

Report on the national policy and best practices

The following report was written according to the questionnaire on the national policy and best practices and to focus on the outcomes of the group debate.

1. THE NATIONAL/PROVINCIAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

1a. What are the main characteristics of the national qualifications system?

(Describe levels, qualification typologies, system, organization).

With reference to the comparison between qualifications system in Italy and EQF, a first hypothesis under study (1) foresees a division into levels as summarized below:

- Level 1: it corresponds to the qualification issued at the end of lower secondary school;
- Level 2: it corresponds to the certification of compulsory education (at the end of the first two years of upper secondary school);
- Levels 3-4-5: they correspond to different levels of qualification/diploma issued by the VET system;
- Levels 6-7-8: they correspond to different levels of upper secondary school education.

Hypothesis of the comparison between the Italian qualifications system and the EQF

EQF level	Type of qualification	Type of educational path	Issued by
1	Secondary school diploma	Lower secondary school	MPI/MIUR
2	Certification of compulsory education	First two years of upper secondary school	MPI/MIUR
3	Vocational diploma	Three-year vocational education	MPI/MIUR
	Vocational certification	Three year VET apprenticeship courses (that are both a right and obligation for students)	Regions
4?	Technical vocational diploma	Four-year VET apprenticeship courses	Regions
4	Upper secondary school diploma (grammar school, technical school, vocational school)	Five-year courses of grammar schools, technical schools, vocational schools	MPI/MIUR



5	Upper technical specialization certificate	IFTS- istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore (Higher vocational and technical education courses)	Regions
?	Advanced technician diploma	ITS – istruzione tecnica superiore (Higher vocational education courses)	MPI/MIUR
6	Degree	Bachelor degree	MIUR/University
	Undergraduate degree	Three-year course	MIUR/Advanced art and music education
7	Master degree	Two-year course	MIUR/University
	1st level master's	One-year course minimum	MIUR/University
	2nd level academic diploma	Two years	MIUR/ Advanced art and music education
	Postgraduate diploma or 1st level master's	One-year course minimum	MIUR/ Advanced art and music education
8	Research doctorate	Three years	MIUR/University
	2nd level master's	One-year course minimum	MIUR/University
	Academic training diploma for research	Three years	MIUR/ Advanced art and music education
	Postgraduate diploma or 2nd level master's	One-year course minimum	MIUR/ Advanced art and music education

(1) The hypothesis is illustrated by the *Punto Nazionale di Coordinamento EQF* in the First Italian qualifications report with reference to the EQF (Draft, October 2011)

1b. Do you have a National Qualifications Framework, in which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated?

At the moment we do not have a national qualifications framework that foresees the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. At national level, experimental qualification frameworks are being worked on and they are adopted in some regions. We are working on a common methodological framework.

Last July, the *Conferenza Stato-Regioni* (State-Regions Conference) approved two agreements to implement the Educational and Vocational training system. An initial framework regarding qualifications and diplomas with recognition of non-formal education was also included. All courses foreseen by VET consider the alternation between work in a company and training in class a very important moment. The Autonomous Province of Trento had a very important role in planning and carrying out four-year VET courses.

1c. Does the qualification system in your country include assessing learning outcomes from the education sector, the labour market and the voluntary sector (non-profit organizations, sports associations, associations for voluntary social work etc., ICT courses, creative courses, liberal adult education for personal development etc.)?

The qualifications system especially favours formal learning outcomes (VET courses), whereas it includes only a small part of results achieved on the job (often only within the same productive sector, or even more often, within the same company) and less non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

1d. What impact does the use and implementation of EQF have on your field of work?

- Does it influence (and in what respect) your policy of collective bargaining?
- Does it influence the legal position of the employee?
- How do you value the problem of data protection vs. transparency?

At the moment, there is no system for the implementation and the use of the EQF (please, see pt 1a). In some sectors, an elaboration to connect EQF and vocational figures (for example, in the bank sector) is being carried out.

The impact that the implementation and use of the EQF can have in the employment field will also be to recognize and give value to skills, therefore to human resources and improve the meeting of demand and supply. As a consequence, people's professional credibility in the labour market will grow thanks to:

- the recognition of the knowledge acquired
- the certainty that the knowledge acquired can be used
- the recognition of courses to enrich the skills of each professional profile

1e. What does your country offer with regard to guidance and individual career development and the assessment of competences? Please name organizations and conditions (fees, costs...)?

Some employment services, with their territorial centres, help workers hit by the crisis and looking for a job, creating with them skills evaluations. This happens in some regions, among which, for example, Tuscany.

As regards the Autonomous Province of Trento:

- The Province's **Employment centres** are the main reference for workers and companies. They offers services to the unemployed but also the employed who are in search of a new job. Individuals are supported in their job search through guidance interviews and vocational counselling. Workers are helped in the preparation of a professional project after having identified what they can offer a future employer in terms of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics. Vocational guidance courses are also activated and addressed to certain categories of individuals (young neo-graduates, women who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, etc);
- The *struttura multifunzionale "Ad personam"* was created to support the actions directly managed by the Managing Authority of the European social fund with:
 - Local information and guidance services regarding actions co-funded by the European social fund;

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EQF Praxis and Information Network

- Management of the training vouchers given to people who want to participate in training activities like IT or language courses;
- Selection, tutoring and support to students and trainees, mobility or guidance within community programmes;
- Services to help citizens access the opportunities offered by the many European social fund programmes.
- o Finally, a guidance service at secondary school and university.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

2a. What is the nature of the lifelong learning policy in your country? What are the goals? Which problems are expected to be solved?

In Italy, we do not have an official lifelong learning system, rather we have parts of the system that refer to the continuing training and to the adult education system (at the moment we call it adult education).

The agreement between State, regions and local authorities, dated March 2000, in which indications of the European Union on the knowledge society were acknowledged, laying the foundations for an integrated local system for adult education in our country, didn't have a follow-up. Some regions issued rather good laws as regards the enunciation of principles that, however, had limited effects at the level of the system, also because they did not face local governance issues. A further limit was the lack of an organized framework and of guaranteed resources, if not those connected to ESF funding.

As regards continuing education, the adults who take part in training initiatives are 6,2% of the population aged between 25 and 64.

Continuing training is particularly important and supported the development of lifelong learning further to the creation and effectiveness of financial funds (inter-professional funds for continuing training) collectively managed by the social partners who have an active and central role in managing and supplying training. Along with the inter-professional funds, we must also mention funds assigned at a national level as well as the ESF contribution.

Since these activities generally involve the "strongest" workers in the training activities, meaning those who have a better position in the company and more qualifications, it was necessary to assure a public intervention for the promotion of company training plans addressed to weak individuals from private enterprises (workers who benefit from the earnings supplement fund, the over 45, low qualified workers, etc) thanks to national laws and ESF funds.

Furthermore, from 2009, the government chose to use a great part of these resources to support the income of workers who receive redundancy payment, in agreement with the regions after a complex debate.

As regards adult education, within the agreement between State, regions and local authorities dated 2000, a decision was made to reorganize and empower it according to the objectives of the European Union, creating permanent local centres for adult education (Centri Territoriali Permanenti - CTP).

The Budget law 2007 foresaw the reorganization of the CTPs by giving autonomy to the "Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti" (CPIA - Provincial centres for adult education); the decree of the Ministry of Education was published in January 2008.

The law foresees that these centres offer literacy courses, Italian L2 courses for immigrants and courses aiming to the achievement of a qualification.

The step from education to adult education involves a reduction of the offer of the CPIAs compared to the traditional offer of the CTPs. However, this matter seems to be compensated by the importance of establishing school autonomy specifically dedicated to adult education. After this though, with the 2008 programming of the government, (law 133/08) the process was interrupted.

While it seems urgent and necessary to create specific education for adults, the regulation should establish and define the organizational aspects of the CPIAs that still have not been issued.

Italy is having problems in keeping up with Europe both as regards lifelong learning policies and continuing training, as well as adult education.



2b. Is there a policy on recognition of non-formal and informal learning practiced as an element in the lifelong learning policy?

Vocational and training standards have still not been defined in Italy for the recognition of skills certified by the State, regions and social partners. This is mainly due to the different training courses of the formal system and also due to the non-formal and informal courses.

The "Documento di sintesi sulla certificazione" is a document that summarizes the certification process agreed by the regions and autonomous provinces that can create the foundations for further specifications to elaborate a document to be approved by the Conferenza Stato Regioni (conference of state and regions) and to be shared with social partners.

Regions and autonomous provinces are working on a document that should become (in the end) a framework agreement and/or guideline to pursue the following objectives:

- The summary and harmonization of tools and processes for the certification of qualifications and skills in vocational training;
- A national operational framework for the validation of skills in non-formal and informal contexts and for the recognition of training credits in an interregional logic;
- An implementation plan coordinated by the Libretto Formativo del Cittadino.

2c. Are all education sectors cooperating in creating lifelong learning programmes?

The problem regarding recognition policies is present at all levels and in all fields of education. The creation of recognition policies is strongly slowed down by the lack of a shared system of vocational and training standards. (see point 2b).

As regards school education, the syllabus of the first two compulsory years of upper secondary education and the following three non-compulsory years is divided per skills. A certification is issued at the end of compulsory education, meaning at the end of the first two years, and another one is issued at the end of the remaining, non-compulsory three years".

2d. Is there a national legislation for lifelong learning? Or is lifelong learning regulated at a sectional level?

In Italy, the parts of the lifelong learning system already existing are regulated within the legal framework of each sector (education, vocational training, higher education). Therefore we do not have a national regulation.

2e. At the national level: what are your experiences with regard to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

According to the first Italian report of reference for the EQF qualifications, the adoption of principles to develop validation and certification tools and processes for skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts was slowed down more than once due to the lack of a national qualifications framework and due to the specificities of each region.

The national level (Ministry for Education, Ministry for University and Research and Ministry of Employment and Social policies and employer associations and regional representatives) has a strategic role thanks to the Table for the definition of the standards and the promotion of initiatives



aiming to validate learning no matter where it took place, especially in vocational contexts in which this process can be an added value.

Among these practices, the **Libretto Formativo del Cittadino** is very important and was introduced with the decree n. 276 2003. At the moment it is the only shared model at the national level with the aim to document the skills acquired by citizens in traditional (formal) and non-formal or informal contexts.

According to the first Italian report with reference to EQF qualifications, over the past years, in many Italian regions the need to give value to adult learning has become very important, regardless of where such learning was achieved.

In particular, some Italian regions introduced provisions to validate non-formal and informal learning within their "certification systems" or for the recognition of training credits within vocational training and education systems to make work placement or re-placement easier for the unemployed or redundant.

2f. Description

The **Libretto formativo del cittadino** works together with the tools that certify the achievement of specific learning results as a further registration tool, in order to guarantee a global and updated vision of the skills acquired during the lifespan.

The format of the Libretto, decreed in October 2005, has been experimented with various practices, in 12 Regions and in specific intervention sectors.

3. ROLES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

3a. Which kind of lifelong learning-practices are functioning in your country/province? Do they include summative and/or formative approaches?

The **Libretto formativo del cittadino (citizen's training book)** has been experimented in many regions: it is a document that makes learning and vocational activity courses transparent, through a series of data and information filled in by the person himself, with the help of a public operator (normally from employment services).

The **Libretto formativo del Cittadino**, represents: (a) a tool to keep record of training and vocational experiences; (b) a functional response to the need of transparent documents of acquisitions also in terms of skills, supporting transitions in training and employment; (c) a moment for people to think about their path and make them aware of their potential; (d) the condition to start these practices, in order to make the skills more usable, allows people to access training courses, complete the acquired training and formalize further acquisitions.

A significant validation experience of non-formal and informal learning for the recognition of credits at a national level, has been carried out by the **University System**.

In Ministry Decree n. 270/2004 they presented the possibility, for Universities, to recognize Crediti Formativi Universitari (CFU – University training credits) for "*individually certified knowledge and vocational abilities as per the current regulations, as well as the other knowledge and abilities acquired in post-secondary training activities in which the university cooperated for their creation and implementation*".

In the laws on lifelong learning of 3rd August 2007, they formalized the possibility, for university institutions, to recognize «*learning acquired with the aim to re-enter school and university education*



and determine the essential levels of performance to re-enter the education and vocational training system ».

Various universities activated projects, regulations and procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, aimed at the recognition of training credits within courses and studies.

A further important experience is represented, for example, by the **Higher Vocational educational and training courses (IFTS)**, that have the aim to facilitate the access of youth to work offering flexible, modular and highly professionalizing training, with the acquisition of skills that can be certified and used in the labour market, and on the other side to offer higher vocational training courses also to adult workers who are employed or unemployed, favouring mobility, retraining and the broadening of knowledge and vocational skills relevant to a person's job.

This post-secondary training typology implies an integrated certification system, which is valid for the prosecution of the training course into university, with the recognition of training credits (CFU) by the university, and for the recognition of II level vocational qualifications by the Regions. The certification issued at the end of the course is a final certification that can be used at a national level and a vocational qualification, following a model approved by the Unified Conference of 2nd March 2000.

Many Training Centres recognize credits at the beginning of each course, after an evaluation and validation process of formal learning but also of skills acquired in different contexts, like the workplace, social and private life.

The aim is to recognize the skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts in order to obtain a recognition of credits corresponding to specific segments of the course itself.

Eventually, some Italian Regions introduced validation tools for non-formal and informal learning within their "**Certification Systems**" or on the basis of the recognition of training vouchers within education and vocational training systems or to ease integration or re-integration processes of the unemployed or persons who were made redundant.

In the first case, Regions stated that their qualification and certification systems should foresee the possibility, for individuals, to also validate and then recognize the skills acquired in different contexts other than the formal one (for example, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany).

In the second case, the validation process and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is linked to the assignment of training credits within education and vocational training paths (for example, Lombardy, Marche and Umbria).

Many experimental activities have been carried out in the Autonomous Province of Trento with the co-funding of the European social fund and in collaboration with the *Incarico Speciale per l'integrazione delle attività formative* (special division for the integration of training activities). Among these we would like to point out:

- the experimentation of a skills evaluation method and Libretto Formativo (training book)

The Libretto Formativo experimental activity allowed to focus on a method to collect the personal skills of each person and create a profile. Since the Libretto Formativo is officially used to certify skills, an attempt was made to use it to certify learning. This became the occasion to offer training centres theoretical guidelines and operational advice to turn knowledge into skills during training, with the aim to actually use these skills in the labour market.

At the end of each training course, this experimentation gave all training centres the chance to actually turn skills into knowledge and acquired and certifiable skills.

- validation of skills experimentation in two post-diploma courses co-funded by the European social fund



The idea was to pursue the certification of skills and begin to **test the validation phase in some ESF courses**. Besides the ordinary project of each training course, **another project was carried out and re-written according to the European framework**.

A model was adopted as a supplement to validation: in the first part it was supposed to include standard personal details, in the second part participants' individual experiences were to be included (for instance internships), therefore the EQF level and the training course described in terms of skills with the modules carried out, the description of the exams taken and the certifications. As regards the skills acquired, they were divided in knowledge and abilities and the following grades were included in the EQF level: elementary, intermediate and advanced, highlighting aspects regarding autonomy, mastery and awareness.

- PROGETTO ENERGIA: specialists in an efficient use of energy.

Thanks to the co-funding of the European social fund, the Associazione Artigiani (craftsmen association) carried out a project named *Progetto Energia* that is a training initiative focussed on energetic efficiency and addressed to five specializations in the construction area (builders, window and door fitters, carpenters, plumbers and electricians). The project was carried out in collaboration with the *Distretto tecnologico trentino Habitech*. The shared goal of the project was to describe a specialization that could highlight skills that all professionals involved have in common but also the specific skills of each specialization. The project intended to formalize and certify the skills of builders, carpenters, door and window fitters, plumbers, electricians as *specialists in an efficient use of energy*. At the end of the project, participants were given a document certifying their skills and knowledge in their specific field.

- Ongoing experiements:

- the *Centro di formazione professionale di Rovereto*¹ is carrying out a project on Interprofessional funds that foresees an intervention to issue the Libretto Formativo del cittadino (citizen's training booklet);
- a project in collaboration with *Fondimpresa* with the aim to issue the Libretto Formativo del cittadino.

- Advanced vocational training courses:

In 2005, the Autonomous Province of Trento organized advanced vocational training courses lasting two years and divided per skills, with steps and evaluation moments. The aim is to give value to the alternation of work and school, in fact 40% of learning takes place in a company.

3b. What is the responsibility of the adult learner in designing his/her learning process?

All learners are responsible for choosing their own study and training courses: currently, there is no information, guidance and support system at a national level.

3c. What is the role of social partners (employers and trade unions) in the learning process to build up competencies sustainably?

¹ Vocational training centre



Social partners participated to various tables for the construction of the national and regional system.

As regards the Autonomous Province of Trento, there is a certain amount of synergy between social partners during the learning process and RNFIL, especially regarding alternation between school and work. Alternation between time spent at school and on the job takes place during the fourth year of the VET courses, in Advanced technical education and training courses and during apprenticeship.

3d. What are your strategies concerning Life long learning with regard to target groups (young, old, low-qualified, men and women)?

Some experimental projects dedicated to specific target groups (in particular, youth and the elderly) have been carried out or are being carried out. They are experiences that fall within the LLP Programme, in particular Leonardo da Vinci programme, or the ESF Operational Programmes.

3e. What runs good or not?

It is currently not possible to answer this question.

4. NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

4a. In how far are people supported in non-formal learning? What are the instruments and kinds of support?

In Italy, there are no measures to support non-formal learning.

Experimental projects are currently carried out (mostly linked to the TOI and DOI LdV projects).

For example, the COLOR project (Competency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for Migrants) wants to apply the ECVET mechanisms to the qualifications of two vocational areas (family and construction assistance).

www.arlas.color-project.org

4b. Is there a praxis in your country to assign EC VET credit points?

In Italy there is no praxis to assign ECVET credit points.

As already mentioned, there are experiences of credit assignment as regards Universities, with reference to the European credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

4c. In how far does EC VET increase flexibility of training programs?

Currently, it is not possible to answer this question.

4d. How do you identify (what methods do you use?) skill profiles due to future skill needs?

There are national and regional offices where institutional subjects and social partners analyze territorial needs.

In some offices (at a regional level) they are starting analyses of skills profiles.

4e. In how far does this influence the formulation of curricula?

In some cases (at a regional level) the activities described at the point 4d led to the modification of some curricula in the vocational training courses.

4f. What are your quality assurance standards within education and training (EQARF)?

As regards quality, all the bodies operating in the vocational training system have to be accredited, through the recognition at a regional level of minimum requirements, in terms of structures, equipment, resources to control the training processes.

5. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

5a. What are the tools/instruments/methods used for the identification (e.g. portfolio, interview, demonstration, self-assessment) of competences? What kinds of proof can be submitted?

In order to create **Libretto formativo del cittadino**, it is necessary to hand in all the “formal” documents regarding education and vocational training courses attended.

For the accreditation of university credit points, IFTS credit points and regional qualification credit points, it is necessary to hand in a portfolio.

The tools used by the Autonomous Province of Trento were:

- the skills validation supplement for ESF post-diploma courses (“Lavorare in banca” and “Tecnico di progettazione ecosostenibile e cantierizzazione edile”)²;
- the “Progetto Energia” skills validation document
- the Libretto Formativo.

5b. How is informal learning measured and validated? To what extent can validation use the same standards and references as formal education and training? If not, what other standards are used - job, or sectoral (branch)?

Currently, it is not possible to answer this question.

5c. What kind of advice/feedback may be made by assessors or mentors, counsellors, peers examiners?

Currently, it is not possible to answer this question.

² “Working in a bank” and “Technician for eco-sustainable planning and setting up of a building site”



6. SWOT

6a. Which strengths are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Richness and diversification of formal and non formal learning courses.

Attention to learning by workers' organizations and employers.

6b. Which weaknesses are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Lack of a global and unitary architecture of the system.

Strictness of systems and of the organization of courses of formal learning systems (education, university and vocational training).

Lack in the definition of reference standards for the various levels of qualification.

Lack of a clear and organic credit system, able to enhance personal or acquired competences.

6c. Which opportunities are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Possibility to increase the number of adults in learning courses (formal, informal and non formal)

The formal and institutional learning system is interested by reform and reorganization processes.

6d. Which threats are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

For the educational system, difficulty to go from an evaluation of knowledge to and evaluation of skills.

Difficulty in the use of a shared language.

7. THEMATIC OUTLINE

7a. On page 1 there are 10 issues (themes) formulated: Are these addressed issues relevant or not relevant for you?

Thematic	Relevant (3)	Less relevant (2)	Not relevant (1)	Why did you indicate this rating?
Collective bargaining	x			All the thematic are considered as relevant with reference to the EQF. The judgment results to be agreed by trade unions, entrepreneurs associations, training bodies and Regions.
Impact of the learning outcome-approach for initial and further training	x			
Assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning	x			
Data protection vs. transparency		x		
Increase flexibility in training programmes (e.g. EC VET)	x			
Permeability between general, vocational and tertiary education and training	x			
Quality assurance within vocational education and training (EQARF)	x			
Guidance and individual career development	x			
Standards for developing new skill profiles due to future skill needs	x			
Mismatching (low and over qualification)	x			

7b. On page 1 there are 10 issues (themes) formulated: From your national point of view what else issues are relevant for you in the process of implementation and use of EQF? Please give us a detailed description. Do you have any approaches (strategies or experiences) to solve these challenges?

See point 7a



8. INFORMATION AND SUPPORT BY PIN

8a What information do you expect from PIN, from a trade union, in company and educational providers point of view?

8b What support do you need?

Information to become familiar with what is happening in other countries to introduce and implement EQF and ECVET, both as regards the overall governance of learning systems (formal, non-formal, informal) as well as the definition of methodologies and tools.