

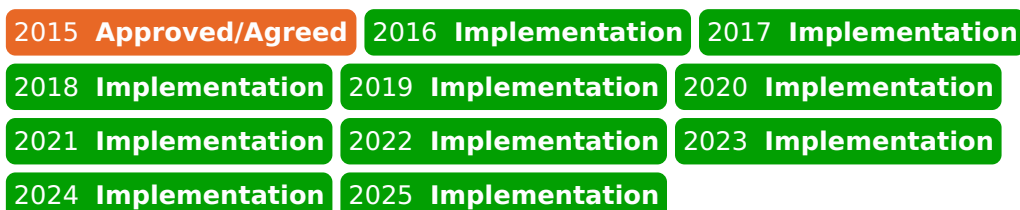
# The regulatory framework for apprenticeship

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 ITALY

## Timeline



**ID number 28313**

## Background

Since 2015, the regulatory framework for apprenticeships in Italy has been shaped by Legislative Decree 81/2015. This framework involves coordination between the labour and education ministries, regions, and autonomous provinces. The State-regions conference defines national education and training standards, while regions and social partners handle training implementation. National and inter-sector collective labour agreements regulate details such as hiring, trial periods, contracts, salaries, and training standards. The reform supports the dual system, integrating education with the labour market.

## Objectives

- integrate training and employment of young people within a dual system by reinforcing those apprenticeships linked with the education and training system, and particularly within initial vocational education and training (IVET) pathways;
- reinforce apprenticeship for higher training/education and research;
- introduce elements of flexibility to simplify the actual legislation and boost the attractiveness of apprenticeship amongst enterprises;
- set up a specific pedagogical methodology aimed at reinforcing the school-work exchange programme;
- further integrate education and training.

## Description

Apprenticeship regulations were entirely reformed in 2015 (Legislative Decree No 81/2015). The State-regions conference is in charge of defining the minimum set of education and training standards valid for all regions countrywide. The Regions and autonomous provinces, together with social partners, are responsible for the training component definition and implementation. The National collective labour agreements or inter-sector agreements regulate apprenticeships in detail with the obligation to respect some general

principles. The inter-sector and national collective labour agreements generally refer to all apprenticeship types regarding apprentice hiring, trial period duration, contract form, salary, company tutor, in-company training, and occupational standards. Following the reform, apprenticeship has been defined as a job contract structured in three different schemes.

Type 1 - Apprenticeship for young people aged 15 to 25 enrolled in three- or four-year school-based programmes. Type 1 leads to formal qualifications (VET diploma, upper secondary school diploma), higher technical specialisation (IFTS), and entry to vocational tertiary education. The labour ministry has the overall coordination of Type 1-apprenticeship implementation strategies, regulations and activities at national level, also through dedicated bodies. Through the type 1-apprenticeship, which is formally recognised as an instrument supporting integration between the education and training system and the labour market, the labour ministry underpins the development of the dual system in Italy

Type 2 - Vocational apprenticeship, for young people aged 18 to 29, which is enterprise-based. It is targeted at young people but also adult workers who have been made redundant. It has a training component, which is marginal: a maximum 120 hours in three years, to be carried out inside or outside the company. No qualification from the formal education system is awarded upon completion, but the apprentice can become a skilled worker by acquiring a contractual qualification defined and recognised by collective labour agreements.

Type 3 - Higher education and research apprenticeship, for young people aged 18-29, which leads to a university degree or fulfils requirements for carrying out research or compulsory traineeship to access liberal professions.

The reform aimed to boost apprenticeship (the changes mainly affected the first and third type, the apprenticeships leading to formal qualifications), improve the on-the-job-training component, reduce early school-leaving, and improve the transition from the education system to the job market. It also supported the development of a dual system in Italy. Dual VET includes learners enrolled in three/four-year regional vocational programmes (IeFP), IFTS students and apprentices. The ministerial Decree of 12 October 2015 specified the framework components for apprenticeship contracts: the duties and responsibilities of the signatory parties, the employer's requirements, the training standards, the apprentice's rights and obligations, the tasks assigned to the company and workplace tutor and to the tutor at the training institution, and skills' assessment and certification modalities. The duration of apprenticeship contracts varies from a minimum of six months to a maximum linked to the period required to achieve the qualification and tasks assigned in the contract. Simplification and flexibility have been introduced for operating apprenticeships, including through individualised training plans, and making remuneration proportional to the effective number of hours spent on the job. Financial incentives were also introduced in the form of a total social security exemption. To support recruitment of young people on a permanent contract in the same company where they were on alternance or on types 1 or 3 apprenticeship, companies are entitled to total social security exemption for the first three years.

The 2015 Jobs Act (legislative Decree No 81/2015) about the new apprenticeship system and the inter-ministerial decree of 12 October 2015 refer to the role and tasks of trainers in companies and teaching staff.

Decree 81/2015 provides that apprenticeship may be used to achieve a diploma or a qualification. Fruitful cooperation amongst companies is fundamental in this regard.

The labour ministry is carrying out specific actions to tackle all emerging critical issues which don't fully allow the implementation of Type 1 apprenticeships. Since the 2015 reform, a number of local and national level agreements have been signed in various sectors within the context of a 'dual system'.

### **2015 Approved/Agreed**

In the academic year 2015/16 a national pilot for the support, development and reinforcement of the dual system within vocational education and training (VET) was

launched, based on a State-regions agreement of 24 September 2015.

### **2016 Implementation**

In 2016, the Legislative Decree No 81/2015 introduced the possibility -for apprentices that don't obtain their qualification or diploma by the planned date- to extend Type 1 apprenticeship for one year.

### **2017 Implementation**

### **2018 Implementation**

Law 145/2018 re-affirmed the financial incentives which pre-existed in law 205/2017.

### **2019 Implementation**

The Italian budget Law No160/2019 provides total exemption from payment of social security contributions for the first 36 months of the contract for those enterprises (up to nine employees) hiring young workers with a Type 1- Apprenticeship contract. This provision was planned to enter into force in 2020 with the aim to support enterprises to hire and train young workers.

The rate of 10% is kept for any contribution after the third year. The 2019 Budget Law, only addressed type 1-apprenticeship and micro-enterprises, which made very limited use of this apprenticeship type.

In December 2019, the National Technical Body for Apprenticeship, was formed to boost coordination at national level by bringing together different stakeholders and simplifying administrative procedures to use type 1-apprenticeship.

### **2020 Implementation**

In 2020, total exemption from payment of social security contributions for the first 36 months of the contract for those companies (up to nine employees) hiring young workers with a Type 1- Apprenticeship contract came into force pursuant to the provisions of Italian budget law.

In 2020, the labour ministry, together with education ministries, organised several meetings with an ad hoc working group called the National Technical Board, in order to support the National Technical Body for Apprenticeship for the preparation of the national repertoire of professions, to improve the application of Type 1 apprenticeship (according to Article 43 of legislative Decree No 81/2015) and to resolve critical issues (e.g to support companies, especially SMEs to implement apprenticeship regulations, to support the dissemination of apprenticeship opportunities to relevant target groups, etc) .

The meetings, attended by all the actors involved (labour ministry, regions and public administrations, social security institutions, inspectorates, economic and social partners, technical-scientific institutions such as the Italian National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies (INAPP), the National Agency for Active Employment Policies (ANPAL) and the Association of the Regions for the European Social Fund (Tecnostruttura), focused only on Type 1 -apprenticeship within the dual system to simplify the implementation of the contract.

The National Technical Body for Apprenticeships aims to boost coordination at national level and ensure the link with decision-makers, whereas and the National Technical Board, has the key role of 'technically' supporting the National Technical Body for Apprenticeships.

### **2021 Implementation**

In 2021, the National Technical Board analysed the critical issues identified in Type 1

apprenticeship. The goal was to improve the application of Type 1 apprenticeship (ex-Article 43 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2015), by interpreting the legislation that regulates apprenticeship and by simplifying all implementation aspects. The outcome was the following:

- (a) a document which provides interpretative clarifications of Legislative Decree no. 81 of 15 June 2015 and the Inter-ministerial Decree of 12 October 2015;
- (b) an operation manual. The manual aims to promote understanding and the dissemination of Type 1 apprenticeship and to support both training institutions and employers, in the various phases of the provision of Type 1 apprenticeship, from the feasibility analysis to the organisation, management, and evaluation of training in the company.

## 2022 Implementation

In 2022 the Unified Conference, which was established in 1997, and is part of the multi-governance Italian system, and more specifically an 'institution' that promotes cooperation between the State and Regions and autonomous provinces, approved guidelines for regulating activities relevant to the 'Dual system', under Mission 5-Component 1-Investment 1.4 of the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). More specifically, the guidelines identify potential learners, training providers and administrative actors that are eligible to implement these measures, planning and funding criteria.

On 6 June 2022, the labour ministry issued Circular No. 12 which provided clarifications on the current regulations concerning apprenticeship type 1, including the publication of a manual for employers intending to hire apprentices.

The circular was drawn up following intensive discussions with the education ministry MIM, the Regions, the social partners, National Institute of Social Security (INPS), the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL), the National Labor Inspectorate (INL) and the National Agency for Active Employment Policies (ANPAL). It specifies that, apprenticeship type 1 ends when the results of the final examination of the apprentice are published, at which point he/she may opt for:

- (a) a continuation, with an open-ended contract;
- (b) an extension of the apprenticeship type 1 contract;
- (c) a conversion of the apprenticeship type 1 contract into a vocational apprenticeship;
- (d) a termination of the contract.

Clarifications are also provided about the training plan, the validation and certification of competences and on health and safety at the workplace.

## 2023 Implementation

In July 2023, the Decree-Law No. 48 of 4 May 2023, with amendments, known as the 'Labour Decree' was converted into Law No. 85 of 3 July 2023. The law contains urgent measures for social inclusion and access to the labour market and several regulatory changes regarding apprenticeships have been introduced. Specifically, those who employ recipients of the Inclusion Allowance, including through apprenticeship contracts, are granted an incentive for each worker up to a maximum of €8 000 per year for a period not exceeding 12 months. Additionally, an incentive equal to 60% of the gross monthly salary subject to social security contributions is provided to employers who between June and December 2023 hired young people under 30 years of age with professional apprenticeship contracts, who were neither working nor studying and were registered in the National Operational Programme 'Youth Employment Initiative'. Finally, the regulation removes the percentage limits for hiring with apprenticeship contracts.

In December 2023, the interministerial decree implementing Decree-Law 44/2023, converted into Law 74/2023, was signed. The law established the criteria and procedures by which administrations can recruit, until 31 December 2026, young

graduates selected through competitive procedures announced by the same administrations based on their territorial needs and scope, with fixed-term apprenticeship contracts lasting a maximum of 36 months. The recruitment notices must be published on the recruitment portal of the Department of Public Administration. To implement this regulation, also in December 2023, on the proposal of the Minister for Public Administration, in agreement with the Minister of University and Research, a degree was adopted, establishing the criteria and procedures by which public administrations can recruit young graduates.

Under the new rules, administrations interested in hiring young graduates through apprenticeships can exercise this option within the limit of 10% of the recruitable positions (except for municipalities, unions of municipalities, provinces, and metropolitan cities, for which the limit rises to 20%). The administrations establish the admission requirements through specific notices and candidates have to pass competitive exams, which - include a written test, which may also have a theoretical-practical content, and an oral test to verify the possession of the set of knowledge and logical-technical, behavioural, and attitudinal skills, as well as the knowledge of at least one foreign language.

### **2024 Implementation**

The Draft Law 1532-bis (commonly known as the Labour Draft Law) - currently under review by the competent Senate Committee (<https://www.senato.it/leg/19/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/57744.htm>) concerning training and employment, with specific reference to apprenticeship, in Article 18 envisions a single dual apprenticeship contract. This aims to introduce a "supply chain" apprenticeship, capable of fostering the development of continuous training and employment pathways to meet the needs of businesses and young people. What is currently envisaged is already possible by concluding one contract and then entering into a new one. Article 18 simplifies this process by avoiding the succession of two different contracts. An innovation is the possibility, at the end of a first-level apprenticeship, to transform the contract into an advanced training and research apprenticeship (or third level), should the apprentice wish to continue their studies at a tertiary level without giving up the integration of training and work in apprenticeship. In this sense, the "supply chain" apprenticeship benefits those who, at the end of secondary education, are already engaged in an apprenticeship and wish to continue studying without giving up their job (and salary) at the company where they were hired and trained. Similarly, the company can offer its employee an important (and legally recognised) study programme, maintaining employment continuity. Also in the Labour Draft Law, Article 15 aims to ensure greater flexibility for Regions and Autonomous Provinces in the use of resources made available annually by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to finance training activities related to apprenticeship pathways. The resources currently amount to 15 million, provided by the Social Fund for Employment and Training (FSOF) and are intended solely for professional apprenticeships.

### **2025 Implementation**

On 17 December 2024, Bill No 1532-bis of 2024 (Collegato Lavoro) was enacted as Law No 203/2024 (Budget Law). The law introduced changes to the funding framework and organisation of apprenticeship pathways.

Article 15 provides that, from 2024, annual resources amounting to EUR 15 million, previously allocated exclusively to basic and transversal training under professional apprenticeship (second level), may be used to support all types of apprenticeship. The measure aims to rebalance resource utilisation across apprenticeship pathways, including first- and third level (dual) apprenticeships.

Article 18 further allows first-level apprenticeship contracts, after the attainment of the qualification and the update of the individual training plan, to be converted into either a professional apprenticeship contract, as already provided for under Legislative Decree No 81/2015, or a higher education and research apprenticeship contract.

More broadly, the Collegato Lavoro introduces the concept of a 'single dual apprenticeship cycle', allowing the apprenticeship contract to continue through university education and where applicable, up to doctoral studies or the traineeship required for access to regulated professions. This enables learners completing upper secondary education to progress into tertiary education while maintaining the same contract and employer.

From the 2024/2025 academic year, a pilot phase involving regions in territorial planning allows students enrolled in experimental four-year upper secondary pathways or in four-year regional vocational education and training (IeFP) programmes, within the technological-vocational stream and validated by INVALSI, to directly access two-year programmes of the ITS Academy system, supporting the development of a 4+2 training campus model.

In 2025, Decree-Law No 25 of 14 March 2025 (Decreto reclutamento), converted into Law No 69 of 9 May 2025, introduced provisions on apprenticeship in the public administration. The law allows local authorities to increase hiring capacity by 15 % through the recruitment of young people holding specific technical qualifications, including diplomas issued by the ITS Academy system, under apprenticeship contracts of up to 36 months. The measure aims to address staff shortages and applies on a temporary basis until the conclusion of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

The efforts made thus far to introduce apprenticeship into the Public Administration have yielded modest results.

## Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
- Regions and autonomous provinces
- Ministry of Education and Merit
- Ministry of Education (until 2022)
- Ministry of Universities and Research
- Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (until 2019)

## Target group

### Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices  
Young people (15-29 years old)

### Education professionals

Teachers  
Trainers

### Entities providing VET

Companies  
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)  
VET providers (all kinds)

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### **Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation**

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

## **European priorities in VET**

### **VET Recommendation**

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

### **Osnabrück Declaration**

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

## **Subsystem**

IVET

## **Further reading**

[Law 27 December 2019, No160, State budget for financial year 2020 and multi-year budget for the three-year period 2020-22](#)

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[Guidelines for the planning and implementation of Vocational education and training and Higher technical education and training in dual modality, published on 19 September 2022:](#)

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[Ministry of Labour and Social Policies \(2022\). The apprenticeship type 1 contract, pursuant to article 43 of the Legislative Decree June 15, 2015 and of the Interministerial Decree of 12 October 2015. Circular No. 12, N. 81, 6 June 2022](#)

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[XX Apprenticeship Monitoring Report](#)

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[Law No. 85 of 3 July 2023](#)

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[interministerial decree implementing Decree-Law 44/2023, converted into Law 74/2023](#)

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## **Related policy developments**

**2022 Completed**

### **Defining tasks of trainers in companies**

The 2015 Jobs Act (legislative decree No 81/2015), on the apprenticeship system, and the inter-ministerial decree of 12 October 2015 refer to the role and tasks of trainers in companies and teaching staff.

 ITALY

#### **Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2025 Implementation

### National strategy for competences/skills

A National strategy for competences/skills has been launched based on the education and training (Good school) and labour (Jobs Act) reforms.

 ITALY

#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2025 Implementation

### Cooperation framework with industry

On 13 July 2015, the Italian government adopted a reform of the national education system emphasising alternance between classroom work and periods of workplace training. The main objective is to boost school-to-work transition by increasing employment opportunities and guidance for students.

 ITALY

#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

#### Subsystem

IVET

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