

Vocational Education Systems in the participating countries

Italy

Overview

Compulsory education until the age of:	Until the age of 16
Age of usual entrance into the vocational training:	At the age of 14
What are the pupils' requirements for entering the VET system?	Lower secondary education
Is there a dual system?	Yes, but does not mainly address the minors
If not, does any other work-based training exist?	
Are internships scheduled during the training?	sometimes

1. Structure of the general school and VET system

Compulsory education in Italy lasts 10 years, until the age of 16 and includes the first two years of upper secondary general education or Vocational Education Training, which young people usually begin at the age of 14, when they have completed lower secondary education. They then have to go through a state exam to acquire a certificate (EQF level 1) which grants admission to the upper secondary level where young people have to make a choice between general education or vocational education.

At upper secondary level, young people can choose from three main programmes of education:

1. School-based programmes lasting five-years, including the two last years of compulsory schooling and three years (under the right/duty of education and training) in:
 - High schools (*licei*). These provide general education programmes at upper secondary level;
 - Technical schools;
 - Vocational schools

High schools (*licei*) offer education with focus on art, linguistics, natural sciences, human sciences, music and dancing or general education. After successful completion of high school, graduated achieve the qualification at EQF level 4 (technical and vocational school) and access to higher education which is achieved by a state exam;

2. vocational education and training programmes organized by the regions
3. apprenticeship-type scheme

2. Details of the Vocational Education System

For young people who choose the path of vocational education, there exist several options.

Technical school programmes (istituti tecnici) offer education for technical or administrative professions and take five years. Vocational school programmes (istituti professionali) qualify the young people for higher industrial professions in the manufacturing trade. Both education programmes offer a mixture of general and vocational education. Graduates from these two programmes are granted access to universities and the tertiary education level.

Further options in vocational education are the vocational education and training programmes (istruzione e formazione professionale, leFP) provided by the regions, which are dominant in quantity. These programmes are organized in a more flexible modular form lasting either three or four years and aim at qualification in general, as well as professional and technical skills. Since the State-Regions Conference in 2011, systematic elements for the implementation in the regions are obligatory, including sets of minimum standards of skills and certifications at national level. The leFP programmes are school-based, but include scheduled work-based trainings, especially internships. Two tutors, one from the training school and one from an enterprise, supervise the young pupils during their practical trainings. Training methods in the leFP programmes include traditional classroom teaching, simulations, role play, and cooperative learning. The four year programmes are not offered country-wide.

Young people in Italy can also choose a dual VET programme for the duration of three to four years. At the age of 15, they are offered a mixture of school-based and work-based education at EQF levels 3 or 4 which are under the political responsibility of the regions and autonomous provinces. Those apprenticeships base on contracts that specify the training purpose. The apprenticeship system has been reformed in 2011 by the 'Consolidated Act on Apprenticeships', and entered into force on April 25th 2012. In Italy three types of contracts are available for apprentices. The new law mainly introduced some new features within these types and reorganized the legislation on the dual trainings.

The three apprenticeship types are:

- 1) 'Apprenticeship leading to a qualification and a professional diploma' (Apprendistato per la qualifica ed il diploma professionale)
 - aimed at young people aged 15 to 25,
 - enables apprentices to complete compulsory education or to acquire a professional qualification or diploma after three or four years of training (ISCED level 3).
 - Training activities, provided both in and outside the enterprises, last a minimum of 400 hours per year;
 - further training at enterprises can be agreed on through collective bargaining
- 2) The 'Professional apprenticeship' (Apprendistato professionalizzante e di mestiere)

- aimed at young people aged 18 to 29, qualifies apprentices to gain a professional qualification on completion of a three-year training pathway (five in the case of the artisan sector).
 - Training is divided in two areas: basic training (120 hours over a three-year period) that is regulated by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and is provided by VET agencies; and professionalising training that is provided directly by the companies in accordance with the provisions established by collective bargaining agreements;
- 3) The ‘Higher education and research apprenticeship’ (Apprendistato di alta formazione e Ricerca)
- enables apprentices to gain secondary (ISCED 3) or tertiary level diplomas (ISCED 4 or 5) from the education system or a doctorate degree (ISCED 6).
 - This type of apprenticeships offers a combination of higher school-based education and on-the-job experience that grants access to the regulated professions.
 - The Regions and Autonomous Provinces, in agreement with the social partners and public institutions, decide how to organise the training, also in relation to the education system curricula, and decide the duration of the contracts.

Over the last few years (under the legacy of the old law) the number of apprenticeship contracts has dropped. With the new Law coming into force, apprenticeships have also been introduced for the workers registered in the so-called ‘mobility lists’ (when an employee is fired, usually following a certain period of extraordinary redundancy pay, when company is not able to re-insert him/her because of technical or productive reasons) to enable them to qualify or re-qualify and to those working in the public sector.

3. Statistics

Participation in the apprenticeship programmes is not very high in Italy and does not focus on initial training. Reforms from 2003 aimed to extend apprenticeship to minors (15-16 years old), but have not been implemented by the regions (except the Autonomous Province of Bolzano). Therefore, in Italy - unlike the German system where 80% of apprenticeship agreements involves young people (under 20) - 98% are adult apprentices (Italia lavoro 2012). Apprenticeship in Italy, as well as in other southern European countries, is not an essential part of the education and training system, but rather a form of labour flexibility among adults.

33% of the apprentices are aged between 25 and 29 years, and the training component is rather limited. Although this is difficult to measure, it is estimated that only one fourth of the apprentices receives training (Italia lavoro 2012).

Italy ranks low regarding the Europe 2020 benchmarks. A high proportion of 17% leave education and training early (EU target: 10%); and only 22.4% of 30 to 34 year-olds achieve tertiary education or equivalent (target of 40%).

The share of early leavers from training is steadily decreasing but still high. “In VET, almost half of the learners are at least one year behind in their training, which, as evidence shows, increases the probability that they will leave prematurely” without any certificate (Refernet 2014). There is a wide gender gap in Italy. While women are often more qualified than men, several obstacles in accessing the labour market lead to lower employment rates and lower wages among women.

4. Political responsibility

In Italy, different actors are involved in planning and organizing the vocational education and training. Political responsibilities are shared among those actors of the different governance levels. The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) sets the framework for VET in national school programmes (technical and vocational schools) for higher technical institutes (ITS) and higher technical education and training (ITFS). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLPS) sets the framework for vocational education and training (IeFP), while the regions and autonomous provinces are in charge of planning, organisation and provision. The regions and autonomous provinces are also in charge of planning, organisation and provision of ITS, IFTS, post IeFP, post-higher education, and most of the apprenticeship-type schemes.

Italy also has a system of Social partnerships. The social partners have a general advisory role in VET policy, from which VET provision is then defined. They furthermore contribute to designing and organising active labour market policies. Currently, the social partners are playing an important role in promoting apprenticeships (either at single companies or a group of companies) which are planned to be financed by the regions or by joint inter-professional funds.

5. Current reforms and plans

As youth unemployment in Italy is high, the reforms focus on the entrance of young people on the labour market. A national plan arranges the implementation of a youth guarantee. “The recently published Job Act (Law 78/2014) includes measures to boost employment and simplify bureaucracy for enterprises. It also includes initiatives to simplify short-term and apprenticeship contracts to align them better to labour market needs. Comprehensive reform of the employment services is planned to help match better labour demand and supply through partnerships between businesses, public institutions and non-profit organizations” (Refernet 2014).

The government, regions and social partners agreed to allocate financial resources to promote training programmes for low-qualified workers and for those most affected by the economic crisis. The following measures have been adopted:

- (a) establishment of a specific government unit responsible for collecting data on skills needs and occupation profiles required in specific sectors at local level;
- (b) the labour market reform law (Law 92/2012) provided for the creation of an integrated information system on training and welfare policies for employment at local level;
- (c) broader adoption of outcome-oriented learning methods;

(d) incentives to adults, also through:

(i) agreements aimed at providing new employment opportunities for laid off workers;

(ii) use of joint interprofessional funds to provide training opportunities for the unemployed;

(e) launch of a quality assurance system at regional level.

(Refernet 2014)

6. Advantages and challenges of the VET system

Advantages	Challenges
	Diverse political responsibilities and wide range of implementation of national laws → country-wide differences in qualification
	Dual VET programmes do not address young people under 20
Advisory role of social partners	
	IVET does not meet labour market needs
	Low participation in dual training programmes

Literature

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