



ELVETE - Employer-Led Vocational Education and Training in Europe.

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Fòrema Srl – Padova- Italy

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Case study title and focus: Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro¹ in Veneto Region

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¹ For translations of the concept of “Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro” (ASL) in other languages, make reference to: <http://www.bdp.it/scuolavoro/content/index.php?action=europa>

RESEARCH AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

Introduction. Historical approach and state of play.

Veneto is one of the twenty regions of Italy. It is located in the north-eastern part of the country and its territory is divided into seven provinces: Venice – which is also the region’s capital –, Verona, Padua, Vicenza, Treviso, Belluno and Rovigo.

Veneto’s social tissue²

According to demographics collected by the Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT) in 2013, Veneto has 4,926,818 inhabitants. 14.1% of the population are people under 15 years old, 64.4% are people between 15 and 64 years old and 21.3% are people over 65. Immigrants represent 10% of the population. Data from 2013 show also that the percentage of employed people is 63.8%, while the unemployment rate is 7.3%.

Veneto’s economic tissue³

The region’s economic tissue is a mixture of tradition and innovation.

Historically, Veneto is an agricultural region and the first industries developed from agricultural productions. New industrial settlements came afterwards: eyewear industries, jewellery, footwear, clothing, furniture, glass and pottery industries, marble, mechanic and metal-mechanic, chemical and pharmaceutical industries. “Industrial Districts” are a typical feature of the regional industrial system: industries involved in the making of the same kind of product are geographically concentrated in the same area. The success of what is known as “Veneto Model” is mainly due to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The tertiary sector of the economy holds 24% of enterprises in Veneto. Public works, health services, social welfare and business support services are the main activities.

Agricultural activities are still very important to the economy of the region as they represent 10% of the national gross production. The quality of Veneto’s wine and food produce is renowned: cheese, fruit, vegetables, rice, meat, honey and oil are primary products, but white wine is without doubt the most prestigious local product.

² See ISTAT website <http://www.istat.it/it/veneto>

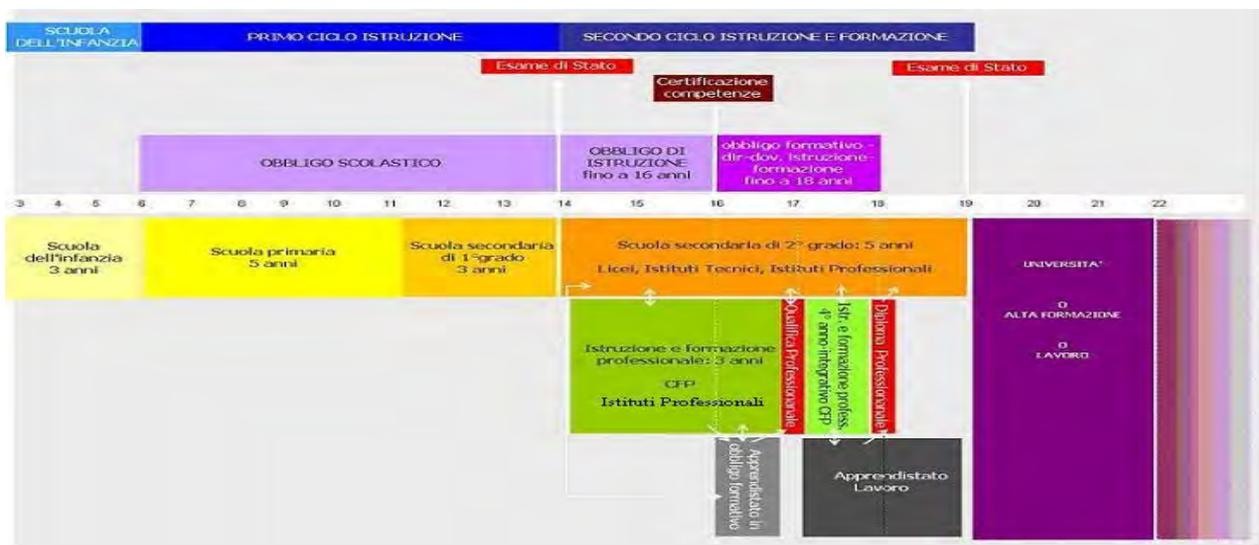
³ See ‘Veneto in cifre’, <http://www.ven.camcom.it/content.asp?ID=476>

Exports are of foremost importance: Veneto is the second region in Italy – after Lombardy – for exports’ volume. The most exported products are machineries and electric equipment, clothing, eyewear, footwear and food. Germany, France and the U.S. are the principal buyers.

Finally, tourism is also very important to the local economy. Indeed, Veneto is the most visited region in Italy. In 2011, it received 15 millions tourists, 61.5% of which were foreigners.

The two systems of Education and Training

The Italian school system⁴



The system of education and training in Italy is divided into kindergarten (from 3 to 6 years old), first cycle (primary and lower secondary school degree – from 6 to 14) and second cycle (high schools, technical institutes, institutions professional and the system of education and vocational training).

The first instruction cycle consists of:

- primary school (5 years) divided into a first year, aimed at achieving basic instruments and in two-year periods
- secondary school degree (3 years), which completes the educational path and ensures guidance and connection with the second cycle.

The second cycle consists of the five-year education system (high schools, technical and vocational schools) and of the system of education and vocational training, provided by vocational training centers (CFP) or vocational schools.

⁴ Source of the tables: <http://www.venetolavoro.it/sopralamediaweb/web/cms/node/id/1:9/page/21/>

The compulsory education can be accomplished attending to the first two cycles and in any case until the age eighteen years or up to the attainment of at least a Professional Qualification. Any path, both in the system of education, and in that of vocational training, provides for these first two years, although in different ways, the offer of a basic training common to the four cultural axes, for each of which must be achieved specified learning outcomes: the axis of languages, mathematical axis, the axis-tech computer and the historical and social. At the end of two years each school will issue a certification of the results achieved (competences).

The system of education consists of high schools, technical institutes and vocational institutes; at the end of the paths of the five-year secondary school degree students must support a State Exam, to obtain a diploma that certify the learning outcomes acquired. At the end of a three years vocational training path students support an exam to obtain a qualification, with a certification of skills acquired with respect to professional reference. The recognition of credits allows a student the transfer from the system of education to the system of vocational training, and viceversa. After the State Exam, students can complete their training accessing to University, High level art, music and dance, ITS - IFTS (Education - Higher Technical Education Training).

High School Education

The high school courses provide students with the cultural and methodological tools so that he is raised, with rational attitude, creative, design and critical in the face of situations, phenomena and problems, and acquire knowledge, skills and competence is appropriate to further studies higher order, the inclusion in the social life and the world of work, is consistent with the skills and personal choices.

Technical Education

The identity of the technical institutes is characterized by a strong cultural base of science and technology, built through the study, the study and application of languages and methodologies of general and specific, and is expressed by a limited number of large addresses , related to key areas for economic development and production of the country, with the aim to make the students, in relation to the exercise of technical professions, knowledge and skills necessary for a rapid entry into the world of work, for the 'access to university and technical training and higher education.

Professional Education

Vocational schools are characterized by a solid foundation of general education and technical and professional, which allows students to develop in an operational dimension, the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the training needs of the productive sector of reference, considered in its dimension systemic for rapid integration into the world of work and to access to university and higher technical education and training.

C.F.P. - Vocational Training Centres

The CFP, vocational training centers, are public or private bodies accredited by the Region to conduct training courses lasting three years, targeting young people in possession of the license of secondary school degree and subject to the education.

When students are sixteen they can approach the labor market:

- as a student, thanks to Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro, special programmes organized by the School
- as a student, thanks to internships managed by the School or the Vocational Training provider
- as a workers, thanks to Apprenticeship labor contract

VET systems. Relevant national and local policy or policies.

The main VET system in Italy – for ELVETE target group – is **Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro (ASL)**.

The concept of ASL defines a didactic programme, the aim of which is to merge schooling and work. Therefore, it consists of a series of theoretical training modules – delivered in any kind of secondary school –, and of practical training modules in an enterprise context, where theoretical notions can be put into practice. Thanks to this kind of training, secondary school students acquire an active role in the social and working reality.

In other words, ASL is an alternative educational path. Alternating school and work training is a good way to overcome the traditional separation between school and work themselves, that is, between the theoretical and practical moments. ASL is meant to train students in accordance with the logic of “learning by doing”, and to guide them towards the labour market.

It is necessary to notice the difference between what is called “Stage” in Italian (internship) and Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro. While the first is an internship performed in an enterprise regardless of schooling, the second – as the self-explanatory name hints – is the result of a unitary project created thanks to the cooperation of school and enterprise, on the basis of the convergence of their interests. To prepare students with employability skills is useful both to schools and enterprises, especially in time of economic crisis.

ASL programmes apply to students between 15 and 19 years old, but usually they take place between 4th and 5th class (which correspond to Year 12 and Year 13 in England).

Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro in Italy is regulated by the Government Decree issued under parliamentary delegation of April 15th, 2005.⁵

On a regional scale, an **Integrated Plan for Youth Employment** (Piano Integrato per l’Occupazione Giovanile) in Veneto has been issued on January 19th, 2012.⁶ The plan is the result of a cooperative action between Veneto Region, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), the Regional School Office, and Confindustria Veneto. It is meant to deal with the necessity to valorise and promote activities of collaboration between training institutions and the world of work.

The plan provide for:

⁵ see art. 4 D. Leg. 15 aprile 2005, n. 77.: http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/decreti/dlvo_altscuolav.htm

⁶ see ‘Piano Integrato per l’Occupazione Giovanile, Protocollo d’Intesa tra Regione Veneto, MIUR, USRV e Confindustria Veneto: http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_file/scuolavoro2///Piano%20integrato%20per%20l'occupazione%20giovanile.pdf

- orientation for middle school students,
- ASL programmes for secondary school students,
- services of school placement which supervise the encounter between demand and supply in the labour market,
- assessment of the results of school training.

These actions aim at giving students the means they need to enter the world of work.

For the school year 2014/15, **MIUR** has provided a fund of 927,562.00 euros for ASL programmes in Veneto. Precisely, 66,998.00 euros were allocated to Licei – secondary schools which prepare students for university –, 524,292.00 euros to Technical and Commercial Schools, and 335,272.00 euros to Professional Schools.⁷

Another funding stream for ASL projects in Veneto is the **European Social Fund (ESF)**.

According to Dgr. 2894 of December 28th, 2012,⁸ for school years 2013/14 and 2014/15, ESF has allocated a provision of 2,000,000.00 euros for the realization of 118 ASL projects. These projects are destined to unemployed students attending 4th and 5th classes, that is, to students between 16 and 19 years old.

The main objective of the EU strategy is to encourage a deeper connection between educational systems and the world of work. From this perspective, school training should be moulded on the needs of the labour market. Unfortunately, as ASL experiences show, there is still a relevant lack of interaction between schools and enterprises and, as a consequence, the traineeship within the enterprise often becomes an end in itself. In other words, *Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro* often takes on the traits of “Stages”. This is mainly due to the fact that schools are too engaged in completing ministerial educational programmes and do not have enough time to carry out ASL. Therefore, ASL programmes usually take second place: theoretical training modules in school are minimized.

However, through the Integrated Plan for Youth Employment and thanks to the European Social Fund and the MIUR fund, Veneto Region asserts its engagement in promoting and improving ASL. The dialogue between school and enterprise is of foremost importance in the making of the student’s employability skills: on the one hand, school offers notions, methodology and logic; on

⁷ see ‘Direttiva sui Progetti Innovativi di Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro per l’assegnazione del finanziamento MIUR’: <http://www.istruzioneveneto.it/wpusr/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/DirettivaAsl-def.pdf>

⁸ see Dgr. 2894/2012: http://www.regione.veneto.it/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=e217f250-b62f-4e11-aa11-06849f9b346c&groupId=10773

the other hand, the enterprise offers a context of formal and informal learning, where students can develop their skills and practice on the field their theoretical knowledge.

According to data collected by INDIRE (National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research), during the school year 2011/12, 197 secondary schools in Veneto realized ASL programmes. 96 of these schools were professional schools, 66 were technical and commercial schools, 3 were art schools, and 32 were licei. 14,813 students were involved in ASL and 55% of them were boys. Vicenza registered the highest number of students in ASL programmes, followed by Treviso and Verona.⁹

Erasmus Plus (or Erasmus +) is the new programme financed by the EU for years 2014-2020. Among other things, it covers international mobility projects for students between 14 and 19 years old. Promoting educational and training actions abroad, Erasmus Plus supports secondary school students in their acquisition of employability skills useful in the European labour market. Leading objectives of Erasmus Plus projects are: improving students language skills, stimulating the modernization and internationalization of training institutions in Europe, building a sense of European citizenship and identity.

Outline of strategies, projects, programmes

European Social Fund for ASL projects

Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro projects funded by the European Social Fund must ensure interaction between schools and enterprises in order to establish a link between the educational system and the productive system.

A partnership is created between school, enterprise and, eventually, a private VET provider. School tutors and enterprise tutors have the role to guide and assist students all along ASL projects.

ASL projects consist of school training hours and a traineeship within the enterprise. School training depends on the students' specialization: for example, students from commercial institutes would be trained in subjects such as marketing tools, communication strategies, social webs and innovations, commercial English, web communication; students from technical institutes specializing in mechanics would be trained in subjects such as safety at work, CAD design and CNC machines. The traineeship within the enterprise is complementary to school training: students

⁹ see: http://www.istruzioneveneto.it/wpusr/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/1Alternanza_Scuola_LavoroVeneto_USRV.pdf

put into practice their theoretical knowledge. Thus, a coherent training path is developed in order to give students employability skills.

In accordance with the guidelines established for the implementation of ASL projects funded by the European Social Funding, **Fòrema S.r.l.** acts a third party actively involved in the realization of ASL projects in the province of Padua. Precisely, as a private VET provider, Fòrema S.r.l. creates the connection between schools and enterprises and follows ASL projects from their beginning to their end, acting as an intermediary agent in the partnership.

Evaluation, feedback, reports on success. Advantages and disadvantages.

Both students and enterprises in Veneto benefit from Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro programmes. On the one hand, students have the opportunity to approach the labour market and develop employability skills. On the other hand, enterprises can monitor the regional training and working reality, and take part in the definition of training paths in tune with the needs of the labour market. Much of the strength and success of ASL relies on the continuity of schools and enterprises' partnerships, and on the constancy of their interaction.

Unfortunately, bureaucracy becomes very complex when public funds are concerned. As a result, many public VET providers find it difficult to establish continuity in their relationship with the enterprises.

Teachers have a key role in determining the success of ASL projects since the contacts with the enterprises depend on their own commitment. However, they often give priority to ministerial educational programmes and do not dedicate enough time and energies to ASL. As a consequence, enterprises miss the opportunity to take part in the definition of training paths, school trainings are minimized, and students do not develop adequate competences.

Ultimately, students are not prepared to face neither the traineeship in the enterprise, nor the labour market in general. Due also to the economic crisis, in most cases, companies are not willing to invest on students after the traineeship is over: they prefer to hire people with degrees or with more experience.

In order to improve ASL programmes, contacts between the actors involved should be more frequent, schools should be more active and bureaucracy should be lighter; ministerial educational programmes should not be obstacles, and teachers should give priority to the implementation of

ASL; enterprises should have an active role in the definition of training paths, and traineeships within the enterprise should be longer than 2-3 weeks. Finally, students should engage themselves more, be more pro-active, and work not only on their technical skills, but also on their transversal ones.

CASE STUDY

Description of the project/programme

This case study deals with Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro programmes financed by the European Social Fund in Veneto Region. The target group involved are students between 17 and 19 years old. Precisely, the case study at issue investigates the relationship between enterprises and public/private VET providers within the programmes.

Outline of guideline model (length, timing...)

In order to be financed by the European Social Fund, single ASL projects implemented by schools and enterprises need to provide for both:

- a maximum of 160 hours for 4th class students and
- a maximum of 100 hours for 5th class students

Notably:

- 4th class students must spend at least 80 hours in the enterprise and 20 in school and
- 5th class students must spend at least 40 hours in the enterprise and 20 in school.

As a consequence, each project must have a duration between 160 and 260 hours.

As it concerns school years 2013/14 and 2014/15, each single project must be addressed to at least 30 students (15 in 4th class and 15 in 5th class). In order to obtain the ESF, ASL projects must take place, imperatively, outside curricular school hours. In other words, the projects must be carried out in the afternoon with the possibility to do the internship in the enterprise during summer holidays. As a matter of fact, ASL must not interfere with ministerial educational programmes.

The actors involved in Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro are:

- the public VET provider (school): teachers
- the private VET provider (optional): professionals
- the enterprise: HR specialists and tutors
- students

- eventual financiers.

ASL projects funded by ESF differ from one another, as much depends on single teachers. The lack of a systematic approach makes it difficult to draw a standard outline of Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro projects. However, usually, they are carried out as it follows:

- classroom training between March and May,
- internship in the enterprise between June and July,
- classroom training between September and November.

Classroom trainings include an assessment of students' initial and final skills.

From the point of view of the enterprise, ASL projects are carried out in three stages:

- planning: working together with the school, the enterprise sets the targets;
- realization: the enterprise receive students;
- assessment: skills acquired by students are evaluated.

Preconditions for success: advantages and disadvantages

Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro programmes financed by the European Social Fund present advantages and disadvantages. They offer students the possibility to practice what they have learnt and develop employability skills. Also, enterprises benefit from taking part in students' training: they can prepare people who could be useful in terms of employment.

However, ASL is often subordinate to ministerial educational programmes; therefore, its success depends much on the teachers' engagement. Moreover, bureaucracy is a major obstacle and schools spend too much time in completing forms.

ASL projects often lack a systematic dialogue between schools and enterprises. Enterprises do not take part in the definition of training paths and schools focus too much on theory. As a consequence, students are not well prepared and their technical and transversal skills are inadequate. This compromises their employability, especially in times of economic crisis: nowadays, employers prefer to hire people with experience.

Evaluation and impact. Define indicators

Before and after the traineeship within the enterprise, students involved in Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro undergo a skills' assessment. Thanks to these evaluations, they can be aware of their

competences and of what can be improved. Technical and transversal skills are evaluated and both the school and the enterprise should take part in the assessment.

INTERVIEWS

Companies involved

Company 1

Name of company: La Meccanica di Reffo S.r.l.

Type of activity: manufacturing of plants and machines for animal feed, biomass, fertilizers and recycling

Status: public/private: private

Size: medium size (61 employees)

Level of education targeted: the company offers trainings in mechanics, electronics, and economics to students in 4th-5th class (17-19)

Website: <http://www.lameccanica.it>

Contact person and role: Managing Director Roberto Reffo

Email address: lameccanica@lameccanica.it

Company 2

Name of company: Celenit S.p.a.

Type of activity: manufacturing of wood-wool and cement boards for new thermal and acoustic solutions

Status: public/private: private

Size: small size (34 employees)

Level of education targeted: the company offers trainings in mechanics, electronics, and economics for students in 4th-5th class (17-19)

Website: <http://www.celenit.com>

Contact person and role: Managing Director Giulia Svegliado

Email address: info@celenit.com

Company 3

Name of company: Arneg S.p.a.

Type of activity: design, manufacturing and installation of complete equipment for the retail sector

Status: public/private: private

Size: big size (690 employees)

Level of education targeted: the company offers trainings in mechanics, electronics, hydraulics and economics for students in 4th-5th class (17-19)

Website: <http://www.arneg.it>

Contact person and role: HR Manager Armando De Crescenzo

Email address: info@arneg.it

Company 4

Name of company: Costan S.p.a.

Type of activity: manufacturing of equipment for commercial refrigeration

Status: public/private: private

Size: big size

Level of education targeted: the company offers trainings in mechanics, electronics, hydraulics and economics for students in 4th-5th class (17-19)

Website: <http://www.costan.com>

Contact person and role: HR Specialist Marila Bernard

Email address: info@costan.com

CONTENTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Company 1: La Meccanica di Reffo Srl

General introduction

Four representatives of four private companies have been interviewed. The companies at issue all work in mechanical engineering: Reffo Srl manufactures plants and machines for the rural sector, Celenit Spa realizes wood-wool and cement boards for thermal and acoustic solutions, Arneg Spa and Costan Spa manufacture equipment for commercial refrigeration. Arneg Spa and Costan Spa are big-sized enterprises, Reffo Srl is medium-sized and Celenit Spa is small-sized.

All the interviews were carried out in the companies' headquarters. The interviews took place: with Reffo Srl on July 23rd, 2014, with Celenit Spa on July 28th, 2014, with Arneg Spa on September 18th, 2014, and with Costan Spa on December 2nd, 2014. Project Manager Angela Caiazzo, from Fòrema Spa, carried out the first three interviews together with Gianfranco Gonzato.

The last interview was carried out with Beatrice Persico. Both Gonzato and Persico are Project Assistants from Fòrema Spa.

Reffo Srl, Celenit Spa and Arneg Spa were selected on the basis of their partnership with Fòrema Spa. Costan Spa was chosen to provide a different example about Veneto's reality. Indeed, the first three companies are based in the province of Padua, whereas Costan Spa is based in Belluno and, presents a different socio-cultural situation. Padua lies in the Po Valley, an area characterized by the presence of numerous industries; instead, Belluno is in the mountains, where business activities are rare.

Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies

The target group involved in ASL projects in the four companies are students in mechanics from the 4th and 5th class of secondary school (between 17 and 19 years old).

Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students

Reffo Srl has been engaged in ASL programmes for over 10 years and has been cooperating with both public and private VET providers (Fòrema and ENAIP). Generally, private VET providers get in touch with the company and intermediate the contacts within the partnership. Collaborations in ASL projects arise from previous collaborations between schools and Reffo Srl in traditional traineeship projects.

Usually, traineeships within the enterprise start in spring and many are the students involved. Reffo Srl needed to extend its premises in order to cope with the students' coming.

The company is not actively involved in the students' recruitment but receives the trainees VET providers send.

Joint design/planning of training path

Reffo Srl is not engaged in the definitions of training objectives before the traineeship begins, and is not aware of the competences required to students. However, definitions and adjustments are made along the way in accordance with the company's needs. Due to a major gap between assessment methods of the company and of schools – students often do not possess the skills the school claims they have –, Reffo Srl has to start from zero, and define its own training paths on the basis of the competences students show on the field.

Moreover, bureaucracy is a major obstacle to the cooperation between the company and public VET providers, especially when public funds are involved. As a matter of fact, public VET providers are too concerned in forms control.

Reffo Srl agrees that strategic planning should be fundamental to conduct accurate training paths based on the specific needs of the company. Therefore, the company would like to take part in the definition of training objectives before the beginning of the traineeship within the enterprise.

Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation

Communication between company and training agency is of utmost importance. Communication has been intense especially with Fòrema, thanks to its strong and long-lasting relationship with the company. A direct and personal contact with professionals of the training agency fosters and strengthens cooperation. Instead, collaborations with teachers are weaker.

Company visits by the public VET provider should be foreseen into a wider framework; that is, they should not be occasional but part of a long-term ASL programme.

Reffo Srl takes part in the evaluation of students. Trainees' assessment is done only after the traineeship. However, since this lasts only a few weeks (2-6 weeks), it is difficult to have a trace of students' development.

SWOT analysis

Communication with a private VET provider strengthens ASL projects. These can be improved provided that a long-lasting relationship between the company and the VET provider is established, regardless of funds. In other words, Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro should be implemented even when there are no funds, in order to ensure constancy to the programmes. Unfortunately, bureaucracy is a major obstacle.

Students should be followed also after the traineeship is over because they could be employed eventually.

Evaluation of the cooperation: 4-5.

Students' Skills

Reffo Srl reckons incoming students' competences are inadequate. Nevertheless, during the traineeship students can be employed in any sector – planning, trade, administration, production – and they are supported with a direct and active one-to-one relationship with enterprise tutors. This is one of the company strengths, since both trainees and the enterprise benefits from this kind of relationship.

According to the company, competences in Italian and foreign languages, in mathematics, science and technology, in informatics, social and cultural skills, a positive attitude towards learning, ability in taking the initiative and in entrepreneurship are fundamental employability skills.

The company values transversal skills and would like to recruit trainees who know German.

Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives

Training for company tutors can be a domain of cooperation with private VET providers. Private VET providers are generally more active and motivated than schools; therefore, they can lead the organization of other initiatives. Also, technical courses for humanistic profiles to be applied to sales and management positions should be implemented.

Besides Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro, Reffo Srl has been engaged with Fòrema in organizing courses for employees on ICT, trade, internationalization of enterprises, and business organization. However, these activities have lacked in continuity.

Key messages and recommendations

- Reffo Srl has been engaged for over 10 years in the programme “Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro”.
- Support and **direct relationship tutor – trainee** is a key to success.
- Enterprise **not engaged in the definition of training objectives** before the traineeship begins. Definition and adjustments made along the way according to the company's needs.

- **Bureaucracy** hampers cooperation company – VET provider especially when public funds are involved, and it absorbs human and organisational resources that could be spent on the definition of contents.
- Gap between **skills assessment** methods of company and schools.
- **Communication** between company and training agency is of utmost importance. Building **strong and long-lasting relationships** and keeping **direct and personal contacts** with professionals of the training agency foster and strengthen cooperation.
- **Company visits** by the training provider should be foreseen within a wider framework (not within a single project) and a longer period of time.
- Strategic planning is fundamental to conduct accurate **training needs analysis** based on real needs of the company and **design tailored training programmes/paths**.
- **Low level** of incoming trainees' skills (not necessarily a liability -> training on the job makes up for it). All 8 basic skills for Lifelong Learning are equally important.
- Trainees' **assessment** is done only *ex-post* (should be done also *ex-ante*).
- Training for company's tutors can be a domain of cooperation with training providers.
- Private training providers are generally more active, motivated and receptive than schools.
- Technical courses for humanistic profiles to be applied to sales and management positions.

Company 2: Celenit Spa

General introduction

Four representatives of four private companies have been interviewed. The companies at issue all work in mechanical engineering: Reffo Srl manufactures plants and machines for the rural sector, Celenit Spa realizes wood-wool and cement boards for thermal and acoustic solutions, Arneg Spa and Costan Spa manufacture equipment for commercial refrigeration. Arneg Spa and Costan Spa are big-sized enterprises, Reffo Srl is medium-sized and Celenit Spa is small-sized.

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Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies

The target group involved in ASL projects in the four companies are students in mechanics from the 4th and 5th class of secondary school (between 17 and 19 years old).

Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students

Celenit Spa has been engaged in ASL programmes for over 6 years and has been cooperating mostly with one public VET provider: Istituto Girardi in Cittadella. The partnership started thanks to a very active and committed teacher from the school. Indeed, before she came contacted the company, Celenit Spa did not know anything about Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro. Since then, ASL

projects with Istituto Girardi have been regularly implemented and the company has assumed a role more and more active.

Celenit Spa has cooperated also with private VET providers (with Fòrema only once). Generally, private VET providers are more active, motivated and committed than public VET providers, where the implementation of ASL projects depends on the single teacher.

The company is not actively involved in the students' recruitment but receives the trainees VET providers send.

Joint design/planning of training path

Celenit Spa has never taken part in the definition of training objectives for students engaged in ASL but would like to do so. The company is willing to undertake a dialogue with schools involved, in order to set up coherent training paths, but school tutors are not active in this sense. As a result – among other things – Celenit Spa laments over the students' inability to put into practice what they have learnt in school.

The company is aware of the competencies required to students and is more interested in receiving students with profiles such as accountants, administrators and production specialists.

Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation

At the beginning of the partnership between Celenit and Istituto Girardi, the teacher involved used to pay regular visits to the company. In fact, it was necessary to know each other better. Later on, contacts were held only via telephone.

In general, for ASL projects, the company prefers to have a face-to-face contact at the beginning and, when the students start the traineeship, to be given a certain latitude in handling the project. Moreover, Celenit Spa is not interested in meeting the students before their training within the enterprise. Indeed, they stay only a few weeks (2-4 weeks), and the company does not wish to hire them afterwards.

Celenit Spa takes part in the evaluation of students. Trainees' assessment is done only after the traineeship.

SWOT analysis

About Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro, the company appreciates the students' willingness to learn. They fulfil their duties and behave properly. However, schools should prepare them better. Indeed, students are not inclined to the practice as a result of the lack of proper tools in schools, and of a teaching too much oriented on theory.

Celenit Spa deeply values the relationship with certain teachers and professional: direct contact with them is a precondition for success.

Evaluation of the cooperation: 2.

Students' Skills

Celenit Spa reckons incoming students' competences are inadequate. The company is more interested in students' hard skills rather than in their soft skills, and in profiles such as accountants, administrators and production specialists. Competences in Italian and foreign languages, in mathematics, science and technology, in informatics, ability in taking the initiative and in entrepreneurship are fundamental employability skills.

The company recognizes and appreciates the great value of students' ICT skills. However, students lack technical skills and are incapable of putting into practice the theory they have learnt in school. Also, they are not pro-active and need to be constantly supervised; they are shy and unable to handle interpersonal relationships (e.g. they are afraid to answer the phone). Nevertheless, students are willing to learn, motivated and hard working, and, as a consequence, they learn quickly.

Among transversal skills, Celenit Spa values knowledge of Italian and foreign languages – even though the company has never had the opportunity to test them.

Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives

Besides Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro, Celenit Spa has collaborated with VET providers on other initiatives. For example, the company's experts hold seminars and courses in training institutes and private VET providers' premises. Celenit Spa also collaborates with freelance professionals for the realization of safety at work courses.

Celenit Spa hosts traditional traineeships too. Moreover, the company has collaborated with ITS Red form Padua on projects concerning trainings for young people between 18 and 21 years old.

With regard to the cooperation with Fòrema, only once a project was successful. The company laments that other projects suggested by Fòrema never resulted in concrete actions.

Key messages and recommendations

- Celenit Spa has been engaged in the programme “Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro” for over 6 years, and has been cooperating mostly with one VET provider (Istituto Girardi).
- Key to make the cooperation successful is **direct contact** and **trustworthy relationship** with VET provider’s professionals/tutors/teachers.
- General **lack of commitment by public VET providers** (low motivation and no financial incentives), private providers are more active and cooperative.
- VET providers usually took the initiative to begin ASL, after that Celenit became more proactive.
- Very **low job-specific skills** of incoming students; yet they have willingness to learn and curiosity. Gap between theoretical and practical knowledge, weak preparation received at school.
- The company is **more interested in “hard skills”** rather than “soft skills” and in profiles like accountants, administrators and production specialists.
- **ICT skills** are the most important among transversal skills; students generally perform well.
- **Interpersonal skills**: widespread shyness of incoming students when they have to answer the phone.
- Short length of students’ stay within the company with ASL (2-4 weeks):
 - makes it difficult to assess improvement of their skills;
 - students are not seen as potential future employees (too young, too soon, too inexperienced).
- Celenit never took part in the ex-ante **definition of training needs** and in **designing training programmes** for students engaged in ASL but would like to do so.
- Celenit’s experts hold seminars and courses in training institutes and VET providers’ premises, and cooperate with freelance professionals for the realization of safety at work courses.

Company 3: Arneg Spa

General introduction

Four representatives of four private companies have been interviewed. The companies at issue all work in mechanical engineering: Reffo Srl manufactures plants and machines for the rural sector, Celenit Spa realizes wood-wool and cement boards for thermal and acoustic solutions, Arneg Spa and Costan Spa manufacture equipment for commercial refrigeration. Arneg Spa and Costan Spa are big-sized enterprises, Reffo Srl is medium-sized and Celenit Spa is small-sized.

All the interviews were carried out in the companies' headquarters. The interviews took place: with Reffo Srl on July 23rd, 2014, with Celenit Spa on July 28th, 2014, with Arneg Spa on September 18th, 2014, and with Costan Spa on December 2nd, 2014. Project Manager Angela Caiazzo, from Fòrema Spa, carried out the first three interviews together with Gianfranco Gonzato. The last interview was carried out with Beatrice Persico. Both Gonzato and Persico are Project Assistants from Fòrema Spa.

Reffo Srl, Celenit Spa and Arneg Spa were selected on the basis of their partnership with Fòrema Spa. Costan Spa was chosen to provide a different example about Veneto's reality. Indeed, the first three companies are based in the province of Padua, whereas Costan Spa is based in Belluno and, presents a different socio-cultural situation. Padua lies in the Po Valley, an area characterized by the presence of numerous industries; instead, Belluno is in the mountains, where business activities are rare.

Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies

The target group involved in ASL projects in the four companies are students in mechanics from the 4th and 5th class of secondary school (between 17 and 19 years old).

Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students

Arneg Spa has been engaged in ASL for many years and has been cooperating with some VET providers in the province of Padua, e.g. with Camerini Rossi. Both the company and VET providers take first contacts. Unfortunately, due especially to a complicated bureaucracy, collaborations with VET providers have never led to altogether positive results.

The company has never been actively involved in the students' recruitment but receives the trainees VET providers send.

Joint design/planning of training path

The training within the enterprise lasts only two weeks. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a real collaboration between the school and the company. In the past, Arneg Spa used to implement "true" ASL projects with some technical schools: thanks to a two-month training within the enterprise supported by a school training, results were overall positive.

Arneg Spa has never collaborated with VET providers in the definition of training objectives and training paths, but would like to do so. The company believes that students should work on their transversal skills (which only the school can provide for) rather than on their technical skills.

Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation

Contacts with VET providers are rare. Company visits should be implemented, but there is neither enough time, nor interest on the VET providers' side. Indeed, company visits have not been organized for two years.

The company does not take part in the evaluation of students. However, internal assessments are carried out for each employee, even for trainees.

SWOT analysis

Arneg Spa considers the collaboration with VET providers in ASL projects very negative. Complicated bureaucracy, lack of motivation and interest on the VET providers' side, and weak training in school are major obstacles.

Moreover, the success of ASL projects much depends on the commitment of single teachers, and on their willingness in keeping constant contacts with the enterprise. Unfortunately, such teachers are not so many.

Finally, only students can benefit from this kind of projects because thanks to the training in the enterprise they can have a real contact with the labour market.

Evaluation of the cooperation: 2.

Students' Skills

Arneg Spa reckons incoming students' competences are inadequate. Except for a few cases, students involved in ASL projects lack both technical and transversal skills.

Arneg Spa values transversal skills the most. Above all, young students lack a series of values about life, work, commitment and money. They are absent-minded and overprotected by their parents. As a consequence, the teen-agers' generation undergoes a widespread cultural impoverishment: schools and VET systems should teach them how to face real life challenges. Although they behave correctly, students trained within the company lack common sense, motivation and a solid value structure, which the company cannot teach them in 2 weeks.

The lack of technical skills is of minor importance since students can be taught – better, helped to improve – on the field. Indeed, Arneg Spa organizes internal trainings for its own employees. The company, however, is not interested in employing students after ASL projects. Due to the recent economic crisis, it prefers to invest on mature and experienced people, such as engineers and economists in possession of a degree.

Competences in Italian, in mathematics, science and technology, in informatics, ability in taking the initiative and in entrepreneurship are fundamental employability skills.

Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives

The company has a very solid “internal tradition” with regard to training – internal courses, career guidance and advancement –, which sometimes compensates for the lack of training provided by traditional education systems. It also happened that Arneg Spa's experts held courses, seminars, and organized training meetings in schools and private VET providers' premises.

Important occasions for initiatives proposed by the company have been missed due to a lack of interest on the part of schools, universities and students themselves.

Key messages and recommendations

- Arneg has been engaged in ASL for many years, as well as in other traineeship and dual training programmes.
- Training within the company foreseen in ASL is too short (2 weeks): it should be longer and embedded more strongly in school curricula.

- Bureaucracy is a major obstacle in implementing any training project with public institutes.
- The company has a very solid “internal tradition” with regards to training (internal courses, career planning, career guidance and advancement), which sometimes caters for the lack of training provided by traditional education systems.
- Lack of interest by schools, private VET providers and universities in initiatives proposed by the company (internal Masters, traineeships and other project works) coupled with lack of responsiveness by students. Many good occasions have been missed.
- The company values transversal skills the most and expects students to have them (especially self-awareness, cultural awareness, pro-activity). Technical skills can be taught on the spot (if the person starts with solid foundations the company can help him boost these skills).
- Above all, students lack strong values, cultural awareness, and sense of responsibility: education and VET systems should do their part in teaching them how to face life’s challenges.
- The reason for Italy’s economic decline should be sought in the widespread cultural and social decline.

Company 4: Costan Spa

General introduction

Four representatives of four private companies have been interviewed. The companies at issue all work in mechanical engineering: Reffo Srl manufactures plants and machines for the rural sector, Celenit Spa realizes wood-wool and cement boards for thermal and acoustic solutions, Arneg Spa and Costan Spa manufacture equipment for commercial refrigeration. Arneg Spa and Costan Spa are big-sized enterprises, Reffo Srl is medium-sized and Celenit Spa is small-sized.

All the interviews were carried out in the companies' headquarters. The interviews took place: with Reffo Srl on July 23rd, 2014, with Celenit Spa on July 28th, 2014, with Arneg Spa on September 18th, 2014, and with Costan Spa on December 2nd, 2014. Project Manager Angela Caiazzo, from Fòrema Spa, carried out the first three interviews together with Gianfranco Gonzato. The last interview was carried out with Beatrice Persico. Both Gonzato and Persico are Project Assistants from Fòrema Spa.

Reffo Srl, Celenit Spa and Arneg Spa were selected on the basis of their partnership with Fòrema Spa. Costan Spa was chosen to provide a different example about Veneto's reality. Indeed, the first three companies are based in the province of Padua, whereas Costan Spa is based in Belluno and, presents a different socio-cultural situation. Padua lies in the Po Valley, an area characterized by the presence of numerous industries; instead, Belluno is in the mountains, where business activities are rare.

Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies

The target group involved in ASL projects in the four companies are students in mechanics from the 4th and 5th class of secondary school (between 17 and 19 years old).

Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students

Costan Spa has been engaged in ASL projects for at least three years. The company has been collaborating mainly with two public VET providers: ITIS Segato in Belluno and ITIS Negrelli in Feltre. Generally, Costan Spa is more interested in recruiting students in mechanics; however, it

welcomes the students schools choose to send, including students in informatics and accountancy. Usually schools take first contact with the enterprise.

Costan Spa has been collaborating also with Reviviscar, a private VET provider, which – at the beginning of the relationship – works as an intermediary between the school and the enterprise.

Joint design/planning of training path

The company takes part in the definition of training objectives and training paths, and is aware of the competences required to students. After the school take first contact and verifies the company's availability and willingness to implement ASL projects, the HR Specialist draws up a training plan. Even tough teachers have always shown a deep commitment, bureaucracy makes difficult the joint planning of training paths.

Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation

Costan Spa implements two kind of trainings within the enterprise for secondary school students: traineeships which last 2-3 weeks and take place between school semesters (in February); and traineeships which last one month and take place during summer. During the first type of traineeship, the teacher pays a visit to the company and evaluates the students. The company takes part in the assessment too. According to Costan Spa, even though the second kind of traineeship is preferable, both types are too short.

During the project implementation contacts between Costan Spa and public VET providers are constant.

SWOT analysis

Even though their preparation is inadequate, the enterprise benefits from the students' presence. Indeed, they bring young and original points of view and give the company the opportunity to monitor the training and working reality. Bureaucracy, however, is a major obstacle to ASL projects.

According to the representative of the company, companies should be more present in the school reality: visits to schools should be organized and continuity in the relationship with VET providers should be fostered.

Evaluation of the cooperation: 5.

Students' Skills

The company has no particular expectation about the students' technical skills and knows that their training in school is purely theoretical. However, schools are working to offer students trainings more practice-oriented. Incoming students also lack transversal skills – e.g. they are not punctual – and this is mainly due to the social and domestic context.

Competences in Italian and in foreign languages, in mathematics, science and technology, in informatics, social skills and a positive attitude towards learning are fundamental employability skills.

Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives

The company has collaborated with private VET providers (Fòrema and Reviviscar) on other initiatives such as training and refresher courses for employees. These collaborations always had positive results.

Key messages and recommendations

- Marila Bernard, HR Specialist, explains the **environmental difficulties** of the area: it is mountainous and public transports are inadequate; so, there are not so many business activities.
- As it concerns the local engineering industry, Costan is the most important company. It belongs to the Epta Group and it deals with **industrial refrigeration**.
- Costan Spa has been engaged in taking interns from ITIS Segato and ITIS Negrelli for at least 3 years; the most researched profile is the **mechanical expert** (complicated to find). Usually, the contact starts from the school.
- There are two options as regards the duration of the traineeship within the enterprise: two weeks between the school semesters; one month during summer. Costan prefers the second option, because with the first one the tutor spends time in teaching the student, but then the company has very little in return, because of time constraints. However, even one month **is not long enough**; six months would be preferable (now this is possible with University internships).

- Bernard (and the company in general) has **no particular expectation** about the students because she perfectly knows that their school training is purely theoretical; actually, **the biggest gap concerns behaviour rules** in work situations such as punctuality or the low value given to this opportunity. However, Bernard thinks that this is related especially to family education. On the contrary, she notes how schools are working on giving the students a more practical preparation.
- When Costan needs human resources, the preference falls on hardly replaceable people or on young people who already did an internship there.
- Bernard has a crucial role during the internship: she **writes training plans** and provides **final assessments**. During the two-week-internship there is also an ongoing evaluation made by a professor.
- The company collaborates with Fòrema and other private VET providers on training and refresher courses.
- The **problems** of internships are: **bureaucracy** and inadequate preparation of students; on the other hand, **young people bring new and original points of view** and at the same time, the experience is an occasion for the company to monitor the training and working reality.
- Possible solutions: companies could organize **visits, go to schools** to explain who they are and what they do, keep contacts with schools also outside the internships; moreover, Bernard is planning an intervention of **Welfare**, to help the employees' children in their choice of school.