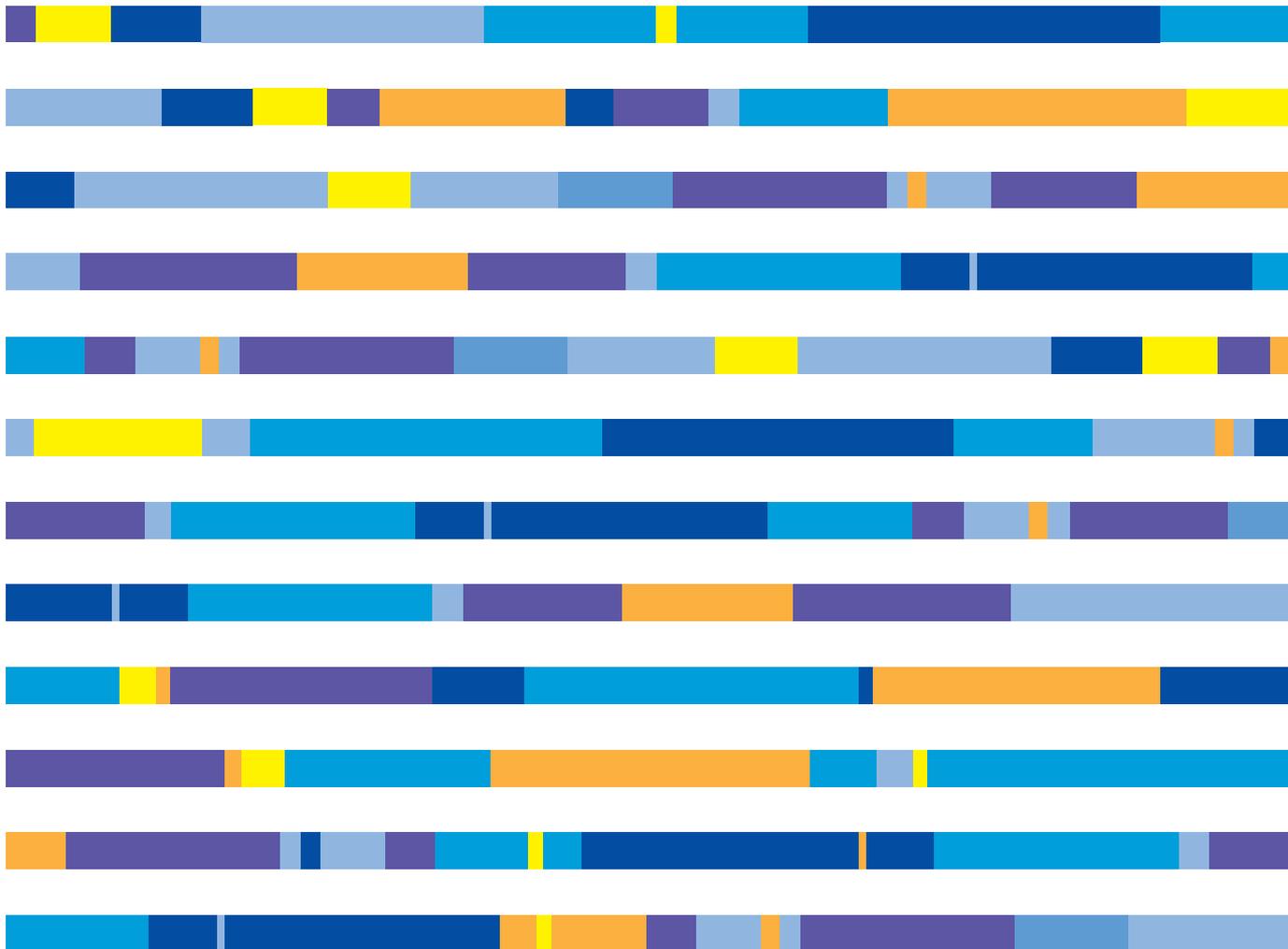EN

European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: **ITALY**

Author: Elisabetta Perulli

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

The process of building the National System of Competence Certification started in 2012 and was completed in 2015 (widely described in the 2016 Inventory), which also includes the national institutional framework of rules for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The last two years have been essentially dedicated to the implementation of the system itself. This happened mainly through the following processes:

■ the completion and improvement of the common national tools and above all making the National Repertory of Qualifications active and available;

■ the groundwork for preparation of services to the beneficiaries;

■ the training and entitlement of validation bodies and operators;

■ the launch of controlled applications to verify the effectiveness and sustainability of the system.

In addition, a further regulatory element that was still lacking in the system was finally achieved: in January 2018, the National Decree concerning the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) came into force.

This Decree published on 8 January 2018 provides the establishment of the NQF according to the Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and defines for our country a clear common set of descriptors for the eight levels of Qualifications by identifying what kind of knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility elements are attributable to each level. In addition, the NQF Decree structures the procedures for referencing every qualification to the Framework through the National EQF Coordination Point established in the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL) and with the independent preliminary assessment of the National Institute of Public Policies Analysis (Inapp) and former Isfol.

A weakness at present is that the National Technical Committee (which according to Decree 13/2013 is the institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the system) has not yet defined the National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences. Nevertheless this fundamental regulatory element to promote the development of the validation opportunities by all the entitling bodies[1] is going to be achieved and a draft proposal has been presented during the last meeting of the technical group set up by the decree of 30 June 2015 at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, composed of representatives of the same Ministry, the Ministry of Education, University and Research and of the regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano, with the technical support of INAPP (National Institute of Public Policies Analysis and formerly Isfol).and ANPAL (National Agency for Active Labour Policies).

The table below summarizes and updates the main ruling acts concerning the validation system in Italy (2012-2018).

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[1] According to Decree 13/2013 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).

Table 1.1 Summary of main ruling acts concerning the validation system in Italy (2012-2018)

Ruling acts	What does it change	Who is involved
The National Law 92/2012 June 2012 Reform of the Labour Market	The law reforming the Labour market foresees the immediate institution of a national system of competence certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (within six months)	Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education
Legislative Decree 13/2013 16 January 2013 on the national certification of competence and validation of non-formal and informal learning	The national certification and validation system was designed and had to be fully implemented within 18 months of its entry into force (March 2013) by defining National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences. The *National Technical Committee* had responsibility for this task, but it has not yet been completed.	The *National Technical Committee in charge of the system development is composed of the* 'entitling bodies' or qualification authorities: Ministry of Education, University and Research, for the qualifications of the School and University system; Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano for the regional qualifications (vocational training); Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, for the qualifications of those professions not organized in professional associations or colleges or otherwise regulated; Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department (leading the other national authorities) for the qualifications of regulated professions.
Inter-ministerial Decree 30 June 2015 on National Framework of Regional Qualifications	It establishes: 1) a mechanism of mutual recognition among the regional qualifications; 2) process, attestation and system standard procedures for the services of identification/ validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences.	Regions in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education as ruling actors The other qualification authorities for the shared or overlapping institutional fields.
Interministerial Decree of 8 January 2018 concerning the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in response to the European Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF)	Defines a set of descriptors for the eight levels of qualifications by identifying knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility elements attributable to each level. Structures the procedures for referencing every qualification to the NQF	All the 'entitling bodies' or qualification authorities: Ministry of Education, University and Research; Regions; Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department.

The principles and indications included in the Recommendation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning of 2012 have all been taken into account in detail throughout the entire regulatory process allowing full alignment to them.

The set of national standards places Italy in an advanced position in terms of a sound and consistent system of regulations linked to the European indications on these topics. However, many of the critical issues already raised by international surveys and investigations linked to the concrete implementation of these services remain:

- need for fast and homogeneous training of operators involved in services for setting and maintaining good quality standards at a national level,

- the promotion of the validation services,

- the achievement of a balance between quality and economic sustainability,

- the monitoring of the validation procedures in relation to the different target groups,

- the evaluation of the impact and benefits for the beneficiaries and for the companies and sectors, the community and the whole country.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

The emergence of a national policy on validation in Italy is linked to the Law 92/2012 on the reform of the Labour Market. This Law, introduced on 28 June 2012, establishes a national system of certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Concerning 'lifelong learning' issues, this law sets out the following activities:

- Re-launch the policies for lifelong learning through local networks made up of employment services, schools, universities, VET providers, enterprises;

- Specific public services to re-trace and value formal, non-formal and informal learning;

- National rules for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competencies;

- The establishment of the National Repertory of Education, Training and Professional Qualifications.

The Law defines for the first time in Italy the validation of non- formal and informal learning, as one of the key elements to ensure and implement lifelong learning in a comprehensive and systemic manner, establishing rules and regulatory requirements (standards) concerning the characteristics of the system and the stakeholders involved, ensuring transparency, usability and broad accessibility of validation/certification services.

The implementation of Law 92/2012 led to a national decree fundamental for the implementation of the national validation framework was ready.

The Legislative Decree on the 'National competences certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning' n. 13/2013 (published on 16 January 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 formal, non-formal and informal learning in a way consistent with the European Commission glossary and other relevant terms such as entitling and entitled bodies within the public system of certification, validation of learning, certification of competences.

The Decree 13/2013 defines some important principles and features for the validation system in its Article 3:

■ **Validation as a central point** - In line with EU guidelines, the focus of the identification/validation and certification is on the competences acquired by the individual in formal, non-formal or informal contexts.

■ **A whole qualification or parts of it can be validated** - The entitled bodies can identify/validate and certify competences related to the qualifications or to parts of qualifications up to the total number of competences composing an entire qualification.

■ **The centrality of the individual** - The identification/validation and the certification of competences is aimed at valuing the individual's study, work and life experiences. Therefore, the centrality of the individual in this process requires a simple, accessible, transparent, objective and confidential service as well as methodological accuracy, completeness, fairness and non-discrimination in the related procedures.

■ **Public documents** - The validation documents and certificates issued respectively at the end of the identification/validation and certification services are public documents.

■ **Quality assurance** - The reliability of the national system of competence certification is based on a shared and progressive system of indicators, tools and quality standards applied at national level.

The system designed by Decree 13/2013 is national and comprehensive as it covers all the range of qualifications from education, HE, VET and even the ones with legal value. It includes the professional qualifications and the regulated qualifications.

The institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the system is the National Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Labour and by the Ministry of Education and composed of all the Qualification Authorities (Entitling Bodies[2]).

The National Technical Committee is also in charge of defining the National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences. but this task is not accomplished at the time of writing. Nevertheless this fundamental regulatory element to promote the development of the validation opportunities by all the entitling bodies is going to be achieved and a draft proposal has been presented during the last meeting of the technical group set up by the decree of 30 June 2015 at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, composed of representatives of the same Ministry, the Ministry of Education, University and Research and of the regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano, with the technical support of INAPP (National Institute of Public Policies Analysis and formerly Isfol) and ANPAL (National Agency for Active Labour Policies)

In addition, a further regulatory element that was still lacking in the system was finally achieved: in January 2018, the National Decree concerning the National Qualifications Framework came into force.

This Decree published on 8 January 2018 provides the establishment of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) according to the Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and defines a clear common set of descriptors for the eight levels of qualifications by identifying what kind of knowledge, skills and

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[2] According to Decree 13/2013 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).

autonomy/responsibility elements are attributable to each level. In addition, the NQF Decree structures the procedures for referencing every qualification to the Framework through the National EQF Coordination Point established in ANPAL (National Agency for Active Labour Policies) and with the independent evaluation of Inapp (National Institute of Public Policies Analysis and formerly Isfol).

The provisions of this Decree do not affect what is contained in the first EQF Italian Referencing Report edited in 2012, but creates a shared framework of criteria, methodological assumptions and procedures for maintaining and expanding the Framework to numerous other training and professional qualifications, finally giving the possibility to institutions, citizens and other relevant actors to benefit from better qualifications descriptions and more transparent learning outcomes.

2.2 Validation in education and training

According to Legislative Decree on the 'National competences certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning' n. 13/2013, there is a national system of validation in Italy but it is not fully developed.

The system designed is national and comprehensive as it covers all the range of qualifications from HE and VET sectors, regardless of whether they have legal value or not. The system allows the award of up to an entire qualification both by means of validation and by means of formal education and training.

Chapter III in The Decree 13/2013, 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'. To be included in the National Repertory the qualification must be referenced to the EQF and over time there will be progressive work of descriptive standardisation to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

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 process standards (Article 5) define a methodological framework consistent with the four stages of validation mentioned in the European Commission Recommendation of 2012:

'*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:

■ Identification: phase aimed to identify and bring transparency to the individual's competences relating them to one or more qualifications. In the case of non-formal and informal learning this step involves specific support in the analysis and documentation of the experience of learning and in correlating the results to one or more qualifications.

- 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.

- 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.'*

The 'entitling bodies' or qualification authorities in the field of education and training are the following:

1. The Ministry of Education, University and Research, for the qualifications related to the School and University systems;

2. Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano for the regional qualifications (vocational training);

To sum-up, the tasks and commitments of the entitling bodies (Qualification Authorities) are the following:

- To pursue the formal adoption of an encoded repertory of qualifications and competences previously referenced to the EQF;

- To ensure a clear single regulatory framework of conditions of use and guarantee of the services;

- To implement measures of guidance and information on the new validation opportunities for individuals and organizations;

- To ensure appropriate features and job requirements for validation practitioners;

- To put in place an interconnected information system (or a database) where all data concerning the validation and certification of outcomes can be found; each qualification authority's database should be inter-operational with the others;

- To establish conditions to ensure quality standards for the validation procedures (i.e. collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence of the assessment).

Regional Vocational Training systems

In 2013, as the Decree 13/2013 came into force, in Italy 21 regional certification systems coexisted at different stages of implementation. Some of them were characterised by a strong governance coming from their history and culture. Some others were at that time at their starting point. The challenge to face was how to harmonise these systems, both self-regulated and others. Since 2014 Regions analysed their own systems, looking for the common principles which were to be guarded and agreed on a common framework on validation procedures and services within the 'National Framework of Regional Qualifications' and on 30 June 2015 this agreement became an Inter-ministerial Decree signed by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education.

Within one year following the approval of this Decree, the Regions adopted the official provisions of the National Framework of Regional Qualifications and proceeded with their implementation. By July 2016, validation services had to be set up and made

available to cover the 21 Regions according to the same methodological and system standards.

At present there are still differences in regional policies and practices on validation. This data suggests that it is necessary to maintain a shared coordination at national level to make the framework of rules operative all over the country so to guarantee opportunities for final beneficiaries.

Specifically, the measures implied in the 2015 regulatory framework of regional validation and certification of competences were in some regions already in place. These have been accessible for several years to a significant number of beneficiaries: we mention in this regard the systems previously active in the regions of Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Toscana, Lombardia, Umbria, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto.

On the other hand, some Regions have introduced these measures later, in 2016/2017, by setting up provisions to regulate the validation and certification services. To name a few: Basilicata, P.A. of Bolzano, Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Puglia, Sardinia, P. A. di Trento.

The remaining regions of Abruzzo, Calabria, Marche, Molise, Sicily, are now in the process of setting up their service rules.

Alongside the regulatory alignment, the organization of services requires a lengthy period of time before reaching stabilization, because it calls into question a plurality of services and actors besides the new organizational arrangements.

School and University systems

School and University systems (dependent on the Ministry of Education, University and Research) have not yet addressed the validation issue in an organic and official way as both systems have been engaged in national deep structural reforms that concerned their organisation and strategic direction. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate about validation and the interest is high in both the school and university sectors.

Within the school system and the Adult Education system the 'Provincial Centres for Adult Education' (CPIA), defined, during 2015 (Interministerial Decree MIUR - MEF of 12 March 2015), a framework for validation according to Decree 13/2013.

Subsequent to the Law 92/2012, adult education was reformed and regulated by Presidential Decree No. 263/2012. After an initial experimental phase of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (the CPIA), through projects assisted by the Ministry of Education, 56 CPIA were activated so far since September 2014, located in eight regions (10 in Piemonte, 19 in Lombardia, four in Friuli Venezia Giulia, two in Veneto, seven in Emilia Romagna, eight in Tuscany, one in Umbria and five in Apulia). Another 64 CPIA are planned for the near future, which adds up to 120 centres in total at national-wide level in Italy.

The CPIA is the central administrative unit that manages and organises educational pathways for adult learners in an integrated manner. It interacts with the stakeholders in the territory that requires specific education and training needs. The CPIA are therefore in charge of designing and delivering the education and training offer taking into account the particular needs of adult learners, migrants and NEET.

The adult education training offer is designed in learning units in order to promote the recognition of credits and the customisation of the pathways. This is done by entering into an individual 'learning pact' in which there is a recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The task of defining each individual 'learning pact' is assigned to a committee composed of teachers who perform a validation process divided into the three phases of identification, assessment and certification, as required by the Decree No. 13/2013. Credit recognition as well as validation and guidance activities, as well as the possibility of distance-learning, can cover up to 20% of the total number of training hours for a qualification.

It is expected that once defined by the legislator with the tools to boost adult education in Italy, CPIA would be able to meet the challenge of up-skilling the adult population and meet the new requirements of knowledge, expertise and skills required for the development of a "Learning society".

University

Since 2014, there has been several new initiatives from RUIAP, which is an important Italian university network that brings together about 30 Italian universities engaged in promoting lifelong learning at university level (University LLL). The RUIAP adheres to the European Network of universities for lifelong learning (EUCEN).

In 2015/2017, the Italian network of Universities for lifelong learning RUIAP, continued promoting a first level Masters programme in 'Expert in accompaniment to competence recognition and validation of prior learning'. The Masters programme is run at regional level by some of the member universities. It aims to train professionals to accompany and support candidates in the documentation of their experiential knowledge and manage their practical recognition and validation of prior learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings with the view of obtaining certification according to the national framework established through Decree 13/3013.

As a result of this ruling about the national process in Italy, all the services and practices of validation offered so far, as well as the ones underway and further, can take advantage of this national system and methodological framework. There is no sector or region or type of qualification, public or private, that can be considered excluded from these rules. That means that also low-skilled adults can benefit from this framework and specific pilot activities are being designed now.

Following the EU Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, in January 2018 the Ministry of Education took on the responsibility of promoting a thorough review and for this it activated a working platform on lifelong learning in which the trade unions took part, the representatives of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), those of the University Network for Lifelong Learning (RUIAP), those of the third sector and of the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). The interinstitutional platform set up at the Unified Conference of Regions was also reopened.

Aiming to begin the review process the Ministry of Education launched a proposal of a Plan to guarantee the skills of the adult population outlining five proposals drawn up by the Ministry, namely:

- To foster and support the participation of CPIA in the construction and operation of territorial networks for lifelong learning.

- Promote and support - in accordance with the provisions of the Agenda 2030 and the New European Skills Agenda - the activation of Competences Guarantee Paths for the adult working age population aimed at acquiring basic skills (mathematical, alphabetic, linguistic and digital), transversal (ability to work in groups, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, ability to solve problems or to learn to learn and financial literacy).

- Strengthen and consolidate the already existing research, experimentation and development centres for adult education.

- To foster and support the full application of flexibility tools for adult education pathways and in particular for distance learning.

To foster and support the activation of 'Integrated Educational Paths' aimed at achieving, also in apprenticeships, a professional qualification and / or diploma with a view to allowing the continuation of training at tertiary level (university and non-university). The primary objective is the activation by 2019, in agreement with the Regions, of a national Integrated Educational Paths pilot.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

The emergence of a national policy on validation is related to the Law No. 92/2012 about the reform of the labour market in Italy. This Law approaches validation by defining a national system of certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning. In the chapter related to lifelong learning this law indicates employment services and enterprises, together with schools, universities and VET providers, as relevant actors. The law states that these stakeholders should constitute local networks for the concrete application of the policies on lifelong learning which also aim to re-trace and value formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Based on this approach, the system designed by Decree 13/2013 is nation-wide and comprehensive as it covers the range of qualifications and thus it includes also the professional qualifications (those regulated and unregulated). These are the main reasons why the Italian strategy and policy on validation is directly related to the labour market as it has been developed primarily for employability purposes.

Concerning the content and management of qualifications, the 'entitling bodies' (or qualification authorities) directly pertinent to the labour market are:

1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, for the qualifications of those professions not organized in professional associations, chambers or colleges or otherwise regulated;

2. The Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department (leading several other national authorities) for the qualifications linked to regulated professions.

However, both of these institutional contexts have not yet addressed the validation issue in an organic and official way. This is because both systems have been undergoing reform which have included changes in relation to European and Italian policies on professions. Nevertheless, the framework of the Decree 13/2013 lead to considerable interest and debate.

Concerning the services of validation, in many Regions the bodies entitled for the validation services are, sometimes exclusively, the public or private employment services. For instance, in Lombardia and Veneto regions, the validation service is focused only on the employment service. In Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Toscana and other regions, the entitled bodies are mixed but the employment services are almost always involved.

In recent years, the Youth Guarantee Programme in Italy was managed almost exclusively by the employment service system. It supported the use of validation for young NEETs as a method of increasing their employability. However, it was limited to the Regions which already have validation systems in place, using them to provide

services to the Youth Guarantee beneficiaries. At the moment, there is no precise data on the actual number of beneficiaries.

Finally, it is remarkable how some sectors were spontaneous in their involvement. Several produced relevant contributions; they standardized their own work processes, competences and qualifications and so they participated in the building of the qualification and validation system.

2.3.1 Skills audits

In relation to skill audits, the overall approach seems to define this function as a specific necessary step of the validation procedure and indicates the Dossier of Evidence as a key tool in its development.

The *Libretto formativo del cittadino*[3] can still be considered as the first national experience articulating skill audits.

In 2005, an inter-ministerial decree (Decree of 10 October 2005) gave the *Libretto* official status and established the format it should take. 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.

the Decree 13/2013 within the process standards (article 5) define a specific step devoted to the skills audit:

'Identification: phase aimed to identify and bring transparency to the individual's competences relating them to one or more qualifications. In the case of non-formal and informal learning this step involves specific support in the analysis and documentation of the experience of learning and in correlating the results to one or more qualifications.'

Moreover, within the Decree on National Framework of Regional Qualification of 30 June 2015, this step is better designed and articulated in the description of the functions in charge of it, namely the **Function of Accompanying and supporting the identification and transparency of competences** (described in further detail in section 7.1 below)**.**

2.4 Validation and the third sector

In the third sector, there is a dynamic sense of innovation and a strong interest in the validation on non-formal and informal learning for the very large body of workers and volunteers participating in this context in Italy.

In June 2016 a structural legislative reform of the entire third sector was put in force in National Law 106/2016 and among the provisions there was the right for the volunteers of '*recognition and enhancement of the competences acquired during the completion of the universal civil service aimed to their further use in education and work pathways*'.

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[3]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 N*ational Portfolio of Competences*. In the rest of this document the shortened term "*Libretto*" will be used.

In 2015, the National Programme of Competence Validation for volunteers in the civil service under the Youth Guarantee, started. The programme was carried out by almost all the Regions and targeted at more than 5 000 volunteers.

Box 1 National Programme of Competence Validation for volunteers in the civil service under the Youth Guarantee (2015/2017)

This programme was initiated in 2015 and is the first concrete national application of the new validation framework outlined in the Decree on the National Framework of Regional Qualifications, adopted in June 2015.

The programme is aimed at validating the competences of 5 666 volunteers involved in 1 137 projects in the Civil Service (CS) in 11 Regions within the Youth Guarantee Programme.

This procedure followed the standards of the Decree of 30 June 2015 on the National Framework of Regional Qualification. The procedure was thus divided into three main phases:

Step 1. Identification of a profile for certification of the CS Project;
Step 2. Identification and transparency of competences through the "Individual DOSSIER";
Step 3. Validation and release of the Validation Document.

Phase 1 is a preliminary step to commencing the individual Dossier and consists of the definition of the CS project's profile for certification or the analysis of the CS project and the activities planned for the volunteer with reference to the National Framework of Regional Qualifications.

Subsequently, Phase 2 is aimed at the commencement and management of the Individual Dossier for each volunteer, consisting of collection of documents and evidence needed for the Dossier. These actions take place throughout the project cycle through initial, periodic and conclusive interviews involving the volunteer and his/her tutor (Project Local Operator).

Finally, in Step 3 the procedure provides for the validation carried out by an entitled body that performs a final assessment through the technical examination of the dossier or direct examination in order to release a Validation Document.

Data and outcomes of this project are not yet available.

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3 Links to national qualification systems

According to Decree 13/2013, only competences belonging to qualifications included in the National Repertory of Qualification can be validated and/or certified, by each entitled body for its respective territory. Every qualification can be certified either after education or training or after a validation process from a minimum of one competence up to one or more entire qualification.

According to the Decree of 30 June 2015, the National Framework of Regional qualifications is part of the National Repertory of Decree 13/2013. It represents the only point of reference for the correlation of regional qualifications as well as for the identification, validation and certification of qualifications and competences, including training credits at European level.

The National Framework is structured according to the classification of 24 economic-professional sectors and is intended to serve as a reference for the regional qualifications repertories with the following operational references:

1. referencing to the national statistical codes and to the sequence of descriptors of the classification of economic-professional sectors;
2. identification and description of qualifications and their related competences in line with the criteria of the EQF;
3. referencing of qualifications according to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), carried out through the formal inclusion of these qualifications in the EQF national referencing process.
4. For the purposes of matching and recognising regional qualifications across the whole national territory, the National Framework represents:
5. a professional reference in terms of occupational standards;
6. a reference for the recognition of the regional qualifications and competences at national and European level;
7. a performance reference for the assessment to be carried out within the services of identification, validation and certification of competences.

4 Standards

The Decree 13/2013, 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 the EQF and over time there will be progressive work on the descriptive standardisation to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

Therefore the standards used within the validation system depend on the field of the 'entitling body': it is substantially an education standard within school and university; it is occupational (but related to a qualification learning outcomes based standard) in the case of VET Regional qualifications; it is purely occupational in the regulated or unregulated professional cases.

Aiming to make the 'National Repertory of education, training and professional qualifications' accessible and active as a real single framework for the certification of competences, the national and regional institutions have promoted the implementation by Inapp of the Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni[4] (Atlas of Work and Qualifications). The Atlante describes the contents of the work in terms of activities (processes and tasks) and of potentially deliverable products-services. The contents of the work are represented, and made available, through a classification scheme made of 24 professional economic sectors (SEP). The SEP classification was obtained using the classification codes adopted by Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT), concerning economic activities (ATECO 2007) and professions (Classification of Professions 2011), and is entirely connected to them. The SEP classification consists of 23 sectors plus a sector called the Common Area. The Common Area collects all those work activities not specifically characterized by a specific sector as activities concerning: administration, marketing, communication and public relations, general affairs, human resources management. In this sense, the

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Common Area is therefore to be considered as an addendum compared to the other 23 sectors of which the classification is made up.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

The institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the system is a National Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education and composed of all the Qualification Authorities (Entitling Bodies).

The Decree 13/2013 defines the following two main roles in the national certification and validation system: public entitling body and entitled body.

- '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 - EU 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 organisation, 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.

Concerning the entitled bodies, specific accreditation systems for the validation services have been set up in all the Regions that formalized the procedures to implement the new validation framework. Almost all the Regions have entitled bodies that were already accredited for vocational training or guidance or employment services giving them this new task.

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising

Little information is available on such aspects as the services are mostly in a start-up phase. Awareness actions are addressed to those target groups involved in the initiatives. The entitled bodies are often in charge also of the groundwork aimed to promote the validation opportunities.

The INAPPI 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.

During 2015, INAPP in cooperation with RAI National Italian TV and with financial support from the ESF, produced a documentary called *L'esperienza vale* ('Valuing experience') (http://www.raiscuola.rai.it/articoli/lesperienza-vale/30043/default.asp). The documentary was an experiment and a new way of informing citizens and communicating public policy about validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The pilot is focused on four Italian and foreign stories of learners: Michelle, Oleg, Carmen and Enrica who have found work, built their own ambitions for integration, or have returned to training due to the system of validation and certification of their competencies. The stories take us around Italy as well as in France and in the Netherlands to find out how the validation works in different contexts and represents a cross-sectional valuable tool both for validation practitioners and potential beneficiaries.

6.2   Information, advice and guidance

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.

7   Validation practitioners

7.1   Profile of validation practitioners

The Decree on the National Framework of Regional Qualifications of 2015 defines the three functions in charge of the different steps of the validation process:

1) *Dossier counsellor* - Function of Accompanying and supporting the identification and transparency of competences.

In line with the standards process, this function is intended to oversee the identification phase of the recognition and validation procedures and of the certification of competences.

The function supervises the application of appropriate methods in order to:

– document prior learning experiences;

– pre-code the identified competences in line with the qualifications targeted for the validation;

– support the elaboration of the "Dossier/Document of transparency";

– recommend the service interruption in the case where the minimum conditions for success in the validation or certification of competences are not fulfilled;

– provide any information of use for the next steps, including possible recommendations for the assessment phase.

The following key activities have been identified:

– support with the application to access the service of identification, validation and/or certification of competences;

- preparation of the service agreement and / or the necessary documentation to start the process;

- management of information on the procedure in the information systems or documents required;

- planning of forthcoming meetings necessary for carrying out the work of identifying the competences required for the validation of the targeted qualification;

- conducting individual and group interviews aimed at documenting the prior learning experiences and making the competences acquired through formal, non-formal and/or informal learning transparent;

- identification and formalization of competences identified with reference to the qualifications and to the relevant repertories;

- support the composition of the Dossier of evidences through the application of the acceptability and relevance criteria;

- final drafting of the "Document of transparency" referring the user to the next stages of the procedure or other services.

2) 'Assessment responsibility' – Function of planning and implementation of assessment activities

In line with the standards process, this function is intended to oversee and guarantee, as a responsibility, the evaluation stage of the process of identification, validation and the certification of competences.

The function is related to the assessment that provides, at least, the technical examination 'Dossier/Document of transparency'. Each Region and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, as part of their regulations, may also include a possible direct assessment of the candidate through audition, technical interview or performance test, in any case, through an evaluative standard set by default. The opportunity and the depth of the possible assessment must be balanced by the amount and quality of the evidence presented in the Dossier through the application of the criteria of value and relevance of such evidence.

The following key activities have been identified:

- verification and evaluation of the documentation relating to the users entering the assessment process, including the documentary evidence produced in the 'Dossier/Document of transparency';

- planning the competences assessment process, taking into account the characteristics of each validation user, the context of exercise and the reference standards;

- planning the assessment procedure following the criteria of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence required in accordance with regional regulations as well as equity of the conditions and privacy of validation users;

- definition, where necessary, of the indicators observed and of the minimum standards of performance based on the professional reference standards;

- detailed planning of the testing procedures and definition of the relevant assessment criteria;

- implementation of procedures and tests in accordance with the project planning and with the reference rules of the system of validation and certification;

– monitor the entire process through reports and information systems or documents arranged.

3) 'Assessment sector expert' – Function of implementation of assessment activities concerning curricular and professional content

The function is mandatory in the case of direct assessment (in presence of the candidate). If the procedure requires only the dossier, technical examination is optional. To meet this objective, the following key activities have been identified:

– assessment of the technical quality of the incoming documentation including the documentary evidence produced;

– analysis of the activities and expected performance with reference to the qualifications' professional standards and to the relevant repertories;

– preparing and carrying out of technical interviews;

– fulfilment of situational tests by preparing appropriate settings with regards to the required professional standards;

– formulation of technical assessments required by the procedure in accordance with the provided documentation;

– participation in the assessment process in accordance with regional regulations while respecting the principles of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence.

The condition to access the role is that the expert should have at least five years of experience relevant to the contents of the assessment and exercised in the last ten years, continuously or not continuously.

In each Region, the three functions can be named and upgraded in different ways, but the fundamental activities and roles within the process should remain the same, as described above.

7.2 Qualification requirements

The National framework on validation makes the different qualification authorities responsible for the tasks of qualifying their practitioners according to the rules and standards defined in the framework.

Some Regions include in their qualification systems some qualifications which referred to the functions of validation practitioners. They created training pathways for them with a formal certification (i.e. Toscana). Some other Regions prefer to include the job profiles for validation practitioners in the accreditation quality system (i.e. Lombardia).

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Each qualification authority (entitling body) of the national validation and certification system has its own training initiatives and there are currently several initiatives underway especially at a Regional level.

To support the quality and optimization of practitioners training at a national level Inapp has developed a multimedia training package designed in an open source environment (Moodle) and delivered on a MOOC platform (Massive Online Open

Courses) to support the training of the operators of identification, validation and certification of competences.

The training path accompanies the correct application of the standards and tools identified by the Legislative Decree. n. 13/2013 and the Inter-ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015, standards and tools that are then as we know implemented at regional level.

From the operational point of view, the course aims to transfer to the operators of the services of identification, validation and certification of competences a common basis of information, knowledge, methodologies and tools useful to manage the different phases of the process.

The final version of the modules is available on the platform at the following address: http://mooc.librettocompetenze.it/

The course is divided into four modules, usable together or individually, each of which is organized into distinct learning units, divided in turn into two sections, an information and a training one.

The modules are divided as follows: Module 0 is common for all the three functions and the other three are strictly connected to the process profiles (cfr. 7.1):

Module 0 - Introduction to the subject of validation and certification (Introduction to the topic of competence certification, foundational concepts, premises and definitions, the European scenario, the national operational framework: processes, functions and tools).

Module 1 - Supporting the identification and transparency of competences (Accompaniment to the identification and transparency of competences; Reception and information; Reconstructing experience; Identifying and describing competences; Assembling and drafting a transparency document).

Module 2 - Designing and implementing the assessment (Design and implement assessment; Check evidence and documentation; Plan assessment; Assessing and releasing certifications.

Module 3 - Assessing the curricular and sectoral aspects (Assessing the curricular and sectoral aspects; Plan the assessment; Assessing the curricular aspects).

8   Quality assurance

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;

![ICF logo]

- collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence at every stage of the procedure.

The quality assurance framework will be further developed through specific Guidelines.

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this Decree 13 are jointly carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, by the Ministry of Education, University and Research and by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, with the support of the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (*Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori* - ISFOL).

The Decree of 30 June 2015 on the National Framework of Regional Qualifications further regulates the quality assurance framework by defining a number of indicators related to the above-mentioned system. These indicators include the job description and requirements of the personnel involved in validation and an operational approach to the principles of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence. Within the same Decree, Annex 5 "*Technical requirements in the service process of identification, validation and certification competences*" outlines also a set of compliance indicators for the quality assurance linked to every step of the process: identification, assessment and attestation.

At regional level, there are specific procedures for quality assurance consistent with the funding and legal rules: they are often linked to the procedures and the features of companies or professionals carrying out the validation services.

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

Concerning the EQAVET National Quality Plan, the involved institutions supported by Inapp are currently promoting a shared reflection and commitment through the peer learning activities, which are about integrating the quality assurance indicators in order to cover all the new validation provisions.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

The funding framework for validation activities has not changed since 2016 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.

Within the last two years, there has been an increased use of the Youth Guarantee funds for validation procedures addressed to NEET beneficiaries, including the national project of validation in the Civil Service, which was mentioned in section 2.4.

9.2 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 1 200 per individual (depending on the complexity of the individual experience and on the need/opportunity for external assessment).

Usually in Italy no charges are expected from the validation beneficiaries. Most of the validation practices are carried out with public funds but in some contexts. there are some pilot experiences of co-funding between private and public funds. For instance, in the Lombardia regional system, there is a contribution requested to the candidate of validation and certification services (around EUR 600) but just if he or she needs tutorship in building up the portfolio and if he or she is not classified as belonging to a disadvantaged group.

In Emilia Romagna, there are some experiences of funding in cooperation between public and specific enterprises interested in validation for their employees.

9.3   Evidence of benefits to individuals

Given the recent changes and the dynamic situation of validation in Italy, it is difficult to evaluate the benefits of validation to individuals.

Nevertheless, according to a survey carried out by INAPP (publication underway), some primary data on impact and benefits has been collected.

The survey was carried out in 2015 and involved all actors who have been involved in the 52 surveyed practices. The survey was aimed at understanding what types of benefits and advantages have been experienced and what costs were incurred in terms of economic and organizational efficiency. Out of the 511 interviews carried out, 52 were with managers of the validation practice; 105 with operators/practitioners involved in the operational management of validation tools; and 355 with beneficiaries of validation.

Asked about what is the effectiveness of validation practice for beneficiaries, the majority of **managers** (42.3%) claimed that validation processes may have an impact on employment chances. Others claimed that validation is effective for the vocational or professional orientation and in terms of related / subsequent decisions (25.0%) and a fraction of the interviewed managers considered that validation may have an impact on individual well-being (3.8%).

Asked about whether the management of the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning had brought a return of investment for their own organization, the majority of **managers** surveyed (84.6%) responded positively. The benefits identified were related to the consolidation of the validation service within their traditional systems and the creation of partnerships at national, regional and European level.

The **practitioners** surveyed were mostly trainers, coordinators of training and operators of the employment services. All operators agreed that, to perform the validation activities, specific skills are required. In particular, those skills are mainly related to understanding the regulatory framework (55.2%); guidance and assessment (14.3%); training design (7.6%); interviewing techniques (5.7%).

The majority of validation practitioners (76.2%) were able to take advantage of the specific training on the validation processes and reference tools as well as on the techniques for the identification and validation, on counseling and assessment.

In terms of impact and return of investment, 60.8% of **beneficiaries** interviewed claimed to have benefitted from the validation process. In particular, the respondents claimed to have used the certificate to boost their CV and for use at job interviews.

Most of the surveyed **beneficiaries** (48.2%) evaluated the relationship with the operators of the validation service as excellent while only 2.8% defined it as critical or very critical. Most of the beneficiaries interviewed (40.8%) believed that the validation

service is easily accessible, simple enough (36.9%) and beneficial (35.8%) and very pleasant (49.6%).

Finally, when asked if the validation process has influenced their current employment status, 63.1% of beneficiaries responded affirmatively emphasizing that through the validation procedure they had been able to find a new job or to improve their search for a job and to better manage job interviews.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

There is data from some regional monitoring systems that indicates an increasing trend in the number of beneficiaries of validation.

Emilia Romagna

The system of validation and certification of competences in the Emilia Romagna Region has been in place since 2007 and is constantly monitored by the Regional authority.

The procedure resulted in three types of outcomes: 1) Certificate of a whole qualification, 2) Certificate of competences (it means that one or more competence of a qualification is certified) and 3) Card of Skills and knowledge (that is released when a validation dossier does not reach the requirements for certification of at least one competence).

The data available are presented in Table 9.1 below:

Table 9.1   Number of Certificates released in Emilia Romagna in 2007/2017

Kind of certification	2007/2017
Certificates of Qualification	9 433
Certificates of Competence	3 868
Cards Skills and Knowledge	31 725
Sum	44 026

Toscana

The validation system in Toscana is based on using the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* which is the tool (also electronic) through which the identification, validation and certification processes are carried out.

Since 2011, this service was proposed to unemployed people (economically sustained) and subsequently to other target groups.

The monitoring has been enriched over time with new variables. The latest figures from the region indicate that 57 444 Libretto were released in the period 2011-2017.

9.4.2 Validation users

As already mentioned above, according to the periodical surveys carried out by IINAPP I (www.librettocompetenze.it), the main target groups of validation of non-formal and informal learning over the last five years have been:

–   Unemployed people or workers at risk of unemployment;

–   Workers in sectors which are poorly regulated and with the need for professional accreditation;

–   Immigrant workers without formal qualifications that by now take up a permanent base in whole segments of the labour market (i.e. in the sectors of logistics, building, health and social assistance care);

–   Highly qualified young Italians who move abroad for work or study;

–   Volunteers, interns, apprentices.

9.4.3   Validation and disadvantaged groups

Migrants and refugees are considered as one of the most relevant target groups for validation and many pilot projects, listed in the box below, have been focusing on this target group. However, at the time of writing this report for the 2019 update, there is no specific relevant initiative on validation in place mainly due to Italy having experienced a transition migration flow and only a small number of migrants have been interested in staying and working in Italy.

Box 2 Pilot projects on validation for migrants and refugees

Some examples of pilot validation projects targeted at immigrants or refugees are listed below:

- DISCORSI - MIGRANTI – Dialogue inter-regional on Competences, Health and House for migrants integration (presented at the First Validation Festival in Brussels, 14-15 june 2018).

source:https://migrazionicop.wordpress.com/

■   'FAIR – For a new recognition of skills developed in the non-formal and informal settings in the fair trade sector';
■   'FORTH - From non-formal and informal learning to a flexible training system for healthcare workers';
■   'Give Competence a Chance';
■   ;Highlight the competences';
■   'I CARE - Informal Competences Assessment And Recognition For Employment';
■   'Rear Window - Transparent Qualifications In The Engineering Sector';
■   'Talenti di cura';
■   'Trasforbuilding';

Source: VALICO www.librettocompetenze.it

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10   Validation methods

At the present time, there is a formal agreement on the procedures and methodologies to be used to validate non-formal and informal learning in Italy.
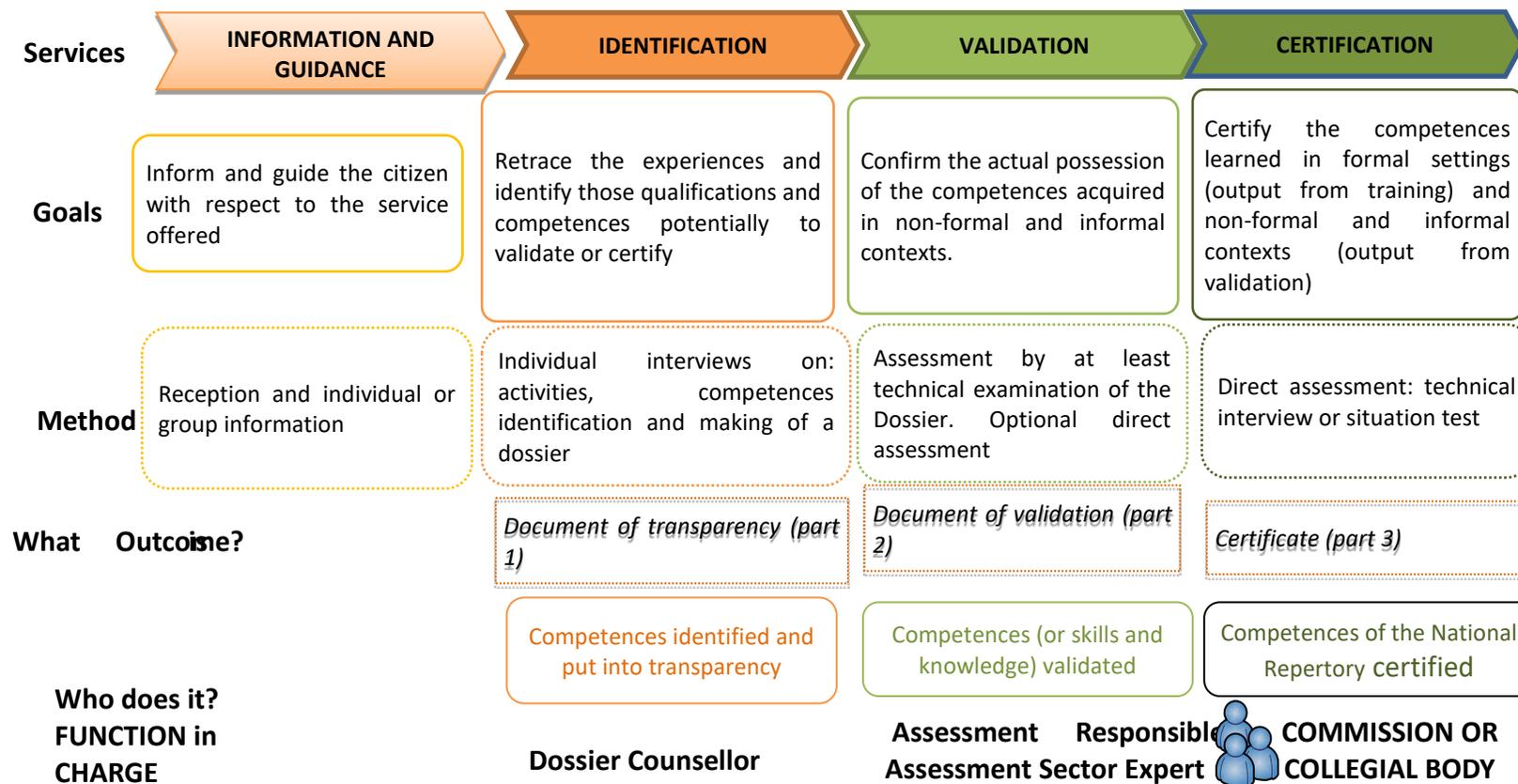
The Decree 13/2013 has established a first methodological framework (see Section 2.2)

The National Framework of Regional Qualifications of 30 June 2015 created a more precise methodological framework, which is described and illustrated in Table 10.1 and Figure 10.2 below.

Table 10.1 Comprehensive framework of processes and procedures of validation and certification in formal, non-formal and informal learning (extract from DI 30 June 2015)

Process phases	PROCESS IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION of non-formal and informal learning	PROCEDURE FOR CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES AS A RESULT OF VALIDATION of non-formal and informal learning	PROCEDURE FOR CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCE ACQUIRED IN FORMAL CONTEXT
Identification	Identification of the competences, evidence collection and elaboration of a Dossier.	Admission through the 'Document for validation' or validated Dossier	Admission through formalizing the attainment of the learning outcome
Assessment	Technical examination of the Dossier and optional direct assessment (audition or technical structured interview or other testing methods)	Summative assessment carried out with technical structured interviews and/or performance tests. Commission that ensures compliance with the principles of impartiality, independence and objectivity of the process	Summative assessment carried out with technical structured interviews and/or performance tests. Commission that ensures compliance with the principles of impartiality, independence and objectivity of the process
Attestation	'Document for validation' or Dossier Validated (value at least of second part)	Qualification Certificate (value of third part)	Qualification Certificate (value of third part)

Figure 10.2 Summary of standard according to DI 30 June 2015 on National Framework of Regional Qualification

Services	INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE	IDENTIFICATION	VALIDATION	CERTIFICATION
Goals	Inform and guide the citizen with respect to the service offered	Retrace the experiences and identify those qualifications and competences potentially to validate or certify	Confirm the actual possession of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts.	Certify the competences learned in formal settings (output from training) and non-formal and informal contexts (output from validation)
Method	Reception and individual or group information	Individual interviews on: activities, competences identification and making of a dossier	Assessment by at least technical examination of the Dossier. Optional direct assessment	Direct assessment: technical interview or situation test
What Outcome? is the		*Document of transparency (part 1)*	*Document of validation (part 2)*	*Certificate (part 3)*
		Competences identified and put into transparency	Competences (or skills and knowledge) validated	Competences of the National Repertory certified
Who does it? FUNCTION in CHARGE		**Dossier Counsellor**	**Assessment Responsible Assessment Sector Expert**	**COMMISSION OR COLLEGIAL BODY**

The method of Portfolio / Dossier is quite well known in Italy and widely used in the identification stage; it has been successfully used also in the National Programme of Competence Validation for volunteers in civil service in the Youth Guarantee.

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

The opportunities for validation when they are visible and made available always appear very welcome and used by the beneficiaries; there is however no hard data but it is how this appears to the operators who manage the information in these services. Thanks to the future national monitoring arrangement, it will be possible to estimate exactly the attitude of the beneficiaries towards these opportunities.

Validation in Italy has been stable for at least 10 years, due to the certainty of a serious scientific and institutional debate; and for five years there has also been strong evidence in the reforms of educational policies and support to employability measures. It is difficult to provide an assessment of how validation outcomes can be considered socially reliable even in the labour market. It will inevitably take some time for the system to be fully launched and widely disseminated.

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MOOC VaLiCo (Massive Online Open Courses) to support the training of the operators of identification, validation and certification of competences. http://mooc.librettocompetenze.it/

RUIAP Italian university network for lifelong learning at university level (University LLL) organised a first level Masters programme in 'Expert in accompaniment to competence recognition and validation of prior learning'. http://www.ruiap.it

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