



European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014

Country report Italy

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Cite this report as:

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014).
*European inventory on validation of non-formal and
informal learning 2014: country report Italy.*
http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87064_IT.pdf



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European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

A project carried out by

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This country update has been produced by Elisabetta Perulli, as part of the 2014 Update to the European Inventory on Validation, a project managed by ICF International (lead consultants: Jo Hawley, Ilona Murphy and Manuel Souto-Otero). The report has benefitted from feedback from the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (EQF AG) Members for Italy as well as a quality assurance panel of experts and Cedefop (lead contact Ernesto Villalba-Garcia).

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1 Introduction

For many years in Italy, there has been a rich debate and substantial agreement between all institutions and social actors on the importance of the institutional validation of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal environments.

Nevertheless, until 2012 every attempt at creating a national legal framework on validation failed due to the rigidity of the existing rules (legal value of national qualifications) and the complexity of the institutional governance of the education system (national level for school and university, regional level for vocational training with overlapping tasks).

Despite the lack of a national framework, a considerable amount of practices and experiences have been continuously developed at the local, regional and sectoral level. Several Regions started the definition and implementation of a certification/validation system and created specific services addressed primarily to unemployed people hampered by the economic crisis. A key tool developed has been the *Libretto Formativo del cittadino*: the format and aims of this tool can be compared with the European Skill Portfolio but it is managed through a public support service of 'skills audit' (at the regional level).

The degree of development of regional validation systems is heterogeneous. In a nutshell, Regions can be classified into three groups:

- Seven Regions are in an exploratory phase (Abruzzo, Calabria, Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Molise, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Sicilia). In these Regions a strategy for validation is emerging (experience in projects, programmes, types and training sectors) but is not yet publically formalised and institutionalised;
- Seven Regions are in a formalisation phase (Basilicata, Lazio, Liguria, Marche, Puglia, Sardegna, Autonomous province of Trento). In these Regions the strategy for validation has been formalised and /or have resulted in a regional system of certification (not implemented yet);
- Seven Regions are in an implementation phase (Emilia Romagna, Lombardia, Piemonte, Toscana, Veneto, Umbria, and Valle d'Aosta). In these Regions the strategy of validation has been fully formalised and institutionalised within a regional system; the services are currently in development or offered (to all citizens or specific target groups).

The general approach to validation in Italy until 2012 can be considered mostly bottom-up but, as a new trend in the last two years, the bottom-up experiences started to methodologically converge. The points of convergence are absolutely consistent to the indications suggested by the CEDEFOP Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, even if this consistency is not always explicit but often due to a spontaneous imitation effect.

Since 2012, a national legal framework on validation has been developed:

- The National Law 92/2012, reforming the Labour market foresees the immediate institution of a national system of competence certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- Subsequently on January 16, 2013 the national **Legislative Decree on the national certification of competence and validation of non-formal and informal learning**¹ was promulgated, starting with an implementation phase of 18 months. According to the Decree, every qualification, fully or partially, can be accessible by formal training or validation of non-formal or informal learning.
- On December 2012 Italy formally and legally approved the **EQF National Referencing Report** that has been presented to EQF AG on May 2013. Starting from this first release of the Report, all the Italian qualification authorities, and especially the Regions, assume

¹ Legislative Decree n. 13/2013 "Definition of general rules and basic level of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and minimum service standards of the national system of competences certification"
http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/15/13G00043/sq;jsessionid=QtVQDnVhW+1EjOvz718GA_.ntc-as1-guri2b

formally the engagement of establishing a National Qualification Framework based on learning outcomes and to work on a comprehensive credit and validation system.

As a result, the background in which the local and sectoral validation practitioners work in Italy has now fundamentally changed; the new legislative framework will create a top-down framework for further concrete developments in relation to comparability and quality assurance, as well as the accessibility and usability of validation services.

2 National perspective on validation

2.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

In Italy, the national and regional institutions involved in the qualification system (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Regions) have tried on several occasions to establish a legal set of standards to share and harmonise validation practices. There have been important institutional documents and engagements envisaging this perspective since 1996 as well as numerous specific initiatives related to certain sectors, Regions or target groups. During the last four years, the topic of validation was particularly high on the agenda of institutions in charge of the qualifications system. This certainly has a connection with the economic crisis that has hit Italy and the global economy and with the need to improve and upgrade human capital and tackle uncertainties in the labour market. The economic crisis has stressed the disparity between demand and supply of competences and the issue of the maintenance and enhancement of qualification levels has taken priority even in political and institutional agendas.

The Law 92/2012, meant to widely reform the labour market and promulgated on 28 June 2012, establishes a clear path to a systemic top-down approach to this subject by defining a national system of certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Law defines validation of non-formal and informal learning, in the framework of the national system of certification of competences, as one of the key elements to ensure and implement lifelong learning. Perhaps for the first time in Italy, these matters are treated in a comprehensive and systemic manner. The law establishes rules and regulatory requirements (standards) concerning the characteristics and the parties involved, with the aim of ensuring transparency, usability and broad accessibility of validation/certification services.

The implementation of Law 92/2012 led to the adoption of different provisions. The Legislative Decree on the national competences certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning n. 13/2013 (published on January 16, 2013) consists of 11 articles. It contains a section with a glossary of keywords and lays down some essential principles and institutional responsibilities and tasks within the new system. The glossary defines competences, formal, non-formal and informal learning, entitling and entitled bodies within the public system of certification, validation of learning, certification of competences.

Key points of the Decree 13/2013 concern the definition of three types of standards for validation and certification services:

- **process standards** that outline three main steps: identification, assessment and attestation (Article 5)
- **attestation standards** that outline what kind of information must be registered (Article 6);
- **system standards** that outline the roles and responsibilities and guarantee adequacy, quality and protection of beneficiaries (Article 7)
- The Decree 13/2013, in Chapter III also establishes the 'National Repertory of education, training and professional qualifications' which is the single framework for the certification of competences. The Repertory is a comprehensive collection of national, regional and sectoral repertories that already exist, under the responsibility of the competent authorities or "entitling bodies". The entitling bodies are the following: Ministry of Education and Universities (for school and university qualifications), Regions (for VET

qualifications), Ministry of Economic Development - UE Policies Department (for regulated professions), Ministry of Labour (for non-regulated professions). To be included in the National Repertory the qualification must be referenced to EQF and over time there will be progressive work of descriptive standardisation to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

- The national certification and validation system should be fully implemented 18 months after its entry into force (March 2013).

2.2 Skills audits

General framework

In relation to skill audits in Italy, the *Libretto formativo del cittadino*² can be considered as the 'driving national practice'. The *Libretto* was proposed in the framework of a State-Regions Agreement signed in February 2000³. The aim was to establish a tool to record the citizen's learning history (curriculum) and acquired competences. The Regions decided to promote and conduct the experimentation on this instrument. The decree 276 adopted in 2003⁴ sets out the aims of the *Libretto*: "[to record]experience acquired during training or learning pathways, continuing training and employment" and "competences acquired in non-formal and informal ways according to the relevant EU guidelines".

In 2005, an inter-ministerial decree⁵ gave the *Libretto* official status and established the format it should take. It should be underlined that while the decree is inter-ministerial and was jointly signed by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education, the *Libretto* was drawn up by a larger working group that included representatives of these two Ministries, the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and the Social Partners. Within this agreement it is stated that the *Libretto* must be primarily managed and provided by the Regions according to their institutional framework for employment and vocational training matters. The *Libretto* is presented as the 'citizen's identity card for countrywide mobility, from the point of view of both their learning experience and work experience'. In this respect, the *Libretto* can be compared to the Europass Portfolio and European Skills Passport but it differs from them as it is not self-managed but issued by the institution as the outcome of a service to the individual.

Format

The *Libretto* is divided into two sections:

- The first section is used to collect and formalise the factual information on the individual and their training and employment experience. This section is intended to establish a setting for the individual's experience by juxtaposing biographical information within a pre-defined framework.
- The second section is a 'double-entry' table entitled 'Competences acquired in learning pathways'. The five columns of the table are headed: 'type' [of competences, ed. note], 'description', 'context of acquisition', 'period of acquisition', and 'type of evidence produced to support the actual acquisition of the competences described'. The types of document considered as evidence are:
 - education and training qualifications issued by the Ministry of Education or by the Regions;
 - certification and testimonials of other training activities;
 - documents concerning employment experience;
 - any other document serving as proof.
 - 'self-declaration' allowed on the basis of the information provided during the interview;

² The translation of the term "*Libretto formativo del cittadino*" may vary. For example, in French it can be translated as *livret formatif du citoyen* or *livret des expériences du citoyen*; in English, *Citizen Training Booklet* or *National Portfolio of Competences*. In the rest of this document the shortened term "*Libretto*" will be used.

³ State-Regions Agreement of 18 February 2000, Ministerial Decree 174/2001 on the certification of competences.

⁴ Decree 276/2003

⁵ Decree of 10 October 2005.

- competences that emerged clearly through the interview and his or her account of this experience.

Process of elaboration

The process includes four stages:

1. **Reception and guidance.** Before introducing the *Libretto* in detail, practitioners must inform the beneficiary of its general characteristics and the implications of its use. The individual's motivation and the nature of their personal project should also be specified at this stage.
2. **Reconstruction of the applicant's experience and competences.** During this stage, the practitioner analyses the individual's education and training history, employment experience and any self-learning they have achieved. The results of this analysis and a summary version of it are recorded under the responsibility of the individual concerned.
3. **Production of proof or evidence, documents "supporting" the reconstruction of the individual's experience.** The range of possible types of evidence has already been described. However, the guidelines also mention "examples of products accomplished". Practitioners must not merely "demand" evidence: they must also help *Libretto* users to find and present it.
4. **Recording of the data and information to be included in the *Libretto*, and its compilation.** This stage concerns the formalisation of the information collected. As a result, the quality of this process largely determines the quality of the final document.

Testing and implementation phase

In 2006 the format of the *Libretto* was elaborated with Guidelines, a toolkit and professional requirements of practitioners.

The *Libretto* was tested in 13 Regions and Autonomous Provinces between 2007 and 2010. The experimentation protocol was designed to give the regions and provinces involved full organisational freedom. As a result, they adopted fairly diverse courses of action in conducting the experimentation. These were closely related to the regional provisions then in force governing the recognition of learning outcomes and, more generally, the certification of competences. In some cases, the *Libretto* was linked to a regulated device for the recognition of competences. So in Valle d'Aosta, for instance, it is used as a training credits recognition device that is intended to facilitate the transition from the education to the vocational training system and vice versa.

After the testing phase, several Regions started to apply the *Libretto* within their development of qualification frameworks and also tried to use it as part of measures to tackle the impact of the economic crisis. Since 2011, the regional public employment centres of the region of Tuscany have included the *Libretto Formativo* as part of the service offer to unemployed people receiving benefits. In almost one year and half (2011/2012) 25,000 beneficiaries received a *Libretto* in Tuscany with a pre-registration of competences, all belonging to the regional qualification and competence inventory, ready to be further validated and certified. In Tuscany, the testing phase has led to encouraging results. The *Libretto*, and especially the related support services are quite useful and effective. On average, two to four individual interviews are needed depending on the length of the individual's experience and his/her self-consciousness and self-reporting abilities. The service process requires also at least equal time in back office activities so that the total amount of necessary work is from four to eight hours for each *Libretto*, excluding the further eventual validation or certification steps.

So far, the *Libretto* is not concretely operational in most of the Regions, but it is the subject of several initiatives, both experimental applications and constructions of specific regional regulations.

2.3 Relationship with qualifications framework and credit systems, and information on standards used for validation

As mentioned above, one of the key obstacles towards the establishment of a national validation framework in Italy was the absence of a national qualification and competence set of standards necessary to relate, and value at a national level, the outcomes of a validation process.

In September 2006 the Ministry of Labour promoted a 'National board for occupational, certification and training standards', aimed at defining and implementing a 'National Qualification Framework' according to the indications of the most advanced experience in EU. The Board was made up of representatives of the Ministries of Education, University and Research, the Regions and the social partners and represented a very important step in the development of a system able to provide transparency and visibility of competences acquired in any context (formal, non-formal and informal), in line with the European policies for lifelong learning (EQF and ECVET above all). Between 2007 and 2008, the Board approved a comprehensive cataloguing of all the competence and qualification standards produced so far at regional or sectoral level with the participation and active involvement of all the participants. It also developed a methodology for the construction of structured standards in sectors, work processes, wide work profiles and Competence Units. The methodology was experimented successfully in two sectors: tourism and mechanics and in 2010 extended to other sectors (chemical, agro-food and textile-footwear). This methodology has inspired both the production of qualification standards in several Regions and the revision of the national professional qualifications and diplomas, even though formally the process stopped in 2010. The structure of the standards coming from this process is completely credit compliant as it is based on Competence Units autonomously certifiable and recognisable as credit for the access to a formal qualification training pathway. The technical base for the Italian NQF was 'informally' born.

As an immediate consequence of this process most of the validation practices and experiences carried out so far, including the *Libretto*, are based on Competence Unit standards at a regional level. The Competence Unit model differs from one Region to another but have the same conceptual base: a profile is constituted by a number of UC (ca. 4 to 8) and each UC is articulated in Knowledge and Abilities (*in italian Conoscenze e Capacità*). Below we present two different examples of Competence Unit format in Emilia Romagna and Toscana.

Example 1 – Format of the four Competence Units of a whole qualification in Emilia Romagna

UNITÀ DI COMPETENZA	CAPACITÀ (ESSERE IN GRADO DI)	CONOSCENZE (CONOSCERE)
1. Ideazione e sviluppo ricette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rilevare stili alimentari ed esigenze dietologiche peculiari della clientela • individuare assemblaggi di prodotti alimentari in base alle diverse caratteristiche organolettiche e morfologiche • identificare la struttura di ricette-base tradizionali e tipiche al fine di riproporle in modo personalizzato • concepire combinazioni bilanciate tra i prodotti alimentari rispondenti alle diverse esigenze nutrizionali e caloriche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Principali diete moderne e loro caratteristiche nutrizionali: vegetariana, macrobiotica ed eubiotica ❖ Tecniche di comunicazione e relazione interpersonale ❖ Caratteristiche merceologiche degli alimenti
2. Progettazione menù	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definire accostamenti appropriati tra pietanze e gamma di vini offerta per la realizzazione di menù tradizionali e tipici • concepire sequenze alimentari -cibi-vini- per la composizione di menù innovativi ed esclusivi • adeguare e personalizzare le scelte enogastronomiche in funzione delle mutevoli tendenze di gusto del target di clientela di riferimento • scegliere le diverse componenti culinarie del menù anche in funzione dei parametri di costo prefissati 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Tecniche per la preparazione di piatti tipici e complessi: antipasti caldi e freddi, primi e secondi piatti, contorni, fondi di cottura, salse madri e derivate ❖ Tradizionali metodi di cottura degli alimenti: bollire, arrostitire, grigliare, friggere verdure, carni, pesci, crostacei, molluschi, pasta e riso ❖ Moderne tecniche di cottura degli alimenti: al microonde, cottura con fit, cottura con sonda, affumicatura
3. Composizione specialità culinarie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scegliere qualità e dosaggi di materie prime e semilavorati per la realizzazione di pietanze complesse • selezionare utensili ed attrezzature ad hoc per la pulitura, il taglio ed il trattamento di materie prime e semilavorati • scegliere tempi, temperature e metodi di cottura specifici per tipologia di alimento prevedendone le principali alterazioni e trasformazioni • utilizzare sistemi tecnologici avanzati per la trasformazione e conservazione di grandi quantità di cibi nel rispetto degli standard qualitativi e di gusto prefissati 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Principali vini italiani ed europei e tecniche di composizione sequenze alimentari cibo-vino ❖ Disposizioni a tutela della salute nell'ambiente di lavoro nelle strutture ristorative ❖ Norme igienico-sanitarie per la gestione dei prodotti alimentari (DI n. 155/77) ❖ Tecnologie moderne di manipolazione e conservazione dei cibi e relativi standard di qualità
4. Proposizione estetica degli elaborati culinari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prefigurarsi l'immagine del piatto da presentare con senso estetico e creatività • adottare strumenti e tecniche di sporzionatura e di disposizione dei cibi nel piatto • scegliere modalità e tecniche di decorazione e guarnizione per la presentazione del piatto 	

Example 2 – Format of one Competence Unit in Toscana

DENOMINAZIONE ADA	Trattamento materie prime e semilavorati alimentari
Descrizione della performance	Collaborare alla preparazione di piatti semplici trattando le materie prime necessarie alla preparazione dei piatti a supporto dell'attività del cuoco
UC 1709	
Capacità	Identificare le caratteristiche e la qualità delle materie prime e dei semilavorati
Capacità	Operare nel rispetto dei tempi di lavorazione per garantire un servizio efficiente
Capacità	Preparare cibi freddi (affettati misti, piatti estivi, antipasti, insalate e contorni), dolci (freddi o congelati), impasti e salse secondo le normative igienico sanitarie vigenti
Capacità	Preparare la cucina calda (minestre, contorni amidacei, verdure, volatili, carni, pesci, ecc.) secondo le normative igienico sanitarie vigenti
Capacità	Scogliere le materie prime da utilizzare tenendo conto dei dosaggi previsti dalle ricette
Conoscenza	Caratteristiche merceologiche e nutrizionali degli alimenti per trattare le materie prime e semilavorati alimentari secondo le norme HACCP
Conoscenza	Caratteristiche organolettiche degli alimenti per comprendere le modifiche degli alimenti dopo la cottura
Conoscenza	Disposizioni a tutela della sicurezza nell'ambiente di lavoro nelle strutture ristorative per garantire la sicurezza propria e dei colleghi
Conoscenza	Modalità di presentazione, guarnizione e decorazione dei piatti per valorizzare la presentazione degli stessi
Conoscenza	Norme igienico-sanitarie per la gestione dei prodotti alimentari per tutelare la salute della clientela
Conoscenza	Principali tecnologie e attrezzature utilizzate in cucina, in sala e nel bar e loro funzionamento per la corretta trasformazione e cottura delle materie prime
Conoscenza	Principi, scopi e applicazione del sistema HACCP e delle norme relative
Conoscenza	Sistemi di conservazione delle materie prime alimentari, dei semilavorati e dei prodotti finiti per garantire la conservazione dei prodotti e preservandone la qualità e le caratteristiche naturali
Conoscenza	Tecniche di preparazione dei piatti secondo standard di qualità e nel rispetto delle norme igienico sanitarie vigenti

The recent Decree 13/2013 establishes the 'National Repertory of education, training and professional qualifications' under the responsibility of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour which will be the single framework for the certification of competences. The Repertory is a comprehensive collection of national, regional and sectoral existing repertories. The entitling bodies are the following: Ministry of Education and Universities (for school and university qualifications), Regions (for VET qualifications), Ministry of Economic Development - UE Policies Department (for regulated professions), Ministry of Labour (for non-regulated professions). To be included in the National Repertory the qualification must be referenced to the EQF and over time there will be a progressive work of descriptive standardisation to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

2.4 Governance and allocation of responsibilities

The Italian legislation entrusts the Regional and Provincial Authorities with the definition of vocational training and certification standards and the regulation of vocational education and training supply and related providers (Reform of the Title V of the Italian Constitution, 2000). According to this institutional role, all the 21 Italian Regions have to some extent sought to develop opportunities to validate learning, which includes the implementation of the *Libretto* (skills audit).

The recent Legislative Decree 13/2013 defines the following two main roles in the national certification and validation system:

- 'public entitling body': this includes
 - The Ministry of Education, University and Research, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to the qualifications of the school system and university;
 - Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to qualifications issued under the respective responsibilities in the VET system;

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to qualifications of non-regulated and non-organised professions in chambers or formal associations;
- The Ministry of Economic Development - UE Policies Department (coordinating the other competent authorities) in the identification and validation and certification of competences related to qualifications for regulated professions;
- 'entitled body' means an entity, whether public or private - including chambers of commerce, industry, trade and agriculture, schools, universities and institutions of higher education - that is approved or recognised by the public entitling authorities, according to national or regional law, and provides, in whole or in part, services of identification, validation and certification of competences.

This structure of governance will be developed with a better definition of the tasks, minimum performance criteria and accreditation features within the implementation process.

2.5 Examples of national regional, local or EU funded initiatives

2.5.1 Regional validation systems

Some examples of regions that have an institutionalised system of validation and/or started to implement such a system are outlined below:

From 2011 **Basilicata**⁶ formalised the strategy on validation within the regional system of standards of competences and qualifications. After the appropriate steps have been taken to share the provisions with the regional stakeholders involved, the certification procedures will be approved and implemented probably during 2013, in line with national guidelines.

In **Lazio** the regional strategy on the validation of competences was developed between 2006 and 2012, and it was linked to the Regional system of qualifications certification⁷. Meanwhile, some testing was undertaken in the context of apprenticeship and employment centres. In addition, in 2009/2010 a specific Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Lazio Region and the Region Military Command Centre for the 'management of the certification of specific training and competences owned by personnel belonging to the Armed Forces'. The testing phase has led to the development of the Libretto Formativo.

In **Marche**, the regional strategic activity on validation began with the DGR 1656 of 22/11/2010 'Approval of the architecture of the regional system for the recognition and certification of competences of the Marche Region'. This introduced the certification and recognition of 'non-formal and informal learning in the reform of education and training systems in the perspective of lifelong learning'. In this initial regulatory framework the testing of validation of learning has been applied in specific European programmes, in the alternation between school and work and in specific industrial sectors (i.e. footwear). In 2011, with the DGR 808 of 06/06/2011, a Memorandum of Understanding between Toscana and Marche was approved: it aims at defining professional profiles as well as the procedures for validation and certification of competences within the regional system.

The **Autonomous Province of Trento**, pending the establishment of a national framework, has carried out different pilot activities on validation. A particular focus is in relation to apprenticeship training, vocational adult education and volunteering. At the conclusion of this exploratory phase in 2013 the Province approved a Provincial Law⁸ in which the issue of validation services is expressly reflected in Article 8 as an essential part of the certification system.

⁶ Basilicata Region DGR n. 243 of 23 February 2011, with Resolution of the Regional Council of 8/11/2011, no. 1625 establishing the "Regional Repertory of professional profiles" and the Resolution of the Regional Council of 17/5/2012 n. 625, establishing the regional Repertory of certificate

⁷ Lazio Region Deliberation of the Regional Council of 22 March 2006, n. 128 "Establishment of a Regional Repertory of professional and training profiles" refers to the creation of a system for the certification of competences acquired in training and recognition of credits for the integration of systems. The Repertory was updated with new profiles with the DGR 452 of September 11, 2012.

⁸ Trento Provincial Law No. 10 of July 1, 2013, "Measures to promote lifelong learning and competences certification"

In **Puglia** the DGR no. 1604 of 12 July 2011 started defining a competences certification system through the opening of an interregional cooperation with the Region of Tuscany, for sharing experiences, tools and technical devices. As part of this pathway - together with the Executive Act n.854/2013 - the *Libretto Formativo* was adopted under a Special Action Plan for unemployed workers receiving benefits. The implementation of the *Libretto* by the territorial centres of Employment has started on an experimental basis.

In **Lombardia**, the regional strategy was formalised with specific regulations⁹ and validation of non-formal and informal learning has been linked closely to the Repertory of Professional Profiles. It is aimed at the acquisition of VET credits or even a whole qualification. Specific testing activity for validation has been carried out regarding the Qualifications of Gardener and Trainer (Regional Resolution 3337 of 2010). More recently, the Decree no.9380 of 22.10.2012 specifies the format and procedures for the implementation of validation services.

In **Tuscany**, the strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is an integral part of the regional system of qualification and competence certification and has a fully defined and established procedure. The service process is activated by the request of the individual who wishes to obtain a certificate to be used in the formal VET system and/or employment system. The service process is related to certain Competence Units included in the Regional Repertory of Qualifications. This process concerns learning outcomes acquired in different contexts that may have already been identified and that are the object of a simple 'declaration' when achieved in a partial or interrupted training experience or 'validation' in the case of non-formal and informal learning experiences. The certification process is formalised in a procedure regulated by minimum standards that ensure the quality of the process. At the end of the process the Region may award a whole qualification included in the Regional Repertory or one or more Competences Unit.

In 2011 Tuscany started the implementation of the *Libretto Formativo*¹⁰, constituting an inter-sectoral technical group involving all the Regional relevant stakeholders in education, training and employment sectors. After a first step of practitioner training, that involved the managers and operators of public employment centres where the service was located, there has been an information campaign targeted at unemployed people on benefits. (By the end of 2011 the service was extended to all citizens). The procedure of implementation of the *Libretto* in Tuscany does not yet envisage the 'assessment phase' but is aimed at the documentation of those competence declared by the individual that can be demonstrated through the collection of documents and evidences. Within Tuscany, 25,000 persons have elaborated their *Libretto* so far.

In **Umbria** the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is formalised through the Regional Council Resolution no. 51 of 18/01/2010 'Approval of the Directive on the regional system of professional standards for training, certification and attestation'. In order to clarify and promote a comprehensive interpretation of the rules and regional strategies by the operators of the system, the Region in May 2013 released the book entitled 'Give Value to Experience'. This book contains operational guidance and examples for the application of the validation and certification procedures.

With the Regional Directive no. 1758 of 16/06/09, the **Veneto** Region started actions for experimenting with the validation of competences acquired in different areas of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) provided not only within education and training institutions, but also within employment services and agencies. With the D.G.R. no. 2895 of 28/12/2012, the Region has approved the 'Guidelines for the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning'. The drafting of the guidelines was preceded by a testing phase within the programme 'Doti Lavoro' involving about 10,000 beneficiaries (unemployed people receiving economic benefits) supported by the final release of a 'personal dossier of evidence' and a 'certificate of learning outcomes'.

⁹ Lombardia Region DGR n. 8/6563 of 13 February 2008 "Guidelines for the regional training offered in vocational education and training and in particular the Third Part Certification of competences and recognition of training credits"

¹⁰ Toscana Region, DGR 1066/2011, "Guidelines for the systematic development of the procedures for the *Libretto Formativo*"

2.5.2 Sector experience

FORMEDIL Operating Procedure for the assessment and certification of competences in the building sector.

Formedil, the National Agency for vocational training in building, is a bilateral national body. It aims to promote, implement and coordinate initiatives at national level about qualification and continuous training in building which are undertaken by schools and training centres.

Since 2005 Formedil has been equipped with a sectoral system for the assessment of competences:

1. Acquired through formal paths (specifically provided by sectoral schools) and
2. In any context.

The process of assessment, validation and certification of competences includes the following components:

- The Competences Repertory of the building sector;
- The Training Sector Repertory;
- A 'Worker Personal Transcript' for registration of competences acquired which is released at the end of the procedure;
- A 'database of training activities for the building industry' - a unified web-based system for the management of the above-mentioned devices;
- The manual 'Operating procedure for the assessment and certification of competences'.

The service concerns mainly the following target groups:

1. Workers who need a certification of their prior learning for entry or re-entry into the labour market or to improve their positioning;
2. Workers who require an assessment of competences to enter a training scheme with a 'credit' or to fulfil the prerequisites for access.

In the last five years, this system has generated several experimental projects within the building sector in order to investigate different issues.

- Project CO.GI.T.O. co-funded by the Programme for cross-border cooperation Interreg Italy - Switzerland (PIC Interreg III A - Measure 3.1). The project investigated the possibility of establishing a unitary mode of assessment of learning outcomes in informal and non-formal education in the building industry. The project has led to the development of a methodology for the assessment of competences and a set of tools including practical tests related to standards of competence;
- Project TRASFOBUILDING (funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme) proposes a model of identification, recognition and certification of competences. This model enhances the project outputs and links to the draft description of the formally acquired competences (FONDIMPRESA) in order to achieve a unitary system of assessment;
- Project COMPEDA (funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme) aimed to develop a system of recognition of competences for adult education and vocational training by analysing, adapting and testing two tools of validation: the DEWEBAS - DK, and the MASTER PORTFOLIO - UK ;
- Project COMPCARD (funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme) promotes the validation of competences for low-qualified adults re-entering the VET system through the testing of 'Portafolio de las Competencias'. This tool was developed by the Generalitat de Catalunya and it is integrated with the Libretto Formativo together with the Formedil 'Worker Personal Transcript' designed for the building sector;
- Finally the pilot project 'Saperi costruttivi' (Knowledge construction - validation of non-formal and informal learning in the building sector 2010/2011). This was managed by ESEV - School in the building sector in Verona in partnership with all schools in the Veneto Region. The Formedil system has been implemented involving more than 350 workers.

2.5.3 Other practices of validation¹¹

CO.L.O.R. (COmpetency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for migrants), funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, 2011-2013

The project met specific labour market requirements related to competency valorisation and learning outcome recognition for migrants. ECVET mechanisms were put into practice in order to achieve:

- Adapted and tested qualifications (in terms of learning outcomes) - on the basis of shared and tested transferable methods;
- Defined assessment, validation and recognition processes;
- Testing activities (including a repertory of case studies) to assess the transferability of the recognition processes in a cross-sectoral dimension;
- A Memorandum of Understanding on ECVET-related issues among the Italian Regions involved aimed at promoting a wider use of the project results and the transfer of its results into mainstream policies.

CO.L.O.R. focuses on migrants in need of a qualification in two specific sectors: healthcare and building, and on 11 qualifications (based on both national and regional standards) at EQF level 3. This level represents the 'basic' level of qualifications (the first 'achievement' in terms of competency) to permit entry into the Italian labour market.

The Regional Agencies' active involvement, alongside the Regions, facilitates the successful implementation of ECVET and validation processes. All participating Regions have conducted previous studies in the specific domain and have identified qualifications in the relevant sectors. As competent bodies awarding qualifications, Regions introduced significant changes in their policies, adopting a learning outcomes approach and concrete ECVET application at national level.

Project coordination

ARLAS, Regional Agency for Education and Employment in Campania

ISFOL, Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers

Regional partners:

- Campania Region (represented by ARLAS), IT
- Lazio Region, IT
- Piemonte Region, IT
- Toscana Region, IT
- Basilicata Regione (IT): associated partner

International partners

- Centrul National de dezvoltare a invatamantului profesional si tehnic, RO
- Scottish credit and qualifications framework partnership, UK
- Kunsill Malti Ghall-Kwalifiki, MT

The MoU of the COLOR Project has presently been extended to other Italian Regions (Calabria, Puglia) confirming high expectations about the robust and systemic impact of results.

Validation for internships of Municipality of Rome, Pica - Paths of Active Citizenship

PICA is a programme involving paid internships targeted at young people 18-28 years old. The programme was created by the Minister of Youth and the Municipality of Rome in the European Year of Volunteering.

The fields of work covered by the internships are different and involve almost all the main municipality services and offices: assistance and solidarity, environment, artistic and cultural

¹¹ More validation projects and practices are reported in the Web Portal Isfol Va.LI.Co. (Validation Libretto Competences) <http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/>.

heritage, education and cultural promotion, development and protection of territory, cooperation and local development. Computer science, civil protection and safety are also included. Validation of learning has been carried out for the 236 young people involved in the 36 PICA projects between 2011 and 2012.

The validation model, inspired by the Dutch model of validation of prior learning, includes the following phases:

1. Analysis of individual internship projects with project designers and tutors in order to identify and describe a set of competences (basic, transversal and technical-professional) that may have been acquired during the experience which then provides the basis for assessment and validation;
2. Development of the grid of self and external-assessment. This is linked to the sets of competences as well a structured interview carried out with the final beneficiaries at the end of the experience. Self-assessment is also taken into account. The interview is aimed at stimulating a reflection on the meaning of the learning experience and on future plans of study and work;
3. Administration of the self-assessment grid during an interview carried out by counsellors external to the project;
4. Implementation of assessment by the project tutor through structured observations in the workplace;
5. Data collection and processing; production and award of the final Certification of the competences achieved.

The validation process involves:

- Project tutors and designers (elaboration of the competences set for each project and for the assessment);
- Final beneficiaries (self-assessment);
- Counsellors (administration of the self-assessment grid and management of the interview).

INFORMEDU 'Validation and recognition of Non formal and Informal Learning in the Education System', funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme

The project Informedu has been implemented by a Consortium composed of national and European partners, which includes representatives from VET Systems, volunteer organisations, Chambers of Commerce and Public Authorities with political responsibility for Instruction and Training. These Institutions offer a vast amount of direct experience relating to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Their presence guarantees the necessary conditions to experiment, apply and promote the ECVET system. The final product is the development of a procedure for the individualisation, recognition and the validation of informal and non-formal learning for the purpose of re-entry into the Education System. This procedure is a pre-requisite for the creation and subsequent signing of the 'Memorandum of Understanding', in application of the ECVET system. The project satisfies European recommendations for personal and professional development in terms of occupation and professional mobility. The phase of recognition and validation of units of learning outcomes is focused on the tourism sector because of the increasing number of individuals working in this sector in the project partner countries. Conditions are developed for the gradual application of the ECVET system regarding the recognition of the results of learning achieved in informal and non-formal contexts.

The Consortium consists of Giano Ambiente; the Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts: Lithuania; the Centre Intrinstitutionnel del Bilan de Compétences D'Arras: France; the Regional Structure Steunpunt Scouting Gerderlan: The Netherlands; The Provincial Administration of Grosseto, two Scholastic Institutes of Secondary Education and two territorial Centres for ongoing Education and Training for Adults: Italy.
<http://www.informedu.it/>

Highlight the competences

The 'Highlight the Competences' project is funded through the Leonardo da Vinci programme and it commenced in 2007. The aim of the project is to promote transparency

and comparability of qualifications, transferability, validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved by individuals in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal). In the perspective of the EQF and ECVET, the project allowed the partners to work together. They were able to elaborate references of activities, of competences and of certification on the crafts identified in the services sector (cleaning and logistics), transferring the European methodology of 'Sustainable professionalisation' (validated by the European Commission). The testing activities have been mostly related to the qualification of 'Responsible in cleaning service'.

The testing led to the certification of competences for beneficiaries and the formal registration of the tested qualification in the Regional Qualification Repertory of the Umbria region.

The project partnership is composed of the most important representative organisations of the cooperative movement in Italy (Consortio Nazionale Servizi; Associazione Nazionale delle Cooperative di Servizio e Turismo, Itaca), Spain (Fundación EZAI) and Malta (Apex Coop) and by technical specialised organizations from the VET system of the services sector (Aris Formazione e Ricerca Società Cooperativa in Italy, ZDZ in Poland, Econometrica Ltd in Greece) or with specific know-how and experience in the fields of transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes (public organisation, as the French Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle, and private as the French CRDveloppement).

The impact planned for this experience is considerable: the project adaptation and experimentation process will involve directly, the cooperatives and the workers of the national Consortia (like CNS: 230 cooperatives and several thousand workers) and, indirectly, the associations (like ANCST and Apex: ANCST has more than 2,500 cooperatives and more than 150,000 workers). The impact will be felt by the relevant organisations in Italy and also in the other participant countries.

I CARE - Informal Competences Assessment and Recognition for Employment Services

This Leonardo da Vinci project aimed to promote procedures for the recognition and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings. It also promoted the transparency of qualifications with specific reference to 'white jobs', i.e. personal care occupations. Based on the results of the project 'TIPEIL - Transfer of an Innovative Portfolio to Evaluate Informal Learning' (also funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme), the project aimed to:

- Transfer to the Employment Services in the partner territories in Italy and Romania an innovative procedure for the recognition of non-formal and informal competences, based on the methodology of the digital portfolio and its supporting web based platform;
- Integrate this methodology into a model for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal competences, related to specific white jobs. This model is developed on the basis of both an exchange of European best practices in recognition and accreditation of informal learning (coming specifically from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and the procedures, instruments and methods already in use in the Employment Services.

I CARE ran for two years (2010-2012) and included the participation of TECLA Association as project leader, the Provinces of Brescia, Campobasso and Pisa in Italy, the Employment Agency of the county of Bistrita-Nasaud in Romania and of the scientific partners University of Rome La Sapienza (Italy), Cofora BV (The Netherlands) and the Institute of Education of the University of London (United Kingdom). The website of the project can be found at: <http://www.icareproject.eu/index.html>.

“NFE South E- Evolution”: empowering non-formal education in Southern Europe promoted by SYC- Southern Youth Councils

“Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2012-2014 (ongoing). Coordinator: Forum Nazionale dei Giovani-Italian Youth Forum

www.nfesouthrevolution.eu

Nine National Youth Councils who are cooperating at European Level in the fields of education, training, global cooperation and advocacy towards national, European and international institutions,

agreed on a common educational strategy to create and implement , the blended learning approach to non-formal education. The aim is to encourage participation and support national policy strategies for the validation of lifelong learning competences developed through non formal education experiences.

The competences developed by trainers in national and international activities, underlines the value of EU recommendations regarding education and training policies, focusing on non-formal education as an important part of the lifelong learning process for each contemporary European citizen.

To be a non-formal education trainer has become an highly qualified profession in the European youth field. This is a role not recognized in our societies and educational systems; it is a key role in supporting lifelong learning and the development of soft skills in adults and pupils.

Therefore, the recognition of non-formal education and its professionalism at national level is a priority in which the partnership is addressing in this project.

General objectives

The learning partnership has a specific focus on the exchange of good practices. It has set a common pedagogical approach for the recognition of non-formal learning and of the role of trainers in national contexts; therefore it aims to achieve the following objectives;

- to develop a common understanding and a joint strategy to advocate for the political and formal recognition and the validation of Non-Formal Education and learning by law in all the partners countries; both at educational level and in the European labour market
- to mainstream experiences and learning outcomes developed through non-formal and informal education with reference to the European Qualification Framework- EQF;
- to legitimate the role of National Youth Councils and its member organizations as non-formal learning providers in society at national, regional and local level;
- to strengthen the capacity building of National Youth Councils and its member organizations as non-formal learning providers in society at national, regional and local level
- to strengthen the capacity building of NYC's and member organizations through the haring of good practices of the educational approaches which support national training strategies;
- to develop trainers' skills and competences in order to assure quality in NFE activities and training courses;
- to advocate for the recognition of non-formal education trainer's competences and professionalism in society;
- to establish and reinforce a lasting cooperation process focused on education and training among European National Youth Councils

2.6 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

2.6.1 Funding

The funding framework for validation activities has not changed since 2010 and is mostly represented by public funds, mostly regional and European (ESF or the Leonardo da Vinci Programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme, LLP). Also Employers' Training Funds (Fondi Interprofessionali) have been used for financing validation projects and models.

2.6.2 Distribution of costs

There are no new official data about costs. An unofficial estimation made within the validation system of the region of Tuscany estimated that the cost of an average process of validation would range from EUR 500 to EUR 1200 per individual (depending on the complexity of the individual experience and on the need/opportunity for external assessment).

Usually in Italy no charges are requested of the validation beneficiaries. In Emilia Romagna there have been some experiences of applications for the regional validation system for employed workers within enterprises, and in this case the company provided a contribution.

2.6.3 Data on flows of beneficiaries

There is no official data available on validation in general.

Concerning the use of the *Libretto Formativo*, according to an Isfol survey of 2013 there have been at least 50,000 beneficiaries involved in a Libretto practice in the last two years; according to the regional monitoring data, half of these are the ones in Tuscany.

2.6.4 Evidence of benefits to individuals

At the moment no specific data is available on this topic. Statistical surveys are planned and will start in future years, mandated by the Ministry of Labour to Isfol according to the EU Recommendation on Validation.

3 Information, advice and guidance

3.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

Little information is available on such aspects, especially in relation to experimental projects. Each project/system has its own recruitment system and/or focuses on specific target groups. For example, a validation service can be proposed to unemployed people receiving benefits as an 'active employment policy measure', alternative to training.

3.2 Role of information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

The information for this section is based only on regional experiences (regional validation systems).

In Italy, there are several information and advice networks and these are not always coordinated with each other. Their responsibilities are mainly to give information about the territory and job opportunities. Nevertheless every regional validation system includes in its guidelines a clear reference to a duty of information and guidance prior to commencing the validation procedure.

Concerning the *Libretto Formativo*, Phase 1 of the procedure is focusing on these objectives.

The recent Decree 13/2013 on a Certification National System (Article 5 Process Standards) has also reiterated the importance of the provision of information and guidance:

“The public entitling body will ensure as a minimum service standards: (...) the adoption of customised measures for information and guidance addressed to the beneficiaries of services for the identification and validation and certification of competences”.

3.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

The Isfol web portal Va.Li.Co. (Validation Libretto Competences) <http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/>, which was set up in 2012, gives Italian administrators and operators a database of validation practices and experiences. This is a useful tool to help with the design and implementation of practices. It is consistent with the national and European context and provides web-based supporting software.

Moreover, many of the above-mentioned LLP Projects regarding validation in Italy were mainly aimed to support the 'practitioner learning community' and to promote the awareness of professionals and stakeholders.

4 Quality assurance and evaluation

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

The Decree 13/2013 (Article 7 'System standard') envisages the further creation of a framework of quality assurance. Namely all the public entitling bodies must ensure some minimum quality standards related to:

- the conditions of use and service for access to qualifications and validation procedures;
- the adoption of measures for information and guidance services;

- compliance to the job requirements of personnel;
- an interoperable information system for monitoring, evaluation, traceability and preservation of the acts issued;
- compliance with the provisions on the procedures for simplification, access to administrative documents and protection of personal data;
- the collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence at every stage of the procedure.

The quality assurance framework will be further developed within the implementation process of the Decree through specific Guidelines.

4.2 Quality assurance systems / procedures

Every experimental project has its own quality assurance system. At a Regional level there are specific procedures for quality assurance consistent with funding and legal rules: they are often linked to the procedures and to features of companies or professionals carrying out the services.

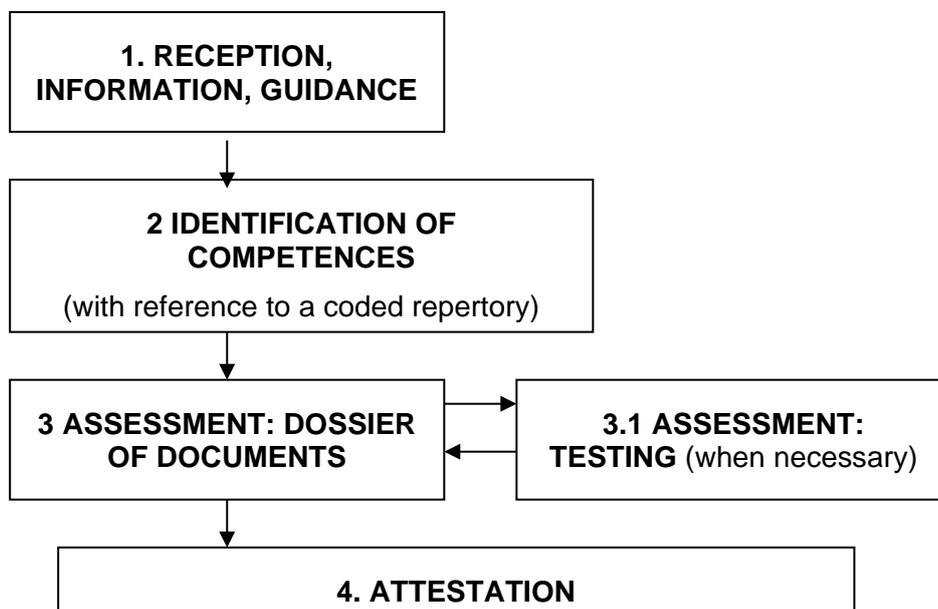
Almost all regional VET systems are integrated and consistent with the ISO-UNI quality standards.

4.3 Evaluation framework

The Decree 13/2013 (Chapter IV, Article 9 Monitoring and evaluation) establishes an evaluation framework outlined as follows:

1. *The national system of certification of competences is to be monitored and evaluated, also with a view to continuous improvement, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education, University and Research and the regional and autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano as 'public entitling bodies' under this decree, who can be supported, for its actions, by the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers (ISFOL), the National Institute for the Evaluation of the education and training system (INVALSI), the National Institute of documentation, innovation and educational research (INDIRE) and the National Agency for the Evaluation of higher education and research (ANVUR) and the National Union of Chambers of Commerce, industry, trade and agriculture.*

2. *The results of monitoring and evaluation referred to in paragraph 1 shall be the object of communication to Parliament every three years for the purpose of the provisions of Article 4, paragraph 51 of the Law of 28 June 2012, no. 92.*



5 Validation methods

5.1 Methods used and the validation process

Despite the plurality of practices, there is a consolidated, substantial and widespread agreement on the procedures and methodologies to be used to validate non formal and informal learning in Italy.

The recent Decree 13/2013 has established a methodological framework:

“With reference to the process of identification, validation and certification process, the public entitling body will ensure the following minimum standards:

a) the articulation into the following phases:

- 6. Identification: phase aimed to identify and bring transparency to the individual’s competences relating them to one or more qualifications. In case of non-formal and informal learning this step involves a specific support in the analysis and documentation of the experience of learning and in correlating the results to one or more qualifications.*
- 7. Assessment: phase to ascertain the mastery of the competences related to one or more qualifications. In the case of non-formal and informal learning this stage involves the adoption of specific assessment methods and evidences as proof of the competences actually possessed.*
- 8. Attestation: step aimed at issuing validation documents or certificates, standardised in accordance with this decree, documenting the competences identified and validated or certified related to one or more qualifications.*

b) the adoption of customised measures for information and guidance addressed to the beneficiaries of the services of identification, validation and certification of competences.”

Considering regional validation systems, the most common methods in each phase are outlined below¹².

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate	X		
Declarative methods		X	
Interview	X		
Observation			X
Portfolio method		X	
Presentation	X		
Simulation and evidence extracted from work		X	X
Tests and examinations			X
Other (e.g. e-learning methods) – please specify			

6 Validation practitioners

The national legislative framework does not contain provisions on validation practitioners. The information below relates to the regional validation systems and or pilot/experimental projects.

¹² Source: ISFOL (a cura di Perulli E.), (2013), *Validazione delle competenze da esperienza: approcci e pratiche in Italia e in Europa, Edizione aggiornata*, Collana Temi e Strumenti.

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The profile of validation practitioners is heterogeneous and has not evolved significantly in recent years. Validation practitioners are often education/training or vocational guidance professionals who are used to managing competence curricula and training programmes. They are also skilled in carrying out services for individuals.

6.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

The national legislative framework does not contain provisions relating to training and support to validation practitioners. In practice, validation practitioners often participate in some training (classroom and distance learning).

Concerning the practitioners involved in the delivery of the *Libretto* (skills audit), a map of the practitioner's competences is broken down into four Competence Units (corresponding to the four stages of the procedure). The reference tool describes in detail the methods practitioners should follow when providing assistance. The 13 competence-related skills (four to seven for each competence) required of practitioners are closely related to the subsequent operations. Each unit also includes an assessment framework that indicates what practitioners should expect from candidates when evaluating their competences and needs as expressed in the form of performance indicators.

Some training and support initiatives for validation practitioners have been carried out at regional level (Emilia Romagna, Veneto). The aim was to provide practitioners with knowledge and methods useful for managing the whole process (especially Documentation and Assessment)

6.3 Qualifications requirements

The national legislative framework does not contain provisions on qualification requirements for validation practitioners. Concerning the Regional or project experiences there are no changes compared to 2010: there are not standard qualifications with respect to the validation related jobs. Usually the practitioners are trainers, tutors, training programme designers or coordinators, vocational guidance and counseling professionals. They are often graduates of education, psychological or pedagogical University degree courses.

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7.1 Organisations consulted

EQF Advisory Group (Italy)

LLP Leonardo National Agency Italy