
SUPPORTING TEACHERS
AND TRAINERS FOR
SUCCESSFUL REFORMS
AND QUALITY OF VET

ITALY

Mapping their professional
development in the EU





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1. Introduction

In recent years Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces (AP) have undertaken a deep process of reform within the education system and the labour market, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The economic crisis in the intervening period led to considerable acceleration of this Reform Plan that had already partly begun. More specifically, the recent agreements between the State and the Regions cover many strategic issues concerning lifelong learning, higher technical education and training (*Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore* – ITS and IFTS), guidance, certification, new apprenticeships and placements and school-work alternance training. These relevant agreements shape a coherent reference framework available at national level and highlight the desire of both Central and Regional institutions to promote system-wide actions aimed at integrating services for citizens. This directly brings attention to the fundamental role of teachers and trainers due to the fact that effective implementation of the aforementioned innovations requires the systematic retraining of teachers and trainers involved. For this reason, the main regulations concerning the role of VET teachers and trainers are given below.

2. Main categories in teaching and training professionals in VET ⁽¹⁾

Government-regulated VET provision includes: 1) three and four-year education and vocational training courses organised by the regions (EQF3 or 4), after which students can progress to the 2) upper secondary education system, usually in a technical and vocational institute (EQF4); 3) post-secondary VET includes two strands: IFTS (higher technical education and training, EQF4) pathways; ITS (higher technical institutes, EQF 5) pathways managed by newly established technical/professional upper secondary institutes; 4) adult education; 5) the apprenticeship system (EQF 3 or 4).

In Italy VET teachers and trainers have very different features. The professional profile of teachers is much more clearly defined and regulated than trainers as far as training, recruitment, duties and skills are concerned. Additionally, when it comes to the actual teaching part of their activities, teachers are mainly defined as ‘content experts’, whereas trainers are ‘process experts’ who can play a variety of roles depending on the situation (e.g. tutors, including apprenticeships tutors, trainers, group leaders, coaches,

(¹) More information on vocational education and training in Italy is available at Cedefop (2014). *Vocational education and training in Italy: short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4132_en.pdf

etc.). In fact, trainers are mainly required to support the learning process by guiding and motivating learners, to strengthen the link between training and work and to update learners' vocational skills.

Teachers are employed by the Ministry of Education and work in State vocational schools and in centres for adult education (*Centri per l'istruzione degli adulti – CPIA*). Some also work at higher technical institutes.

Trainers mainly work in vocational training centres that are managed directly by the regional/provincial/municipal authorities, as well as in private vocational training centres accredited by regions. Some trainers also work in businesses, consultancy agencies, non-profit organisations and public employment services (Table 1).

Table 1. **General features of VET teachers and trainers**

Features	Teachers	Trainers
Place of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State vocational schools • Higher technical education and training institutes/Higher technical institutes • Adult education centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and private vocational training centres • Higher technical education and training institutes/Higher technical institutes • Businesses • Consultancy agencies • Non-profit organisations • Public employment services
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide face-to-face learning activities to develop basic skills in languages, math, social/historical and scientific/technological areas • Develop higher skills in specific industries and services sectors, as well as key competences • Develop key competences for citizenship and lifelong learning (learning to learn, planning, communicating, collaborating, acting autonomously, problem-solving, establishing relationships, acquiring and interpreting information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide face-to-face learning activities (cultural, humanities, scientific, technical and practical subjects) with a special focus on professional practice • Provide professional support for alternate training and apprenticeship periods • Provide guidance and counselling regarding vocational training career and employment • Coordinate training projects for disadvantaged people • Promote the establishment of integrated networks between education/training, employment services, businesses and social assistance services • Facilitate face to face and blended learning activities for individuals and groups in the areas of corporate organisation and management, languages, marketing, accounting, ICT, etc., to develop higher technical and organisational skills and increase the competitiveness of the productive system
Type of employment contract	Mainly state employee with open-ended or fixed-term contracts	Mainly private employees with open-ended, fixed-term and atypical form of work arrangements (*)

Features	Teachers	Trainers
Type of recruitment	State certification exam	Direct: recruitment and selection are not regulated by law
Professional requirements	Specific subject degree	Bachelor Degree or high school diploma and professional experience
Pre-service training	Five-year academic degree followed by an active traineeship (<i>Tirocinio formativo attivo</i> – TFA) in schools	Currently not compulsory
In-service training	Compulsory	Not compulsory

(*) Very short-term contracts or part-time work of fewer than ten hours a week.

Source: ISFOL data, Survey on teachers and VET trainers, 2013.

The ISFOL survey on vocational training in Italy (2012) ⁽²⁾ shows that on the supply side (planners, tutors, trainers, which are numerically more consistent), every facility employs 25 independent workers on average (professional and occasional service), almost double the number of permanent employees and more than twice the number of fixed-term employees. The facilities mainly tend to use collaboration contracts, probably due to the fact this it is more flexible in nature and suitable for responding to the diverse and changing needs of the market (for example, aimed at shorter course for adults), as well as the discontinuity of regional administrations in issuing notices ⁽³⁾.

3. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

3.1. VET teachers' training

The Ministry of Education strictly regulates VET teachers' pre-service training. Universities provide teachers' initial training on behalf of the Ministry and in

⁽²⁾ Isfol, L'offerta di formazione professionale nelle regioni italiane, I risultati dell'indagine Isfol-OF, Vol. II. L'indagine quantitativa, 2015.

⁽³⁾ Isfol, Qualità e accreditamento Analisi comparata tra i dispositivi di accreditamento di Regioni e Province autonome e la Raccomandazione europea EQAVET (Quality and accreditation analysis compared with the accreditation mechanisms of the regions and autonomous provinces and the EQAVET European Recommendation), Rome, July 2013.

collaboration with the schools. Following a long period of reforms (4), the minimum requirement for accessing the teaching profession is now a five-year bachelor degree in specific teaching subjects (math, chemistry, foreign languages) , followed by a one-year traineeship (Active Teaching Traineeship, *Tirocinio Formativo Attivo* – TFA) in schools. TFA courses have a restricted access (admission test) (5), last 1500 hours (EQF7) and are managed by private and state universities, in collaboration with the schools. The TFA includes face-to-face learning, workshop activities and practical work experience (6) in schools under the supervision of a teacher acting as a tutor. Its aim is to cover both content and methodological/didactic aspects within a specific learning environment. During and at the end of the traineeship, students are required to take theoretical and practical tests. More generally, the pre-service training of VET teachers should be aimed at strengthening their knowledge of mathematics and the natural and physical sciences, as well as at improving their teaching, psychological, pedagogical, organisational and social skills. Special attention is also given to improving their languages and digital skills in compliance with EU recommendations. Educators who wish to teach disabled people must attend a specific course of study in formal education. At the end of this training pathway, teachers must pass a state exam in order to be admitted to state schools.

VET teachers' in-service training now is compulsory and regulated by law and it is considered an individual right under the National Collective Work Agreement (7). Some training activities for VET teachers are provided by universities (master courses) and public or private vocational training centres (specialisation courses). In addition, the Ministry of Education (8) in collaboration with INDIRE (*Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa* – National Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Documentation) (9) promotes and organises updating or training courses for teachers, to promote a higher participation to the teachers training courses (10).

(4) Decrees of Ministry 249/2010 and 487/2014 define the requirements and the characteristics of teachers' pre-service training.

(5) Every year, the number of TFA students are decided on the basis of the vacancies in each teaching subject.

(6) Practical work in schools lasts 475 hours, 75 of which are dedicated to developing skills for teaching disabled students.

(7) Teachers attending compulsory training courses are paid, as if they are working.

(8) For more information please consult www.istruzione.it.

(9) For more information please consult www.indire.it

(10) For more information please consult <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/ministero/talis>. On this site you can find the description of TALIS 2013, the international survey about

The National Plan for e-schools ⁽¹¹⁾ is noteworthy amongst these. It is aimed at supporting the innovation process of teaching methods by promoting the use of new technologies and the development of teachers' ITC skills. More specifically, actions are being carried out that are designed to create learning environments based on the regular and widespread use of those technologies (social media), which students typically use in their social and personal relations. The new plan reinforces collaborative and experiential learning and combines digital education with new organisational models of the structural and human resources of the school. The plan reached out to almost 90 000 teachers between 2008 and 2013.

Moreover, within the context of the 2007-13 ESF National Operation Programme 'Competences for Development', the following plans are under way ⁽¹²⁾:

The training and information plan of the evaluation teams on national and international surveys, which was designed to equip teachers with useful tools to understand the features and results of the INVALSI (*Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e di Formazione* – National Institute for the Evaluation of Teaching and Training Education System) tests and international surveys, in order to improve students' learning performance;

The National M@tabel plan for innovation and quality improvement in teaching and learning math, designed to train teachers on new teaching methods and thus fill in the skill gap of Italian students in the field of math and science;

The DIDATEC training plan on new teaching technologies was designed to increase access and use of the information society tools in schools by delivering distance-learning courses for teachers.

3.2. Reforms in the Italian educational system and the role of teachers

The key role played by teachers in the quality of the VET system is confirmed by recent regulatory acts ⁽¹³⁾ which earmarked substantial funds for teacher training initiatives for 2014 in the following areas: digital teaching methods, school-work training pathways and disadvantaged youth. Besides, the Law 107/2015 (the so-called 'The Good

teaching and learning. The study results show that so far the participation of Italian teachers to CPD activities is lower than the European one (75% Italy, 88% media TALIS).

⁽¹¹⁾ For more information please consult http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/piano_scuola_digitale.

⁽¹²⁾ For more information please consult http://risorsedocentipon.indire.it/home_piattaforma

⁽¹³⁾ Law 128/2013 Urgent measures about education, university and research.

School'), that is being implemented, establishes that teachers' in-service training is compulsory and continuing; this law provides incentives to support teachers CPD and systematic need analysis mechanisms. Teachers' in-service training must be in line with the school plan and with the Ministry of Education priorities. It also involves all open-ended contract teachers. This Law provides for more comprehensive and flexible training for students, personalised investment in employers training and the development of digital skills and aims, overall, to invest in improving the educational system, starting by reinforcing the teaching staff and their training especially. Indeed, there is an extraordinary recruitment plan for more than 100 000 teachers to fill teaching vacancies and strengthen the teaching provided, providing stable resources for training and developing educators. The schools will have access to economic resources, as well as increased human resources: every institution will have seven more teachers on average to implement its projects and to enrich training. In terms of the recruitment criteria for teachers, open competitions will once again be run regularly every three years. Schools must implement a recruitment plan aimed at filling the current vacant positions, to guarantee the continuity of teaching; respond to new educational, organisational and planning requirements; bolster training; fight early school leaving; and make the school more inclusive. Starting with this reform, the schools themselves will be able to notify the state of the need for teachers and tools in order to implement their educational project.

This law provides specific resources to update teachers' competences. An electronic credit card ⁽¹⁴⁾ has also been introduced for all teachers. It contains a voucher for 500 Euro per year that each teacher can use to purchase books, digital tools, training courses, cultural events. Such training was funded by a structural budget of 40 million Euro per year for the first time.

A dedicated fund of 200 million Euro was established for the promotion of the merit of the teaching staff and the allocation of these funds to schools will take account of the regions with the greatest levels of critical educational needs. In each school, there is a Committee for the evaluation of teachers. Teachers receive a bonus based on the following criteria: strengthening students skills, innovative teaching method, dissemination of good teaching practices, etc. The Committee is also in charge of evaluation of initial training of the teachers on trial ⁽¹⁵⁾.

As part of 'The Good School' reform, it is interesting to highlight the pilot program (lasting three-years, 2014-16) which involves the Enel (*Ente nazionale per l'energia*

⁽¹⁴⁾ For more information please consult <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/faq-carta-del-docente>.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Decree of Ministry 850/2015.

elettrica – National Electricity Company) and 145 students admitted to the fourth year of seven secondary technical institutes in the technological sector ⁽¹⁶⁾, and includes apprenticeship. The link between the school and company must be guaranteed, not only in the planning phase of the training, but for the entire duration of the apprenticeship. This task is entrusted specifically to school teachers involved as tutors and company tutors, who are also responsible for encouraging the successful training of apprentices, facilitating the learning processes, assessing student's activity and evaluating effectiveness of the training process.

3.3. VET trainers' training

VET trainers' pre-service training is not regulated at a national level; there is no nationally recognised register of trainers or formal recruitment procedures, except for public training centres for which a public examination is required. As regards access requirements to the training profession, the National Collective Work Contract only sets minimum requirements: a degree or an upper secondary school diploma plus professional experience in the relevant sector. Additionally, it establishes that – regardless of the role played in the different training contexts (tutor, counsellor, trainer coordinator, etc.) – trainers should regularly participate in professional refresher programmes, either within or outside the institutions at which they work.

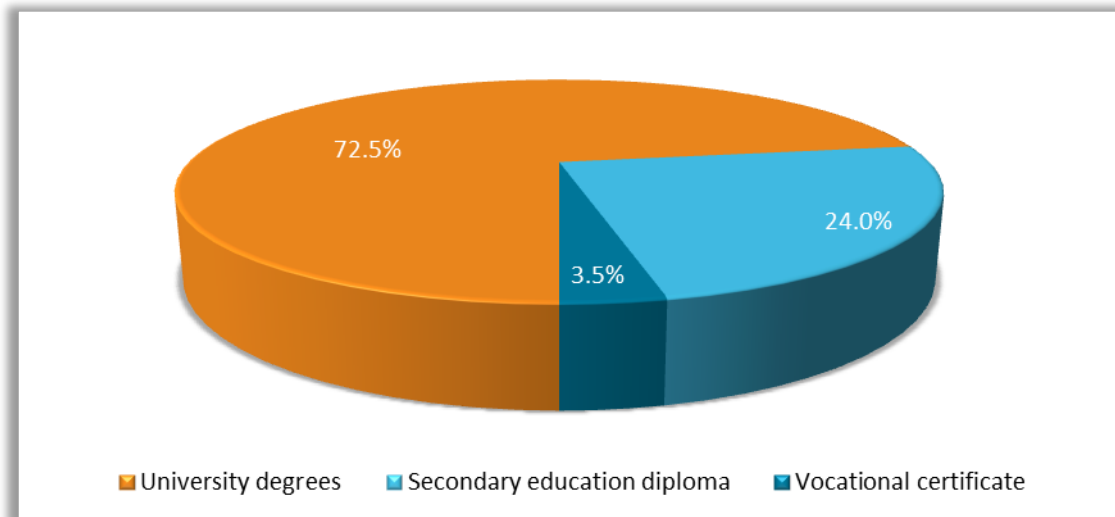
Although no specific requirements apply to obtaining the qualification to access the trainer profession, the number of university graduates has increased, thus showing that greater attention is paid to the entry requirements in the recruitment process. In addition, in recent years a number of education faculties have been offering university degrees and masters' programmes for trainers. Nevertheless, most of the trainers have academic degrees in various subjects (i.e. sociology, psychology, economics, foreign languages, etc.) and prior work experience is generally considered more important.

Over the two-year period between 2013 and 2014 a survey concerning the human resources working in accredited vocational training centres was conducted. The data shows that overall the education level of the trainers is very high, indeed, half of those interviewed (51.6%) possess at least one bachelor degree (EQF6), and these are

⁽¹⁶⁾ The specific objectives and content of the program were defined in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the seven regions in which the program is being run – Campania, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Piedmont, Puglia, Tuscany, Veneto – and the Enel Group; specific agreements were also stipulated between the Enel Group and the teaching institutions involved in the trial. The regulatory and economic aspects of the apprenticeship contract, on the other hand, are regulated by a framework agreement that was signed in 2014 by the Enel Group and trade unions in the electricity sector.

joined by the 20.9% of those that have a post-graduate degree (EQF7). To those we can add the 24% that hold a secondary education diploma (EQF4); the remainder is the percentage that only has a vocational certificate (EQF3) (3.5%) (Fig. 1). It should be noted that teachers with low qualifications are also the oldest ones.

Figure 1. **Educational qualifications of trainers working in the VET system**



Source: ISFOL, *Survey into the accreditation of training centres*, 2014.

Greater constraints exist for human resources in the public and private bodies, which deliver training with public funding. To access these funds, the organisation must be accredited by the competent authorities (regions and autonomous provinces) on the basis of quality standards, which also affect the skills of trainers, as indicated by the new national accreditation system of training and guidance providers (March 2008) ⁽¹⁷⁾. This system, in fact, has triggered an important reform process in which human resources have been recognised as a key factor for improving the quality of the training system. As a result, the human resources that govern the key functions (management, administrative and economic management, need analysis, design, delivery), must meet the following requirements:

⁽¹⁷⁾ Decree of the Ministry of Labour 166/2001, 'Provisions for Accrediting VET and Guidance Providers' (Accreditamento delle sedi formative e delle sedi orientative); State-Regions Agreement 'The New Accreditation System' ('Nuovo sistema di accreditamento') implemented by the Ministry of Labour and approved in March 2008 by the State-Regions Conference.

- (a) level of education and work experience (university degree or secondary education diploma with work experience) ⁽¹⁸⁾;
- (b) upgrading professional skills (at least 24 hours of training per year);
- (c) type of contract (as permanent staff or expert).

Within this national framework, each region and autonomous province established its own standards for trainers' training with a view to ensuring high quality VET services financed by public funds. Private VET centres, which do not use public funds, can regulate the matter of learning facilitators' training autonomously and do not have to respect specific laws.

As already stated, VET trainers' in-service training is not formalised, it varies greatly and participation is discretionary. Activities are mainly promoted by the regional authorities and funded by the ESF and more recently by Joint Inter-Professional Funds for Continuing Training (*Fondi paritetici interprofessionali*) ⁽¹⁹⁾. However, in-service training is not widespread across Italy and varies from region to region (e.g. in-service training services tend to be more structured in the northern and central regions).

The learning facilitators' training supply is determined by the free market and the most important providers are public and private training bodies and consortia, consultancy firms, professional associations, universities, social partners, Chambers of Commerce and some business schools. Some sectorial professional associations also act as accrediting bodies in the private sector, in the area of business and management training (for example, the Italian Trainers' Association, AIF) ⁽²⁰⁾. Large companies or public administration departments with permanent internal training services usually contribute to funding these activities or invest directly in the continuing training of trainers.

Trainers' training is mainly designed to enhance the skills required by technological innovation and market globalization; foster the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and establish reliable standards for the validation procedures; adjust training

⁽¹⁸⁾ Standards concerning level of education and work experience vary on the basis of the function (management, administrative and economic management, need analysis, design, delivery) and of the competent authority (Region or Autonomous province).

⁽¹⁹⁾ These funds are managed by the social partners and supervised by the Ministry of Labour.

⁽²⁰⁾ The Italian Trainers' Association identifies the following professional profiles: teacher trainers, training planner, project manager, centre manager or training service manager, basic e-tutor profile, e-tutor specialised in the content-disciplinary field, e-tutor specialising in educational management and an e-tutor specialised in community management. It also defines specific indicators for professional certification (higher university study, professional experience, teaching-training skill) and each of these clearly state the minimum level requested and supporting evidence. <http://associazioneitalianaformatori.it>

interventions to local needs; create local, national and international networks and develop relationships between training systems and the labour market via traineeship experiences.

As part of digital citizenship, some regions are implementing different projects aimed at spreading greater awareness of the opportunities offered by ICT amongst trainers. In particular, the federate e-learning system from the Emilia Romagna region (SELF) should be noted. It is an integrated environment aimed at supplying network technologies in order to implement e-learning measures across the entire public administration. As part of this initiative, the community of trainers has cooperatively generated educational guides for trainers – now available within the SELF system – regarding the effective writing for e-learning, as well as designing e-activities and the educational usage of Moodle activities. There are also many bodies and organisations that offer certifications for teachers' digital skills.

In regards to data concerning the continuing education of VET trainers, the ISFOL survey from 2014 highlights a rather varied situation: 9% of those interviewed stated that they had not participated in any training activity in the previous year, 38% had taken part in a formal training course (in the form of e-learning also). The remaining percentage, while not having taken part in formal training activities, had curated their own upskilling via non formal channels (conferences, seminars, publications, trade magazines and specific websites). Out of those that had participated in formal updating events, 70% had attended a course of medium-long duration (over 24 hours) (Tab. 2.).

Table 2. **CPD activity carried out**

CPD activity	Percentage values
Participation in updating courses, even e-learning versions	38.1
Participation at conferences and seminars related to their profession	55.2
Participation in work groups that are internal or external to their workplace	44.7
Regularly consult publications, trade magazines and specific websites	53.5
No activity	8.8

NB: The sum of the percentages is not equal to 100% because respondents could provide more than one response.
 Source: ISFOL, *Survey into the accreditation of training centres*, 2014.

4. Apprenticeship tutors or practical training instructors in companies (work-based settings)

The Italian regulatory framework concerning work based learning in recent years has been developed in two directions, which have considerably extended the opportunities for young people to develop – within training courses – skills that are immediately useful in the labour market:

- (a) the first is the apprenticeship reform, which will be described after. Some common characteristics emerge: the flexible courses structure; cooperation of school and company in planning; the definition of personalised training courses; the presence of two tutors, one from the training institution and one assigned by the company; shared criteria for tests and evaluation;
- (b) the second one is the increase of alternance training in education for all fields of study of second level secondary schools with compulsory hours in the last three years (400 hours per year in the vocational and technical institutes and 200 hours per year in the lyceums).

Going in depth about apprenticeship, we can say that it is considered a channel to access the labour market, as it is a permanent employment contract aimed at training and providing employment for young people. In exchange for reductions in tax and social security contributions, the employer is required to provide the apprentice with specific professional training, as well remuneration, as compensation for the work carried out.

All the regulations concerning apprenticeships in the last years, including Legislative Decree 167/2011 (Consolidated act on apprenticeships, known as the TUA – *Testo Unico dell’Apprendistato* in Italy) that increase the on-the-job training of students require the presence of tutors who support the apprentice throughout the entire training process, thereby guaranteeing the integration of any external training with the internal training of the company. More recently the Law 81/2015 and the Ministry Decree of 12th October 2015, concerning training standards of apprenticeship system and general criteria to implement apprenticeship pathways, introduce the requirements of training tutor and of the company tutor. The company tutor is the key figure for the apprentice in workplace learning, while the training tutor is the reference figure for training courses outside of the company and his role is regulated by the training institution (training centre, school, etc.) ⁽²¹⁾. The company tutor guarantees and is responsible for the apprentice's training. Before the Consolidated Act on Apprenticeships, a specific Ministerial Decree from 28/02/2000 governed the role of the company tutor in regards to the apprenticeship, which included compulsory training for tutors. Coming into force the Consolidated Act on Apprenticeships, the training for this

⁽²¹⁾ Isfol (edited by S. D’Agostino), L’apprendistato tra risultati raggiunti e prospettive di innovazione. XV Rapporto sull’apprendistato in Italia (Apprenticeships amongst the achieved results and the outlook for innovation. 15th Report of Apprenticeships in Italy), Rome 2015, <http://bw5.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?web=ISFL&opac=Default&ids=20332>; Isfol, Il tutor aziendale per l’apprendistato: Manuale per la formazione (The company tutor for apprenticeships: Training manual, Rome, 2013, <http://sbnlo2.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?web=ISFL&opac=Default&ids=19399>.

role appears to have significantly decreased ⁽²²⁾. However, it should be noted that Regional legislation may regulate differently the functions of tutor.

The law states that the company tutor must have 'suitable training and skills', according to regional legislation or, in the absence of this, a national collective labour contract. The minimum skills that the company tutor must possess are:

- (a) be familiar with the regulatory context concerned with alternance systems;
- (b) understand their own functions within their role and the contractual elements of the sector and/or company in terms of training;
- (c) manage the reception of the apprenticeships, fostering their placement within the business environment;
- (d) manage relationships with people outside of the company that are involved in the apprentice's training, in order to foster positive integration between extra-company training and work experiences within the company;
- (e) plan and support learning pathways and work socialising, fostering the acquisition of the skills required by the job and facilitating the apprentice's learning process throughout the entire training pathway;
- (f) evaluate learning and acquired skills, as well as the progress and results achieved by the young apprentice during his/her placement and professional development, for the purpose of the relevant certificate being issued by the company.

The aforementioned skills anticipate a rich and complex set of functions that the tutor must carry out, which also depends on the organisation of the tutoring department in the various company settings, and in relation to the characteristics of the young apprentice, who arrives to the company with a wealth of experience, both personal and professional, made up of expectations and fears, which influence their motivation and the outcomes of the training and work pathway that they are about to embark on. The Regions (with employers' rights organisations and trade unions) define and plan the specific training measures aimed to develop the minimum skills required to carrying out the functions of a tutor.

The training measures for the company tutors, now spread over almost all of Italy, have many distinctive features, both due to methodological requirements and the operational means used. Every regional entity sets different pathways due to methodological requirements, structure, content, duration and tools used, as well as due to language and terminology ⁽²³⁾.

⁽²²⁾ In 2013 11 973 company tutors took part in training courses with a decrease of 42% in regards to the previous year.

⁽²³⁾ Usually, the company tutor is an expert employee who works in the same workplace of the apprentice. He is appointed by the employer. He must have at least three years of work

Box 1. The professional apprenticeship model of Piedmont Region

An important example is provided by the Piedmont Region that, as part of a pilot of the professional apprenticeship, developed a structured training model based upon the support of two professionals that are indispensable for the positive outcome of the course and for successful training of the apprentice. On the one side there is the training coordinator, coming from the training centre, who supervises the training process in the workplace through site visits, both in structured and unstructured ways, interacting with both the company tutor and the apprentice and evaluating the outcomes of the training provided at the company. The training coordinator must have at least two years of experience in the training field and a teaching qualification or equivalent and must possess both technical-specialist skills – related to the qualifications that are the aim of the training course – as well as mediation skills. On the other side there is the company tutor who accompanies and supports the apprentice during their work placement, personal development and training. This tutor manages relationships with all the subjects involved in the apprentice's training, who are both within and outside of the company. The Regional rule states that the company tutor should be suitably trained and possess a qualification level that is equal or superior to the level that the apprentice must achieve at the end of his/her training. Moreover, the company tutor is also involved in signing the training agreement that the training body signs with the under-age apprentice and his/her family. The company tutor is selected by the employer among people in possession of the requirements provided by Regional law. The company tutor performs his/her duties within these main areas: coordinating training; facilitating and supporting learning; coordination; evaluating learning. The Piedmont Region has provided a training course for company tutors, which covers the above mentioned main areas, with a final certification, after passing a final test, attesting the skills acquired.

Concerning the alternance training in school-based education, it should be noted that after a proposal by the Ministry of Labour, the Regions and Provinces agreed (2015) on the pilot project 'Support, development and reinforcement of the dual system within vocational education and training' (*Azioni di accompagnamento, sviluppo e rafforzamento del sistema duale nell'ambito dell'Istruzione e Formazione Professionale*), which begins in the 2015/16 training year.

In this framework should also be mentioned the contribution coming from employers organizations. For example, Confindustria presents a few models and pilot projects with the education system relative to alternance training, the results of which are shown in the Vademecum of 2015 ⁽²⁴⁾. In particular, the three key actors are established in

experience (requirement not applied if there are not workers in the company with similar characteristic) and have the same employment level or higher than the apprentice's one at the end of apprenticeship. In small companies with (with less than 15 employees) the company tutor role can be played by the same employer.

⁽²⁴⁾ The Traineeship project, promoted by Federmeccanica, aims to enhance and experiment – by implementing 'the Good School' reform – school-work alternance as a useful methodology for consolidating the relationship between educational institutions and companies. 'Traineeship' is the first practical application of the alternance model. It includes 400 hours of on-the-job training and will be implemented across all regions. In the 2015/16

this pathway: internal teacher tutor and external trainer tutor, supported in many schools by a teacher with an instrumental function for alternance and/or by a project coordinator, as an interface between internal and external workers to coordinate the activities required by individual projects. For the successful implementation of alternance courses, a strong interactive relationship must be developed between the internal tutor and the external tutor aiming to: a) define the organisational and educational conditions that are favourable to learning, both in terms of guidance and skills; b) guarantee the supervision of the state of development of the pathway, during and in the last phase, in order to promptly intervene on any critical features; c) verify the certification process for the activity and the skills acquired by the student; d) gather elements that allow for the experience to be repeated and to be capitalised on. The internal and external tutors, as part of their jobs, must possess experience and suitable professional and educational skills that guarantee the objectives required by the training pathway are achieved. These professionals should be trained on the methodological, educational, procedural and content aspects of alternance.

5. Trainers in adult education courses

Trainers also hold an important role for training courses implemented within the field of adult education centres.

The regulations establishing the general rules for restructuring the learning organisation within adult education centres, including evening courses for acquiring a school diploma (Decree 263/2012 of the President of the Republic), tend to support the construction and consolidation of a lifelong learning 'system' via the transformation of old adult education centres into autonomous schools, with a specific educational and organisational structure and governing bodies, based on a provincial basis. The move to the new arrangement was accompanied by Guidelines for 2015 associated with the new criteria concerning the educational and organisational structure (credit recognition, study program personalisation, distance learning, individual reception and guidance for the purpose of defining the learning agreement and the active involvement of Regional service networks). The adult trainers, in addition to the general requirements described for trainers, must have communication skills, linguistic and/or mediation abilities for guiding groups at risk of exclusion (people with low educational attainment or without qualifications, elderly workers, disabled people, migrant workers, people employed in fragile economic sectors and in companies with a risk of unemployment).

school year, 50 technical and professional institutions will be involved, for a total of 200 classes, 5 000 students and 600 teachers.

6. Lifelong guidance – skills and role of teachers

The agreement between the Government, the Regions and Local Bodies concerning the definition of the national system on lifelong guidance in 2012 provides a national reference framework that aids and consolidates common language and culture between guidance workers. In the framework of this agreement, an Inter-institutional and National Working Group for Lifelong Guidance (*Gruppo di lavoro nazionale e interistituzionale per l'orientamento permanente*) defined the minimum standards for guidance services and worker's professional skills, with reference to the guidance services and functions that exist within different Regional VET and working systems. In fact schools can also implement different guidance measures within their training plans: individual and/or group support tasks to retrieve drop-outs or to prevent early school leaving; recovery workshops and learning development workshops, additional activities for disabled people placed in three-year courses and/or qualification courses, support services for young foreigners and services for qualifying adolescents leaving the school system for the purposes of their employability.

The development of these widespread and recurring innovative services requires teachers to move from a didactic approach (for example, based on the priority usage of classrooms) in favour of a stable and 'advisory' guidance approach ⁽²⁵⁾ that, however, depends on improving the skills of teachers via targeted training measures. Concerning these measures, it is important to highlight that in the academic year 2014/15, training courses were implemented for more than 28 000 teachers on trial with specific workshops about guidance methodologies.

7. The teachers' role in skills certification

The Legislative Decree 13/2013, *Definition of the general regulations and the essential performance levels for the identification and validation of informal and non-formal learning and the minimum service standards of the national system of skills certification*, outlines a set of rules, which are the same for all competent Italian institutions, in order to ensure that citizens can exercise their right to the social and institutional acknowledgement of their skills, however and wherever they were acquired. The objective was to put the lifelong learning strategy into practice by adding special attention to the skills validation processes at a compulsory institutional level for the first time. This framework states that teachers and trainers must gradually acquire the ability to recognise and manage methodologies and tools with transparency and the

⁽²⁵⁾ To learn more about guidance professionals, please consult Isfol, Euroguidance Italy, *Information on the Lifelong Guidance System in Italy*, 2013, www.isfol.it.

acknowledgement of the skills acquired in informal and non-formal learning settings, with particular attention paid to actions aimed at the employability of the most vulnerable people in the labour market (namely those that lack qualifications or have low qualifications, drop-outs, immigrants and people that have been outside of the labour market for long periods) ⁽²⁶⁾. Even if skills certification is a key factor to improve the Italian VET system, nevertheless there is a long way to go before it can be fully implemented, as nowadays there are only few pilot training pathways. At a regional level, the ECVET pilot project COLOR (Competency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for migrants) involves VET centres expert in adult training ⁽²⁷⁾.

Besides, it should be highlight that many regions are promoting increasingly the training of tutors who work in the apprenticeship system. As a matter of fact, tutors should be able to manage the complex process of recognition and evaluation of apprentices skills acquired in the job context.

⁽²⁶⁾ Isfol, Agenzia Nazionale LLP Programma settoriale Leonardo da Vinci (National Agency for the Leonardo da Vinci LLP Program), *Trasparenza delle qualificazioni e delle competenze. Sperimentazioni e pratiche di attuazione della Raccomandazione ECVET (Transparency of qualifications and skills. Trials and implementation practices from the ECVET Recommendation)*, Rome, 2014

<http://bw5.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?web=ISFL&opac=Default&ids=20005>

⁽²⁷⁾ Isfol, *Validazione delle competenze da esperienza: approcci e pratiche in Italia e in Europa*, Isfol, Rome, 2013,

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