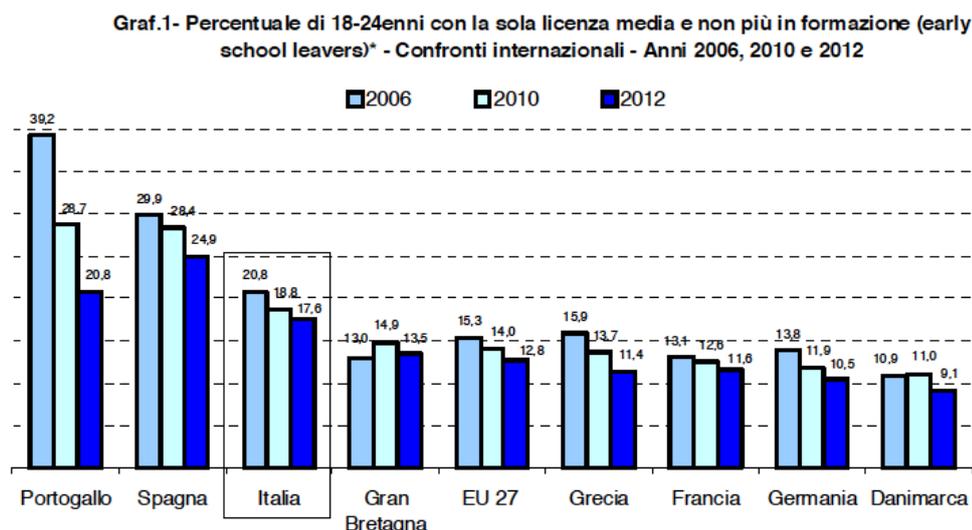
**Questions of analysis:**

- *What are the main trends of change of this number in the recent 10 years?*

One of the Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union) indicators for the analysis of the phenomenon in the European context is that of *early school leavers* (ESL), which is useful to understand the proportion of young people aged from 18 to 24 years who only got a Middle School Diploma and are out of the national education system and the regional vocational education and training. According to the most recent data of 2012, early school leavers aged 18-24 have dropped to 758 thousand (29 thousand less than in 2011), of which 59.6% are males. In the age group evaluated, the young people who only got a Middle School Diploma are 17.6% (18.2% in 2011), while the EU average is 12.8% (13.5% in 2011).

Among the 27 EU countries, Italy ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> just after Portugal. The gap with the EU average is due to the strong male component (20.5% against 14.5%), compared to the female one (14.5% against 11.0%). However, since 2006 the percentage has dropped even if this trend seems weakened in the last three years.

Graph 1 – Percentage of early school leavers aged 18-24 – International comparison- 2006, 2010 and 2012



(\*) L'indicatore fa riferimento alla quota di giovani (18-24enni) che hanno conseguito un titolo di studio al massimo ISCED 2 (scuola secondaria di primo grado) e che non partecipano ad attività di educazione/formazione. Dal 2009 l'indicatore è calcolato come media annuale di dati trimestrali

Fonte: Eurostat - Statistics on Education (EU27 e Germania dati provvisori)

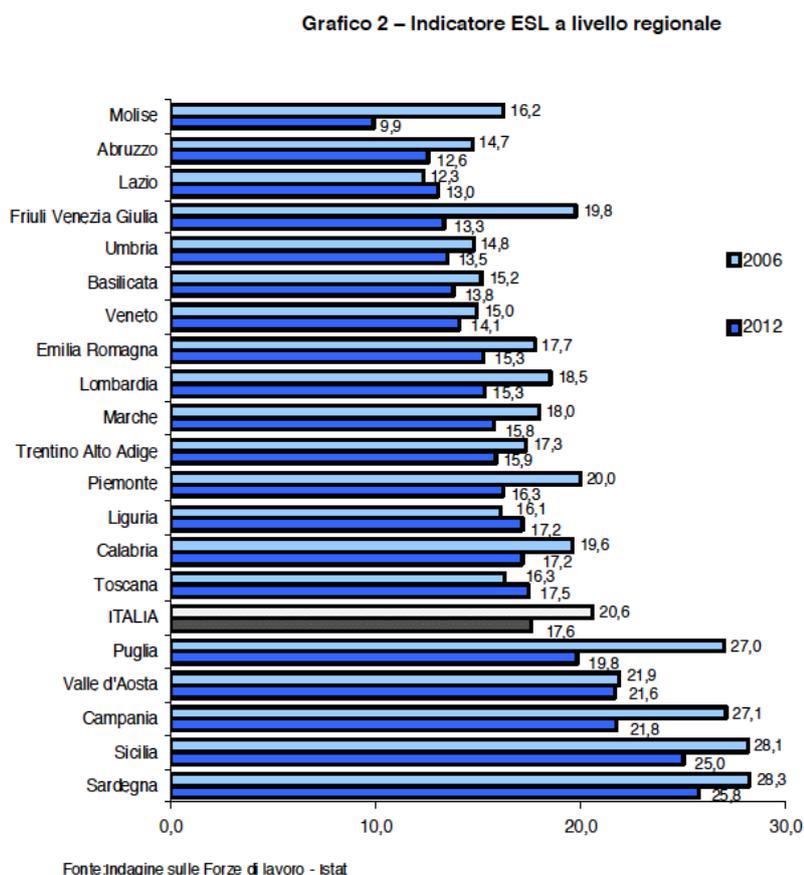
Portugal, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, EU27, Greece, France, Germany, Denmark

(\*) The Graphic refers to early school leavers who got a lower secondary school diploma (ISCED 2) and are out of training/education activities.

Source: Eurostat – Statistics on Education (EU27 and Germany provisional data)

However in the Italian territory the situation is not homogenous, there is a strong early school leaving in the southern regions, with the exception of Molise that shows the lowest school dropping-out of Italy.

**Graphic 2 – ESL indicator at regional level**



Source: Labour Force Survey – Istat

During the last three years the situation of early school leaving has improved while the NEET category is steadily worsening. In Italy on average one in five young people don't study or work (one in three in Campania and Sicily and one in ten in Trentino-Alto Adige). Italy presents the highest number of NEETs among European countries and NEET percentage has recently increased especially in the southern regions because of the economic crisis.

The NEET rate is negatively related to the percentage of working students. Greater student participation at the labour market, even with low-skilled jobs, part-time or casual employment may help in reducing the share of young NEETs. In short, *it is better (for career progression) to be working in a low-paid job than to have no job at all.*

The rate of Italian NEETs is higher than the rest of Europe also because there are many young people who are not looking for a job (it has to be considered that this rate doesn't include the illegal work, mainly developed in the South) This is probably caused by poorer job prospects for a youth with low education level and few skills, skill mismatch, territorial dualism and inefficiency in intersection between supply and demand.

The young people at risk of becoming NEET are especially those who only got a Primary school certificate or a Professional Training Diploma, because they haven't taken part in further training activities.

As in all European countries, the rate of foreign NEETs (30.9%) is higher than that of Italian NEETs (20.3%), possibly due to an insufficient knowledge of Italian language. In effect, OCSE-PISA data confirm that more than half foreign students does not reach the minimum level of literacy.

About half of young NEETs has never contacted an employment agency, the other half mainly addressed to an employment agency and only 3.4% to a recruitment agency. However, the share of not NEET youth that succeeds in finding a job through a recruitment agency is 3%.

In European countries apprenticeship is considered to be the most effective instrument to introduce young people in the world of work. This is confirmed also in Italy: in the regions where there are more apprenticeship contracts there is a lower share of young NEETs.

Among NEETs there are 54 thousand young people who declare to be unemployed because unable to work. Their education level is very low since the 78% of them have abandoned compulsory education and most of them can't work because of their disabilities.

Finally it is estimated that more than 50 thousand young NEET are related to problems with the law and drug abuse, finding themselves in a situation of social exclusion and unemployment.

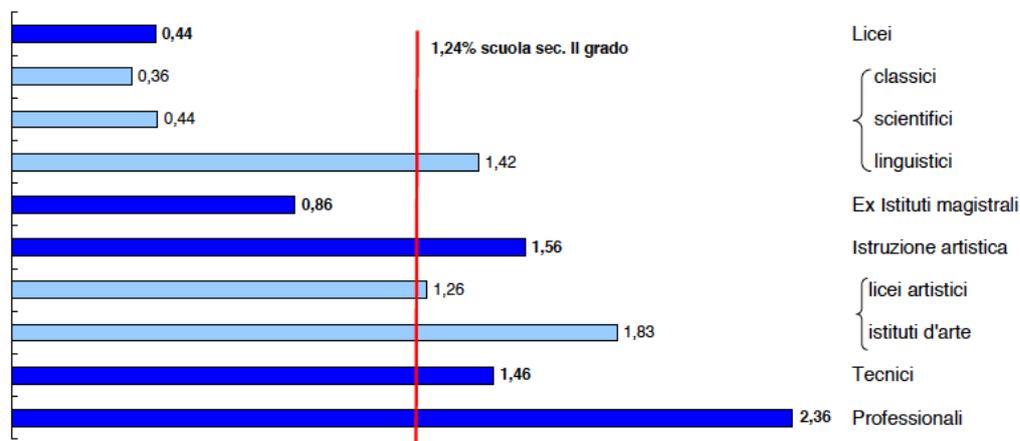
*- How many socially disadvantaged young people are enrolled in the initial VET programmes?*

According to data supplied by the ISFOL report of December 2013, the students during the academic year 2012-2013 who signed up to three year vocational training courses are more than 300 thousand, with an increase of 18% compared to 2011-2012 and of 52% compared to 2010-2011.

It's among these students that it is measured the highest risk of early school leaving: in fact most early school leavers are registered in the area of vocational training, polytechnic schools and art education.

**Graph 4. Students at risk of not completing school divided into different type of secondary schools.**

Graf.4 Alunni a rischio di abbandono (% degli iscritti) per tipo di scuola della secondaria di II grado - A.S. 2011/12



Fonte: MIUR - D.G. per gli Studi, la Statistica e i Sistemi Informativi - Servizio Statistico

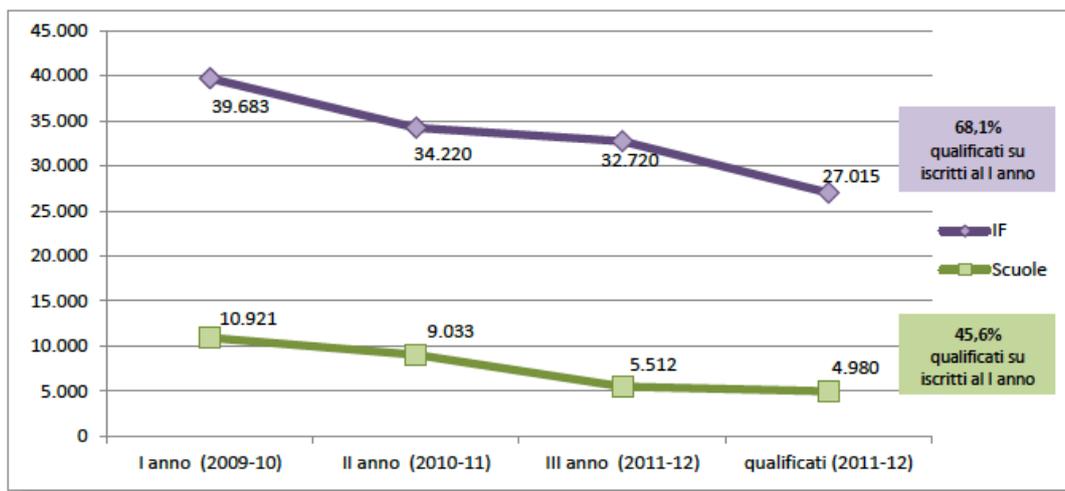
**Secondary schools: focusing on humanities (classici), focusing on sciences (scientific), specializing in modern languages (linguistic), Former teacher training schools (ex istituti magistrali), art education: artistic high schools (licei artistici), art schools (istituti d’arte), polytechnic schools (tecnici), professional institutes (professionali).**

**Source:MIUR – “D.G. per gli Studi, la Statistica e i Sistemi Informativi” – Statistical Office**

More than 41 thousand students in 300 thousand (15.5%) are foreign nationals and it is rather high the number of students with special educational needs.

*- How many of them graduate initial VET establishments and get employed?*

Regarding the young people who got a degree, the percentage is different for students registered to three-year courses organised by Recognized and Accredited Education Centres (68.1%) and students signed up to subsidiary State Institutions (45.6%).



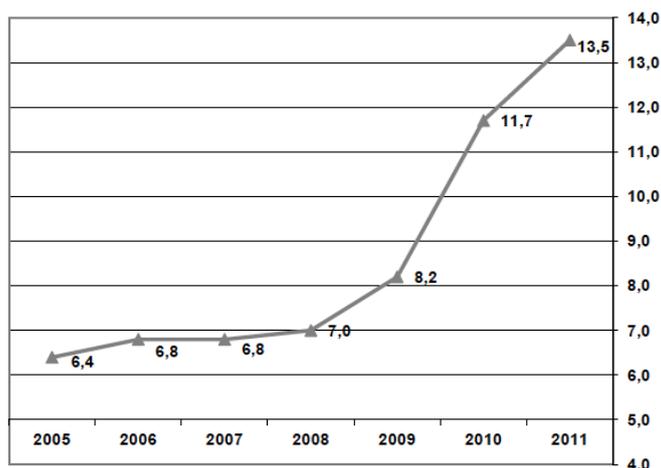
68.1% qualified on 1<sup>st</sup> year students, 45.6% qualified on 1<sup>st</sup> year students, 1<sup>st</sup> year – 2<sup>nd</sup> year – 3<sup>rd</sup> year

As for job placement at the end of three year courses, it has been hard to find final figures because of the different education system of every region and the different ability in collecting data about it. However, one of the latest Unioncamere reports (Excelsior 2011) forecasts a positive future for professionally qualified youth who will join a company (24.3%).

The same report reveals that companies prefer to hire young people coming from the Regional Vocational Training: evidence of the growing awareness of the importance of regional Vocational Education and Training.

**Graph 1 – Preferences in hiring from regional Vocational Education and Training, percentage per year. 2005-2011.**

Fonte: *Grafico 1 - Preferenze aziendali per le assunzioni da IeFP regionale, in % sul totale e per annualità, a.f. 2005-2011.*



Fonte: elaborazione ISFOL su dati UNIONCAMERE. Tavole dei Rapporti Excelsior n. 32 del 2006, n. 29 del 2007, n. 18 del 2008 (Vol.II), n. 17 del 2009 e 2010 (Vol. II), n. 18 del 2011.

Source: ISFOL data processing provided by UNIONCAMERE, Report Excelsior n.32 of 2006, n.29 of 2007, n.18 of 2008, n.17 of 2009 and 2010, n.18 of 2011.

This appreciation is confirmed by the ESRI survey on Vocational Education and Training of 2011, where it is observed that skilled people have the same chance as graduate people in entering the job market. The

survey also shows that six in ten qualified students succeed in finding a job.

*Overview of the main institutions providing support for socially disadvantaged youth and their role in the field of vocational integration of this target group.*

**Questions of analysis:**

- *What are the most important social and educational policies directed to vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth?*
- *What are the main goals of these policies?*
- *What are the main factors that facilitate effectiveness of these policies in the field of vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth?*
- *What measures are applied to achieve these policy goals?*
- *What are the main public institutions responsible for provision of support in vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth and what kind of support they provide?*
- *What are the main private or independent bodies and stakeholders involved in the provision of support in vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth and what kind of support they provide?*
- *Where the programmes and measures of vocational integration of youth are implemented and applied – in the initial VET schools or enterprises?*

The main role in the fight against youth exclusion is certainly played by the Regions, which have the task of arranging the education provided through the vocational training, as well as the planning of social policies. Of course they play this role in cooperation with the territorial divisions of the Ministry of Education (Regional Boards of Education), with the Provinces and Municipalities.

Regarding policies supporting young people's education, it is possible to distinguish the role of the different institutions depending on their specific function. In order to operate this classification, subjects and policies related to four different types of measures are described below:

1. Knowledge of young people at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out, in order to help them.
2. Activities carried out at local level by Employment Services;
3. Development of a qualified education through three-year training courses to meet the demands of business entities;
4. Implementation at regional level of the apprenticeship contract designed to accomplish the right to education (as it's provided for in Article 48 of Legislative Decree n. 276/03).

As regards the first point, it is clear that it is possible to efficiently contain the phenomenon of social exclusion only through an accurate monitoring of young people at risk, in order to acquire all the essential elements to organize effective policies. The Ministry of Education has the task of updating the National Register of Students, which is the only currently existing regional register system.

Looking forward to an integrated system of registers between MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research) and Regions, the National Register of Students can be used by:

- The Municipality, where students subject to compulsory education leave;
- The Head of the school where students are signed up;
- The Province through the employment agencies.

At the moment young people under a contract of apprenticeship are not included in the Register due to a lack of data because in Italy there are no tools to analyze the NEET category and to conduct periodic and specific surveys.

A measure to reduce the number of NEETs is the recognition of their situation that should be brought to the attention of the State, Regions and Provinces.

Regarding the second point, the employment services, managed by the Provinces, should represent the key structure for job placement of NEETs, through information, orientation and tutoring.

The information and orientation services consist in individual interviews with students at risk, meetings at the educational institutes, ... For example, in some of the Northern Regions of Italy, employment agencies have organized a service aimed at focusing on potential dropouts preparing them for the world of work through tutoring or work experiences.

As for the third point, another important solution to fight social exclusion is the educational programme. The three or four year courses of vocational education and training arranged by the Region can help youth at risk of not completing school because offer young people the chance of early approach to the professional world, flexibility in planning educational programs, openness to new civil society actors, development of autonomy and skills.

The fourth point taken into consideration is the apprenticeship as implementation of the right to education. Even if it is considered a fundamental part in professional experience allowing young people aged 15-24 to enter the labour market through an apprenticeship contract, it isn't still guaranteed in all the regions.

In order to contrast early school leaving it is possible to involve other parties such as bilateral bodies set up by trade unions and small firm associations and professional associations, in particular with regard to the testing of the Record of Achievement, very useful to certify the skills of the apprentices.

Related to apprenticeship, the Decree n. 40/2007 of Vocational Polytechnic Schools contributes to strengthen the partnership between vocational training bodies, national school, companies and Universities, connecting the supply chain to regional vocational training.

In the end, it has to be noted that also secondary schools and qualified VET schools should be at the forefront in fight against early school leaving creating orientation and placement services that could support employment agencies.

3. Critical analysis of the social and educational policies directed to vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth.

**Questions of analysis:**

- *To what extent these measures concern or target VET curriculum design, organization and provision of training, assessment and recognition of learning outcomes?*
- *Who is responsible for the teaching and training of these young people – teachers, trainers or masters and supervisors of enterprises? Do teachers and trainers in the VET schools, as well as masters and supervisors in the enterprises have sufficient*

*pedagogical competences and specific pedagogical skills to work with socially disadvantaged youth groups? How can they acquire these competences and skills?*

- *What mechanisms of the vocational integration provide these policy measures?*
  - *Adaptation of the existing initial VET curricula, training processes and instruments to the needs and possibilities of socially disadvantaged youth. What are the features of this adaptation? In what ways the VET curricula, training processes and instruments are adapted?*
  - *Increasing and strengthening of capacities of socially disadvantaged youth to enable them to integrate in the “normal” pathways of initial VET. What are the instruments of these capacity building measures (e.g. specific preparatory courses, specific education of trainers/teachers)?*
  - *The combination of the adaptation and capacity building approaches.*

The key element of the descriptions above is the training methodology based on the right of recognition of acquired skills. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a national system of skills to guarantee citizens the usability of learning outcomes. It has been taken a significant step in that direction with the Legislative Decree of January 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, defining the general rules and the minimum service standards of national skills certification system.

It is a further tool to increase young people attendance at certifiable training activities promoting the learning on the workplace.

Even the basic education is moving towards skills development, focusing on practical experience.

Among the measures that are currently being implemented have been identified:

- Methodologies enhancing the multiple learning style, student-oriented, promoting socialization and experience sharing.
- The methodology of work-related learning, as it's provided for in the Legislative Decree 53/03 and 77/05. This methodology is based on the collaboration between business and school systems, as claimed during the Council of the European Union of 2009: *“it is important to develop partnerships between education and training providers and businesses, research institutions, cultural actors and creative industries to promote innovation and increase employability and entrepreneurial potential of all learners”*.
- Workshops for skills development have been established by the Decree 53/2003, but they are unevenly applied in Italian regions. They are designed for:
  - People who need in-depth courses;
  - People not included in three-year or four-year courses, but registered to personalized projects, innovative educational pathways based on a new methodology.

All the tools described above can be successful if there are competent teachers and valuable professionals, especially during the courses and the apprenticeship. In this regard, the situation can be described as follows:

- Vocational school educators are qualified to teach in traditional public schools since it doesn't exist a specific qualification for teaching in vocational education and training centers which have a different school pathway.
- Training schools teachers should have a specific qualification, but in accordance with the Decree 226/2005, these educators are trained through a traditional teacher education, while for the professional experts is sufficient to have five years of experience in the professional field of reference.

- With regard to professionals involved in employment services or apprenticeship, there is not yet a discipline able to guarantee the educational and teaching skills.

- *What are the main problems and obstacles that decrease effectiveness of these measures in vocational integration of socially disadvantaged youth?*

Returning to the four lines of action described above (knowledge of the phenomenon of risk, orientation and tutoring service, basic vocational education and training, spread of the apprenticeship system), the following problems have been noted:

- ☒ incomplete information about students (Students Register);
- ☒ Gap between Northern and Southern Italian regions about information and orientation services and prevention of early school leaving;
- ☒ insufficient alternative education systems and apprenticeship activities;
- ☒ Apprenticeship only reduces the labour cost, without financing the training of young people. In some cases only, the regions finance tutoring expenditures during apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship in Italy is regulated by Art. 5 of Legislative Decree n. 167/2011, the “Consolidated Law on Apprenticeship”. However, in order to promote this education system a number of problems are to be solved:

- ☐ unclear and incomplete regional regulation;
- ☐ different regulations from region to region;
- ☐ excessively bureaucratic burdens to manage the training;
- ☐ inadequate services in supporting apprenticeship management.

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