
CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

ITALY



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This thematic perspective was prepared based on data collected through the first Cedefop European public opinion survey on VET. The European report can be found at: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5562_en.pdf

More information on the survey at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/opinion-survey-vocational-education-and-training-europe>

ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

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The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in 'VET in Europe' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda. Thematic perspectives provide national overviews of specific themes in a common format and offer comparative dimension across the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. They are available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives>

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Introduction

This article reports information and comments about data related to Italy, collected in the final report published by Cedefop. The final report presents the results of the public opinion survey on vocational education and training (VET) in the 28 EU Member States of the European Union. The survey was carried out by Kantar Public from 1 to 29 June 2016. Some 35 646 respondents from different social and demographic groups aged 15 and over were interviewed face-to-face at home in their mother tongue on behalf of CEDEFOP. The survey has covered a wide range of topics related to VET. In order to make the survey more accurate, the focus has been on initial vocational training at the level of upper secondary education, although there were questions pertaining to both IVET and CVET.

The article is organised in four different paragraphs that cover the four major themes explored to investigate citizen's understanding and attitude towards vocational education and training:

- (a) awareness and knowledge;
- (b) attractiveness and access;
- (c) experience and satisfaction at upper secondary level;
- (d) outcomes and effectiveness .

Cedefop's first survey on vocational education and training included 2 034 interviews carried out in Italy where the population aged 15 years and over reached about 52 million people which in proportion to EU-28 represent the 12.13%. As first feedback from the survey, we can see how among respondents who went to upper secondary education, the majority (67%) say that their education was primarily general in nature, while only the 33% say that it was primarily vocational.

These data should be analysed taking into consideration that, according to the Italian system, all young people have the right/duty (*diritto/dovere*) (Law 53/2003) to pursue their education and training for at least 12 years before reaching age 18 and should not leave education and training without a qualification. In the Italian education system, vocational education and training includes two different pathways: vocational education provided by public and private schools and vocational training as training provided at regional level. Compulsory education lasts 10 years, up to 16, and includes the first two years of upper secondary general education or VET.

Young people complete lower secondary education at age 14. At this stage, learners sit a state exam to acquire a certificate (EQF level 1) which grants

admission to the upper secondary level where young people have the opportunity to choose between general education and VET.

At upper secondary level, young people may opt for:

- (a) five-year programmes which include the two last years of compulsory education and three years (under the right/duty of education and training) in:
 - (i) high schools (*licei*). These provide general education programmes at upper secondary level;
 - (ii) technical schools;
 - (iii) vocational schools.

High schools (*licei*) offer artistic, classical, linguistic, scientific, human sciences, music and dance strands. Within the artistic strand, learners can specialise in figurative arts, architecture and environment, design, audiovisual and multimedia, graphics or stage design in the second period.

The qualifications awarded after successful completion of high school, technical and vocational school are at EQF level 4 and a state leaving exam at the end of them gives access to higher education;

- (b) regional education and vocational training courses (leFP) (three or four years – EQF 3 or 4 respectively).

CHAPTER 1.

Awareness and knowledge of VET

Compared to the European data, VET seems to be less popular in Italy with respect to other EU countries. Only the 51% of respondents say that they had heard of vocational education and training (VET) before their interview, and only the 57% (among those who did vocational education) and the 36% (among those who did general education) say that they had heard of it and received information about vocational education when making a decision about their upper secondary education. This could be due to the many different strands of VET at national and regional level that exist. When asked about a number of different aspects of VET, respondents are most likely to associate it with 'preparing you for a specific occupation', 78% say that this always or often applies to VET. The two main reasons for choosing vocational education at the upper secondary stage are the likelihood of finding a job (52%) and interest in the subjects (50%). Those who went on vocational education are more likely than those who went on general education to say that it was because of the likelihood of finding a job. However, some reasons are more likely to be given by those who did general education than those who did vocational education as the interest in the subjects and being good at the subjects.

CHAPTER 2.

Attractiveness and access

Around the 80% of Italian respondents think that vocational education at the upper secondary stage has a positive image in their country. Italy is among those countries where people are most likely to say that vocational training has a positive image. But, at the same time, more than 80% of Italian respondents think that in Italy general education has a more positive image than vocational education. This applies in particular to respondents who went to general education themselves (82% agree). However, those who participated in vocational education are also likely to agree with the statement (74%). However, Italian respondents perceive vocational education as providing better employment prospects than general education. When thinking about upper secondary education, the majority of respondents say that people who complete vocational education are more likely to find a job than those who complete general education, while about 16% say they are less likely to find a job and 30% say there is no difference. Responses on these issues are similar between those who did vocational education and those who did general education at the upper secondary stage. We can motivate these results according to the fact that historically in Italy vocational training, work oriented and teaching mainly practical skills, is considered a second choice for weak students who could only apply to get a job. Even if we should underline that according to the INAPP survey on regional education and vocational training courses (IeFP) ⁽¹⁾ regarding the dichotomy first choice/second chance, in the training year 2015/16 an average of 44.4% of 14-year-olds enrolled in the first year, has opted for the IEFPP pathways in a vocational manner, that is to say as a first choice, while the remaining 55, 6% comes, presumably, from previous school failures.

This is also because in Italy the choice of general education is normally linked to the wish to go to University, after the completion of upper secondary education. Respondents who went on vocational education themselves generally say they would recommend vocational education to a young person about to enter upper secondary education (61%), rather than general education (13%). On

⁽¹⁾ INAP (2017). *La IeFP tra scelta vocazionale e seconda opportunità. XV rapporto di monitoraggio delle azioni formative realizzate nell'ambito del diritto-dovere a.f. 2015-16, luglio 2017*
<https://oa.inapp.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/110>

the other hand, the gap is much higher for respondents who followed general education, where 54% say they would recommend general education compared to 25% who would recommend vocational education. Respondents are most likely to say they would recommend general education in Italy rather than vocational, this applies for participants in general education.

CHAPTER 3.

Experience and satisfaction

A high percentage of respondents who went to general education (91%) say they were satisfied with the general skills they developed, while similar proportions were satisfied with the quality of teaching (89%). However, these respondents are less satisfied than those who did vocational education in relation to work-related skills (73% compared with 80%) and the equipment that was available (67% compared with 69%). Respondents who followed vocational education at the upper secondary stage mostly say that they were satisfied with the general skills they developed. In relation to the quality of teaching and work-related skills, satisfaction levels are very similar for respondents who did general education (80%). Across the four items covered in the survey, respondents who went to general education have consistently high levels of satisfaction with the general skills they developed and with the quality of teaching.

As other EU citizens, also Italian respondents say that they developed a number of different skills when they were at upper secondary education. Among those who did vocational education, respondents are most likely to say that they developed the ability to work with others (80% compared to the 87% of EU respondents), followed by the ability to pursue and organize their own learning (75%), the communication skills (67%) and the ability to be creative (66%). While among those who did general education, respondents are most likely to say that they developed the ability to work with others (87% compared to the 81% of EU respondents), followed by the ability to pursue and organize their own learning (87%), the ability to think critically (79%) and the mathematical skills (77%). In Italy, respondents who did general education are more likely than those who did vocational education to say they gained skills in the ability to work with others (87% compared with 80%) and the ability to pursue and organize their own learning (87% compared with 75%). By contrast, respondents who went on vocational education are more likely than those who went on general education to say that they developed the communication skills (67%) and the ability to be creative (66%).

CHAPTER 4.

Outcomes and effectiveness

Respondents were also asked whether they had ever experienced any difficulties in finding a job after completing their highest level of education. 69% of respondents who attended VET and 67% of respondents who attended general education at upper secondary level stated that they had difficulties of some kind in finding a job after completing their highest level of education. Moreover, the majority of respondents whose upper secondary education was primarily vocational stated it took them between one month to a year to find a long-term job after completing their main studies (41% for VET graduates and 47% for general education graduates). Generally, respondents who attended general education at upper secondary level, took longer to find a job after their studies compared to their VET counterparts who followed vocational education and training.

CHAPTER 5.

Main conclusions and further research needs

In Italy, the survey shows that vocational education and training has a positive image in the country, especially in relation to its capacity of providing job opportunities and preparing people for the world of work, meeting the employers' needs. However, when compared to general education, a majority of respondents tend to agree that general education has a more positive image than VET. In general, VET is always associated with an education that prepares you for a specific occupation. For VET graduates, the level of satisfaction with their education is in many instances higher than those that have carry out general education. In the case of developing work-related skills, VET graduates are far more satisfied than general education graduates. In terms of key competences, on the other hand, such as mathematic skills, VET graduates perceived to have developed less those skills during the upper secondary education than the general education graduates. By contrast, respondents who went on vocational education are more likely than those who went on general education to say that they developed the communication skills and the ability to be creative. When it comes to labour market outcomes VET graduates tend to need less time to find a long-term job than general education graduates, while their career satisfaction is similar.

In this respect, in the training year 2015/16 the number of qualified students from leFp is of 69 237 students (after the third year of training) and the number of students enrolled in all the years from the 1st to the 4th year is of 322 322 and among these 13.3% are foreigners ⁽²⁾.

Overall the survey while provides a rather positive picture of VET in Italy, also suggests that the major problem in improving its image relates to the perception of VET as job related training. Indeed, VET is often seen as a type of education that allows you to get a job fast, but not necessarily a well-paid, well regarded job and often less attractive job.

As a matter of fact, the financial and employment crisis continues to constitute the scenario in which the training offer of the leFP system is inscribed. Where Italy complains about too few graduates compared to international

⁽²⁾ INAP (2017).

competitors and, on the other hand, the demand for professionalism in the labour market seems to consider, in addition to highly specialised levels, personnel without specialisation, the education and vocational training is called to operate in two different directions:

- (a) the first is to continue the training young people leaving the secondary level, allowing both those who have chosen vocationally, and the students who arrive after previous training failures ('second choice'), to offer themselves very young to the labour market with an adequate range of basic, technical and transversal skills;
- (b) the second direction regards the need to allow qualified and graduates to continue their training process, enriching their professional skills, so as to increase the attractiveness of these young people towards the market. And last but not least the leFP is playing a key role in the fight against drop out, a phenomenon that continues to afflict our country to a greater extent than in other Member States of the European Union ⁽³⁾.

⁽³⁾ See above INAP (2017).

References:

INAP (2017). *La leFP tra scelta vocazionale e seconda opportunità. XV rapporto di monitoraggio delle azioni formative realizzate nell'ambito del diritto-dovere a.f. 2015-16, luglio 2017* <https://oa.inapp.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/110>