

PANORAMA

Lifelong learning in Italy

The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Italy

Lifelong learning in Italy

The extent to which vocational education
and training policy is nurturing
lifelong learning in Italy

Pierluigi Richini

Cedefop Panorama series; 43

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2002

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2002

ISBN 92-896-0146-9

ISSN 1562-6180

© European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2002

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium

The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference Centre for vocational education and training. We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 337/75.

Europe 123
GR-57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)

Postal Address:
PO Box 22427
GR-55102 Thessaloniki

Tel. (30) 310 490 111
Fax (30) 310 490 020
E-mail: info@cedefop.eu.int
Homepage: www.cedefop.eu.int
Interactive website: www.trainingvillage.gr

Pierluigi Richini

Edited by:

Cedefop

Martina Ní Cheallaigh, Project manager

Published under the responsibility of:
Johan van Rens, Director
Stavros Stavrou, Deputy Director

Foreword

The European year of lifelong learning was 1996, which brought much awareness and promotion of 'lifelong learning for all'. This was also the title of an influential OECD publication in the same year. Since then, lifelong learning has been in prominence on most education and training policy and conference agendas in Europe and has generated much debate. There has also been scope to put some of the theory into practice. Cedefop is setting up a reporting system on developments in lifelong learning in the Electronic Training Village (www.trainingvillage.gr) to monitor progress.

The reporting system will concentrate on delivering up-to-date information on developments, initiatives and research. In addition, there will be reports on the implementation of lifelong learning in systems of vocational education and training (VET) in selected countries. In summer 2000, studies were launched on the extent to which vocational education and training policies and actions nurture lifelong learning in Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Developing a 'system' that supports lifelong learning implies establishing links between a number of highly diversified learning areas, thus opening up opportunities for combinations and synergies not possible in one institutional setting. If supportive policies are being seriously implemented, there must be some evidence that learning is starting to spread over the lifespan. Learning that takes place intentionally and unintentionally at work, at home or during leisure-time, must be acknowledged for its worth, both to the individual and to the organisation. Policies should respond to the main challenge of giving all people a fair chance, and equal opportunities and access to learning throughout their lives, and not allow lifelong learning to become a mechanism that 'reproduces inequalities'.

This report assesses the extent to which lifelong learning strategies are being implemented in VET in Italy. It examines implementation and results achieved from a number of angles: the specific national context being addressed by policy, as well as its focus; the learning areas and structures implicated; the instruments and pedagogical methods used; the actors involved.

With publication of its *Memorandum on lifelong learning* (2000), the European Commission again placed this issue among its priorities. Cedefop is fully aware that vocational education and training is merely one facet of lifelong learning, which, according to the memorandum, has become the guiding principle for provision and participation in all learning contexts. Nevertheless, we hope this report will make a useful contribution to the debate and consultation process launched in the Member States as a follow-up to the memorandum.

Cedefop wishes to thank Mr Pierluigi Richini of Networking Srl for preparing this report on lifelong learning in Italy.

Stavros Stavrou
Deputy Director

Martina Ní Cheallaigh
Project Manager

Preface by the author

In Italy, as in other countries of the European Union, a far-reaching process of education reform has been set in motion. This came into being outside the educational and training systems and has to meet a complex set of requirements, both of an economic nature and in terms of social exchange.

Training and employment policies must meet the new requirements of a global and ever more specialised market, characterised by imposing technological innovations. The Italian system has, in fact, been completely redesigned, starting with the September 1996 labour agreement, and the December 1998 Pact for development and employment. With these the government and social partners laid the foundations for the ensuing redefinition of relationships between supply systems (school education, university, vocational training) and the labour market on the one hand, and between central institutions (ministry, and partly, the regions) and the local level (provinces, and more particularly the single actors who provided on-the-spot supply: school institutions, training agencies, employment services) on the other.

This study aims to:

- demonstrate the processes of total system reform, at both political and statutory level, in the different ambits (school education, vocational training, continuing training, adult education, etc.) and in integration amongst them;
- check the degree of implementation, in other words any initiatives and specific action towards lifelong learning in the country, with an analysis of its impact;
- draw future conclusions regarding policy and practice.

In order to facilitate understanding of the area of investigation, some of the terms used are defined:

- **initial training** refers to a complex organised system comprising school and/or training institutions both public or private, operating at national and regional levels, to which training provision stemming from the universities stands in parallel. The system is characterised both in terms of its aims, intended to encourage the transition of young people into the world of work, and by the qualifications to which the training pathways give rise;
- **continuing training** refers to training which targets employed workers and workers at risk of unemployment; this term refers, in particular, to activities involving the shared interest of both companies and workers;
- **company training** refers to training activities aimed at employed workers, company-organised activities, in which the worker is required to participate;
- **vocational training** refers to the set of interventions aimed at first insertion, improvement, retraining and vocational guidance, to continuous, permanent and recurrent training and training related to the reconversion of productive activity;

- **lifelong learning**, as stated in the European Commission's *Memorandum on lifelong learning* (2000), sees 'all learning as a seamless continuum from the cradle to the grave'.

The study has drawn on numerous sources of data, with particular reference to data published by national public institutions responsible for defining policy orientations and monitoring their implementation, such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, ISFOL, ISTAT, and the individual regions.

The reform process is in full swing in Italy. Many of the reforms entail long and complex statutory instruments. Three different types are used extensively in the text: the law, which is an act passed by Parliament; the memorandum or agreement between governments at national, regional and local level; and the protocol agreements between the social partners or between public authorities (at national, regional and local level). Agreements between the social partners are also described. As many of these instruments are still at the implementation stage, results are not yet evident. Therefore, it was not possible to relate all the questions raised by the study to data and information produced by scientific methods or statistics. In particular for the issues covered in Section 3 and some of the areas considered in Section 4, the experience of privileged witnesses of the phenomena under observation needed to be drawn upon and their views aired. The report uses qualitative interviews with the following experts:

- Francesco Avallone, incumbent Professor of industrial psychology in the faculty of psychology of the University of Rome 'La Sapienza';
- Franco Frigo, co-ordinator of the ISFOL continuing training project. (Higher institute for worker training and guidance);
- Anna D'Arcangelo, ISFOL researcher, experienced in matters of adult education and higher technical education and training (IFTS);
- Paolo Inghilesi, leader of the CGIL's research and training sector (Italian General Confederation of Workers);
- Gabriella di Francesco, leader of the ISFOL certification project.

Grateful thanks are also due to Francesco Mancuso, the trade unions advisor for the OBNF bilateral organisations (Confindustria – CGIL – CISL - UIL) and Chirone 2000 (bilateral organisation comprising Federreti – CGIL – CISL - UIL) for the indications and suggestions provided.

Pierluigi Richini

Table of contents

Foreword	1
Preface by the author	3
Table of contents	5
List of tables and figures	9
Executive summary	11
1. Policy, legislation and structural framework	13
1.1. Policy principle: towards the integration of systems.....	13
1.1.1. Cooperation between educational bodies at all levels	16
1.2. Innovations in the initial vocational training system.....	18
1.2.1. Initial education and training	18
1.2.1.1. Compulsory education	19
1.2.1.2. Post-compulsory education	20
1.2.1.3. The regional vocational training system	21
1.2.2. Initial in-company training.....	22
1.2.2.1. Apprenticeship	22
1.2.2.2. Employment-training contracts: features and extent	25
1.2.2.3. On-the-job training and counselling	26
1.2.3. Integrated higher technical education and training	27
1.3. Continuing training in the business environment.....	30
1.3.1. Italian companies and their willingness to train.....	30
1.3.2. The national legislative background	32
1.3.3. The continuing training experience since Law No 236/93	33
1.4. Adult education	36
1.4.1. Legislative background	36
1.4.2. The experience of the territorial adult education centres	37
2. Support measures for promoting participation and access, modes of delivery and action	41
2.1. Skills certification as a fundamental tool of integration	41
2.1.1. Regional evolution	42
2.1.2. Problems of integration at the national level	43
2.2. Cooperation between institutions and social partners	45
2.2.1. The main education and training agreements	45
2.2.1.1. The 1993 agreement.....	45

2.2.1.2.	The 1996 labour agreement	46
2.2.2.	An analysis of the need for a national contribution	47
2.2.3.	Company, sectoral and territorial training plans	47
2.2.4.	Bilateral funds for continuing training	49
2.3.	Developing individualised continuing vocational training	49
2.3.1.	Promotion of individual training in Law No 236/93	49
2.3.2.	Towards an individualised continuing training model.....	52
2.3.3.	Some comparisons of local experimentation	54
2.3.4.	Paid educational leave.....	57
2.4.	Development of distance learning and self-learning methodologies and techniques.....	58
2.4.1.	Ministry of Labour projects	59
2.4.2.	Ministry of Education projects.....	60
2.4.3.	Contribution of EU programmes	60
2.4.4.	Company training projects	63
2.5.	The guidance function in employment services	63
3.	Curricular development and content, learning strategies and methodologies	67
3.1.	Introduction	67
3.2.	Changes underway and educational modelling	68
3.3.	New curricular models	69
3.4.	New learning environments	71
3.5.	New skills for trainers	72
4.	Conclusions, observations and evaluation of current progress.....	77
4.1.	Towards a national system of lifelong learning	77
4.1.1.	Redesigning the education and training system	77
4.1.2.	Developing IFTS.....	78
4.1.3.	Developing continuing training	79
4.1.4.	Developments in adult education.....	83
4.1.5.	Developing individualised training.....	83
4.1.6.	Developing the certification system.....	85
4.2.	Problems still pending.....	86
4.2.1.	The new school model	86
4.2.2.	Supporting the individualised project	87
4.2.3.	Promoting continuing training	88
4.2.4.	Training of the over-45s and the weaker social groups	89

4.2.5. Developments in distance training.....	91
4.2.6. Skills recognition	92
Annex 1 Legislation.....	95
List of abbreviations/glossary	99
Bibliography.....	103

List of tables and figures

Tables

Table 1:	Classification of integration experience according to complexity of planning and type of training	18
Table 2:	Estimated numbers involved in compulsory training on the basis of gradual phasing in	20
Table 3:	Persons enrolled on first and second level regional initial training courses in 1998-99	22
Table 4:	Regional distribution of apprentices, as a percentage of labour force 15-24 years of age in 1997-99	24
Table 5:	New apprentice identikit: certificate	25
Table 6:	Distribution of workers starting CFL by age and percentage.....	26
Table 7:	Distribution of workers starting CFL by qualification and percentage	26
Table 8:	IFTS courses 1998-99 by economic sector	28
Table 9:	Regional distribution of IFTS projects, for 1998-99 and 1999-2000.....	30
Table 10:	Characteristics of users of permanent territorial adult education centre courses in 1998-99	39
Table 11:	Characteristics of users of short literacy basic skills courses in permanent territorial adult education centres in 1998-99	39
Table 12:	Administrations involved in implementing individual training schemes for employed workers, and allocation of resources, in ITL and EUR	51
Table 13:	Age class distribution of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna.....	55
Table 14:	Distribution by sex and age group of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna.....	55
Table 15:	Distribution by certificate of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna.....	56
Table 16:	Distribution by vocational position and by sex of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna	56
Table 17:	Distribution by company economic sector to which participants in initial training experimentation belong, in Emilia Romagna	56
Table 18:	Comparison of ADAPT Phase II projects, involving distance training and general training, and relative geographical distribution.....	62

Figures

Figure 1:	Reformed system map.....	15
-----------	--------------------------	----

Executive summary

This study examines the process of reform of education and training systems in Italy, which is based largely on integrating and harmonising education, training and work. Implementation of this reform is at the heart of attempts to develop a culture of lifelong learning.

This study is set out in four main sections:

- (a) Section 1. - policy, legislation and structural framework, depicts the general situation regarding policies and innovations introduced at statutory level in Italy towards implementing the objectives of the lifelong learning principle;
 - (i) Section 1.1. - policy principle: towards the integration of systems - introduces the principle of integration around which policy is currently being built, and analyses the actions aimed at promoting cooperation between bodies from different institutional and social backgrounds, and with different connotations in terms of educational culture, intended to bring about forms of integration between systems and their relevant actors;
 - (ii) Section 1.2. - innovations in the initial vocational training system - illustrates the initial training policies and systems in Italy, with particular reference to changes introduced over recent years with the intention of bringing national standards into line with European ones, and laying the foundations for constructing education and continuing training;
 - (iii) Section 1.3. - continuing training in the business environment - describes national politics for continuing training, with particular reference to the thrust and experience built up under Law No. 236/93 (all laws mentioned in the text are listed in Annex 1) which has been applied in innovative ways under various memorandums, and which is of interest for the success of lifelong learning (LLL) in Italy;
 - (iv) Section 1.4. - adult education - introduces the specific legislative form of adult education, which puts a new slant on the '150 hours' experience - introduced by the social partners in 1972 with national collective bargaining - towards a new system which integrates education and continuing training. With its ministerial orders No 455 and No 456, the Ministry of Education has made far-reaching changes to the structure of services on offer, creating territorial centres for adult education, whose experiences are related in Section 1.4.2.;
- (b) Section 2. - support measures for promoting participation and access, modes of delivery and action - looks at measures aimed at supporting these changes to the system and promoting lifelong learning in Italy;
 - (i) Section 2.1. - skills certification as a fundamental tool of integration - looks at national legislation and follows the development of types of attestation and certification at regional level;

- (ii) cooperation between institutions and social partners is of particular importance in the development of continuing training and recent relevant innovations, besides more general innovations in education and training systems. This issue is dealt with in Section 2.2. (Cooperation between institutions and social bodies). It looks at planning models, based on the five years of experience with the European Social Funds (ESF) and on the provision of training for employed workers according to Law No. 236/93, with particular reference to the achievements of business, sectoral and territorial training plans (provisions introduced with the Ministry of Labour's Circular No 65/99) and with the recent creation of bilateral Funds;
- (iii) Section 2.3. - developing individualised continuing vocational training - treats the recognised right of the individual to continuing training, introduced in experimental form by Law No. 236/93, and sanctioned - through the introduction of training leave – by Law No. 53/2000, and describes some local experimentation. Fifteen regions have earmarked part of their continuing training resources for individual training for employed workers. Such an innovatory and complex move has created the need for techno-scientific support and organisational coordination, which allows a general model to be designed, which is able to enhance, increase and improve what is already being done in the regions by way of individual action and the development of continuing training;
- (iv) Section 2.4. – developing methodologies, techniques and structures for improving access to training - tackles the issue of distance training and self-training;
- (v) Section 2.5. - the guidance function in employment services - illustrates several significant initiatives at national level, as well as the reform of guidance services;
- (c) Section 3. - curricular development and content, learning strategies and methodologies - deals with how educational modelling has taken account of changes currently underway, what curricular models seem to be emerging from current experimentation, what new learning environments are going to emerge and for what types of use, and what skills define the trainer's professional profile;
- (d) Section 4. - conclusions, observations and evaluation of current progress - highlights the results of the study in terms of innovations started within the Italian national system as open problems which need to be resolved if lifelong learning principles are to be correctly applied.

1. Policy, legislation and structural framework

1.1. Policy principle: towards the integration of systems

The reform process under way in the Italian educational system raises the issue of integrating school, training and work systems.

The Italian educational system embodies a variety of organisational skills, models and cultures; this variety makes it difficult to plan procedures for integrating the different modules. At the same time, this different cultural identity can place demands on the flexibility of the system itself.

On this basis, integration of the different training systems should focus on creating a strong link between school, training and work.

The background to recent discussion of this point is that the actions planned for the work-based system must also take account of the reference schemes adopted for training and educational systems.

The main legislative references ⁽¹⁾ are:

- Law No. 59/97, which grants regions a higher level of management and intervention in the local area; this switch accompanies the autonomy granted to schools, thus encouraging the establishment of integrated training systems; however, this new model will more effectively focus the expectations of end users, and should tailor national plans to the characteristics of the local districts;
- Law No. 112/98, which highlights the strategic role of the regions in programming training and educational cycles;
- the 1998 social contract, which gave rise to considerable political and social commitment to formulate a system of rules for governing education and training within the context of lifelong learning. Integration of the different training systems compels all the key players within these systems to review constantly the boundaries of their own operating models, and the pilot schemes implemented in recent years have resulted in the creation of a number of models for integration.

The renewal of the Italian training system is placing demands on initial training, as well as both continuing training and adult education.

The Permanent Conference established by the Prime Minister, defines adult education as ‘...all formal types of education supply (certified education and vocational training) and non-

⁽¹⁾ All legislation mentioned in the text is listed in Annex 1.

formal opportunities (culture, social and health education, physical fitness, other cultural incentives received through associations) addressed to adult citizens, with the global goal of pursuing the strengthening of basic personal abilities’.

Accomplishing the targets outlined in the March 2000 agreement ⁽²⁾ between the State, regions, provinces and communes, made the combined commitment of several key actors already involved in this sector of education even more essential. This encompasses the school system, the regional vocational training system, employment services, companies, universities, non-profit agencies and other subjects of relevance in the creation of culture.

The system foreseen by the agreement is divided into three institutional levels: national, regional and local.

At national level, the establishment of a committee consisting of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of University and Research, Department of Social Affairs, representation of regions, local administrations and social partners is foreseen. The committee will be mainly responsible for integrating the system, and it will link up with the national committee for IFTS.

At regional level, the setting up of a committee composed of the governing regional council, representatives of the social partners, and the regional school department is foreseen. The regional committee will be responsible for planning and programming adult training supply.

At local level, competences and roles shared between the local administration, communes and the local committee are foreseen. The local committee, which will be established according to standards defined at regional level, will be responsible for promoting adult education, preparing projects in the field, and setting up and locating permanent territorial centres (described in Section 1.4.2).

The agreement between the State and regions foresees a reshuffle within them, based on targets and on priorities clearly specified during regional programming of training supply. This reshuffle will requalify the centres as service structures which, in accordance with local administrations and with employment services and the local committee, could implement the following initiatives:

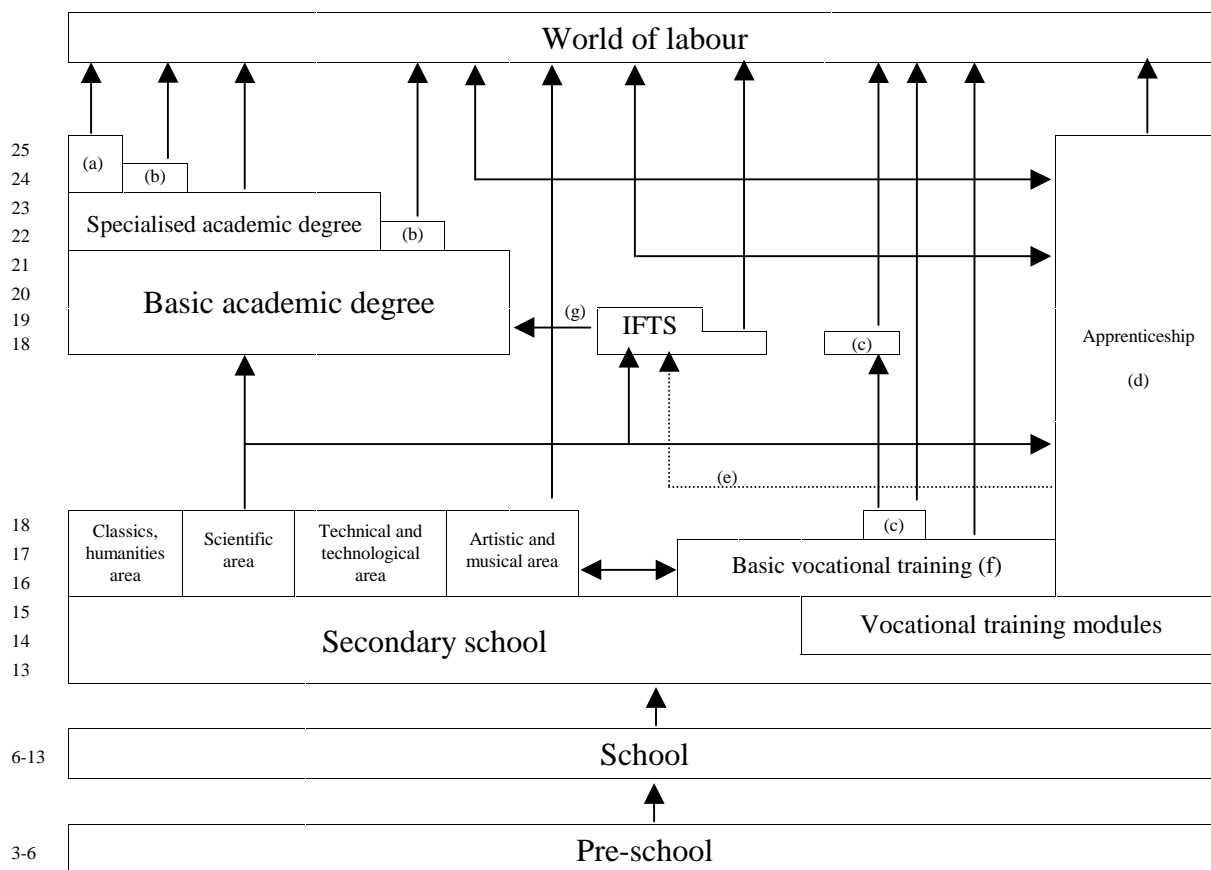
- organise reception and enrolment;
- evaluate initial training credits;
- cooperate to accomplish a skills assessment;
- participation in organising an integrated and modular training supply.

As far as skills are concerned, centres can arrange to certify acquired credits, in accordance with the national and regional regulations in force.

⁽²⁾ Record of the Joint Conference of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2 March 2000 session.

Finally, the agreement underscores the opportunities which non-formal adult education (municipal networks, cultural agencies, third-age university, etc.) provides for citizens' personal development.

Figure 1: Reformed system map



NB: IFTS (*Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore*) higher technical education and training.

Key/legend:

- a specialisation course.
- b master.
- c regional post-qualification course.
- d apprenticeship duration is determined by the labour contract; age can range between year 15 and 25.
- e access subject to acquired skills credits.
- f qualification achieving allows the fulfilment of compulsory training even before the 18th year of age.
- g access with credits recognition.

Source: ISFOL, 2000e.

1.1.1. Cooperation between educational bodies at all levels

The marked impetus towards integration between educational and training systems determined the need to intervene in different ways at institutional level, promoting cooperation between schools, universities, training agencies and companies in training design and experimentation.

One interesting area involves promoting forms of cooperation between different participants in educational, training and work systems, who see the experimentation underway in higher vocational training activity as an important field of comparison.

In accordance with community regulations, multi-participant partnership experimentation was encouraged, giving rise to a new dialogue and the search for new tools and forms of integrating individual skills.

Integration between training systems means that all participants are forced to check continually the limits of their own operational models, and implies the steady maintenance and scrutiny of their work.

A recent ISFOL-CENSIS survey ⁽³⁾ registered 76 protocols of understanding drawn up over the last ten years, and identified a trend and local distribution that demonstrates the state of the continuing discussion of integration.

The first round of protocols of understanding (26.3% of the total number considered by the survey), drawn up between the late 1980s and 1993, outlines the first elements of integration between training systems, towards integrated pathways in the vocational education field, and towards post-diploma pathways. They are still marked by uncertainty as to the role of the subjects involved, but they trigger a discussion which, according to the February 1994 executive agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Presidents of the Regions Conference, would lead to a second round of protocols of understanding.

'Second generation' protocols (61.8%) commit signatories to working in tandem to prepare experimental projects to enlarge and implement training supply; in particular, a clear increase in the number of agreements signed is apparent, both at regional (55.3%) and local level (36.1%).

The third and last generation (11.8%), in accordance with the 1996 labour agreement, meets the need for coordination between the different institutions involved, in order to achieve a joint strategy for all actions, both at regional and local level, towards the aims of decentralisation, improving local administration, and the participation of social partners and leading subjects in the productive world.

⁽³⁾ 'La costruzione di un'offerta formativa integrata' (Constructing integrated training supply) / ISFOL. In *Rapporto ISFOL 1999. Formazione e Occupazione in Italia e in Europa* (Training and employment in Italy and in Europe. Report 1999). Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999.

Cases mainly involve:

- assigning teaching plans in accordance with new flexible ways of sharing in modules, intended to provide a more functional response to the growing demand for individualisation of training supply;
- a closer relationship between vocational and university training;
- supporting companies through the preparation of continuing training.

Generally speaking, the protocols of understanding which apply nationally, and which are considered by the ISFOL-CENSIS survey (mostly included in the 1989-95 period) provided the driving force for the implementation and diffusion of integration.

Locally applicable protocols, representing 30.2% of the total under consideration, are an expression of experimental exuberance in diverse local contexts. Integrated initiatives do not only depend on the specific characteristics of the local area from which they originate, but also on the relationships established between the various signatories to the agreement, and on the submission capacity of the training structures.

With reference to experience built up with integrated training, for the three years from 1994-97, 227 projects were conducted in Italy, of which:

- (a) 77 were autonomous projects, or referring to single pathways;
- (b) 150 were complex projects, subdivisible into:
 - (i) 40 executive projects, characterised by a homogeneous planning picture, which constitute the 'standard' pathway;
 - (ii) 110 single achievements.

Looking at executive and autonomous projects alone, we have a total of 117 potential integration models, involving different types of training, in respect of which they have specific structural and methodological characteristics. Table 1 classifies experience according to the type of training and complexity of planning. The introduction of IFTS (*Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore*) higher technical education and training, a post-secondary pathway with well defined access standards and national values for the certificates issued, is considered a significant contribution to lifelong learning and a bridge between initial education and training and the world of work (see Section 1.2.3.).

Table 1: Classification of integration experience according to complexity of planning and type of training

	Executive projects		Single achievements		Autonomous projects		Total	
	a.v. ⁽¹⁾	%	a.v.	%	a.v.	%	a.v.	%
Cross-the-board actions	4	10	10	9	1	1.2	15	6.6
Basic training, return to training, adult education	10	25	2	1.9	9	11.6	21	9.2
Post-qualification	1	2.5	2	1.9	22	28.5	25	11.2
Post-diploma	9	22.5	61	55.4	34	44.1	104	45.8
University degree	4	10	32	29	1	1.2	37	16.2
School-work alternation	9	22.5	1	0.9	5	6.5	15	6.6
Training of trainers	3	7.5	2	1.9	5	6.5	10	4.4
Total	40	100	110	100	77	100	227	100

⁽¹⁾ Absolute value.

Source: ISFOL, 1999.

1.2. Innovations in the initial vocational training system

1.2.1. Initial education and training

From the institutional point of view, the initial training system in Italy is separated into vocational education and vocational training, the State being responsible for vocational education and the regional authorities for vocational training.

A further way in which young people can acquire vocational qualifications is through in-company training, making use of apprenticeship and employment-training contracts. Independent vocational training is also offered by agencies that do not receive public financial support.

Italy has two State authorities that administer the education system: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research.

The Ministry of Education's tasks are to supervise, coordinate, plan and oversee schools and the educational activities carried out within the national territory.

The Ministry of Education has regional and provincial education officers: regional superintendents of schools in the regions and provincial directors of education in the provinces.

These authorities share the common tasks of implementing policy directives decided at central level and ensuring that local people are offered the activities and services they require.

A legislative regulation was recently approved which grants higher level schools a significant degree of autonomy in the planning of teaching programmes and curricula.

Compulsory education – Law No 9/99 raised the number of years of compulsory schooling to ten, thus rectifying a discrepancy which had existed to date between Italy and other European countries. Compulsory education thus lasts for nine years between the ages of six and fifteen.

In quantitative terms, raising the minimum school leaving age to 15 will result in a slight increase in the school population, due to the fact that the proportion of 14 year-olds not enrolled in any school is approximately 6% (about 32 000 people, in absolute terms, according to the Ministry of Education's estimate, 2000).

1.2.1.1. Compulsory education

At present, compulsory education is divided up as follows: five years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education and the first year of upper secondary education. Each cycle has distinct and very specific characteristics, curricula and objectives. Lower secondary education lasts three years (from 11 to 14). The main focus of curricula and teaching is to develop pupils' personalities in all moral, social, intellectual, operational, emotional and creative areas. Upper secondary education is free and generally lasts five years; only the first year is compulsory.

During 2000, significant progress was noted in the reform process regarding the national training and education system, with the approval of the so-called 'reform of cycles', which completely revises the picture just set out above. (cf. reformed system map, Section 1.1. and Figure 1).

Options at the end of compulsory education – Law No 144 of 17 May 1999 introduced compulsory training for all persons under the age of 18. Pupils completing compulsory education at fifteen are then required to undergo compulsory training. This can be achieved by moving on to:

- the ensuing years of education;
- vocational training;
- alternating training, such as apprenticeship.

These courses can be taken by juxtaposing various different systems. The operative regulations, which were launched by the Council of Ministers on 7 July 2000, lay down conditions which facilitate the switch from one system to another, through the acknowledgement of training or educational credit, and with compulsory training being backed up by guidance activities provided by school and employment services.

In quantitative terms, the target number of users affected by the reform was recently estimated on a hypothetical basis for gradual phasing-in (15 year-olds in 2000, 15 and 16 year-olds in 2001, 15, 16 and 17 year-olds in 2002), thus highlighting a significant increase in the number of persons enrolled on regional vocational training courses and young people in apprenticeships (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: *Estimated numbers involved in compulsory training on the basis of gradual phasing in*

	2000 (Age 15)	2001 (Age 15, 16)	2002 (Age 15, 16, 17)
Educational system	506 123	969 400	1 390 402
Apprenticeship	27 988	77 514	147 124
Vocational training	48 980	112 244	178 051
Total	583 091	1 159 158	1 715 577

Source: ISFOL collation of data from ISTAT, Doxa and Ministry of Labour, 1999.

In 2000, significant progress was recorded in the reform process which from 1997 onwards has involved all training systems, from pre-school to university.

As far as the education system is concerned, the most relevant innovation was the approval of the reform of cycles, which laid the foundations for a complete overhaul of all education systems and of their relationships with the vocational training system.

Law No 30 of 10 February 2000, which is currently being reworked by the new Government, brings in two cycles instead of the traditional split between primary school, lower secondary and upper secondary education:

- the elementary and lower secondary education cycles have been merged in a single curriculum, known as the *scuola di base*, lasting 7 years;
- the upper secondary school will be known as the *ciclo secondario*, lasting 5 years; after the first 2 years of this cycle, the compulsory education cycle ends.

Thus, the total length of education will be shortened by one year, allowing people to leave the system at 18 rather than 19.

The Italian initial training system landscape changes shape in the light of these reforms. This can be seen in schematic form in Figure 1 (the new post-reform picture).

1.2.1.2. *Post-compulsory education*

Currently, upper secondary education includes a large number of options, the length and objectives of which differ:

- education in humanities and sciences, including classical lycées and scientific lycées (five-year course) and nursery and primary teacher training schools (five-, four- and three-year courses);
- technical education divided into a number of options (industrial, commercial, agricultural), all lasting five years;
- vocational education, divided into options lasting three and five years;
- art education, including art lycées and schools of applied arts, lasting five, four and three years.

Now that the cycles have been reformed, secondary school will be divided into:

- the classics-humanities field;
- the scientific field;
- the technical and technological field;
- the artistic and musical field.

All courses will last five years and will be divided into a compulsory two year period (compulsory education) and a final three year period, at the end of which a certificate (diploma) will be issued.

Once they have completed compulsory education, those who have acquired a higher secondary education certificate, will be able to enter:

- university;
- an integrated higher level technical education and training course (IFTS);
- a regional post-diploma course;
- an apprenticeship.

Once the skills they have acquired have been accredited, those who have successfully completed compulsory education in full-time vocational training or in apprenticeship and gained a qualification may also accede to IFTS. Successful completion of an IFTS gives admission to university once training credits have been acknowledged.

In the meantime, the universities themselves are in the throes of reform (cf. Figure 1) which opens up the possibility of acquiring a basic academic degree at the end of a three year training course, and a specialised degree for those attending the course for a further two years.

1.2.1.3. The regional vocational training system

The types of courses included in regional classification systems can be grouped under the following headings:

- basic post-compulsory education training (first level);

- further training for students with school-leaving certificates and for young graduates (second level).

Table 3: *Persons enrolled on first and second level regional initial training courses in 1998-99*

	First level	Second level
Northern Italy	49 832	54 273
Central Italy	13 553	11 906
Southern Italy	31 746	18 101
Total	95 131	84 280

Source: ISFOL collation of regional data.

Training activities for end users such as the disabled, immigrants, former drug addicts, former prisoners, etc., should also be added to this list. However, it should be kept in mind that over recent years this classification has been replaced by the one adopted by the European Social Fund, which funds about 70% of training activities at regional level.

Generally speaking, first level training represents the most substantial part of the system. This level of training in fact offers an alternative teaching cycle for young people with learning difficulties as far as the more theoretical models are concerned. In the absence of this type of training support, this group of end users would swell the ranks of the social ‘drop out’ categories.

1.2.2. Initial in-company training

Measures to match labour supply and demand at national and local level and to promote employment among young people include three laws: the first establishing the apprenticeship system, the second the employment-training contract (*Contratto di Formazione-lavoro*, CFL) system and the third the system of on-the-job training and counselling (*tirocini formativi e di orientamento*).

1.2.2.1. Apprenticeship

Recently, alternating training has been given a major boost following the innovations introduced by Law No 196/97. Article 16 designs a new model of Italian apprenticeship system, giving higher value to training activities conducted by external operators, outside the workplace. The main innovations are:

- apprenticeship ends at 24 years of age with no preconditions based on formal qualifications;
- the apprenticeship contract lasts 4 years;

- the contracts have to cover at least 120 hours of training undertaken outside the company, within specialised training centres.

Following this act, a regulation issued by the Ministry of Labour laid down guidelines for apprentices' training activities: its contents are intended to shed light on work processes and to provide a better grasp of the technical knowledge pertaining to each formal qualification. Part of the training content is devoted to learning more general notions concerning, for example, behavioural modules in complex organisations, basic linguistic or mathematical knowledge; this component must make up at least 35% of the time devoted to the overall training activity.

This new training approach is intended to attract 400 000 young users.

Besides the projects developed by the Ministry of Labour, several regions have defined experiments on this topic, through dialogue with the social partners. Moreover, financial resources provided by Law No 144/99 will allow further training activities to be conducted, which will allow apprenticeships to run.

On the basis of regional plans, about 70 000 apprentices should be involved in training activities, over and above the 20 000 or so additional apprentices already participating in experimental trials. We are still far from having all apprentices involved, and it is to be expected that the process of creating apprenticeships will take up virtually the whole of the European funds for the forthcoming planning period.

Taking data from the last three years as a reference (cf. Table 4), there is an increasing shift towards apprenticeship in all regions of Italy. Greatest use is made of it in the North-eastern regions, where in 1999 it represented as much as 31% of relevant manpower.

Table 4: Regional distribution of apprentices, as a percentage of labour force 15-24 years of age in 1997-99

Regions	1997	1998	1999
Piedmont	13.2	16.4	20.7
Valle d'Aosta	16.3	26.8	32.0
Lombardy	13.3	12.8	16.0
Trentino Alto Adige	17.4	22.0	27.8
Veneto	21.5	24.1	29.8
Friuli Venezia Giulia	13.3	19.7	26.9
Liguria	12.0	12.3	24.2
Emilia Romagna	19.6	23.2	34.5
Tuscany	28.9	33.7	35.6
Umbria	9.0	22.2	22.0
Marches	23.1	23.7	9.8
Latium	4.9	5.5	5.6
Molise	6.8	9.8	12.9
Abruzzo	16.8	20.1	21.3
Campania	3.9	3.0	3.4
Apulia	8.9	9.1	10.9
Basilicata	4.5	5.2	2.7
Calabria	5.5	3.9	5.0
Sicily	3.2	2.8	5.1
Sardinia	6.0	6.5	7.5
North-West	13.2	13.9	18.1
North-East	19.7	23.2	31.0
Centre	16.7	19.5	18.0
South	5.9	5.7	6.9
ITALY	12.7	13.8	16.5

Source: ISFOL based on Ministry of Labour data, 2000.

Increased commitment on the part of users, and public commitment to improving apprenticeship training systems has helped to produce an innovative apprentice image. From the traditional 15-16 year old stereotype drop-out apprentice employed in menial tasks, we have now moved on to a new profile, characterised as follows (ISFOL, 2000e):

- prevalently male (69%), about 20 years old, the apprentice has abandoned his studies at just under 17 ;
- in 80% of cases, the parent's level of education reaches lower secondary level at most;

- 51.3% of apprentices have a lower secondary education certificate and about 26% have acquired a higher secondary education certificate; over a third of people interviewed have unsuccessfully tried to continue studies, but just a tiny minority is still studying;
- 51% of apprentices think that the route they have chosen is like the beginning of a professionalisation course, which they intend to pursue.

Continuous surveys are intended to check whether new motivation to study could be attributed to satisfying experiences linked to a training course more suited to their interests and needs.

Table 5: New apprentice identikit: certificate

Certificate acquired	%
None – primary education	1.2
Lower secondary education	51.3
Occupational qualification obtained through vocational training course	10.8
Occupational qualification obtained in state vocational school	8.8
Higher secondary education certificate	27.8
University degree	0.1
Total	100

Source: ISFOL, 2000e.

1.2.2.2. Employment-training contracts: features and extent

The employment-training contract (CFL), introduced by law in 1983, builds on previous regulations intended to promote employment among young people. Under this type of contract, employers can recruit by name young people aged between 15 and 29 under fixed-term, one-year contracts with training aims.

With regard to continuous youth unemployment, and following agreements between the social partners and the government, a decision was taken on Law No 863/84, which changes the format of the employment-training contract as set out in previous regulations under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour.

Under this new law, public economic agencies, companies and their consortia may recruit young people aged between 15 and 32 by name for a period of 24 months. At the end of the contract, the company may terminate the employment relationship with the young person or retain him/her on a permanent basis.

Unlike apprenticeship, where the law specifies a compulsory ratio of working hours to training hours, employment-training contract regulations do not contain any strict provision on hours.

However, following the extension of apprenticeship to young people up to 25, it outlines how CFL is to be replaced by a new-look approach, aimed at integrating older young people into the labour market, and which is characterised by support provision related to occupational difficulties. The expected CFL reform appears to be in line with the current trend, where this type of approach is increasingly focusing on young people over 25, and with a qualification (cf. Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6: Distribution of workers starting CFL by age and percentage

	15-18 years	19-24 years	Over 25 years
1996	5.3	51.4	43.3
1997	4.5	48.9	46.6
1998	4.5	42.8	52.7
1999	4.5	41.8	53.7

Source: ISFOL, 2000e.

Table 7: Distribution of workers starting CFL by qualification and percentage

	Compulsory education	Certificate	Degree
1996	61.9	34.0	4.1
1997	63.3	32.4	4.3
1998	64.2	30.5	5.3
1999	63.7	30.4	5.9

Source: ISFOL, 2000e.

1.2.2.3. On-the-job training and counselling

On-the-job training and counselling (*tirocini formativi e di orientamento*) is perhaps the newest measure within the context of training policies.

The amendments introduced by Article 18 of Law No 196/97 and Decree No 142/98 from the Ministry of Labour highlight two different modules:

- on-the-job training activities, promoted by training institutions aimed at organising alternating training programmes (all school levels, including university);
- on-the-job counselling activities, promoted by agencies and institutions related to labour policies, to favour more effective choices by the apprentices through a more direct knowledge of the problems related to working environments.

The regulation also stipulates the maximum length of training periods:

- not more than four months for students enrolled in post-compulsory schools;
- not more than 12 months for university students and those involved in higher vocational training courses;
- up to 24 months for underprivileged end users.

1.2.3. Integrated higher technical education and training

The approval of Article 69 of Law No 144/99, ratified by the state-regions conference in March 2000, endorsed the introduction of IFTS (*Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore*) higher technical education and training. These higher training courses provide technical and scientific instruction to an advanced level, geared towards working practice and planned in accordance with technological and organisational developments in a number of sectors or fields in which there is a demand for highly qualified technical professionals. These activities should have the following characteristics:

- a more specific focus on ‘detailed and specific vocational and technical training, especially concerning research, development, and the implementation of technologies applied to products and processes’ and comparable to the same supply in other European countries in the same sector;
- variable length from two to four semesters.

Possession of an upper level secondary school diploma is not a binding requirement, thus opening the door to recognition of credits achieved both by young people who have gained qualifications through compulsory training, and for adults with work experience.

Integrated higher vocational training is characterised by modular design and innovative methodologies, and leads to regional and national level certification, which is also recognised at European level. A steering committee has been set up, comprising representatives from the ministries of education, labour, university and research, regions and local administrations, and social partners.

In 1998 and 1999, 229 projects proposed by the regions were financed annually (of which 221 were effectively conducted). The courses began in spring 1999 with various institutions being involved: school, university, regional vocational training and companies. The sectors with the highest levels of representation are industry and commerce (29.6%) and the environment, territory and cultural heritage (19%). Tourism (5.2%), the arts (2.2%) and social services (2.2%) are under-represented (see Table 8).

Table 8: IFTS courses 1998-99 by economic sector

Sector	Absolute value	%
Industry and commerce	68	29.6
Environment, territory, cultural heritage and restoration	43	19
Transport and logistics	22	10
Quality and safety	22	10
Construction, rehabilitation of historic centres, public works	20	8.8
Agriculture and zootechnics	16	7
ICT, multi-media, telecommunications	16	7
Tourism and farm holidays	12	5.2
Arts	5	2.2
Social services	5	2.2
Total	229	100

Source: Ministry of Education, 1999.

The experience acquired meant that a new planning model could be designed, which can be summarised as follows:

- decentralised government – reaffirming the regions’ responsibility for programming, coordination and systems management;
- arrangements for programming outlines – matching political expectations at central national level with regional programming outlines;
- integration of training subjects present in the local area – emphasising local participation and increasing the value of contributions in terms of varied skills terms;
- practicability of switching between different training paths and the world of work – opening up the possibility of intermediate steps or making the training pathway continuous in its various sections, entering training again in the course of one’s career, or being issued with a certificate for experience acquired on the job;
- flexibility of the framework curriculum – correlating it to the needs that arise from the local context;
- certification of pathways and credits – sharing between schools, vocational training, university and company systems.

Data on integration appears to be of greatest value within the system, aimed at ascertaining new principles about lifelong learning. Integration can be verified at three levels:

- at national level, by the national design committee: established by Ministry of Education ministerial decree on 7 October 1998, the committee is composed of representatives of the institutions and the social partners; it is responsible for developing a new type of supply through the preparation of executive rules, which can be used to set standards, and in the certification, monitoring and evaluation of pilot projects. The committee provides a forum

of discussion for subjects with different demands and people from different cultures and politics, and techno-political confrontation on these issues could be of significant assistance to improving the system itself;

- at regional level, by the regional design committees: these deal with programming, monitoring and evaluation tasks in every single region;
- at local level, through multi-participant partnerships.

According to the integration link established by regional announcements concerning project admissibility, partnerships may take on various organisational guises (temporary associations with a given objective, syndicates, agreements). The protocol of understanding formula seems to be the most widely used, owing to its flexibility which leaves scope for possible second thoughts and refocusing, in the light of new or higher targets.

Integration experience within the IFTS strengthened the experimentation conducted in particularly active and change-sensitive contexts. The 1998 social agreement had the undeniable merit of raising all the problems which needed to be solved, not only in the regulation field.

The integration experience will be backed up by 395 new projects annually from 1999-2000 (see Table 12). The 72% improvement compared to the volume of projects for the first year of experimentation is of major importance, in terms of planning for the local participants (schools, training centres, universities and companies) and for institutional presence in the management of training channels, both at regional and at national level.

Table 9: *Regional distribution of IFTS projects, for 1998-99 and 1999-2000*

Regions	1998-99	1999-2000	Total
Piedmont	11	19	30
Valle d'Aosta	0	1	1
Lombardy	27	27	54
Trentino Alto Adige	0	1	1
Veneto	13	13	26
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1	5	6
Liguria	11	12	23
Emilia Romagna	18	18	36
Tuscany	25	28	53
Umbria	8	5	13
Marches	1	4	5
Latium	8	33	41
Molise	2	4	6
Abruzzo	1	14	15
Campania	26	77	103
Apulia	21	35	56
Basilicata	5	8	13
Calabria	13	21	34
Sicily	16	47	63
Sardinia	14	23	37
North Italy	81	96	177
Central Italy	42	70	112
Southern Italy	98	229	327
ITALY	221	395	616

Source: ISFOL, 2000e.

1.3. Continuing training in the business environment

1.3.1. Italian companies and their willingness to train

The Italian production system is marked by a strong presence of small and medium sized companies: about 95% of companies employ less than 10 workers, and a mere 0.07% of them have at least 250 employees, as revealed by the 1996 ISTAT census (ISTAT, 1998).

The same census points out that, compared to 1991, the average size of companies has shrunk, falling from 7.7 to 6.5 workers in each company in the industrial sector, and from 3.3 to 2.9 workers in each company in the services sector. Company growth forecasts for 1999-2000, indicate overall growth, with a balance amounting to 2.2%, though higher in the services

sector (3%) than in the industrial sector (1.5%). It is estimated in particular that 60% of recruitment for the two years under consideration will be attributable to companies with less than 50 employees (Progetto Excelsior, 1999).

Thus, small-scale companies have shown that they are capable of bringing a positive influence to bear on the overall balance of employment, influencing most policy choices on steps to be taken in their favour.

A recent survey carried out on large companies (Cegos Italia, 1998), pointed out that the training budget for 1997 included 35% of cases between ITL 201 million and ITL 500 million [EUR 103 808 and EUR 258 228] ⁽⁴⁾, while other companies are spread uniformly throughout the range of other expenses. The 1998 training budget showed an increase (average 30% percentage) in 41% of cases, and only in 18% of cases was there any drop in budget (average percentage decrease 26%).

As far as small companies are concerned, only 15% of them conducted training activities for their own personnel. Company attitudes towards vocational training appear to improve in direct proportion to their size: only 4.6% of companies with 10-19 workers ran continuing training courses, compared with 88.3% of companies with more than 1 000 employees (ISTAT, 1996).

Average investment for each trained employee, in companies with more than 1 000 employees, amounts to ITL 217 975 (EUR 113) while companies with less than 100 employees invest ITL 110 240 (EUR 57) (ISFOL, 2000b). Average training hours for each employee trained is 41 hours, highlighting the predominant use made of short and upgrade courses, with a marked imbalance towards intermediate-high level vocational profiles (over 50% are made up of managers and mid-level executives) (ISFOL, 2000b).

As far as national intervention policies are concerned, vocational training was prevalently aimed at youth sectors and, even though over recent years an increase of initiatives targeting adults has become apparent, differences compared with other European countries remain considerable. Available financial data referred to 1992: 'if percentages of expenditure on adults and young people are compared, with reference to 1992, it appears that in Italy 97.8% of total expenditure targets young people, whilst only 2.2% is for adults. This data is unique at international level, given that Germany spends 91% on adult training, France 80% and Spain 59%.' (Geroldi et al., 1997).

Once again, the 1999 National Action Plan for Employment highlights the limited value placed on adult training in Italy compared with other Community countries, although over the last few years there has been an effective increase in training supply and in the number of adults taking part in such activities.

⁽⁴⁾ Throughout this report, EUR amounts are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The following sections aim to provide a description of changes within the continuing training system in Italy, which in government and social partner planning is seen as being ‘...according to a new acceptance: a continuous process which is an integral part of strategic company management and of industrial and labour policies.’ (ISFOL, 1995).

1.3.2. The national legislative background

Faced with concerns about continuing training, specific legislation was amended as indicated below:

- (a) July 1993: Law No. 236/93 transposing Bill No. 148/93 – ‘Urgent steps to support employment’ – Article 9 allows the Ministry of Labour, regions and local administrations to finance qualification programmes for:
 - (i) employees in national vocational training organisations (as specified in Law No. 40/87);
 - (ii) employees in companies which, under specific regulations, cofinance up to 20% of training expenditure;
 - (iii) employees in those companies which have requested CIGS intervention;
 - (iv) employees who, having lost their job, have been enrolled on specific mobility lists (*Liste di mobilità*);
 - (v) unemployed workers who have been involved in public service jobs (LSU - *Lavori di Utilità Sociale*).
- (b) July-December 1994: approval of the operational programmes (PO) of the *Quadro Comunitario di Sostegno* (QCS) EU Objective 1, and of the national programme under ESF Objective 4 (*Documento Unico di Programmazione*) for northern and central regions (ISFOL, 1998), allowing regions and the Ministry of Labour to promote training programmes for employed or unemployed workers, giving a priority to less skilled workers, and for those employed in SMEs;
- (c) May 1997: Law No 196/97 ‘Promotion of employment measures’ – outlining a different organisation of national training systems, Article No 17 suggests supporting continuing vocational training through the establishment of private undertakings; through the involvement of the social partners, this undertaking should encourage training programmes for employed workers, for workers enrolled on mobility lists (*lavoratori in mobilità*) and for unemployed workers who attend training activities before being taken on;
- (d) December 1998: promulgation of a Presidential Decree which specifies how to apply the provisions of Article 17 as mentioned above. The regulation provides for:
 - (i) the establishment of a fund for vocational training activities (*Fondo Interprofessionale per la Formazione Continua*), with four separate sections (industry, handicrafts, agriculture, services);

- (ii) the establishment of a foundation, which will be managed by representatives of workers and entrepreneurs;
- (iii) the allotment of a share (20% from year 2000) of financial resources transferred by companies and workers to the National Institute of Social Security (INPS), for the financing of training activities, and for access to ESF (0.30% of total wages, as stipulated by Article 25 of Law No 845/78).

In 1999, the regulation was suspended for further verification, and for many months the issue of continuing training system ‘governance’ was left on ice, apart from in the ambit of Law No 236/93 policy committee, and the Objective 4 monitoring committee, although neither of these were the appropriate forum.

- (e) December 2000: with Law No 388 (2001 financial act), paragraph 118 ‘Guidelines for training in the annual and multiannual State Budget’, the establishment of interprofessional joint funds for each economic sector of industry, agriculture, tertiary and handicrafts is promoted. Inter-union agreements, stipulated by the mostly highly representative employers’ and workers’ trade unions at national level, foresee the establishment of funds for other kinds of sectors as well. The funds are intended to finance company, sectoral and local training plans, organised by the social partners, to the tune of 100 percent in depressed ‘objective 1’ areas, and 50 percent in other areas. The funds are fed by financial resources stemming from contribution revenue. Each fund is set up on the basis of Inter-union agreements drawn up by the most representative employers’ and workers’ trade unions at national level, or alternatively:
 - (i) as an associative kind of legal entity;
 - (ii) as a subject that has legal personality, granted by Ministry of Labour decree.

Upon agreement between the parties, funds may be shared out regionally and territorially.

1.3.3. The continuing training experience since Law No 236/93

Law No 236/93 expresses the level of maturity, merits and limits, of this important planning phase over the last decade. ‘We are facing an “omnibus” law, which at the time of writing was the object of many requests, but which has the merit of being the criterion for vocational training on two fundamental points: financial resource management, with the creation of the single fund for vocational training (para. 5 of Art. 9) and continuing training, which is specifically covered by paragraphs 3 and 3 bis of section 9.’ (Frigo, 2000).

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the aforementioned section 9 of the same law are also of significance (in terms of support for the evolving training system and of its necessary rapprochement with employment policies). This provides hypothetical initiatives on the analysis of training needs (para. 1) and counselling and guidance interventions aimed at workers, especially at those involved in mobility processes, even within the community ambit.

In 1994, 1995 and 1996, the start of the *Documento Unico di Programmazione* (national programming and allocating funds for ESF Objective 4 in Italy, ISFOL 1998), made it necessary to start seeking solutions - possibly along different lines - for companies and particular areas of user needs. The first implementing memorandum for Law No 236/93, Ministry of Labour Circular 174/96, considers the limits noted in achieving Objective 4 and indications provided by the social partners. It is subdivided into three sections, and shows a choice of priorities which is bound to be a success, even in years to come:

- 1.A: 'System actions', to integrate what is provided by Strand 1 (Anticipation of industrial change) and 3 (Enforcement of systems and technical assistance) of the Single Document on Objective 4 programming, with reference to all types of users provided by paragraph 3 and 3.bis of section 9. Allocated resources: EUR 41 million;
- 1.B: 'Law 40/87 Training activities for employees in training organisations financed by the Ministry of Labour' (paragraph 3). Regions, trade unions and ISFOL collaborate with the Ministry of Labour in a specific team, to prepare a framework tailored to the different requirements stemming from crises in various public bodies in several local contexts. Allocated resources: EUR 33 million;
- 1.C: 'Company training actions' (paragraph 3, but within certain limits for employees who work for companies which contribute at least 20% of the cost of training). Allocated resources: EUR 32 million.

Memorandum 174/96 is used to finance 61 system actions, selected from regions technically contributing to their coordination. Every project involves operators present in various geographical areas and it associates subjects with various characteristics. There is a marked presence of the social partners amongst them, especially involved in implementing the activities. Project size varies from a minimum of EUR 155 000 to about EUR 3 350 000.

There are two types of company training action, as mentioned in point 1.C:

- company contributions for employee training, not exceeding EUR 25 823 for each company;
- inter-company project training contributions, not exceeding EUR 103 291 per project (however, no company may use contributions in excess of EUR 25 823).

Contributions to company training have given rise to 1 148 actions; it emerges that:

- the average number of workers involved in company projects is 39 (but there are projects with only two participants);
- the average number of participants in training activities from the total amount of workers amounts to 3.7%, with a slight prevalence of women;
- for the design and submission of projects to the region, companies turned to both experts and specialised companies, and to consortia and SME associations, where there are a lot of them (in Emilia Romagna for instance);

- large companies also took part in experiments under Law No 236/93 (to a great extent in Liguria and Tuscany, for example);
- in terms of the aims of the activities chosen, ‘refreshers’ predominate (57.6%), followed by ‘qualification’ (22.8%), then ‘retraining’ (16.9%) and ‘reconversion’ (2.7%);
- in decreasing order, the contexts of activities were, quality (28%), organisation and personnel (25.9%), safety (14.7%), IT and telematics systems (12.7%), production and logistics (8.2%), marketing and sales (7.5%).

Ministry of Labour Circular 37/98 brought in some amendments, giving ‘system actions’ wider national importance, granting priority to small and medium sized companies, and introducing the possibility of financing individual training action (see Section 2.3.).

Notice 2/98, issued by the Ministry of Labour, covers the areas of intervention and provisions for submitting proposals, allotting about EUR 1 million for system actions. Of the 110 projects submitted, 11 were financed.

Ministry of Labour Circular 139/98 and Circular 51/99 bring in system actions resources (EUR 1.5 million for system actions, taking the number of projects to 31) and for company training activities (about EUR 85 million). Furthermore, Circular 139/98 also introduces some important innovations, to support experimentation with individual continuing training action (see Section 2.3.). The above mentioned circulars relate to the administration of continuing training funds relative to article 9 of the Law No 293/93.

But the real novelty comes in Circular 65/99 which expresses the will to start experimentation in company, sectoral and local training plans. The activities which the Ministry intends to promote through this memorandum, for which around EUR 26 million have been earmarked, represent the first achievements of the training policies for employed people provided by Law 196/97. Financeable projects take the form of complex training initiatives, to be bound to specific territorial and sectoral development realities, in which social partners assume a central role in the programming of activities. Indeed, every project should be accompanied by a document signed by the representative organisation which is promoting the training plan, explaining the motivation for the choices included in the project. Every plan should foresee both specific training actions – such as refreshers, retraining and reconversion – and cross-board measures in preparation for training, such as needs analysis, guidance, and skills assessment.

Finally, Memorandum 30/00 (2001 financial act) allocates about EUR 77 million for individual and company training activities.

1.4. Adult education

1.4.1. Legislative background

At the beginning of the 1960s, the lowest level of education was still primary, and the target of encouraging entry into lower secondary school had been long pursued by educational policies.

Since 1972, and for at least twenty years, the educational service known as ‘150 hours’ has been used to encourage completion of the compulsory education cycle for workers over 40 recruited at the lowest levels in industry and services. The certificate issued at the end of this cycle was a necessary pre-condition for employment in the public sector.

Over later years, the educational activities organised within this framework focused increasingly on adult job-seekers, and on other social groups such as foreigners who spoke no Italian. In this second case, activities were aimed at providing foreigners with a basic grasp of the language.

More recently, an overall rise in the educational level of the workforce has been noted. In the early 1980s, 48.5% of workers only had primary education, but this percentage had fallen to 24.8% by 1991 and to 13.6% in 1999 (ISTAT-Central Institute of Statistics). In addition, over the same period there was a constant increase in the numbers of people holding higher qualifications.

Moreover, there is data to confirm the marked need to enhance and strengthen the basic skills area (for instance, in 1999 ISTAT pointed out that 50.1% of the workforce only held a lower secondary education certificate).

On 22 December 1998, the Italian government and the social partners signed an agreement on ‘development and employment’. Annexe III of this agreement underlines the government’s commitment to earmark financial resources for trying out and finally establishing an adult education system. The output of the system should grant credit recognition, for both the education and training system and demand in the world of work. The same document commits the government to promoting agreements by the social partners, for defining collective bargaining agreements which should modify organisational flows, in order to allow workers to attend continuous education and training activities for adults.

With the agreement signed in 1998, the adult education system was newly defined as an organisation which should ensure that adults will have equal chances to develop their personal and professional aptitude through training and education, throughout their entire working life.

With Orders No 455 *Adult education – teaching and training* and No 456 *Adult education – teaching and training in primary and middle schools* (July 1997) the Ministry of Education established local adult education centres, located wherever demand for adult education activities exceeds set levels.

On 2 March 2000, the State and regions signed an agreement aimed at developing training supply for the adult population and encouraging integration amongst the various training systems. The new planning hypothesis is gravitating towards a lifelong learning approach, with special attention being paid to personalised training paths, especially for weak and alienated social sectors.

This specific training model is characterised by:

- greater attention to the training needs phase, in order to take account of the huge variety of relevant populations;
- promotion of procedures concerning the start up of guidance activities aimed at participants and skills assessment;
- extending training supply;
- creation of open, flexible and modular training paths.

1.4.2. The experience of the territorial adult education centres

The permanent territorial adult education centres (*Centre Territoriali Permanenti*) established by Order No 455/97 (adult education) bring together and integrate the educational services offered to adults within a specific district.

The territorial centres have a reference point in the head teachers of schools operating within the compulsory education cycle.

The centres perform the following functions:

- counselling and active listening;
- primary level education for illiterate adults;
- language teaching;
- development of social abilities, for better integration in the social environment;
- basic vocational training;
- re-rooting dropouts.

These functions were extended and revised by the March 2000 agreement between the government, regions, provinces and communes, which foresees their reorganisation.

The Ministry of Education's studies and planning office monitored 389 permanent territorial centres which are already online, which provided some important data on experience built up.

Training supply in the centres is of two main types:

- educational courses, aimed at acquiring an educational certificate, which include both literacy skills courses, and ‘150 hours’ workers courses; this type of course lasts as long as the school year;
- short literacy skills courses, organised on a modular basis, with the priority being foreign languages and IT.

In the 1998-99 school year, 64 130 users attended the first type of course, and 87 889 users the second, with a total of 152 019 users. Moreover, data on the first type was affected by people simultaneously on ‘150 hour’ courses related to the previous system; therefore the figure of 64 130 does not necessarily correspond to this data.

Tables 9 and 10 summarise data on the types of users in the centres in 1998-99.

Table 10: Characteristics of users of permanent territorial adult education centre courses in 1998-99

Age	a.v. ⁽¹⁾	%	Sex	a.v.	%	Nationality	a.v.	%	Employment state	a.v.	%
15-25	23 559	36.7	Male	35 759	55.8	Italian	42 551	66.4	Employed	21 744	33.9
26-40	27 296	42.6	Female	28 371	44.2	Foreign	21 579	33.6	Unemployed	42 386	66.1
Over 40	13 275	20.7									
	64 130	100		64 130	100		64 130	100		64 130	100

⁽¹⁾ Absolute value.

Source: ISFOL elaboration on Ministry of Education data, 2000.

Table 11: Characteristics of users of short literacy basic skills courses in permanent territorial adult education centres in 1998-99

Age	a.v. ⁽¹⁾	%	Sex	a.v.	%	Nationality	a.v.	%	Employment state	a.v.	%
15-25	25 462	29.0	Male	33 816	38.5	Italian	78 246	89.0	Employed	39 426	44.9
26-40	37 925	43.1	Female	54 073	61.5	Foreign	9 643	11.0	Unemployed	48 463	55.1
Over 40	24 502	27.9									
	87 889	100		87 889	100		87 889	100		87 889	100

⁽¹⁾ Absolute value.

Source: ISFOL elaboration on Ministry of Education data, 2000.

At national level, long education courses tend to appeal to young (between 15 and 25), predominantly male users (55.8%). Short courses, on the other hand, predominantly attract adults of between 26 and 40, with a substantial number of adults over 40 (compared with long courses); more females attend this type of course (61.5%).

Unemployed Italian nationals predominate in both short and long courses, though data differs according to the region. Foreign attendance is higher in the northern regions, but that could be explained by the phenomenon of clandestine presence, which is more common in the south. Moreover, in the Veneto region – a unique case in the country – employed people make up the majority of adults attending education courses.

In 1999 the Centres' operational funding amounted to ITL 18 706 billion (EUR 9 660 843) 91.9% of which came from state funds, and 8.1% from other sources, including a significant contribution from the communes (40.7% of non-State resources) and ESF (39.5%).

2. Support measures for promoting participation and access, modes of delivery and action

2.1. Skills certification as a fundamental tool of integration

The search for integration forces all of the players involved to take a new look at current own operational models and produces new ones. It also provides an incentive for the evolution of certification systems, such as methods for recognising skills - however they may have been acquired - and tools granting the right of access to lifelong learning.

The 1996 labour agreement ratifies the principles which characterised reform in training certification: the need to create a training system able to offer individuals the real possibility of capitalising on learning skills, including through mutual recognition of credits between different training procedures; to apply transparency of experience and acquired skills right from the very beginning.

Law No 196/97, which develops the contexts behind the agreement, contains three paragraphs with which the legislator may proceed to renew the system:

- paragraph 5, which defines dual responsibility for certification on the part of the region (concerning the results acquired in training path certification) and the employer for skills acquired in the work place;
- paragraph 16, which stipulates that skills acquired during apprenticeship, as long as they are duly certified, may have credit value in the training system, in principle opening up the possibility of returning to the school-vocational system;
- paragraph 18, which establishes that skills acquired in training, if duly certified, may be valid as training credit.

Paragraph 17, however, which concerns the shake-up in vocational training, is of a strategic, cross-the-board nature, affecting executive areas where there is skills certification and training credit recognition.

Following the reform of examinations in upper secondary education, known as Law 425/97, in the ministerial decree of 10 November 1998, the Ministry of Education defines a new and experimental certification model. Its fundamental points are related to:

- certification elements (course of studies, duration of studies, teaching subjects and indication of the hourly duration for each subject, comprehensive marking, total amount of points assigned after the three examinations, mark assigned after oral exam, probable additional score, school credit, documented training credits, examination body evaluations);

- school credit, definable as the total of scores assigned in the last three years of studies, also taking account of other documented training credits.

The knowledge, skills and abilities acquired within the vocational training system, during apprenticeship, as a result of work or through self-training, represent credits for access to various years of upper secondary-education courses. The initial choices made by pupils after completing compulsory schooling are not binding. It will be possible to move from one system to another. For this purpose, the decree states that skills and knowledge acquired in a chosen pathway constitute recognised credits. In the case of reinsertion in school, special boards will be set up to evaluate credits acquired in vocational training or apprenticeship. An agreement between the (central) government and regional/local authorities will establish ways of ensuring that those who leave school enter the vocational training system.

The *Collegato* attached to the 1999 budget, through establishing compulsory training and higher technical education and training (IFTS), lays the bases for integration between pre- and post-secondary education, identifying training credits as being the system capable of recognising skills which have been acquired, and guaranteeing access to lifelong training.

2.1.1. Regional evolution

An analysis of the development of types of attestation and certification adopted at regional level provides a varied picture of the different levels of local arrangements for individual topics and principles. Generally speaking, however, there is a tendency to go beyond the assessment context, and to move on to the certification of skills acquired.

Regarding the types of attestation and certification that have already been introduced or are currently being implemented, the survey covers different levels of training initiatives. It emerges that the approach is still not widely applied, partly due to the complexity of the issue, and partly to difficulties encountered in administration and local regulation processes.

The following experiments should be mentioned in terms of innovatory practices:

- the training passport, in the autonomous local administration of Bolzano;
- the personal training trainee record, in Latium;
- the personal vocational certification trainee record, in Liguria;
- the personal certification trainee record, in Molise;
- the individual training trainee record, in Piedmont;
- the professional trainee record, in Veneto.

Thus, innovation has largely tended to come in the shape of a trainee record, in which the various stages of the individual pathway are registered. In the case of Bolzano's local administration, which recognises the training passport – which actually exists on paper – this also extends to some German *Länder*.

Other types of experimentation are worth mentioning, apart from the trainee record:

- credit certification, applied in Piedmont and in pilot phase in Tuscany;
- skill certificates, skill declarations, certificates of conformity to regional training standards, adopted on an experimental and regulatory basis in Emilia Romagna;
- the portfolio, used in apprenticeships in Bolzano's hotel accommodation sector;
- the trainee record, in Trento's autonomous local administration.

All these examples arose from the need for innovation in the form of certification, to show a willingness to make training steps visible and tangible again for the subjects involved, and their 'spendability' in the labour market.

The experience gained at regional level raised a series of problems at national level.

2.1.2. Problems of integration at the national level

The first problem is related to the description of qualification and professional profiles, and the establishment of skill standards. The descriptions adopted in various different contexts have some elements in common:

- the working sphere of reference to the professional profile: in a 'macro' manner, the characteristics of sector/division and functions/processes to which profile activity could be referred; in a 'micro' manner, the characteristics of the organising-company context within which the occupational profile works;
- activities and tasks peculiar to the professional profile;
- skills connected to the performance of activities/tasks.

These common elements do not square with a conscious choice of specific conceptual/methodological models and approaches, nor with homogeneity of language and description standards, which gives rise to difficulties in harmonising the qualifications and principles of certification transparency advocated by the European Community.

As for rationalisation, the first thrust undoubtedly came from the ministerial decree on experimentation with the new certificate model, which helped different realities to 'make a system', but retained the idea of different experiences acquired locally.

The level of skill is expressed as the only one 'capable of acting as "a go-between" between such different universes as the vocational training system, the school system and the world of work, and to have them "hold a dialogue", so as to allow individuals to credit their achievements, even partial ones, from any of the three systems to the others.' (ISFOL, 1999).

Thus, by establishing the level of skill a common, standard qualification training pathway can be jointly worked out.

A second set of problems regards the relationship which exists between the 'certificate' and the 'trainee record'. The latter, to be effectively legible by either the individual or the company, must take the form of a flexible, concise tool that will provide for a general overview of the elements it covers, and which will offer a brief description of the individual course. On the one hand, this gives rise to the need to reduce and simplify the total information contained in the trainee record, and on the other, it raises the need for a common denominator for the various different types of certification.

A recent proposal (ISFOL, 1999) outlines the possibility of the portfolio becoming the 'hypertext' for schools, training and courses and the trainee record becoming the scheme's hypertext, containing the information needed to understand it. Single certificates with their greater detail would, in turn, be like lots of 'windows', so that anyone wanting to consult the trainee record could check it out in the light of various requirements.

The third series of problems concerns the development of a more homogeneous 'cultural' approach among system operators.

ISFOL recently conducted a survey on projects conducted in the area of the 1996 *Notifications of ESF multiregional operational programmes* (ISFOL, 2000d), aimed at identifying interesting experiences and exemplary cases of approaches and techniques adopted for the certification of training credit.

As far as the cultural approach is concerned, it emerges from the survey that the broad diffusion of key words in project documents (skills, standard, integration) and of concepts and values (transparency, valorisation, flexibility), as well as statements about the use of innovative tools (skills assessment, trainee record, etc.), only comes through to a limited extent when the action is actually implemented.

According to the authors, the integration of language and culture should make it possible:

- to attain a common linguistic area, which transcends the language of disciplines and contexts, drawing rather on the vocabulary of skills and standards;
- to promote a culture of labour and the company even in contexts (such as the school) that are not part of it;
- to diffuse common practices: common means for presenting knowledge, surveying needs, planning initiatives, verifying and valuing, etc.;
- to enhance subject identity, stimulating their peculiarities and enhancing typical skills by allowing them to make their own contribution to an integrated system.

Linguistic and cultural integration may not have occurred as yet, its potential outcome may still be ambiguous, and it may confuse the semantic sphere. Nonetheless, according to the authors of the survey, it represents 'a favourable field predisposed to system innovation'.

2.2. Cooperation between institutions and social partners

The Italian case represents a highly complex situation, with well-structured industrial relations, the development of joint organisations, and with social pacts repeatedly being invoked to deal with contingencies or the introduction of growth processes. The lessons learned from continuing forms of cooperation in several contexts – from territorial agreements, to job security matters – build up common bases, which lead to the enhancement of all types of social dialogue. Economic and financial difficulties, the difficulty of adapting to global markets, unemployment and lost development opportunities in some areas of the country, are important factors encouraging a speedier and more efficient maturing process.

The 1990s in particular were marked by a strong drive for reform, with an intensive round of debates and bilateral agreements, which opened the gates to the major tri-partite agreements of 1993 and 1996.

It was from these agreements that a good proportion of the innovations reported in other sections of this document emerged. These include integration systems for education and training, the development of adult education and continuing training, and training certification among others.

Moreover, training provides the social dialogue experience with an important channel for debate and experimentation with joint bodies' activities. In continuing training in particular, national institutions can expect to play an increasingly fundamental role, both in terms of trend-related tasks and the implementation of complex training projects.

2.2.1. The main education and training agreements

The protocol of July 1993 and the labour agreement of September 1996 reaffirm the central employment strategy based on broader and more adequate manpower qualification.

2.2.1.1. The 1993 agreement

Based on an exchange of views between union demands and demands to generally improve living and working conditions, vocational training for workers provided a malleable subject for the authors of the 1993 Agreement. The paragraphs on 'Youth employment and training' and 'Vocational education and training', touch upon an issue which is regularly raised and discussed, and which is common to both the social partners and government, although it has never been faced in real terms; this is the question of reorganising the system through different and correlated approaches:

- more efficient coordination and trend research, through setting up a national vocational training council in the Ministry of Labour;

- substantially revising the law governing vocational training - Law No 845/78, which is deemed to be no longer appropriate as a basis for the new tasks involved in manpower investment within the revised relations between private and public subjects;
- raising the school leaving age to 16, in order to bring our country into line with European standards and economic needs;
- revision of apprenticeship institutes and training-employment contracts, which are deemed to be not just a useful tool for the new generation entering companies, but also a relevant section of training supply.

Apart from system priorities, the issue of continuing training was raised in July 1993, for which specific and clearly defined resources are requested.

On this occasion, the July agreement once more interprets one of the issues for industrial relations - that of negotiating workers' general rights – and basically entrusts training with the following tasks:

- to become a guarantor of citizens' rights, with vocational qualification standing as a 'passport' to the world of work and afterwards to voluntary (and involuntary) mobility in the context of the major shake-up of the 'rules of the game' in the market;
- to guarantee workers already in employment with job protection, especially for those workers whose professionalisation is poor or hampered;
- to guarantee a 'deferred wage' as a further outcome of qualification for employed workers involved in horizontal and vertical mobility processes (vocational development).

2.2.1.2. *The 1996 labour agreement*

The problem of training supply in Italy is systematically tackled through the labour agreement signed by the government and social partners in 1996. It promotes:

- the organisation of training and education, in order to assure continuity of access to lifelong learning;
- raising the school leaving age to 18, through reorganising cycles and innovation in curricula;
- the development of post-compulsory training pathways, through additional modules of vocational training, new models of school organisation and school-work links;
- IFTS system development;
- the enhancement of apprenticeship and training-employment contracts;
- the gradual amendment of training profiles in the university system, towards introducing checks on the length of academic degrees, and towards boosting 'continuous' opportunities during working time;

- developing continuing training, through the gradual assignment of 0.30% of total wages and asserting the right to training through training leave and sabbaticals;
- setting up an alternating training and guidance system, to encourage contact between young trainees and companies;
- to develop the conditions for continuing vocational training access opportunities.

Furthermore, the agreement sees the development of an integrated system of training credit certification as the instrument which can bridge various different systems and opportunities.

2.2.2. An analysis of the need for a national contribution

Agreements and protocols of understanding between social partners, regions and the Ministry of Labour on employment and training policies, made sure that the needs analysis issue became increasingly central to the definition of the relationship between training, the world of work and employment.

The legislator acknowledged the trend, formalising several phases of Law No 236/93, which foresaw agreements between the regions, autonomous provinces and joint structures. Law No 236/93 also recognised the role of bilateral structures, consisting of employer associations and trade unions, starting with the 1993 protocol of understanding, the main functions of which are to organise training activity and analyse needs.

Through the same bilateral structures, the social partners are increasingly integrating between themselves and the institutions, contributing to a more logical coherence between objectives and training organisation.

One of the most significant experiments has been the national training needs survey conducted by the national bilateral training body (Confindustria and CGIL-CISL-UIL). The survey covered 16 sectors (hotels, basic chemical sector, specialised chemicals, manufacturing, construction, electrical, pharmaceutical, printing, dairy, machine tool, machinery, furniture, textiles, pasta and bakery products, weaving, road transport) on the registry of 482 vocational profiles.

The organisational approach adopted for this survey reveals a bilateral specificity: the selection of reference figures is entrusted to the national categories; the description of figures is attended to by a specially created bilateral laboratory; and the definition of needs is entrusted to the regional bilateral Bodies network.

2.2.3. Company, sectoral and territorial training plans

With Circular 65/99 the Ministry of Labour set the ball rolling for experimentation with company, sectoral and territorial training plans, implementing the agreements entered into by

the government and social partners on 24 September 1996 (labour agreement) and on 22 December 1998 (development and employment pact).

The name 'training plan' means an organised programme of training activities, set by the social partners and corresponding to company, sectoral and territorial requirements.

Financeable projects are defined as complex training initiatives, linked to specific realities, such as territorial or sectoral development, in which social partners take a central role in programming interventions. Each project should be accompanied by a document signed by the representatives of the organisations promoting the training plan, within which the choices included in the project are explained. Each plan must foresee either specific training actions – such as refreshers, requalification and reconversion – and cross-the-board measures preparatory to training, such as needs analysis, guidance, skills assessment.

Although interventions financeable under this memorandum are included in this case in company training, a public contribution granted to every single company could reach up to the maximum foreseen by *de minimis*, in other words to EUR 100 000, instead of the limits foreseen by other memorandums. But if a company has already benefited from state aid, it could only apply for a contribution if it did not exceed that amount, up to the limit foreseen.

The subjects running the projects – which could be companies and their consortia, temporary associations of companies, and associations with purpose, or training structures – should guarantee coordination and coherence between all stages of projects, and they should identify companies which participate in training.

The difficulty of designing a company, sectoral or territorial training plan lies precisely in seeking common training interests among the companies involved. That is why it was foreseen that, for particularly complex interventions, bilateral, territorial and/or national structures could give technical assistance and counselling for the preparation and management of feasible projects.

As in previous memorandums, companies where workers are end users of the activities should guarantee at least 20% of their joint funding. This share of joint funding could be covered by trainee personnel costs and, in contrast with the stipulations of other memorandums, this cost could also be entirely refunded, since it could also be the object of public financing.

Finally, financeable activities are guaranteed a follow-up to the promotion, monitoring and evaluation phase. This task falls to Law No 236/93's steering committee and to other structures set in motion by Memorandum 174/96, starting with the scientific committee.

ISFOL is also called upon to perform an important role of technical assistance during all stages of project implementation.

The approach adopted through this memorandum is seen as a prototype for continuing training activities. The recent implementing memorandum for Law No 125/91 also requires that project applications incorporating equal opportunities should be approved by the social

partners. This encourages social dialogue on training and the best matching of activities not only to company growth needs, but also to the needs of single workers involved in the initiative.

2.2.4. Bilateral funds for continuing training

The establishment of the bilateral funds in the government's economic and financial programming document (Law No 388/2000 para. 118), overcomes the obstacle of debate on setting up continuing training foundations, creating a system that could provide a model for continuing training in Italy.

Some 75% of available funds will be spent by the ministry and regions for company, territorial and sectoral training plans agreed between social partners, which are currently being tested, starting with ministerial Circular 65/99.

The remaining 25% is earmarked for the bilateral funds, once established. These will be distributed according to criteria to be determined by a Minister of Labour decree, in accordance with the Minister of the Treasury, Budget and Economic programming, on the basis of the numerical size of sectors covered by single funds and of the numbers in each single sector.

It is foreseen that a monitoring committee will be set up, consisting of representatives of the government, regions and social partners. This structure was also foreseen for the foundation, although it did not include participation by the regions.

Each fund will be managed by a management board, members of which will be appointed by the social partners.

2.3. Developing individualised continuing vocational training

2.3.1. Promotion of individual training in Law No 236/93

As in many European countries, the notion of tailoring training more to the needs of individuals and their employment or career development has been a theme which is gaining in importance in Italy. An elementary step was taken when the right of the individual to continuing training was first introduced in experimental form by Law No 236/93, and has since been sanctioned through the introduction of training leave by Law No 53/2000 (see Section 2.3.4). From an examination of experiences based on the first use made of Law No 236/93 resources in 1997, various situations were observed which could not be catered for by any current procedures:

- the presence of so many micro companies, for which it was even difficult to take an integrated supply approach of an intercompany nature;

- the existence of company contexts within which training awareness was tilted very much in favour of the workers, making it difficult for the employer to take employee training demand into account;
- the dispersion of demand for specialist skills;
- the existence of individual demand which emerged explicitly, with course applications being submitted by individual technicians or workers in general;
- the recognition of a clear barrier between training supply in the public area of training, and the private sphere which appeared to be searching for a reference market.

Following the instructions of the regions, the steering committee set up by Law No 236/93 has inserted a section devoted to individual continuing training in Memorandum 139/98.

The memorandum declares that ‘regions and autonomous provinces may, to a limit of 25% of available resources, also promote individual guidance-training paths, even using skills assessment provisions, through projects developed by a single employee. Activities may be carried out during or outside working hours, in the first case also using specific existing contract institutions’. This is reiterated in Memorandum 30/2000, thus giving a further incentive to achieving a national system of individual training.

Thus the Ministry of Labour, regions and social partners with their own representative in the steering committee set up by Law No 236/93, have taken on board the idea of lifelong learning, introducing for the first time and in an entirely experimental way, the possibility of making a financial contribution to the running of continuing training projects proposed by single workers.

As provided by Law No 236/93, only employees of companies subject to INPS (national institute of social insurance) contributions equal to 0.30% of wages (contribution against redundancy) may be considered.

The real novelty in this field is the possibility of financing individual self-training activities for individual workers from public funds. The new organisational model raises the crucial issue of innovating training service supply, tailoring it to individual needs and aptitudes.

Fifteen regional administrations have already set aside a proportion of the resources allocated to them for in-company training under Law No 236/93, for the purpose of experimental projects in individual training for employed workers (see Table 12 and, concerning the later stages of experimentation, see Section 2.3.3.).

Table 12: Administrations involved in implementing individual training schemes for employed workers, and allocation of resources, in ITL and EUR

Region	Resources Circular 139/98		Individual training allocated share	
	ITL	EUR	ITL	EUR
Piedmont	18 451 450 630	9 529 379	922 572 532	476 469
Valle d'Aosta	1 313 477 645	678 355	65 673 882	33 918
Bolzano province	3 179 970 541	1 642 318	662 493 860	342 150
Lombardy	31 455 115 444	16 245 211	2 500 000 000	1 291 142
Veneto	18 127 149 007	9 361 891	500 000 000	258 228
Liguria	5 794 125 687	2 992 416	743 286 000	383 875
Emilia Romagna	25 181 671 591	13 005 248	2 500 000 000	1 291 142
Tuscany	10 512 156 932	5 429 076	2 628 039 233	1 357 269
Marche	5 668 913 761	2 927 750	566 891 376	292 775
Abruzzo	3 356 644 737	1 733 562	167 832 240	86 678
Latium	15 657 438 072	8 086 392	3 914 359 518	2 021 598
Puglia				
Basilicata	4 031 082 113	2 081 880	1 007 770 528	520 470
Calabria	2 997 387 408	1 548 021	299 738 741	154 802
Sicily	4 226 889 132	2 183 006	775 000 000	400 254
			18 213 871 510	9 406 680

Source: ISFOL, Continuing training Department.

This new opportunity for continuing training may play a part in solving the difficulties which the development of training for employed adults has encountered in Italy in recent years. It could bring Italy up to date with respect to other European countries, in which in-company continuing training initiatives often derive from prevalently individual initiatives, and are designed in conjunction with the companies themselves.

Furthermore, the accompanying activities envisaged in the experimental schemes may promote integration between the continuing training system and the permanent education system, by developing, for example, initiatives with the territorial centres for adult education and with higher level integrated training.

The transition from uniform training procedures to procedures envisaging differentiated segments designed to respond to individual requirements, may promote a coherent approach sharing the same aims and features of continuing training initiatives.

Generally speaking, experimentation is strongly related to local specifics, which may even originate from significant behavioural differences. For instance, the voucher (or training coupon), is issued to the user according to their own project, put forward and evaluated by the competent provincial administration (in other words, the province where the worker lives or

where the place of work is located) and it is paid to the training institution at the end of the course. The value of the voucher issued by the regions varies between EUR 516 (as in Piedmont) and EUR 1 291 (maximum possible grant).

In the case of Piedmont, and the Emilia Romagna and Latium regions, the request must be formulated on the basis of a supply prospectus prepared by the administrations themselves. Prospectuses classify supply in different areas, ranging from IT to European languages, from administrative topics (business administration, management control) to techno-technical disciplines (plant engineering, productive processes control systems) to supply regarding job security and food health regulations (HACCP -hazard analysis and critical control points - directives).

The Latium region, moreover, also considered about 10% of total project requests for initiatives which were not in the prospectus. Other regions, such as Liguria, did not produce a prospectus, leaving the worker the opportunity to identify the courses on offer which best met his own needs, even outside the regional and national territory.

There are many different ways of informing users and making them aware of what possibilities exist, and for guidance activities the regions made use of local over-the-counter networks (inside administrations themselves, district offices, *Informagiovani*, employment services, itinerant vans, etc.).

To give another example, some regions (Piedmont, Liguria and Tuscany), recognise a voucher assignment priority, where the request is based on sharing the training pathway with the relevant company.

2.3.2. Towards an individualised continuing training model

ISFOL and the inter-regional steering committee for work and vocational training submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Labour on preparing an organisational and technical assistance purview applicable throughout the territory, a proposal which was approved by the continuing training policy committee within the Ministry of Labour on 21 October 1999. This organisational purview promotes experimental self training activities, and ensures:

- the distribution of information to employees interested in this procedure;
- advisory support for workers to strengthen their ability to choose correctly their training curriculum;
- advisory support for the regions, for the development of new patterns of planning of self-training activities for the workers.

This step focuses on two specific points: first to provide assistance in defining a detailed framework of the training activities available; and second to foresee experimentation with technical procedures for worker counselling, and for assessing their abilities, in order to improve their choices.

The entire project is coordinated by a steering committee (*Gruppo di Coordinamento della formazione individuale*), composed of representatives from the following agencies:

- Coordinamento interregionale per il lavoro e la formazione professionale;
- regions involved in the experiment;
- ISFOL;
- *Tecnostruttura* (technical consultancy given to the regions);
- social partners;
- scientific committee established by Ministry of Labour Circular No 174/96, responsible for monitoring the project, and for retaining necessary links with the steering committee for Law No 236/93.

The project is subdivided into two lines of intervention:

- national level – experimentation in technical assistance, through a relevant team of experts, consisting of ISFOL experts and interregional coordination for labour and vocational training experts;
- regional level – enforcement of the regions’ ability to start and develop individualised training paths, through additional suitable financial resources earmarked for them.

As for second level intervention, those regions which reserved a share of resources assigned them for company training, and which targeted those resources on experimentation for individualised projects for the training of employed workers, receive additional resources for promoting end user services, and for creating regional overviews.

The resources committed (amounting to a total of ITL 2 billion [EUR 1 032 914]) allow regional initiatives to be organised, which foresee various types of action, including:

- activity promotion and advertising;
- activating info points (extending existing ones and/or creating from scratch) and providing services such as skills assessment and employed adult worker guidance;
- workshops for regional system operators involved in the programming of continuing training activities, and for representatives of the social partners;
- prospectus of training supply of regional interest;
- integrating individualised training action with company training action;
- certification and validation of individual training paths;
- tutoring and consulting activities for participants in training;
- monitoring and evaluation of activities.

Thus, the proposed innovation would allow the preparation and setting up of a series of services presently not available within local administrations, for instance worker guidance

activity and skills assessment, and would give forward impetus to certification and recognition activities.

One of the actions currently being implemented at national level is also gravitating in this direction, that is the creation of a national catalogue of individualised training supply, which will be accessible via the Internet.

This initiative, jointly run by ISFOL and by technical vocational training coordination, is dialectically related to existing local experiences and requirements. It is intended to work as a logistical service for those regions which have produced their own catalogue, and as a methodological tool of reference for those administrations which have not as yet managed to work out their own operational hypothesis.

Moreover, the prospectus will allow:

- the final user to receive information on provisions for financing their own training plan, as well as on available supply;
- guidance operators to possess a consulting tool for identifying solutions best suited to workers' needs.

2.3.3. Some comparisons of local experimentation

There is still only limited data available on current activities. Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Basilicata, Liguria, Latium and Tuscany are the regions which have completed their experimentation. Not all of them have (at the time of writing) as yet analysed or made public their data. We can report here some recently published data on the experimentation conducted in Emilia Romagna as an example.

The region of Emilia Romagna earmarked ITL 2.5 billion (EUR 1 291 142) for worker training to cover:

- workers in steady employment, with special emphasis on precarious working situations;
- temporary workers, part-time workers with coordinated and continuous performance contracts (for the latter, initiatives cannot exceed 10% of allotted resources).

The prospectus offers courses of short duration and variable cost up to a maximum of ITL 2.5 million (EUR 1 291) for each worker.

An online catalogue is available on the Region of Emilia Romagna's web site (www.odl.net). At the time of writing, 651 courses, in thematic areas such as company management and accounting (6.6% of total courses), IT (57.5%), quality and customer satisfaction (10.4%), organisational behaviour (3.1%), transversal behaviour (9.2%), language skills (9.4%), security and environment (3.8%), were foreseen.

Approval was given to 2 853 demands covering 1 677 workers. An assessment and evaluation report produced by the region in October 2000 allows a first picture of individualised continuing training demand to be identified.

As far as user characteristics are concerned it emerges that:

- there is an equal distribution between sexes, with a slight male prevalence (cf. Table 13);
- women applying for the voucher turn out to be predominantly under 35, while distribution among men appears to be the opposite (cf. Table 14);
- users have high level certificates: almost 80% have at least acquired the lower secondary education certificate (cf. Table 15);
- the intermediate clerical worker represents the prevalent vocational position, 2/3 women and half for men (cf. Table 16);
- the most frequent economic activity is tertiary (cf. Table 17).

Table 13: Age class distribution of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna

Age classes (in years)	No of workers	
	Absolute value	%
Below 30	232	13.8
30-34	503	30
35-39	445	26.5
40-44	239	14.3
45-50	140	8.3
over 50	109	6.5
Total	1 677	100

Source: From CRAS Emilia Romagna region data 2000.

Table 14: Distribution by sex and age group of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna

Age group	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Below 30	44.0	56.0	100
30-34	47.5	52.5	100
35-39	60.0	40.0	100
40-44	55.6	44.4	100
45-50	51.4	48.6	100
over 50	57.8	42.2	100
Total employed	52.5	47.5	100

Source: Data from CRAS, 2000.

Table 15: Distribution by certificate of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna

Certificate	No of workers	
	Absolute value	%
Academic degree	287	17.1
Degree	11	0.7
Upper secondary certificate	1 026	61.2
Qualification	100	6
Lower secondary certificate	235	14
Primary certificate	3	0.2
Not indicated	15	0.9
Total	1 677	100

Source: from CRAS data Emilia Romagna region, 2000.

Table 16: Distribution by vocational position and by sex of participants in initial training experimentation in Emilia Romagna

Professional profile	Workers		
	Male	Female	Total
Manager	9	0	9
Middle manager	76	43	119
Intermediate clerical worker	390	462	852
Clerical worker	77	95	172
Skilled worker	125	22	147
Unskilled worker	91	66	157
Co-operative member	2	4	6
Total	770	692	1 462

Source: Data from CRAS, 2000.

Table 17: Distribution by company economic sector to which participants in initial training experimentation belong, in Emilia Romagna

Company economic sector	Workers	
	Absolute value	%
Agriculture	19	1.1
Industry	721	43
Services	811	48.4
Plurisectoral & non-indicated	126	7.5
Total	1 677	100

Source: Data from CRAS, 2000.

Comparing data on individualised training activities with those of participants in continuing training financed by ESF Objective 4, some significant differences can be observed:

- a higher number of women (47%) attend individualised continuing training, against 36% of women who attend initiatives financed by Objective 4;
- workers under the age of 35 mostly prefer individualised training, while about 40% of participants in Objective 4 training fall into the 30-40 years class;
- although in individualised training 80% have at least the upper secondary education certificate, the percentage falls to 62% in the other training type;
- while intermediate clerical workers represent about 60% of individualised continuing training demands, ex Objective 4 continuing training users appear more frequently among clerical and work categories.

According to the authors of the report these elements provide ‘an unequivocal sign that, for the area and period under consideration, individualised training supply reached more dynamic, young and educated users, who proved to be more receptive to an autonomous, non-predetermined training pathway’.

2.3.4. Paid educational leave

Law No 53/2000 (guidelines on maternity and paternity support, on the right to act as a carer and the right to be trained, and on the coordination of timing) makes further important headway towards defining the right to individual training and to lifelong learning. Indeed, paragraph 6 stipulates that ‘workers, employed and unemployed, have the right to follow lifelong training paths, to improve professional knowledge and skills’.

Workers with at least five years service in the same company have the right to a maximum of 11 months of training leave.

Paragraph 5 defines ‘training leave’ as ‘leave intended to round off compulsory education, to acquire a secondary school certificate, an academic degree, to allow participation in training activities different from those put into effect or financed by the employer’.

The leave is not paid, but paragraph 7 of the same law provides that the worker could benefit from a share of severance pay. The right to training leave still remains bound by company definitions on non-acceptance of employees’ requests on provable grounds related to company dynamics.

Clear expression of this right will be assured by government, regions and by local administrations through the organisation of training supply in the territory. Supply should leave room for personalised pathways, certified and recognised as training credits in the national and European ambit.

In this case, as well as for individual training provided by Law No 236/93, the pathway could correspond to the autonomous choice of the worker or, alternatively, it could be arranged by the company through local or company training plans, decided upon by the social partners.

National and decentralised sectoral collective bargaining stipulates the number of hours to be assigned for leave under this paragraph, workers identification methods, hours and payment provisions related to participation in training.

There is still a degree of uncertainty about sources of finance. In the case of employed workers, the idea is that resources should come from the interprofessional funds provided by Law No 196/97, paragraph 17. Moreover, Law No 53/00 also allocated EUR 15.5 million to be assigned to the funding of training projects which – based on agreement between the social partners – will mean a decrease in hours of work, as well as individual training projects. The state-regions conference should establish the allocation of those resources, which could represent an opportunity for the financial integration of regions which have already assigned parts of 236/93 individual training financing.

With regard to the organisation of supply provision from the administrations, it is supposed that this will be based on the experience built up in the ambit of Law No 236/93.

2.4. Development of distance learning and self-learning methodologies and techniques

Over recent years, the development of distance-learning and self-learning methodologies and techniques witnessed remarkable growth in the various fields of training and educational activity, both in terms of the number of initiatives and their output, and more especially in terms of the setting up and reshaping of training structures in this area.

This increase could be interpreted as the ‘symptom’ of a transition from a socio-economic system, which felt that it was enough to have a highly concentrated education system in early life, to a system which is having second thoughts about the entire educational and training ‘paradigm’.

Both distance training and self-learning, seen as open, flexible and personalised forms of learning, are defined more by the need to break down barriers to access, than to reach a greater potential volume of demand.

Starting with the publication of the *Open and distance training Memorandum* by the Commission of the European Communities in 1991, numerous European resolutions on the issue emerged, both in political terms and regarding financial support for programmes and lines of intervention.

2.4.1. Ministry of Labour projects

At national level, the interest of the Ministry of Labour was confirmed in 1999 by the start of the Progetto FaDol (a national network for on-line distance training aimed at regional vocational trainers), in the area of routine ESF-funded training of trainers initiatives.

The FaDol project targets the entire public training system, in other words both teaching and non-teaching staff involved in regional, provincial or municipal public centres, as well as trainers involved in the training board's training centres.

Distance training activities focus especially on updating, specialising and re-qualifying staff involved in designing, running and assessing the various aspects of training pathways (teachers, tutors, vocational counsellors, course designers, administrators, etc.). It is estimated that the above-mentioned employees number about 17 000.

In the FaDol distance network format, besides having the opportunity of using training tools and contexts which are still personalised, it is also possible to utilise parallel services such as in-training exchange between trainers, data bank access, connection to other existing networks, etc.

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for the entire project. There are two structures involved: SAT (technical assistance service), which is responsible for creating and managing the peripheral and central structure; and SAF (training assistance service), which is responsible for designing and providing training pathways, and training assistance.

The role of the FaDol regional centre is to monitor and support the local training process and to stimulate and guide discussion on the needs stemming from the local situation in terms of vocational training system innovation. It is appointed to direct central guidelines according to local needs and to oversee work carried out from its own position, checking progress regarding other regional centres. It must document and make public through the Internet experiences which have been a success locally in terms of cooperation between the vocational training system, the school system and other institutions such as university and research centres.

The FaDol Regional Centre is responsible in particular for using the Internet to stimulate cooperation and innovation with its own vocational training system, widely integrating it with local labour market needs, SMEs, and access regulations for community and national public funds.

At local level FaDol has its 'local point', from which individual trainers can use courseware, access the 'database' and talk to other trainers connected to the net. The local points are broadly distributed, providing good geographical coverage and making a visible system available for users in the vicinity.

2.4.2. Ministry of Education projects

Another important initiative came from the Ministry of Education, with Progetto PSTD (1997-2000 Didactic technologies programme development). It is a large scale programme involving the entire Italian school system, based on strong public investment. The programme set three broad targets:

- to promote the use of multi-media mastery amongst students, to teach them how to use and comprehend different tools, and to adopt new cognitive styles in studies, research, communication and design;
- to improve the efficiency of teaching-learning processes and teaching organisation itself, both regarding individual disciplines and the general acquisition of skills;
- to improve teachers' professionalism not only through training, but also by providing them with tools and services for their daily work.

At the same time as pilot projects were being conducted, involving some 8 000 educational institutes in the 1999-2000 school year, vocational guidance and guidelines were also defined through ministerial memorandums, which:

- underlined the necessity for all schools, at least those entering the programme, to have Internet access (Ministry of Education Memorandum No 196/1998);
- promotes the supply of digital satellite dishes for training activities (Ministry of Education Memorandum No 430/1998);
- promotes the purchase of multimedia personal computers in educational institutes (Circular letter paragraph No 34332/BL);
- promotes the development of multimedia products and services (Memorandum No 126/1999).

In recent years at regional level there was some indication that open and distance training was becoming more institutionally legitimised. The first region to create a specific regulation was Emilia Romagna, taking the cultural decision to deal with distance training as a 'mainstream' form of training, rather than a 'secondary' system. Recently, the Piedmont region laid down conditions for the development of distance training activities ('Labour Market' resolution, point 13 'Innovative experimental activities').

2.4.3. Contribution of EU programmes

Further acknowledgement of distance training came from the Ministry of Labour, with Memorandum 43/99 (Course activities provided through distance training modules, for multiregional operational programmes and community initiatives, jointly financed with the ESF), which defines the provisions for monitoring activities.

Numerous training activities using distance and self-learning methodologies were implemented using community and national funds (through the ESF, ADAPT and Employment Community Initiatives, Law No 236/93, Law No 125/91, etc.).

Surveys on the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of experimental activities conducted are still few and far between.

The monitoring of ADAPT phase II projects highlighted the awakening of training structures involved in the initiatives to the fact that companies need innovative, flexible and personalised training approaches: 'Companies are in fact making increasing use of technological and multimedia aids, and are using the traditional classroom less and less compared with training structures which for reasons of time and tradition use traditional training' (ISFOL, 2000a).

In ADAPT phase II it is possible to find about 95 projects, 401 of which were approved in Italy, which claim to run distance training activities. Of the various different types of promoters, the most aware ones turned out to be training bodies and companies in general (SMEs, company consortia, cooperative companies). The sectors mostly covered by projects are publishing, graphics, vocational training, commerce, banking, and agro-biological.

The geographical distribution of projects (see Table 18) reveals a higher concentration of training activities and, in the same way, a high percentage of activities conducted using distance training in the autonomous province of Bolzano, and in the Tuscany and Lombardy regions. In this case, the close correlation between distance training and training projects shows how activities are mainly characterised by the 'distance' approach. Even though Emilia Romagna numbers among those regions with a limited concentration of training activities, it nonetheless shows particular interest in distance training: more than half of the region's training projects have adopted this approach.

Table 18: Comparison of ADAPT Phase II projects, involving distance training and general training, and relative geographical distribution

Region	General training projects	Distance training projects	Relation distance training / traditional (%)	Total approved projects
Piedmont	19	7	26	29
Valle d'Aosta	4	1	25	5
Lombardy	38	14	34	43
Trento Autonomous Province	7	2	28	8
Bolzano Autonomous Province	5	2	40	5
Veneto	16	4	25	18
Friuli Venezia Giulia	8	0	0	8
Liguria	10	2	20	13
Emilia Romagna	30	20	53	46
Tuscany	22	8	31	25
Umbria	7	1	14	11
Marches	10	2	10	11
Latium	18	6	27	26
Abruzzo	6	1	16	9
Molise	7	1	14	8
Campania	19	2	10	25
Apulia	15	2	13	16
Basilicata	9	1	11	11
Calabria	6	1	16	10
Sicily	11	4	36	14
Sardinia	14	3	21	18
Multiregional projects	28	11	32	42
Total	309	95	26	401

Source: SNS (national support service) ADAPT, ISFOL.

It is precisely those projects which specify user characteristics which offer distance training activities. This element shows the strategic importance of target phase definition in distance training activities.

In Italy, ADAPT generally tends to focus on executive and entrepreneurial profiles (85% of projects), SME employees (76.8%) and trainers (almost fifty percent of projects). Compared with overall data, projects concerning distance training mainly involve SME employees, trainers and qualified staff; less of them focus on unqualified manpower.

From the total of ESF MOPs (multiregional operational projects) run in 1995 and 1996, the ISFOL survey (ISFOL, 2000d) took 13 initiatives as a reference, which applied distance training methodologies. The overall projects were on a multiregional scale, and covered various types of users (young people with a lower secondary education certificate, those who

left upper secondary education, apprentices, young employed people on training-employment contracts, young people in the last years of vocational schools and State vocational schools), totalling 486 young people. The survey reveals the ability of new distance training technologies to encourage access to professionalisation opportunities.

2.4.4. Company training projects

Company training initiatives conducted on the basis of Law No 236/93 and funding related to memorandums 174/96 and 37/98 resulted in the financing of 934 projects which can be broken down into company activities (79.2%) and multi-company activities (20.8%). In the company intervention cases, there is a clear prevalence of traditional teaching methods being applied (67.4%), unlike the multi-company projects, in which companies mostly used innovative training methods. This could largely be attributed to the fact that dealing with a larger user population triggered economies of scale which brought down the cost of multimedia design and IT equipment.

Activities promoted under Memorandum 174/96 provide a further impetus towards the promotion of continuing training distance-learning tools in SMEs. From a total of 61 projects conducted, 30 refer to the development of distance training systems or to experimentation with distance training modules.

Finally, access to training is determined by the increasing development of new learning environments, such as learning centres and learning points.

This topic is specifically discussed in Section 3 (Curricular development and content, learning strategies and methodologies). Some of the most relevant experiments marked by innovation, complexity and the large number of users reached by the activities are the Melfi open learning centre and the ISVOR learning point (both run by ISVOR-FIAT), the Hypercom virtual campus (Trainet), and the continuing training Pole-centre (CUOA).

2.5. The guidance function in employment services

Besides the 'traditional' users of training and guidance services (young people, students, unemployed people), there is now increasing demand from new types of users (adults, employed people, weak sectors) as a result of the development of new working, organisational and technological dynamics.

The need to face up to structural unemployment situations and social disadvantage is taken on board by the national authorities through the reform of the employment services, based on Legislative Decree 469/97. This reform stipulates that the employment services should promote and carry out the following:

- mediation between companies and workers;

- steps to prevent unemployment;
- steps to broaden participation in the labour market to types of users who are hard to place.

To enable the new services to function, they will need functional units particularly dedicated to:

- guidance information, performing an initial analysis of demand and customer needs (worker or company) and directing him/it to individual services that would best suit his/its characteristics and requirements;
- administrative procedures management, creating more detailed ‘vocational files’ for workers than has been the case thus far; worker registration in registry offices is an essential requirement for entry to some training courses and active labour policy programmes;
- guidance and counselling, foreseeing a series of activities such as individual interviews and training guidance;
- support for weak sectors, analysis of worker potential and steps to support their targeted and assisted introduction into companies;
- matching of job seekers and vacancies, by collating and organising job offers and pre-introduction opportunities in a proper database (practical training courses, apprenticeships, vocational introduction plans).

Recent research promoted by the Ministry of Labour (Ministry of Labour, 2000) led to several initial ideas about the current organisation of guidance services. In terms of the national guidance structures field (about 2 070), ISFOL extracted some data on structures mentioned (ISFOL, 2000f).

From this survey it emerges that guidance services tend to be open to the public on a daily basis (93.9%), especially in the mornings (71.6%). Links between these structures and external organisations are still few and far between, and most cases are limited to other public sector structures (provinces, local administrations, regional training centres, regions).

As for types of users, guidance structures mostly reach young unemployed people (74%), adults in mobility or in redundancy funds (53.4%), upper secondary school students (48.6%) and migrants (44.6%). Users are very much the traditional users of public employment services, although there is a significant minority of other students.

The most widely used methods for letting the public know about services are brochures, sending staff into schools, magazine advertisements, meetings and debates. The most modern means of communication (audio-visual media, internet, etc.) rate lowest.

Amongst the users, the vast majority are in steady employment (81.8%), with an upper secondary education certificate or a vocational qualification; 35.1% have an academic degree and 3.4% a university degree. This raises a problem of the adequacy of workers’ skills, in terms of the increased complexity of their jobs. Only 31.1% of workers in steady employment

received specific training to perform training functions, either after employment or on entering the company.

Thus the reform of the employment services is coming about within a difficult operational set up, and it is expected to provide a systematic picture definition of what future guidance services should offer.

3. Curricular development and content, learning strategies and methodologies

3.1. Introduction

This section attempts to provide answers which cannot readily be inferred from available data; in fact, in many cases there are actually no studies or research into current trends. As a result, a different approach had to be taken to the subjects dealt with in this study, inviting important witnesses - important because of their national representivity or their distinctive outlook - to express their views on the matter.

This section hopes to provide some initial answers to the following questions:

- there is a need within VET to respond at curricular level to calls for greater emphasis to be put upon flexibility, transferability, individualisation, modularisation and mobility. Is this being done and how? With more modular courses and structures; new curriculum architecture; shorter, more diverse, tailor-made courses?
- is teaching developing to make these changes possible?
- are new forms of teaching emerging which are appropriate for adults both young and old, employed or unemployed?
- are the learning tools and support adequate? Availability of technology-based tools and open and distance learning methods to improve access- are they reaching the adult learner? Have teachers and trainers been trained to facilitate this type of learning?
- can we really speak of new learning environments?

To find some answers to these questions, the following experts were interviewed:

- Francesco Avallone, Professor of industrial psychology in the faculty of psychology of the University of Rome 'La Sapienza';
- Franco Frigo, co-ordinator of the ISFOL continuing training project. (higher institute for worker training and guidance);
- Anna D'Arcangelo, ISFOL researcher, expert in matters of adult education and IFTS;
- Paolo Inghilesi, head of the CGIL's research and training sector (Italian General Confederation of Workers);
- Gabriella di Francesco, head of the ISFOL certification project.

Grateful thanks are also due to Francesco Mancuso, the trade unions advisor for the OBNF bilateral organisations (Confindustria – CGIL – CISL - UIL) and Chirone 2000 (Federreti – CGIL – CISL - UIL) for the indications and suggestions provided.

3.2. Changes underway and educational modelling

Generally speaking, over recent years in Italy it has become clear that there is a need for a new theoretical interpretation of teaching and learning methods, for new educational models which are able to explain the changes coming about in teaching and training practice, in the light of the lifelong learning 'paradigm'. Given the complexity of the phenomena and of the variables at stake in the different fields, it has not as yet been possible to identify the emergence of any specific models. What has been seen is rather a multiplicity of relatively structured modes, and general trends.

'From a first close study of adult education initiatives a varied picture appears to be emerging; generally speaking, the supply world is currently in the process of moving away from the old styles of training and teaching, for example evening courses for qualification purposes, towards newer forms of courses aiming to integrate vocational training and work. It is in those centres which have a more established tradition and teaching staff who are qualified in such matters that methods related to the new theories of adult learning are to be found' (from the interview with Anna D'Arcangelo).

'There are still only a handful of experts who deal with adult training issues, even though several universities have chairs in the subject. The whole issue of the relationship between the production of goods and services in general, and the production of knowledge in particular, is something which needs to be reconsidered. The conceptual category of "human activity" is directly related to the "salary-based work" category, but this relationship changes over time and according to the moment in history. At this specific stage, a large proportion of work involves a lot of knowledge, even when the workers in question cannot be seen as "knowledge workers". Thus, the experience embodied in workers must increasingly become a "deposit" which I imagine in my mind's eye as open-cast, which can be mined by new generations of scholars and educationalists. The circuit to be re-established continues to be based on the theory-practice-theory-practice cycle, redesigned this time round with the emphasis on practice as the sign of equal dignity' (Franco Frigo).

Generally speaking, both for the initial training of young people and for adult training, the use of new information and communication technology has led to major changes in the models applied. Their adoption - in response to the need to facilitate access to training for increasing numbers of users and to render modes of delivery more flexible and personalised - has brought training operators face to face with the need to rethink teaching/learning models (obviously besides the roles involved in the various stages of the processes):

'Established education involves one-to-one interaction in small groups. In the wake of the development of new distance and self-learning instruments, in particular following the use of new instruments for data communication and the Internet, a new psycho-educational approach is being developed. It is possible to foresee distance learning as being increasingly tied in with real experience, something which is, in fact, already

happening in many organisations where the multi-media approach is provided by the Internet and, at the same time, is tied in with daily work experience' (Francesco Avallone).

3.3. New curricular models

One could say that both continuing and initial training are gravitating towards short, modular, tailor-made courses. This is due to a different understanding of knowledge and how it is developed:

'Gone are the long in-house courses developed as basic training for new recruits; this trend is in response to a shift towards accumulated know-how, which is taking over from the notion of 'finite knowledge'' (Francesco Avallone).

The same experimental activity with individualised continuing training practices under Law No 236/93 (cf. Section 1.3. and particularly Section 2.3.) shows that supply is evolving towards courses of short duration. Although this type of provision is emerging in response to a new model in know-how construction, it nonetheless poses new problems related to the synthesis of blocks of knowledge, or rather to the design and structuring of a well-constructed and conscious training project on the part of the individual:

'The flexibility and short duration of courses on offer is something which can already be seen in adult training prospectuses. Although the reduction in the length of training courses should be positively welcomed as an indicator of the modularity required, I cannot take the same positive view of the shift towards maximising vocational refresher courses alone. We should also be able to promote courses which are broken down into various modules and training units. Workers should have the possibility of being assisted by specialised staff in putting together effective formal training courses, or courses for enhancing or validating the skills they have acquired on-the-job' (Franco Frigo).

Indeed, the new forms of training which are currently emerging cannot claim to be equally valid for all types of students:

'People in work are faced with the problem of increasing their know-how and skills, which often does not boil down to a "project" issue: a person in work can figure out his own "professionalisation" project in terms of his skills requirements, and can opt for suitable training. A young unemployed person, however, is faced with the problem of designing his own individual growth project. Let us take the example of relational skills: the employed person knows what this means, whereas the young person does not, for cultural reasons. This also holds true for an unemployed person who has to replan his life, unless he wants to acquire a new qualification, or to acquire some basic skills' (Francesco Avallone).

Francesco Mancuso and Guido Premuda express similar views on the ‘flexibility’ project (Chirone 2000, 2001) promoted by the Chirone 2000 bilateral organisation (Federreti, CGIL-CISL- UIL), and financed by the Ministry of Labour within the framework of actions under Law No 236/93:

‘We really cannot avoid the fact that part of the labour force - and indeed a not insignificant part - has still not acquired the right to a minimum vocabulary in order to gain access to such knowledge, which requires projects and adult teaching methods which are neither well-known, nor the object of specific attention in most of the vocational training world’.

And again:

‘Training, it is usually said, is a complex, “unnatural” activity. No-one opts spontaneously and immediately for this type of instrument. It tends rather to pass through various filters, starting with the cognitive charts, on the basis of which the various players shape their strategies, within which they can assign a given role to training. As with all complex tools, this particular one will tend to be used by someone who feels they can handle it well, whilst it will generally be shunned or put to limited use by someone who does not feel entirely at ease in this field. All the surveys conducted on the explicit demand for training would seem to confirm this approach, showing a correlation between demand for new training and previous training experience. A person who has already undergone a lot of training which is then related to work or career pathways, tends to demand further training; someone who has had little experience of training tends not to plan for it, even for the future’ (Chirone 2000, 2001).

Furthermore, as far as adult education is concerned, the data provided by the Ministry of Education (1998/99 - see Section 1.4.) shows that 42% of the courses provided are of long duration and 58% of short duration. Moreover, female users appear to prefer the short courses over the courses of long duration (61.5% for short courses v. 44.2% for long courses). A similar preference is demonstrated by Italians as a nation (89.0% v. 66.4%), and by employees (44.9% v. 33.9%).

‘Short courses have covered linguistic competence and computing; demand is high and there is a steady supply. Functional literacy, however, is altogether more complicated - law, economics, European citizenship, and strengthening basic skills - this requires a national plan. It is being worked on. People are not really aware of training activities, not much is known about supply and demand for them, and there is no national framework. This is also being worked on’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

Generally speaking, therefore, it is true to say that, while they do address a new model of knowledge and its construction, the new types of courses also pose problems in terms of building the capacity to plan individual pathways leading to growth. In the words of the *Memorandum on lifelong learning* (European Commission, 2000): ‘...it is essential to raise

the demand for learning as well as its supply, most especially for those who have benefited least from training so far’.

3.4. New learning environments

Over recent years, numerous experiments in education and training have been conducted, using new information and communication tools, either in types of distance learning, or for self-learning and cooperative learning. Besides the initiatives mentioned in Section 2.4., it is also fair to say that experimental runs developed over recent years have covered various sectors and contexts, from vocational training to schools, from universities to continuing training in private companies and to public administration (interesting reports can be found in Costa et al., 1999; and in Biolghini et al., 2000).

In many cases, as reported in literature, experiences do not come about in response to genuine strategic choices as such made by the heads of the organisations involved, but rather as the response to experiments undertaken by individual teachers interested in exploring new teaching relationships, or as a way of meeting specific functional requirements (in the case of the universities, for example, in order to improve communication with students, facilitate the distribution of material, create links between split campuses, etc.; in the case of private companies and public administration, to limit the need for participants to be absent from work, etc.).

National debate on the issue sways between enthusiasm, that is often too immediate, and an emphasis on technological progress, seen as the driving force behind new forms of social democracy, and more critical views which are generally inclined to take into account the limits to the application of new technologies.

‘We can talk of new learning environments which, on the one hand, are focused on the individual and, on the other, on small groups. Amongst individuals, growing use is being made of the various forms and types of self-learning tools which have been developed to date. For small groups, distance learning tools can be used, as can more traditional training methods in the classroom. But what I believe has changed is the underlying model of values: until only a few years ago the individual-organisation relationship model could be summed up as “you are mine, therefore I will train you in respect of the company’s development needs”; nowadays, the relationship is a trade-off, with individuals being more aware of their own know-how needs as a function of spendability in an increasingly turbulent and demanding labour market, whilst companies have become a touch more open-minded...in the sense that the possibility of marrying working time and learning time has now become the responsibility of the worker, who is often forced to use his own free time for study purposes’ (Francesco Avallone).

It is not only certain trends in continuing training within companies which come in for criticism regarding the use of new technologies; teaching in schools does too. The work carried out by the so-called ‘commission of forty wise men’ ⁽⁵⁾, set up by a Ministry of Education decree, contains - according to numerous critical voices throughout the country - elements which reflect a tendency towards conceptual impoverishment through a deliberate ‘major watering-down of content’ (*Summary of the commission’s work*, 1997) as part of a vision which, according to the critics once again, would tend to support a type of school aimed at tailoring its pupils to fit in with mainstream social, economic and cultural mechanisms:

‘The introduction of the new media into the school should, therefore, be assessed within this setting, where their use is not intended to enrich the object of learning, and render it more complex, but rather to put across impoverished information in a simplified manner’ (Catalano, 2000).

No doubt everyone can recognise the ability of the new media to facilitate access to a broader range of users. Examples which can be quoted are the experiments in open learning conducted by ISVOR-FIAT with the Melfi learning centre, involving 2 565 users in a total of 55 120 hours of learning.

It is currently not possible to compare the experiments conducted with private funds with ones cofinanced using public funds, in either quantitative or qualitative terms. However, it is fair to say that access to public resources is often hampered by the many constraints inherent in the relevant procedures:

‘Distance learning means that large numbers of people demanding training can be assisted. For the time being, however, the procedures followed in our country do not help us best exploit the potential of information and communication technology’ (Franco Frigo).

3.5. New skills for trainers

‘The term “trainer” has always alluded to two professional profiles, which in turn correspond to two different models: a psycho-pedagogical model, which has always worked on providing motivation and back-up, and a psycho-dynamic model, which works on meaning and constructing reality. The trainer profile which corresponds to this second model is faced with a shrinkage in his scope of intervention, but not in the value of his professionalism. Generally speaking, it could be said that the trainer is increasingly becoming an interpreter of strategic aims: his professionalism is becoming

⁽⁵⁾ Scientific commission entrusted with the task of identifying ‘the basic knowledge which will constitute the foundation for the education of pupils in Italian schools in the coming decades’ and set up by ministerial decree No. 50 del 21/01/97. The minutes of the commission’s work, edited by Roberto Maragliano, can be found at <http://www.bdp.it/>.

further and further removed from knowledge transfer, and gravitating towards an overall view of organisational development and human resources' (Francesco Avallone).

Discussion of trainers' skills in the light of the new demands raised by the establishment of new principles of lifelong learning is taking place at various levels in Italy. There are some main forums such as the AIF - the Italian Association of Trainers - and the Italian section of TTnet, the network of training organisations promoted by Cedefop in the various EU Member States.

The second of these two forums has prepared studies of trainers' training activity conducted using distance learning tools, as well as studies of the skills of trainers working in distance learning. The first study ⁽⁶⁾ took 27 national projects as a reference, picking out certain strong points including:

- the new methods and technologies for open and distance learning introduce new ways of relating and learning based on cooperation principles, even in European situations with widely divergent experiences;
- new horizons are opening up in terms of the 'education' concept, towards new models of learning focused on teamwork and cooperative distance learning;
- the distance learning method has created new opportunities for trainers to work towards innovative profiles and qualify in skills which are spendable, both individually and within the vocational training context.

The second study (Richini et al., 1999) involved 15 interviews with key witnesses at national level, regarding their experiences with distance learning. The outcome of these interviews was to reveal certain changes in the skills of trainers using innovatory teaching technology. The following points should be highlighted:

- the role of the trainer in distance learning is determined within a complex system of specialist interaction; on the one hand this implies limits being imposed on trainers' skills and, on the other, the need to master common languages which cut across the other players involved;
- in distance learning experiences in particular, the trainer takes on the role of an expert on 'set content', depending on the target recipients and on the specific context in which the knowledge is to be applied;
- the tutor's role is one involving various tasks and abilities, absorbing the skill to animate, facilitate and regulate the communication exchange which previously tended to lie in the trainer's domain;

⁽⁶⁾ *TTnet Project. Work team on distance training*, written and edited by Luciano Battezzati - responsible for the new media sector of ISVOR-FIAT - and available in the Cedefop electronic training village database.

- the distance learning trainer needs to have well-honed communication skills both in the teaching field - in contextualising in terms of the technological aids used - and on the organisational side, in order to slot in with the other players in the training system.

Once again, as far as adult education is concerned, new training requirements on the part of operators are being forecast:

‘The innovatory methods which should characterise continuing training pathways and which are, in part, already to be found in the best situations, involve reception activity, diagnosis of individual needs, guidance, etc. There is no doubt that operators will need training and in-depth study on this front’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

As for operators involved in IFTS processes, monitoring of actions undertaken has shown the need to bring in a training plan for them:

‘particularly for planning methods, and the team work which this type of approach requires, since it involves interplay between four training subjects related to different systems (school, university, vocational training, and the world of work). Operators are also very much in favour of bringing in training for trainers involved in placements and apprenticeships’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

Finally, the development of new prospects for intervening in continuing training, such as concerted training plans, has triggered discussion of the need to create new mediator figures to back up processes undertaken at local level:

‘We are convinced that, in the not-too-distant future of local plans to be financed by the joint funds, there will be a need to set up and prepare a network of technical experts to back up plans. We have already established agreement with the other organisations on this hypothesis’ (Paolo Inghilesi).

The Chirone 2000 bilateral body’s ‘flexibility’ project puts some thought into the new player who emerges in the guise of the ‘expert’ who backs up concerted training action. The project aims at analysing and testing how training can be used to support the social partners in company reform, requiring flexible modes in some way, including flexibility on working hours. The question is, therefore, not only how training can support the introduction of flexibility, but also how both the social partners can add to the range of trade union relationship tools which are available to them, by also including training.

Tests run have shown the need for a new ‘facilitator’ figure,

‘who should know how to talk with the various players, who has to understand their language and needs in order to invite them to move beyond traditional practices and towards training consensus. He also has to know how to ‘read’ the reference contexts within which companies and trade unions play out their industrial relations - medium and long-term strategies, links with the local area, social vocations, local labour markets; to know how to ‘read’ what is said, and often to read between the lines of

leadership relations within a company, a group, or in a district, between social partners and within the relationships between trade union representatives; to have some theoretical knowledge of adult education and continuing training planning so that, after having picked out one important case and getting it off the ground, one can avoid leaving it in the hands of someone who knows nothing about training; to know how to read and channel the clashes of content, method and leadership which inevitably emerge within complex relationships; to be focused on a clear mission, able to 'recognise' what steps will be of use in achieving successful training: in a nutshell, the complex interweaving of a sense of action and the necessary professionalism (...). There is no equivalent today for this type of 'facilitator'. We have seen that none of the three existing players are willing to create this synthesis; the bargaining players are not able to do so, nor are training experts, at least not the way things now stand. It is, in fact, difficult for the latter to grasp the real dynamics which are being played out between companies, trade unions and workers, and they tend to solve the matter by establishing a privileged - but also unilateral - relationship with the companies which, when all is said and done, are seen as the sole customer. Moreover, trainers also have a tendency to fall victim to the so-called 'hammer and nail syndrome' (if all you have is a hammer, you will tend to see everything as a nail), and attempt to pass off what they can do as being the user's sole need' (Chirone 2000, 2001).

4. Conclusions, observations and evaluation of current progress

4.1. Towards a national system of lifelong learning

4.1.1. Redesigning the education and training system

Between 1997 and today, some major headway has been made in the process of reforming the education and training system through determining the statutory conditions for change (see Section 1.2.).

Tremendous progress has been made in implementing provisions for compulsory schooling and training, going beyond the legal stipulations, which ensure continuity of study for the most able and deserving.

Extending compulsory education to 15 is part and parcel of a framework for getting young people involved in an education system which is already well established, leading to some particularly important results, not so much in terms of the numbers as in the success of training:

‘These tend to be young people with a difficult school track record, who are at risk of being marginalised or, more simply, characterised by more empirical styles of learning, and are interested in more operational methods and study programmes. For these young people it is not enough simply to spend one extra year in school in order to acquire knowledge which is far removed from their own aims and potential. It is essential to use guidance and remotivating pathways, and differentiated and personalised educational and training approaches in order to help them shape their own training project’ (ISFOL, 2000e).

This is the line followed by the approaches to educational policy laid down in Articles 6 and 7 of the implementing regulation for Law No 9/99, which promotes integrated action aimed at aiding young people’s choices using induction and guidance modules, and through planning vocational training modules integrated with school curricula, run in conjunction with regional training centres.

The aim of Law No 9/99 is to reap the rewards of previous experiences on integrating education and training systems, where the various players have tested the limits of their own operational models and methods of work (see Section 2.2. on cooperation between institutions and social partners). Using an ISFOL overview of experiments with integration in compulsory education carried out in furtherance of the law (169 projects conducted from 1999-2000), it

has been possible to group together the following types of frequently encountered approaches (ISFOL, 2000e):

- guidance and access pathways;
- pre-vocational courses, run in training centres or on an alternating basis with schools, aimed at encouraging the acquisition of transversal skills, refreshing linguistic and mathematical skills, basic computing, company organisation, labour law and pre-vocational material linked to the specific sectors of reference;
- vocational training courses, aimed in particular at acquiring sector-specific skills.

Guidance as to what work opportunities are available in the area, and activities aimed at rekindling an interest in study and vocational training cut across most of the projects considered.

The introduction of the training requirement (Law No 144/99) stipulates that everyone is entitled to follow a serious and certified training pathway until they are 18, that no-one should enter the world of work without a good level of cultural and vocational preparation, to be acquired at school, in reformed vocational training, or through new forms of apprenticeship.

This training requirement up to the age of 18 lays a necessary and generalised basis for being able to continue training throughout life, both when working and when not.

Under the training requirement within the education system, curricular planning should encourage greater integration with the extra-school context (vocational training and companies), through the inclusion of integrated vocational training modules in the curriculum, and through the use of integrated pathways.

Under the training requirement within the vocational training system, pathways will be broken down into organised teaching cycles, which also take into account the specific requirements of those undergoing training. At the end of each cycle the skills acquired will be certified, this being the key for accessing other cycles, or for switching over to the school system or apprenticeship.

Recent provisions on reforming these cycles, the introduction of autonomous educational units and the implementation of apprenticeship all contribute to the redefinition of the entire education system and its links with vocational training.

4.1.2. Developing IFTS

Higher technical education and training pathways (IFTS) are one of the major achievements of the integrated training system, and are set to become an important element within the Italian system (see Section 1.2.3. - Integrated higher vocational training, and Section 2.2. - Cooperation between institutions and social partners). The first two years of experimentation with IFTS courses have produced a framework marked by growing interest on the part of

training companies and productive players in this new channel for higher training, which is set to take a front seat in tailoring supply to the multiple and innovative facets of professional requirements emerging from local productive contexts (ISFOL, 2000e). The ability to respond to local needs is guaranteed by the added value of integrating the various players within the local system, and requires solid partnerships to be built up between the various worlds of the school, vocational training, universities, and the world of work. On a speculative basis, this type of integration has also been suggested at national level, through the national design committee, and at regional level with the regional design committees (see Section 1.2.3.).

Having come into being in order to ensure the basic but not exclusive aim of higher training for young people needing to enter the world of employment, the IFTS foresees what are, in fact, already formalised links with adult training:

‘At statutory level both Article 69 of Law No 144/99 which establishes this new channel, and the implementing regulation (Decree 436 of 31.10.2000) of the aforementioned law make explicit reference to “employed and unemployed adults” as potential “users” of IFTS courses. Research shows that over 30% of those who enrolled in the first experimental year in 1998/99 are now working either independently or as employees’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

Thus IFTS will increasingly respond to the principles of lifelong learning:

‘The fact that it is constantly claimed in the statutory references quoted that it is usually, albeit not exclusively, “graduates” who access courses, and that mention is made of accrediting skills on entry, is a clear reference to the enhancement of the working experience as counting towards access to courses. Certification follows a model based on the recognisability of skills acquired in IFTS courses; the model is officially approved by the Joint Conference: it is granted on a part-way or final basis, i.e. it certifies part of the course or the course in its entirety. There is also an accreditation option for credits on entry, either acquired during formal courses or elsewhere, and at work; but this is “accreditation” as such, i.e. assessment for the purposes of admission and individual placement within the course, and has nothing to do with certification’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

4.1.3. Developing continuing training

As indicated in Section 1.3.1. (Italian companies and their willingness to train), spending on continuing training is amongst the lowest in Europe; some actions, however, bear witness to a commitment to develop a new system, both in financial and in qualitative terms. From a financial point of view,

‘public funding made available for continuing training in Italy over recent years amounts to around ITL 500 billion (EUR 258 228 450) per annum, but was increased by ITL 200 billion (EUR 103 291 380) in 1999 by Law No 144/99, in order to finance

company, sectoral and local training plans. A further ITL 30 billion/year (EUR 15 493 707) is foreseen under Law 53 of 2000 and, finally, Law No 388 of 2000 stipulates that as of 2001, 2002 and 2003, 20%, 30% and 50% respectively of the Training Fund (c. ITL 900 billion [EUR 464 811 209] per year) will be earmarked for the training of adults in employment' (Franco Frigo).

As for funding from private companies,

'the only available estimates are the ones drawn up by ISFOL, which give a figure approaching ITL 1 250 billion (EUR 645 571 123) per year for private spending on continuing training, based on the results of ISTAT surveys. I am personally convinced that companies spend at least 2 000-2 500 billion/year in the form of advisory training' (Franco Frigo).

Furthermore,

'if we take the volume of projects submitted to the public authorities for funding as an indicator of the attention being paid to continuing training issues, we can assume that there is a major increase in public as well as private spending, with the latter always being correlated to the data on public resources requested' (Franco Frigo).

In qualitative terms, since the Ministry of Labour's Circular No 65/99, a new process of dialogue has been facilitated between the social partners and institutions in defining company, sectoral and local training actions. This circular also cleared the way for greater consistency between steps towards local development (area contracts, local agreements, and programme contracts), and the continuing training of workers. According to Paolo Inghilesi, the social partners' representative interviewed, this innovation appears to herald new and improved opportunities:

'Because of red tape, the agreements between the bodies responsible for the individual projects and the Ministry of Labour have only just been signed. So we can only assess the first stage of the experiment, which we think is positive. In fact, the request being made is that there should be a context behind every training proposal, and a common view of how to solve ones own specific problems'.

'The regional contexts are almost certainly the most important element. Every project to be approved stems from the commitment of the social partners on the ground, and to ensure consistency a steering committee has been set up for each of them, laying down types of politico-technical cooperation for the trade unions, both for the employers and for the workers. It should be pointed out in this respect as far as sectoral training plans are concerned that it is only this type of action which should be promoted by the national social partners; company and local initiatives should be promoted and managed at regional and local level.

We believe that this experience could serve as an example, even in terms of how joint funds are managed' (Paolo Inghilesi).

The head of ISFOL's continuing training project, Franco Frigo, expresses a more cautious, albeit positive, view:

'The Ministry of Labour, in agreement with the regions and the social partners, themselves wanted to test the social forces' propensity to come up with solutions based on concerted methods. The results were not brilliant, even though the experiment conducted proved most positive in that it allowed a specific culture to be developed even in areas where social dialogue was pretty thin on the ground. The sectoral projects were particularly significant, because the self-same trade union representatives who endeavoured to reach agreement during the recent national round of bargaining were the people responsible for promoting major projects. The promotion of company training plans is not quite as interesting for the time being, given the limited availability of large scale companies used to drawing up annual programmes and budgets.'

It is fair to say that the problem of lifelong learning has been clearly acknowledged by the social partners, starting with the agreement on apprenticeships, in adult education, and continuing training:

'The lifelong learning strategy is subject to the 1993 and 1996 agreements, and is strongly supported by both the employers' associations and the trade unions. As such, I believe that this was a well-timed move, the forerunner of a series of national innovations, based on a conviction which dates back as far as the very early 1990s. In fact, even in 1992 the picture which emerged was clear. Any delay was caused by red tape: for example, we thought that with the Treu Law [Law No 196/97] we would start to see the results of a joint strategy, which are in fact only now starting to emerge.

Circular No 65/99 was thought up with this end in mind [author's note: the social partners play a role in setting out the guidelines for activities stipulated by Law No 236/93, through the relevant Policy Committee- cf. Section 2.3.1.]. 'The lifelong learning strategy is also subject to action taken with the support of the European Social Fund; to give an example, funding is used in both the autonomous province of Bolzano and the Emilia Romagna region for continuing training measures which require prior agreement between the social partners' (Paolo Inghilesi).

'From the early 1970s the social partners in Italy have been promoting the so-called 150-hour experiment, ranking amongst the European pioneers involved in issues relating to the right to training for all. Much of their attention and drive subsequently petered out when basic training for the young unemployed and for the long-term unemployed grabbed the spotlight. Interest is currently being revived, but it is difficult to represent the interests of individuals and small groups in small-scale companies. Many of the social partners' representatives are also convinced that the problem of

lifelong learning is one to be tackled by the State, not by the Partners involved in collective bargaining' (Franco Frigo).

One interesting innovation which depends on continuing training initiatives squaring more closely with real sectoral and local requirements could come from the joint funds:

'The joint funds could provide a model for setting up a continuing training system in our country. At this stage the budget plans to earmark funds for the foundation amounting to ITL 400 billion (EUR 206 582 760) (ITL 200 billion [EUR 103 291 379] for 1999, the same for 2000). A quarter of this figure will go to the budgetary funds, with the remaining ITL 300 billion (EUR 154 937 070) being earmarked for the funds under Law No 236/93, which will be spent by the Ministry and the regions on company, local and sectoral training plans, as is currently being tried out in accordance with the Ministry of Labour's Circular No 65/99. Each Fund will be run by a board of administration, whose members will be appointed by the social partners' (Paolo Inghilesi).

It is hoped that such measures will finally help break the deadlock which has limited Italy's continuing training system, limits which were summed up in the 'flexibility' study in the following terms:

- (a) the situation as a whole is far removed from what is foreseen at European level, although there are already ad hoc laws in existence or in the pipeline which are intended to substantially change this state of affairs;
- (b) all too often, continuing training is still seen as a way of adapting the individual to change, rather than as his individual right;
- (c) continuing training is all too often seen in terms of a contingency, and not as a strategy support instrument;
- (d) indeed, any conviction as to the value of taking a bilateral approach to in-company training needs does not appear to have matured as yet, due both to the persistent marked presumption about who takes the decisions and to the fact that people are not yet ready to see continuing training as part and parcel of bargaining' (Chirone 2000, 2001).

With reference to this last point, the operational nature of bilateral bodies, it should be stressed that, with all due respect for certain outstanding examples, they have not always produced the desired results. In particular 'notwithstanding the value of having a bilateral point of view in the analysis of training needs, wherever the bilateral body has acted as a training agency full-stop, this does not appear to have added anything specific' (ISFOL, 2000b). This would seem, on the one hand, to stem from the 'light-weight' structure of such bodies, which often have only very limited resources constantly available and which carry the full burden for coordinating activities, and, on the other, from the difficult task of involving the local structures of the relevant social partners in the management of activities. Aspects such as these which are, however, affected by swings in the political and social dialogue

between partners, should be taken into consideration when future activities are being developed. The following points should be borne in mind:

‘We actually believe that training is an important instrument, but one which comes after the development strategies for the sector and the company have been defined - and which continues to be an open question, even though some first answers are starting to be found in national labour contracts and local agreements, through the setting up of observatories, control rooms, preventive information how can the spin-offs be agreed upon if strategic choices are made on a unilateral basis?’ (Chirone, 2000, 2001).

4.1.4. Developments in adult education

Aimed at cultural literacy, integrating the right to education and guidance/redirection and vocational training for adults, the permanent local centres which were set up by the Ministry of Education’s Directive No 455/97 perform an important role in developing national lifelong learning policies (see Section 1.4.).

Their activity tends towards overcoming basic cultural obstacles which other forms of intervention (such as individualised and company continuing training) run up against, particularly in the case of the least qualified users and those who run the risk of being excluded from the labour market. The development of adult education also involves endeavouring to create closer links with other educational and training systems:

‘Adult education is an integral part of the Education Ministry’s responsibilities, which is developed by the permanent local education centres where it is teachers, rather than trainers, who work. The plan is to merge with the vocational training and continuing training fields, either through agreements or through integrated initiatives between various roles in an organised context’ (Franco Frigo).

‘New trends are moving towards a concept which differs from straightforward adult education seen in terms of simply providing educational courses; interplay between education and vocational training, education and the world of work (apprenticeships and placements) is planned for. An integrated system needs to be developed, which is as yet only on paper: efficient steps will involve setting up ad hoc round tables to strengthen integration between the various institutional and social players. Subjects such as the link with vocational training and work and certification are key points.’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

4.1.5. Developing individualised training

Experimentation with individualised training activities runs in accordance with Law No 236/93, Ministry of Labour Circular No 139/98, and the introduction of training leave according to Article 6 of Law No 53/2000, has defined the worker’s individual right to training in Italy (see Sections 1.3. and 2.3.).

The need to provide à la carte, individualised training activities has arisen in response to a growing need to refresh knowledge and skills, for which the individual worker is increasingly being made responsible:

‘There is a “common” base of knowledge, related for example to the way in which we perceive reality, read economic and financial data, or interpret technology and management trends. It is usually the company which deals with this field. The worker has now been granted more leeway compared with the organisation, to develop specific abilities related to his own area of professionalism’ (Francesco Avallone).

Individualised training deals with this second field – and, therefore, with the need for the individual to acquire increasingly high levels of accredited, visible and recognisable skills to boost his own personal level of employability.

Experimentation conducted to date on individualised continuing training activities (see Section 1.3. for a description of the system and Section 2.3. for the initial results of the experiments), shows that a mixed public-private model of training policy is being followed:

‘in the “mixed” model the individual dimension of training demand is marked by a context of organised supply, and of the availability of instruments to shore up demand (clarification of needs, demand stimulation and support). With a consequent push for the creation of public networks, or mixed ones involving the social partners, as both local and national policy and coordination centres.’ (CRAS, 2000).

The model which is now taking shape in Italy, guided by German and particularly French experience, refers to ‘lightweight’ forms of the welfare state, in contrast to a training policy model which brings worker self-entrepreneurship processes to the fore in the training field, with the relative costs and risks being taken on board.

The data which is available for the trials run in Emilia Romagna provides

‘an unequivocal sign that for the area and period under consideration, individualised training supply reached more dynamic, young and educated users, who proved more receptive compared with an autonomous, non-predetermined training pathway’ (CRAS, 2000).

This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors: the novelty of the type of supply, which favours workers with better cultural tools (to codify their own demand and identify corresponding supply), the need to combine individualised training activity with preliminary initial education activities for the least qualified groups of workers, the need to develop demand support instruments (as can be seen from the comments in Section 3.3., New curricular models, and the comments in Section 4.2.2., Supporting the individualised project.

4.1.6. Developing the certification system

The certification of training pathways and the results of the learning acquired is of major strategic importance in the implementation of lifelong learning policies in Italy, and much effort has been put in on this front both at national level, through the definition of statutory guidance and guidelines, and through one-off regional experiments (see Section 2.1., Skills certification as a fundamental tool of integration). The definition of a skills certification system intended to ensure both flexibility and common rules (as in the State-Regions agreement of February 2000) may prove to be the institutional instrument most able to give a qualitative boost to the supply system, while at the same time also encouraging professional recognition and worker mobility.

The analysis of multi-regional projects in ISFOL's recent publication *Best practices in vocational training for companies setting up certification and distance training* (ISFOL, 2000d), 1996-97, from the 1994-99 programme, has identified those characteristics which, in experimental terms, will lead to the shaping of a training initiative (best practice) based on the identification of a common methodology in some of the thematic key areas of vocational training. Because of this survey, no further analysis of projects on the subsequent development of 'best practices' related to the certification issue has been conducted:

'Yet in the last three to four years, many programme documents and notification of regional projects related to the ESF or national projects (Community initiatives, Leonardo [da Vinci Programme], [Law No] 236, IFTS, etc.) have referred to skills and certification design: that would mean that a large number of other "best practices" still need to be examined. In the meantime, since early 1998 ISFOL has been organising skills initiative workshops to control and provide methodological support for experimentation in order to assess skill concept potential, which is a particularly useful tool in design evaluation and certification of training content (ISFOL, 2000d).

These experiments provide qualitative samples of the large number of initiatives conducted in various real local situations, aimed at shaping and applying innovative models and technologies for design and certification. Apart from the above-mentioned broad circulation of best practices, elements are now available which confirm the broader correspondence between the new language of key words in certification and training credit, and the reality of application at the regulatory level. The beginnings of a process for defining a new skills certification system, which was brought in by the State-regions agreement in February 2000, and the experience with national regulation of relevance to IFTS, compulsory training, apprenticeships and continuous education, largely bear witness to this correspondence' (Gabriella Di Francesco).

As regards the question of certification, the way in which regulations have developed at regional level points to certain areas of excellence (such as Emilia Romagna, Piedmont and the Liguria region, Trento and the independent provincial administration of Bolzano), and to remarkable delays in other local situations. The new ESF package (2002-2006) is kicking off

with clear, specific targets to homogenise and raise the general level of quality in regional vocational training systems:

‘To this end, the Ministry of Labour has allocated funds for so-called “action systems”, which are intended to provide the regions with a common basis and technical support to boost the principles which are currently applied through national regulations. Compulsory training, new apprenticeships, integrated higher training, credit training facilities, skills certification and flexibility in training pathways are some of the basic components in this extensive reform of the system which is currently underway at national level.

It is clear to see that the ESF planning documents for the regions - both Objective 1 and Objective 3 - are now showing more marked alignment of their regional plans to these principles and priorities, which allows us to assume that we are moving into a decisive stage for overcoming differences, even in terms of certification’ (Gabriella Di Francesco).

The model for certification experimentation suggested by the decree dated 12 March 1996 stresses the type of description and degree of detail considered necessary and sufficient to

‘communicate’ the results achieved along a given training pathway in order to illustrate knowledge of a subject. ‘As things currently stand, descriptions of the new professional certificate shed more light on the training pathway, which comes across in the indication of the length of the training initiative, through the organisation of the content on a transversal and techno-professional basis, and through the final evaluation tests. But it is only through switching from a run-down of the characteristics of the training pathway to a description of the skills actually acquired that the new certificate will be able to increase individual acquisition, through improving communication between vocational training and the labour market’ (Gabriella Di Francesco).

4.2. Problems still pending

4.2.1. The new school model

Approval of the new provisions for reforming the education system has given rise to an even more complex procedure in terms of organisation and content.

As far as the reform of educational cycles is concerned, the work of a commission of 227 experts, appointed by the current Ministry of Education in order to define the criteria to be applied in building up the new Italian school model (reported in ISFOL, 2000e), was recently concluded.

Many issues still need to be sorted out, including:

- how to merge the ‘elementary’ and ‘middle’ schools within the single basic cycle;
- how to design a two-year period which is, at the same time, both the final stage of compulsory education and the initial phase of the secondary cycle;
- what fate will be reserved for current vocational teaching;
- how it is possible to avoid gridlock in the universities and in the labour market as a result of overlapping between the last pupils to leave school at 13, and the young people in the following generation who (although starting one year later) will finish school at the same time;
- what will happen when those pupils who have finished the new basic cycle start secondary school at the same time as the young people who, having kicked off one year earlier, have undergone the traditional eight-year process.

As far as the school-vocational training relationship is concerned, the two systems will need to link up very closely during the two years of the secondary cycle, in order to foster the guidance of young people and the building of bridges towards vocational training.

4.2.2. Supporting the individualised project

Law No 236/93 foresees the funding/co-funding of individualised training activities for people in work, for whom the company has made a redundancy payment. Some regional administrations (Emilia Romagna and Tuscany) have decided to widen the target population to include atypical workers. There has been a significant increase in the number of atypical workers, within a labour set-up which tends to see them more as ‘outside’ workers than as ‘self-employed’. Some labour organisation researchers (see, for example, Bologna et al., 1997) define this new and emerging category of workers as ‘the second generation self-employed’, worlds apart from the traditional category of ‘self-employed workers’, and who bear the cost of upgrading on their own shoulders. For the time being, at least, there are no plans to extend the possibility of access to new training opportunities for this group of workers:

‘The law governing training leave does not stipulate any provisions for ‘outside’ workers; it has, in fact, been drafted with the more traditional profiles in mind. It will be difficult for non-contracted workers to take part in activities, since they are still in a situation which is hard to define. One solution which is being looked into is the possibility of making the cost incurred by vocational refresher courses tax deductible. I feel that co-workers should also be entitled to take part in company activities in the same way as other workers, and the local and company agreements between the parties represented therein should also be able to examine their needs’ (Franco Frigo).

More generally, for weaker groups of workers in particular, the possibility of individual training portraying itself as a lifelong learning opportunity depends on the availability of

effective guidance services. Besides the ideas (expressed by Franco Frigo, Francesco Avallone, Francesco Mancuso and Guido Premuda) in Section 3.3. (New curricular models), the following views were also expressed in an interview by Franco Frigo:

‘The focusing of attention over the last 20 years on the needs of the young unemployed has ruled out the possibility of developing adequate services for adults. In most parts of Italy there is no guidance or advisory system for adults. Experiments in skill-accounting have only been organised in three regions in the centre-north, these activities often having been prompted by the need to meet the needs of workers in difficult situations, such as CIGS workers, and those registered on mobility lists. One difficulty lies in the lack of staff specialised in meeting adult demand’ (Franco Frigo).

The problem also arises in other fields such as adult education: ‘The individualisation of pathways or parts of them is the cornerstone of the adult learning process: negotiating the pathway motivates the adult in learning. This does, however, mean that the individual’s needs must be analysed, and requires tutoring methods as well as targeted programming. It is a practice which does exist, but which for the time being is impossible to quantify, or to establish to what extent it occurs, or to obtain figures from case records of excellence’ (Anna D’Arcangelo).

As has already been indicated in Section 2.5. (The guidance function in employment services), the reform of employment services involves them in a tricky operational set-up, which is expected to provide a systemic illustration of what future guidance services should offer.

4.2.3. Promoting continuing training

As far as policies for the promotion of continuing training are concerned, a point which Edith Cresson proposed in the white paper *Teaching and learning: towards a learning society* (European Commission - DG XXII, 1995), is still pending - that of ‘teaching and learning’, or rather the priority of identifying tax relief measures for investment in the training and development of human resources. It would appear that debate on the issue has far from identified any possible solutions:

‘In the debate which has been running over the last three years, the tax relief issue has been raised on various occasions, but has still not been settled, either for companies or for workers. The French model, which squares nicely with the needs of larger companies, could well be introduced in Italy too. The trade unions representing the workers are demanding that, if this solution is arrived at, then corresponding steps should also be taken in terms of training plans. There is no doubt that the tax lever is the best solution for fostering that part of training which depends to quite some extent on market logic. Continuing training and lifelong learning cannot only be based on the provision of public funding (which by its very definition is always thin on the ground), but also, and in particular, on spurring on economic operators and workers to invest (or coinvest) in training’ (Franco Frigo).

And again:

‘The proposal to put investment in human capital on an equal footing in tax terms with investment in technology is one which has already been made by Confindustria. The unions came out in favour of the proposal, with the proviso that it should not be used to substitute other steps for which bargaining is foreseen. It is a matter currently being discussed. The idea is for investment in human resources to be made tax deductible, as is already the case for apprenticeships’ (Paolo Inghilesi).

Finally, the expectations which bargaining raises for encouraging cuts in working hours to make way for training have not been met:

‘It’s not working. Apart from the fact that specific agreements were signed and that incentives to support them were provided for by Law No 53/00, the experiment is meeting with a lot of resistance. I would not rule out the possibility of some type of experiment having been conducted at local level, but their significance does not reach national level. There are some agreements within the initiatives financed under Circular No 65/99: for example, in the chemical sector an agreement was signed which plans for training initiatives to be partly organised during working hours, and partly outside of them. The agreement’s training component is therefore financed by Circular No 65/99. The model is not dissimilar to the 150-hour one.

This goes to show that the obstacles are related to finding a common language (which leads to a different political formulation of the problem by the social partners): experimentation would be made much easier if someone could say that training would be conducted in working time, instead of talking about the need to reduce working hours to allow people to take part. It basically boils down to the same thing, just couched in different terms’ (Paolo Inghilesi).

4.2.4. Training of the over-45s and the weaker social groups

Continuing training to date is not in a position to bring about any reduction in the effects of long-term unemployment, unemployment amongst the over-45s with limited education, and the poorly qualified, who are excluded from the production process once their physical strength declines, or when technological change and the outsourcing of lower added value production renders their role superfluous.

‘The long-term adult unemployed come from steady positions rather than unstable jobs; they pay for their low level of education on entry, and the lack of any care for them as people, or for their vocational skills during the whole of their working activity’ (Ranieri, 2000).

In a study conducted under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, *Over 45: causes of dismissal and the role of lifelong learning* ⁽⁷⁾, the authors point out that no ad hoc projects have been started in any of the three Italian company cases studied (in the credit and metalworking sectors), which could link reshuffle projects with training or vocational requalification activities aimed at the over-45s to avoid their exclusion from the world of work. The continuing training activities organised by these companies were organised and run by them, and they supported the entire cost. The unions had only a very marginal role to play in the planning and management of training activity, since training is not a bargaining issue. The lack of use made of public resources for training is attributed to the difficulty in finding qualified in-house staff capable of submitting projects for funding.

Generally speaking, the problem arises both for this social group and for other disadvantaged segments of the population. The public sector needs to promote specific lines of action for them. In the words of Inghilesi, CGIL's head of research and training:

'The State needs to commit itself differently to those disadvantaged social groups where there is no interest on the part of management. I am referring in particular to mobile workers, for whom the last initiatives of any interest were conducted in the mid 1990s; to women, for whom the activities planned under the Employment Community Initiative - Now and national Law No 125/91 are exemplary in nature, without forming a system; to the long-term unemployed, for whom activities are organised, but in many cases they remain detached from the world of work; to immigrants. As far as the last group is concerned, Veneto has a training agreement between employers' associations, trade union organisations and the regional administration, because the specific situation on Veneto's labour market means that there is a need for qualified immigrants.

Last but not least, the 'atypical' category: excluded from Law No 236/93 [author's note: the sole receivers of training activities under Law No 236/93 are workers employed in companies who pay their redundancy contribution- cf. Sections 1.2. and 1.3.], the ESF should make greater efforts on their behalf towards promoting and organising individual continuing training activities' (Paolo Inghilesi).

'The problem exists, both politicians and the social partners are aware of it, but in practice no effective instruments have been produced to date. The final push is still lacking for the creation of more straightforward ways of accessing continuing training using solutions which are more closely related to individuals' interests. It is extremely difficult to create solutions which are useful for groups, which generally tend to be quite a mixed bunch' (Franco Frigo).

⁽⁷⁾ *Over 45, causes of dismissal and the role of lifelong learning* – Coordinator: European Institute for Social Studies/European Association (Italy) – Partners: FORCEM (Spain), University of Technology of Helsinki (Finland), TCO (Sweden). (see IESS-AE,1998).

4.2.5. Developments in distance training

In Italy, distance learning still carries an experimental and innovatory tag in the eyes both of the operators and of the users. There is still a lot of vagueness surrounding the quality of the products, as well as the quantity, type, etc.

As was mentioned in the 1999 ISFOL report (ISFOL, 1999), the development of distance learning methodologies and tools requires:

- the shift from the prototype stage to the gradual definition of product and process standards at the basis of innovations;
- more coordination and information between the various levels and sectors of the education-training-work system in Italy, in a dimension which is open to the European space.

In line with the thrust of the e-learning initiative (*E-learning - designing tomorrow's education*, 2000), teachers and trainers need to be closely involved in the innovatory processes, and widespread training activities need to be organised for them, thus laying the foundations in terms of training in the new knowledge and skills needed to face up to the new demands issuing from education and training systems.

Still in terms of the beneficiaries, in the case of continuing training for people in work it should be pointed out that the current trend, which sees workers with medium to high levels of qualification as the main target of distance learning, is poorly adapted to the need to embrace a larger number of users.

The current limit could be countered by facilitating the distribution of the instruments among vocational groups which are more accustomed to using innovatory communication and information tools which, in turn, gives rise to a market mechanism which eases its development and limits its propensity to professional players with medium to low levels of qualification.

To this end efforts must be made in various directions:

- public system promotion of adult education and continuing training for people in working activities aimed at acquiring the knowledge and skills related to the use of new information and communication tools;
- public system promotion of training activities using distance and self-learning methodologies and instruments, with particular reference to the vocational groups with medium-low levels of qualification, and the socially disadvantaged.

It should be noted that the e-learning initiative is moving in this direction and that it is likely that the further development of its activities will lead to the adoption in the near future of similar approaches at national level too.

In terms of infrastructure, the

‘refinancing of the investment plan for information technology and the promotion of activities intended to develop distance learning and the so-called multi-media university is a priority flagged up by the committee for the coordination of initiatives aimed at organising the integrated supply of education, training, research and technology transfer (cf. Presidency of the Council of Ministers, *Presentazione del piano per lo sviluppo e la formazione* (Masterplan) [guidelines for the pluriannual plan in integrated education, training, research and technology transfer system]. Available from Internet: www.palazzochigi.it/servizi/comunicati/dettaglio.asp?d=2803 [cited 4.2.2002]).

Finally, as was revealed by an ISFOL survey of good distance learning practices (ISFOL, 2000c), the social credibility of non-traditional training methods depends on institutional accreditation, which compares the training results achieved with various strategies. Moreover, national and regional regulation should gravitate towards defining quality standards to be respected by organisations providing distance learning and determine administrative parameters within which training activity can be conducted and monitored.

4.2.6. Skills recognition

Not all the regions have a regulation or well-established general rule which allows for credit acknowledgement, and no process has, as yet, been started to define minimum national standards for skills to be acquired through training.

‘This is why it is still too early to talk of standard values or the viability of spending credit. The indications stemming from the improvement to the State-regions agreement from February 2000, under which the regions and the Ministry of Labour are committed to agree on and propose common methods and procedures for certifying skills, are that, in the next few months, we may achieve the necessary conditions to homogenise the acknowledgement of general credit rules within vocational training systems between the regions, as well as the rules governing returning to the school or university system, using specific national or local agreements’ (Gabriella Di Francesco).

In continuing training we are nowadays looking forward to a complex reform which should move at the same rate as the general innovations already mentioned: ‘At the moment there are several innovative experiments in public financing, using funds stemming from the 0.3%, for individual training using individual ‘bonuses’. In experimental terms, this could provide a system which will provide continuing training more in line with workers’ real needs, equipped with proper forms of certification, and which could allow these experiences to be acknowledged and capitalised as credit. From the company point of view, the skills language clearly represents a common legacy of training systems, but it would be better to define in clear terms which forms of interaction and synergy need to be found between training certification and company assessment systems, and staff stimulation. Clear certification structured according to the

language of skills represents a major step for companies towards improving communication and mutual trust between education and training centres and the labour market' (Gabriella Di Francesco).

The social partners are cooperating to this end:

'We have contributed to the preparation of an ISFOL document, which should become regulatory. This would be an important step in that it would provide a way to overcome the current splintering between individual regions, extending the model to national level and laying the foundations for worker mobility, both in Italy and in Europe' (Paolo Inghilesi).

As far as the development of a certification system for so-called non-formal learning is concerned, this is still being studied at the institutional level:

'Within all procedures where a process of regulating certification and credit-related aspects has been started, the problem of acknowledging learning acquired outside traditional training channels has been faced. IFTS and continuing training in particular have produced some operational guidelines which will set some general standards for the accreditation of acquired skills needed to embark upon certain training pathways. The work which will be undertaken as a follow-up to the State-regions agreement of February 2000 will be important in establishing some common tools and rules providing the guarantees needed to meet this essential and tricky requirement' (Gabriella Di Francesco).

Employers' associations and trade unions themselves are currently striving to find common ground for the certification of non-formal learning:

'The certification of training credit acquired at work is one of the pet subjects of the employers' associations, particularly in the craft sector. As a trade union we believe that the certification of contextual skills is important, but to a lesser degree. It is a known fact that workers' adaptational and innovatory skills are not acquired through professional experience alone. Thus, placing excessive emphasis on non-formal learning could lead to a decline in learning models' (Paolo Inghilesi).

Annex 1 Legislation

Law No 845 of 21 December 1978 – Framework law on vocational training.

Law No 863 of 19 December 1984 - Arrangements for employment-training contracts and apprenticeship.

Law No 40 of 14 February 1987 - Rules applicable in relation to general administrative expenses of private training bodies. Paragraph 3, in particular, refers to training activities for staff.

Law No 125 of 10 April 1991 – Positive steps towards male-female equality at work.

Law No 236 of 19 July 1993 – Transposition into law, with amendments, of Decree No 148 of 20 May 1993, introducing emergency employment support measures.

Ministry of Labour Decree of 12 March 1996 on transparency of certificates, adopting minimum requirements for professional qualifications delivered by the Regions.

Ministry of Labour Circular No 174/96 -Limits noted in achieving ESF Objective 4.

Law No 59 of 15 March 1997 – Delegates power to the government to confer functions and tasks on the regions and local authorities towards reforming public administration and facilitating administration.

Law No 425 of 10 December 1997 - Reform of examinations in upper secondary schools.

Legislative Decree No 469 of 23 December 1997 – Confers responsibility on the regions and local authorities for roles and tasks related to the labour market, according to Art. 1 of Law No 59 of 15 March 1997.

Law No 196 of 24 June 1997 – Provisions for boosting employment (Treu Law).

Ministry of Education Order No 455 of July 1997 – Adult education – education and training.

Ministry of Education Order No 456 of July 1997 – Adult education – education and training at primary and junior school level.

Ministry of Labour Circular No 93/98 – Provisions for the application of the provisions of art. 16 of Law No 196 dated 24 June 1997 on training of apprentices.

Law No 112 of 31 March 1998 – Confers responsibility for State administrative roles and tasks on the regions and local authorities, in application of Chapter I of Law No 59 of 15 March 1997, Chapter III school education and Chapter IV vocational training.

Ministry of Education Circular Letter para. No 34332/BL, 1998 - Promotion of multimedia and personal computer purchases in Italian educational institutes.

Ministry of Education Decree of 7 October 1998 - Establishing the national design committee.

Ministry of Education Decree of 10 November 1998 - Defines a new and experimental certification model for state exams concluding upper secondary level studies.

Ministry of Education Memorandum No 196 of 24 April 1998 on programme for the development of educational technology in 1998.

Ministry of Education Memorandum No 430 of 21 October 1998 regarding free digital satellite antennae of training activities.

Ministry of Labour Notice 2/1998 - Promoting 'system actions' under article 9 of Law No 236/93.

Ministry of Labour Decree of 8 April 1998 – Provisions on the content of training activities for apprentices.

Ministry of Labour Decree No 142 of 25 March 1998 – Regulation introducing provisions for the principles and criteria in Art. 18 of Law No 196 of 24 June 1997, on apprenticeship and guidance.

Presidential Decree of 21 December 1998 – Regulation introducing provisions on vocational training, in accordance with Art. 17, para. 1, of Law No 196 of 24 June 1997 and Art. 20, para. 8, of Law No 59 of 15 March 1997.

Law No 9 of 20 January 1999 – Emergency provisions to increase the school leaving age.

Ministry of Education Decree of 10 February 1999 – Identifying the types of experience which give rise to training credit.

Ministry of Labour Circular No 65/99 - Implementing article 9 of Law No 236/93 on experimental in-company, sectoral and territorial training plans.

Law No 144/99 – Annex to 1999 Budget, Law of 17 May 1999.

Ministry of Labour Decree of 20 May 1999 – Identification of the content of training activities for apprentices.

Law No 263/99 – Emergency provisions to govern the closure of the Ministry of Labour's and Social Security's peripheral offices and to encourage apprenticeships.

Framework Law governing the reorganisation of educational cycles.

Record of the Joint Conference of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2 March 2000 session – Agreement between the government, regions, provinces, communes and mountain Communities to reorganise and boost continuous adult education.

Law No 53 of 8 March 2000 – Provisions to support maternity and paternity, on the right to act as a care provider and the right to training, and on time management.

Law No 388 of December 2000 - 2001 Financial Act.

Inter-ministerial Decree No 436 of 31 December 2000 - Application of article 69 of Law No 144/99 concerning IFTS (higher technical education and training).

List of abbreviations/glossary

ADAPT	Community initiative on adaptation of the workforce to industrial change.
AIF	Italian Association of Trainers.
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.
CENSIS	<i>Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali.</i> Centre for Social Investment Studies.
CFL	<i>Contratto di Formazione-lavoro</i> (employment-training contract).
CGIL	<i>Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro.</i> Italian General Confederation of Workers.
Chirone 2000	<i>Organismo bilaterale di CGIL-CISL-UIL e Federreti.</i> Bilateral organisation comprising CGIL-CISL-UIL-Federreti, which carried out a research project to promote continuing training in Italy.
CIGS	<i>Cassa Integrazione Guadagni.</i> Profits Integration Fund.
CISL	<i>Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori.</i> Federation of Italian Trade Unions.
Confindustria	<i>Confederazione generale dell'industria Italiana.</i> General confederation of Italian industry.
CRAS	<i>Centro Ricerche Affari Sociali.</i> Centre for research on social affairs.
CUOA	Continuing training Pole-Centre.
Doxa	<i>Istituto per le ricerche statistiche e l'analisi dell'opinione pubblica.</i> Institute for statistical research and analysis of public opinion.
D.P.R.	<i>Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica.</i> Decree by the President of the Republic.
ESF	European Social Fund.
Federreti	<i>Federazione sindacale vettori e servizi di mobilità.</i> Federation of trades unions in the transportation sector.

HACCP	Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Point.
ICT	Information and communications technology.
IESS-AE	European Institute of Social Studies - European Association (founded by CGIL - CISL -UIL).
IFTS	<i>Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore</i> (higher technical education and training).
<i>Informagiovani</i>	Regional information service for young people. www.informagiovani.it.
INPS	<i>Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale.</i> National Institute of Social Security.
ISFOL	<i>Istituto per lo Sviluppo della FOrmazione professionale dei Lavoratori.</i> Institute for the Development of Workers' Vocational Training.
ISTAT	<i>Istituto Nazionale di Statistica</i> (National Statistics Institute).
ISVOR-FIAT	Isvor Fiat is the Fiat Group's corporate university.
Leonardo da Vinci Programme	Action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy.
LLL	Lifelong learning.
LSU	<i>Lavori di Utilità Sociale</i> (unemployed workers who have been involved in public service jobs).
MOP	Multiregional operational projects.
OBNF	<i>L'Organismo Bilaterale Nazionale per la Formazione.</i> Bilateral National Training Organisation.
OECD	Office for Economic Cooperation and Development.
PO	Operational programme.
Progetto FaDol	National network for on-line distance training aimed at regional vocational trainers.
Progetto PSTD	1997-2000 Didactic technologies programme development.

QCS	<i>Quadro Comunitario di Sostegno.</i> Community support framework.
SAF	Training assistance service.
SAT	Technical assistance service.
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises.
TTnet	Training of Trainers network promoted by Cedefop in the various EU Member States.
UIL	<i>Unione Italiana del Lavoro.</i> Italian Federation of Trade Unions.

Bibliography

Ambrosio, T. *Teachers and trainers in vocational training : volume 2: Italy, Ireland and Portugal*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1995.

Arbeit und Leben et al. *Congedo per la formazione in Europa: una strategia per l'apprendimento lungo tutta la vita?* CD-ROM. Dusseldorf: Arbeit und Leben, 1999.

Biolghini, D.; Cengarle, M. *Net learning. Imparare insieme attraverso la rete*. Milano: ETAS, 2000.

Bologna, S.; Fumagalli, A. (eds). *Il lavoro autonomo di seconda generazione. Scenari del postfordismo in Italia*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997.

Capecchi, V. *L'obiettivo 4 in Francia, Germania, Italia*. Roma: ISFOL, 1997.

Catalano, D. *Da un utilizzatore critico dei nuovi media*. In Biolghini, D.; Cengarle, M. *Net learning. Imparare insieme attraverso la rete*. Milano: ETAS, 2000.

Cedefop. *Technical and vocational training*. Vocational Training, No 2, 1992.

Cegos Italia. *La formazione del personale – Bilanci e prospettive 1997-99*. Cegos Italia, internal document, 1998.

Chirone 2000. *Studio di fattibilità per la promozione di una rete nazionale di organismi bilaterali per la formazione continua, rapporto di ricerca*. Roma: Chirone 2000, 1998.

Chirone 2000. *La risorsa formazione nella gestione bilaterale delle parti sociali. Studio di fattibilità per la promozione di una rete nazionale di organismi bilaterali per la formazione continua*. Roma: Chirone 2000, 1999.

Chirone 2000. *Progetto Flessibilità*. In *Rapporto finale*. Roma: Chirone 2000, 2001.

Commissione Techno-scientifica incaricata di individuare [commission responsible for identifying the fundamental knowledge on which the learning of young people in Italian schools will be based over coming decades] *Le conoscenze fondamentali su cui si baserà l'apprendimento dei giovani nella scuola italiana nei prossimi decenni: Sintesi dei lavori*. Rome, Ministry of education, 1997 (also accessible at www.bdp.it).

Costa, G.; Rullani, E. *Il maestro e la rete. Formazione continua e reti multimediali*. Milano: ETAS, 1999.

CRAS – Centro Ricerche Affari Sociali. *Rapporto di valutazione sulla prima sperimentazione in Emilia Romagna 'Progetti formativi individuali di formazione'* [Assessment report on the

first experiments in Emilia Romagna ‘Progetti formativi individuali di formazione’] (ex legge 236/1993, punto 4.4,c). Regione Emilia Romagna: CRAS, 2000.

CUOA. *Numero monografico sulla Formazione continua*. CUOA Notizie, anno XI, marzo 1998.

European Commission. *E-Learning - Designing Tomorrow's Education* / European Commission. Communication from the Commission COM(2000) 318 final, Brussels.

European Commission - DG XXII. *Teaching and learning: towards a learning society*. White paper. Luxembourg: Office of Official Publications of the European Communities, 1995.

European Commission. *Memorandum on lifelong learning*. Commission staff working paper. Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC (2000) 1832.

Eurydice-Cedefop. *Structures of education and initial training systems in the European Community*. Eurydice, Brussels, 1991.

Fressura, Nicola. *Sistemi e procedure di certificazione delle qualifiche in Italia*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop. Thessaloniki : Cedefop, 1993. (Cedefop Panorama, 16).

Fressura, Nicola; Sampietro, Marina. *Vocational education and training in Italy*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1995. (Original in Italian, 1993).

Frigo, F. et al. *I bisogni di formazione dei formatori aziendali nella preparazione dei giovani*. Roma: ISFOL, 1988.

Frigo, F. *La formazione per le Piccole Imprese : le condizioni per lo sviluppo. Ruolo degli organismi e fabbisogni di formazione dei formatori*. In *Osservatorio ISFOL*, vol 5, 1993. ISFOL, Via G. B. Morgagni 33, I-00161 Roma, Tel.: (39-06) 445901, Fax: (39-06) 44291871, E-mail: isfol.stampa@iol.it, URL: <http://www.isfol.it/>.

Frigo F. *La formazione continua*. Quaderni della Fondazione Aristeia, Roma: Giuffrè, 2000a.

Frigo F. *La formazione continua in Italia: l'esperienza della legge 236/93*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000b.

Frigo F. *I progetti individuali di formazione per lavoratori occupati nell'esperienza della Legge 236/93* (paper presented to convention ‘Training leaves in Italy and Europe’, Roma, 28 June 2000), 2000c.

Geroldi G., Paci M., *Le politiche del lavoro*, Commissione per l'analisi delle compatibilità macroeconomiche della spesa sociale, Documento di base n. 2, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Rome, 1997.

IESS-AE [European Institute of Social Studies - European Association, founded by CGIL - CISL -UIL]. *Oltre i 45 anni. Cause di espulsione dal lavoro e ruolo della formazione continua*. Roma: IESS-AE, 1998.

ISFOL. *La formazione nella contrattazione aziendale*. QdF ISFOL. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988.

ISFOL. *Statistiche della formazione professionale*. Roma: ISFOL, 1991.

ISFOL; Eurotecnet. *Esperienze e prospettive di innovazione della Formazione Professionale*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1993.

ISFOL. *La formazione continua in Italia. Situazione attuale e misure di promozione del suo sviluppo*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1995.

ISFOL. *Rapporto ISFOL 1998. Formazione e Occupazione in Italia e in Europa*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1998.

ISFOL. *Valutazione di medio termine del Documento unico di programmazione dell'obiettivo 4 in Italia*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1998.

ISFOL. *Verso la formazione continua. I progetti aziendali finanziati dal Fondo Sociale Europeo*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1998.

ISFOL. "La costruzione di un'offerta formativa integrata" [Constructing integrated training supply]. . In *Rapporto ISFOL 1999. Formazione e Occupazione in Italia e in Europa* (Training and employment in Italy and in Europe. Report 1999). Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999.

ISFOL. *La formazione continua nei progetti ADAPT II fase finanziati*. Roma: ISFOL. 2000a.

ISFOL. *Le buone pratiche nella formazione continua*. Roma: ISFOL, 2000b.

ISFOL. *Le buone pratiche nella formazione iniziale*. Roma: ISFOL, 2000c.

ISFOL. *Le buone pratiche nella formazione per la creazione di impresa, nella certificazione e nella formazione a distanza*. Roma: ISFOL, 2000d.

ISFOL. *Formazione e occupazione in Italia e in Europa. Rapporto 2000*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2000e.

ISFOL. *Primi elementi di monitoraggio sullo stato di attuazione dei nuovi Servizi per l'impiego*. Roma: ISFOL, 2000f.

ISTAT. *La formazione del personale nelle Imprese*. Roma: ISTAT, 1996.

ISTAT. *Sintesi dei risultati del censimento intermedio dell'industria e dei servizi*. Roma: ISTAT, 1998.

- Ministry of Education. *Atti Conferenza Nazionale della scuola*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1990.
- Ministry of Labour. *Indagine nazionale sui servizi di orientamento 1998-99*. Roma: Ministero del Lavoro, 2000.
- Montedoro, Claudia; D'Arcangelo, Anna; Ghiotto, G. *Glossario di didattica della formazione*. Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori - ISFOL. Milan : Angeli, 1992. (ISFOL Strumenti e Ricerche, 36).
- Montedoro, C. *La formazione verso il terzo millennio: finalità, strumenti e metodologie di intervento*. Roma: SEAM, 1999.
- Pescarollo, Daniela. *Descriptions of the vocational training systems : Italy*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1979.
- Piehl, E; Sellin, Burkart. *Initial and continuing training in Europe*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop. Berlin : Cedefop, 1994. (Cedefop Panorama, 24).
- Progetto Excelsior. *Sistema informativo per l'occupazione e la formazione, 1999*. Roma: Camere di Commercio, <http://www.excelsior.unioncamere.it/>.
- Presidency of the Council of Ministers. *Presentazione del piano per lo sviluppo e la formazione (Masterplan) [guidelines for the pluriannual plan in the integrated education, training, research and technology transfer system]*. Available from Internet: www.palazzochigi.it/servizi/comunicati/dettaglio.asp?d=2803 [cited 4.2.2002].
- Ranieri, A. *Contraddizioni della nuova economia*. In *Gli argomenti umani. Editoriale Il Ponte*. Novembre 2000. Online review; see <http://www.gliargomentiumani.com/> [cited 2.4.2002].
- Richini, P. *La formazione come professione europea. Nuove prospettive nella formazione alla luce del Libro Bianco di Edith Cresson*. Milano: FOR, 1996.
- Richini, P., *EU Guide on training of trainers– the case of Italy*. Electronic document, 1999, see: <http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/ttnet/en/COUNTRY/i/i.asp>.
- Richini P.; Mayorga, P. *Competenze del formatore FAD. Indagine realizzata nell'ambito del Gruppo FAD della rete TTnet*. Cedefop, TTNet, 1999. Electronic publication; see <http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/TTnet/EN/finalreports/Italy-Finalreport2000.pdf>. [cited 4.2.2002].
- Villa, P; Marchetti, A. *Formazione continua in azienda e sviluppo della professione dei formatori in Italia*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1991.

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

Lifelong learning in Italy: The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Italy

Pierluigi Richini

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2002 – VI, 106 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm

(Cedefop Panorama series ; 43 – ISSN 1562-6180)

ISBN 92-896-0146-9

Cat. No: TI-45-02-547-EN-C

Free of charge – 5133 EN –

This Italian report is one of four studies launched in summer 2000, by Cedefop, on the extent to which vocational education and training policies and actions nurture lifelong learning in Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. In Italy, as in other countries of the European Union, a far-reaching process of education reform has been set in motion. Policy is being built around the principle of integrating existing systems of education and training.

This study:

- demonstrates the processes of total system reform, at both political and statutory level, in the different ambits (school education, vocational training, continuing training, adult education, etc.) and integration amongst them;
- checks the degree of implementation, in other words initiatives and specific action towards lifelong learning in the country, and analyse its impact;
- draws conclusions regarding future policy and practice.

Pierluigi Richini

Lifelong learning in Italy

The extent to which vocational education and training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Italy



European Centre for the
Development of Vocational Training

Europe 123, GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
Postal address: PO Box 22427, GR-551 02 Thessaloniki
Tel. (30) 310 490 111, Fax (30) 310 490 020
E-mail: info@cedefop.eu.int
Homepage: www.cedefop.eu.int
Interactive website: www.trainingvillage.gr

Free of charge – On request from Cedefop

5133 EN



OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
L-2985 Luxembourg

ISBN 92-896-0146-9



9 789289 601467