

"SolTec" Interviews Report - Italy

During the Soltec project we interviewed several times decision makers and PV experts on how to widen the implementation of the project results taking into account the difficulties to compare the course to the EQF in Italy either formally and informally.

However many difficulties have been encountered because of the complexity of the situation that sees an NQF in Italy still under construction; as a consequence we can say that unfortunately at the moment the VET system is not ready to speak in terms of EQF in absence of the NQF.

Anyway there are some ways to include the Soltec course in the use, so we collected information at this regard from decision makers strongly involved:

- Regione Piemonte (Mr Valter Martin - qualification standard methods)
- Europass National Unit (Ms Elisabetta Perulli)
- Experts interviewed during the project (Piero Botto, CEO of Ialservice, Delli Santi from CNA, ecc.).
- Desk research from official sources in view of the new NQF (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour), in particular the website <http://www.nrpitalia.it>
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In this report we give a summary of the feedback .

All interviews were based on following and similar questions as the following

- ✓ How do European courses that represents common efforts from European institutions according to the EQF principles, such as Soltec, can be recognized officially in Italy.
- ✓ How the attendance can be encouraged, how competence can be certified at the end.
- ✓ What is the forecasting in Italy on recognition of competences obtained both from learning in Italy and abroad.
- ✓ What is the state of the art of the Italian NQF; are there any updates of the work in progress.
- ✓ What are the institutions and organizations interested to the use of the Soltec training course.

1. Education and VET system

The two frameworks ISCED and EQF constitute different approaches to setting standards for the categorisation of competences and qualifications. The ISCED framework, which can be characterised as the older and “traditional” approach, focuses on formal educational activities designed to meet learning needs. Consequently, the framework excludes various forms of learning that are not organized and the basic unit and analytical focus of the ISCED framework is the single

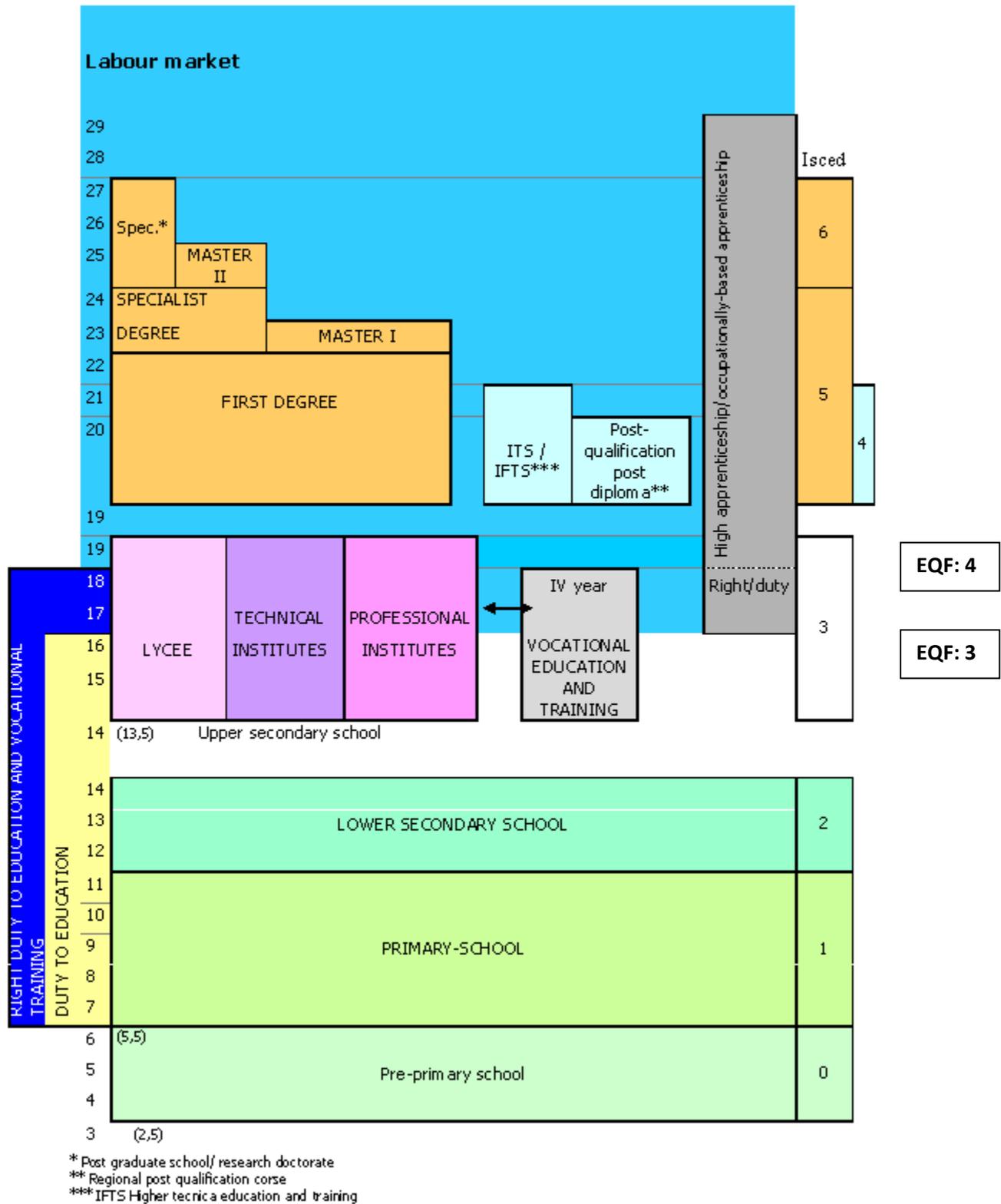
educational programme, especially its scope (e.g. field) and level. The standard of ISCED defines 6 levels of education and 25 different fields. In contrast, the EQF represents a more modern approach linked to the context of lifelong learning. The EQF define learning as taking place in formal as well as informal settings. The analytical unit and focus of the framework is the learning outcome which defines the competences of an individual at 8 different levels of reference.

As a correspondence to the ISCED exists, Italy has not completed the construction of a NQF that responds to EQF principle. As for the Soltec curriculum it is not clear where the training can be inserted. We can assume that as for the contents the course can be inserted at different ISCED levels while in terms of EQF learning outcomes and competences must refer to a single level.

According to Ms Perulli the best way for recognition of the curriculum should be on National basis by Regions and the Ministry of Labour. Therefore if National standards of professional recognition would exist then would be an advantage; although this solution is still on its way in Italy and as a consequence we have in many sectors only some experiences of European networks where there is a mutual acceptance of standards which refer to EQF or ECVET. These experience are not inserted into institutional framework (that can be the case of Soltec) anyway they can have good chances for reference. The only condition is that they must have a strong quality and can be accepted in the context of social dialogue among companies, trade unions, training and education institutions, etc.)

Italian education and training system

(october 2009)



Source: ISFOL

We can see in the picture that certifications whose EQF are 4 and 3 corresponds to 3+2 high secondary school certifications. These information is officially recognized by the Italian framework as declared in the decree n. 164 dated 16.07.2010. The decree establishes a first level of qualifications after secondary school at EQF level no. 3 and a second level of qualifications corresponding to EQF level no. 4.

The “Soltec” course clearly can be placed to level 3 and 4 as part of a curriculum whose conclusion is a set of electric qualification and /or the industrial diploma (es: electric surveyor). The curriculum can also be implemented in the existing courseware in technical schools; this is a decision that a single school can take in its autonomy. There is no official validation, the only validation is made possible by the council of teachers that is chaired by the general manager in each school.

2. Lifelong learning (fondi interprofessionali = intersectoral funds)

According to Mr Botto “Fondi interprofessionali” have been instituted in 2003. Every company is charged for a small percentage out of the amount of salaries and taxes to be dedicated to a fund to cover the costs of staff training. There are at the moment 24 different funds which are differentiated according to the economic sectors. This makes available a considerable amount of money periodically enriched, although not all companies are aware of the opportunities; in fact the use of the funds is below the level of the real possibility. Through the facilities offered by Fondi interprofessionali the training initiatives can be offered at no cost to the client company or at extremely low costs. There are mandatory training programs on topics most requested by companies such as:

- The security issues related to certification or mandatory (and video workstations, fire, suspended loads, first aid, etc.).
- The environmental issues ranging from pollution in the workplace, in the disposal of waste materials, the risks of exposure
- Training for certification BS OHSAS 18001:2007 and UNI EN ISO 14001:2004
- Training system safety prevention (for a contribution INAIL)
- Language training (English, certificated Italian for migrant workers)
- The updating of the certification / specialization (personal or business)
- The management of processes and methodologies for continuous improvement (six sigma, ISO, etc.).
- Technological innovation and updating of technologies (Energy management, solar PV, logistics, etc)

As for “Soltec” there are interesting opportunities. The course can be included in the catalogue of the training courses offered by Fondi interprofessionali; in fact there is no restriction to attend distance and blended courses for the employees. To do that the role of the Solar Network in Italy is essential. For this reason API Formazione and CNA have been included in the Network. The network of this organization is nationwide. The unique barrier to a real implementation of the

course till now has been founded: it is the language, in fact a fundamental issue is to produce a version of the course in Italian, as it is in the deliverable of the project.

Also Ms Perulli agrees about the use of Fondi interprofessionali that can co-exist together with other forms of private and public co-funding. Transparency and clearness of certificates are important and also the importance of the networks: the more the network is large the more the recognition of competence is easy.

3. Associations of entrepreneurs

Associations of small enterprises are the most interesting vehicle to transfer the Soltec results. There are all over the country nationwide associations that are represented at central, regional and provincial level. Among them there are:

- CNA
- Confartigianato
- API
- Confindustria (Nationwide association of large companies)

There is in other words a wide net of opportunities to disseminate and implement Soltec directly in the enterprises. CNA Turin has been interviewed during the project, in the interview the point of the implementation and the use of Soltec has been considered. Mr Delli Santi described the general framework in which his organization is operating. In the province of Torino there are 1600 companies related to the area included in CNA, directly and indirectly, divided among TV aerials installers (400), installers of solar thermal heating system (700), systems installed photovoltaic panels (500). In addition there are another 1,000 small businesses in the sector in the rest of Piedmont.

The majority of enterprises are small with few employees and often coincide with the owner who acts as installers and maintenance, although there are number of companies with employees higher. CNA can be one of the carrier for the Soltec course. The associated companies are interested in educational offers proposals periodically by CNA, they often request a proactive training demand for PV systems together with the provision of efficient training as much as possible. These kind of courses are financed through contributions of Chamber of Commerce of Turin. while companies give only small contributions . In this way companies bear only 30% of the burden. During the year there are about 200 companies that benefit of training courses for their employees (20 -90 hours each training): In Piedmont this costs to companies between 300 and 350 Euros each course while in other Italian regions the cost can be higher. The system does not use the channels of the CNA formal training (European Social Fund (ESF) and / or inter-professional funds) for objective problems of a bureaucratic setting. For example, participation funds is not permitted inter-holders, but only to employees, while the ESF has stiffness in the programming (the plan training must be ready several months before delivery) and duration of courses is generally too high. CNA's training offer is mostly in the classroom, but they're thinking forms of training practice with

live demonstrations, training on the job, role playing, etc.: an attempt to introduce more educational content as those related to energy efficiency of buildings in general, from housing to other types (buildings, shopping centers, services, etc.), renewable energy and sustainable operation of ESCO, etc.. Updates have also introduced different types of products, their characteristics, comparisons between different models, etc.. This Training strengthens the role of the installer who gain credit particularly in managing customer relations: “he become also a true consultant you can trust”. CNA also has a service dedicated to energy advice for the associated owners of enterprises where the training activities are promoted.

According to Mr Piero Botto – past CEO of Ialservice training company operating the intersector funds – Soltec course responds to the interest of professionals if they are consultants for companies. In Italy consultants in the field of energy – but also professionals of in other fields - are associated in specific organization called Albi professionali (Public list of professionals in various fields). These organizations give common rules and assistance, in particular legal assistance, applications to public procurements, fees, etc. “Albi professionali” are distributed nationwide on provincial and regional basis, they may organize training in many fields of interest. APIT has been mentioned as a target institution.

Fire tried also to contact the partners of QualiCERT an IEE project for the qualification of installer in renewable energy systems. The Italian partner of QualiCERT is ENEA (National energy agency) which has a wide catalog of free e-learning courses and has a spinoff Mesos offering courses for PV installers certified by CEPAS (an Italian Certification body) accordingly to ISO 17024. ENEA is also the body in charge for the qualification courses for installers of renewable energy systems accordingly to the directive 2009/28/EC and is the project leader of WISE, the Italian proposal in the framework of BUILD UP Skills.

There were several meetings and phone discussions with Ms Anna Moreno head of information and training service of ENEA, and with Mr Francesco Vivoli and Ms Liliana Bonfiglio of Mesos. At the beginning of February 2011 there was also a meeting at CEPAS to talk about a possible qualification profile for PV maintainers.

In Wise project FIRE should be involved as subcontractor for the definition of qualification profiles.

Table 1 - Framework of main carriers for the Soltec course as a result of Solar networking activity

Carrier	Target	Use of Soltec
Schools and Training agencies (initial vocational training qualifications)	Students (> 16 < 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated as a training module in the curriculum studiorum - Specific course extra curriculum studiorum

Training agencies	Adult unemployed and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation in regional vocational training offer (e.g. inclusion in the data base of Regione Piemonte www.collegamenti.org) - Individual cofounded courses by the trainee (voucher for individual co-funded by ESF)
Association of enterprises (CAN, Confartigianato, ecc.)	Adult employees /owners	Implementation in institutional training offer
Association of professionals (FIRE, APIT)	Adult professionals	Implementation in institutional training offer
Tecno parks	Adult employees	Implementation in institutional training offer
Inter-sector funds	Adult employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation in the catalogue of 24 different funds - Inter-company training

4. Conclusion

Although the insertion of the PV Soltec course in the Italian education and vocational system is possible, there may be some problems with the official recognition of competence for the trainee in the case the trainee has attended a private or blended course. This depends from the education system that in its whole still does not implement the practice of validating competence according the ECVET system. An important role can be played by the regional vocational training system whose rules are more flexible than the education State system.

Training offered by companies through intersectoral funds and/or other initiatives can be an interesting channel to be used with the aim of improving qualifications and competence of workers, although at the end there are difficulties in the validation of new competence by state education institutions.

In conclusion although no institutional framework exists the question of recognition is postponed to good practice on course in some Italian regions: this is a sort of “de facto” methodological framework which is possible to refer to. In the conclusion “Soltec” experience must refer to an Italian context that is moving forward to EQF whose major institutions involved are at the moment the Regions, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education.