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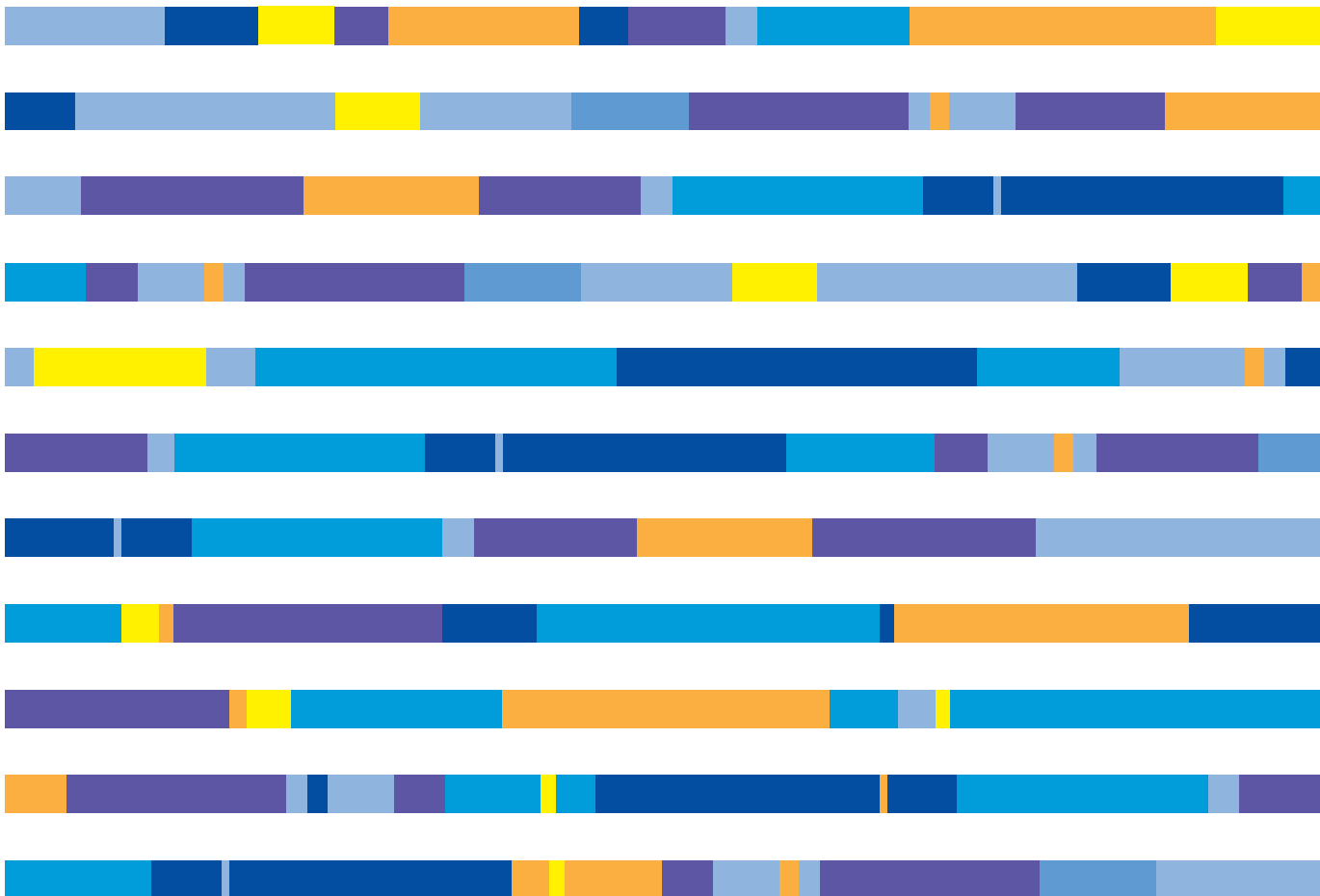
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# European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

COUNTRY REPORT:  
**ITALY**

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	2
1 Abstract .....	4
2 Introduction.....	4
3 National perspective.....	7
3.1 Overarching approach to validation .....	7
3.2 Validation in education and training.....	11
3.3 Validation and the labour market.....	16
3.4 Validation and the third sector .....	18
4 Links to credentials and qualifications .....	18
5 Standards .....	19
6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination .....	20
7 Outreach, awareness raising, provision of information, advice and guidance .....	21
7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising.....	21
7.2 Information, advice and guidance.....	22
8 Validation practitioners.....	23
8.1 Profile of validation practitioners.....	23
8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners.....	25
8.3 Qualifications and experience.....	25
9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes.....	26
9.1 Funding and costs.....	26
9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes .....	26
9.2.1 Validation trends .....	26
9.2.2 Validation users.....	27
9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups .....	27
10 Validation methods.....	28
10.1 Methodologies and methods.....	28
10.2 Use of ICT in validation.....	1
11 Quality assurance .....	1
11.1 Quality assurance processes.....	1
11.2 Monitoring and evaluation.....	2
12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust .....	3
13 References .....	4
13.1 References .....	4
13.2 Sources .....	6

# 1 Abstract

Over the past ten years, validation of non-formal and informal learning has gained increasing attention in Italy, leading to the adoption of the National Guidelines in 2021, a true milestone for the Italian certification system of competences. The current system of validation has been fully absorbed – on paper – by the main actors involved at national and regional level, however, some barriers still exist in practice. Most of the issues derive from the fact that the implementation of the measures is fragmented as it reflects the division of the Italian territory in Regions and, despite some improvements, there is still a lack of an effective and coordinated promotion strategy of validation opportunities, which are currently missing the interest of many potential beneficiaries. Moreover, the validation procedure itself often appears too complex and bureaucratic in the eyes of the beneficiaries. To put it concisely, the efforts of the institutions and entitled bodies involved in the system of validation are visible - including those complying with the regulations at the EU level - and a good dialogue is in place among the stakeholders. Nevertheless, it will still take some time to make the system fully effective.

# 2 Introduction

The process of building the National System of Competence Certification started in 2012 (Law No. 92/2012) and reached a milestone in 2021 with the adoption of the decree of 5 January 2021 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Economy and Finance, with the advice of the Ministry of Economic Development. The decree sets out the provisions for the adoption of Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities holding the respective qualifications systems. This is the main regulatory change that has occurred in the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Italy since the 2018 Inventory,

In practice, each Public Competent Authority (e.g., competent Ministries<sup>1</sup> including Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Ministry of Education and Merit, Ministry of University and Research, Regions and Autonomous Provinces), through their entitled bodies, adopts the Guidelines according to their competences. Therefore, the implementation of the Guidelines is “a work in progress”, meaning that it requires time for the public competent authorities to equip themselves with the necessary tools, leading to an overall fragmentation in the validation system, particularly at the regional level.

In brief, for the validation services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is responsible for the implementation of the general regulations, while the Public Competent Authorities are responsible for the organization of the services.

More recently (2023), the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL), home of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) National Coordination Point, drafted on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies the “Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework” adopted by the Inter-ministerial Decree on 15 June 2023<sup>2</sup>, which *“defines common transparency and readability criteria of the qualifications with the aim of facilitating the comparability and*

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<sup>1</sup> This Report refers to the Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research, Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, following the adoption of the Decree-Law Nov. 11, 2022, no. 173. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/11/11/22G00185/sq>

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in concert with the Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research, on 15 June 2023 adopting the Italian Referencing Report of qualifications to the EQF: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2023/07/03/153/sq/pdf>. The publication of the Report in EN language is forthcoming.

spendability processes and, at the same time, enhancing the identities of the individual systems which differ in purposes” (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022). In short, the report achieves the implementation of the NQF by making it operational at national level, while ensuring a better link between formal, non-formal and informal learning, for instance through the system of integrated territorial networks<sup>3</sup>. This system includes the set of public and private education, training and work services relating to all learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal), organically connected to the main strategies implemented for economic, occupational, social, and personal growth (access to work by young people, welfare reform, active aging and active citizenship, including immigrants). The networks are based on the centrality of the person (and his/her needs, also in a multidimensional perspective) and aim at expanding the audience of beneficiaries of lifelong learning services through, for example, the establishment of synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning systems and between the different subjects of the learning offer (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022).

Another important regulatory element was adopted on 8 January 2018 - the National Decree establishing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). According to the Recommendation on the EQF, the NQF defined a clear common set of descriptors which identify what kind of knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility elements are attributable to each of the 8 levels (see the 2018 Inventory for more information).

Moreover, a recent regulatory provision aimed at the recognition of skills acquired even in a non-formal and informal context contained in the Legislative Decree no.61,16 April 2017 concerning the revision of vocational education pathways (art. 5, c. 1, lett. a) and in the Inter-ministerial Decree no. 92, 24 May 2018 (art. 6, c. 2, lett. a), which focus on the importance of personalising the students’ learning pathways.

The table below summarises and updates the main ruling acts concerning the validation system in Italy (2012-2021).

**Table 2.1 Summary of main ruling acts concerning the validation system in Italy (2012-2021)**

Ruling acts	What does it change	Who is involved
The National Law 92/2012 June 2012 Reform of the Labour Market	The law reforming the Labour market foresees the immediate institution of a national system of competence certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (within six months)	Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education
Legislative Decree 13/2013 16 January 2013 on the national certification of competence and validation of non-formal and informal learning	The national certification and validation system was designed and had to be fully implemented within 18 months of its entry into force (March 2013) by defining National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and	The <i>National Technical Committee in charge of the system development is composed of the ‘entitling bodies’</i> or qualification authorities: Ministry of Education, University and Research, for the qualifications of the School and University system;

<sup>3</sup> The nodes of the network are: schools, Higher Technical Institutes, Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), identification, validation and certification of competences services, employment centers, employment agencies, vocational training agencies, institutes and research agencies, third sector forums and associations, voluntary and non-profit organizations, one-stop shops for productive activities - SUAP, cultural bodies and associations (libraries, museums, theatres), technical-professional centres, Universities, guidance and consultancy services, businesses (through their employer and trade union representatives), Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts – CCIAA and the Immigration Observatory.

	informal learning and certification of competences. The <i>National Technical Committee</i> had responsibility for this task, but it has not yet been completed.	Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano for the regional qualifications (vocational training); Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, for the qualifications of those professions not organized in professional associations or colleges or otherwise regulated; Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department (leading the other national authorities) for the qualifications of regulated professions.
Inter-ministerial Decree 30 June 2015 on National Framework of Regional Qualifications	It establishes: 1) a mechanism of mutual recognition among the regional qualifications; 2) process, attestation and system standard procedures for the services of identification/ validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences.	Regions in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education as ruling actors The other qualification authorities for the shared or overlapping institutional fields.
Inter-ministerial Decree of 8 January 2018 concerning the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in response to the European Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF)	Defines a set of descriptors for the eight levels of qualifications by identifying knowledge, skills and autonomy/responsibility elements attributable to each level.  Structures the procedures for referencing every qualification to the NQF	All the 'entitling bodies' or qualification authorities: Ministry of Education, University and Research; Regions; Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department.
<b>Inter-ministerial Decree of 5 January 2021</b> concerning the adoption of <b>National Guidelines</b> for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities of the National system for certification of competences (NSCC)	Aims at promoting transparency, usability, portability, and the increase of competences at national and European level, also in terms of credits recognition, in the different phases of the learning pathway, to promote the growth and enhancement of the entire cultural and professional heritage acquired by the person in his/her life, study and work history.	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in agreement with the Policies, Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Regions.
<b>Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in concert with the Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research, on 15 June 2023 adopting the Italian Referencing Report of qualifications to the EQF</b>	The "Italian referencing Report of qualifications to the EQF" aims at making the NQF, established in 2018, operational, through the referencing of the national and regional education and training systems and the related types of qualifications to the framework itself and to the EQF, with the aim of linking the Italian framework to those of other European Countries. The referencing process also contributes to coordinate the various education and training systems and the services for the identification and validation and certification of competences. within the National	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Ministry of Education and Merit, Ministry of University and Research, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Business and Made in Italy, with the advice as of the Ministry of Economic Development.

	System for the certification of competences.	
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The set of national standards places Italy in an advanced position in terms of a sound and consistent system of regulations linked to the European measures on these topics, culminated with the adoption of the Guidelines (Inter-ministerial Decree of 5 January 2021), which frame and state the relevance of the recognition of qualifications acquired in a non-formal and informal setting. However, many of the critical issues already raised by surveys and investigations (Perulli, 2021) linked to the concrete implementation of these services in the country remain:

- need for fast and homogeneous training of operators involved in services for setting and maintaining good quality standards at a national level;
- the traditional weakness of lifelong learning and adult education and training, which is not as widespread and consolidated in Italy as in other European countries;
- the promotion of the validation services;
- the achievement of a balance between quality and economic sustainability;
- the monitoring of the validation procedures in relation to the different target groups;
- the plurality of institutions involved in this matter at national, regional and local level;
- the evaluation of the impact and benefits for the beneficiaries and for the companies and sectors, the community and the whole country;
- the legal value of qualifications obtained through formal education and training courses.

## 3 National perspective

### 3.1 Overarching approach to validation

The emergence of a national policy on validation in Italy is linked to the Law 92/2012 on the Reform of the Labour Market, which is the legal basis for the Italian strategy for lifelong learning, the goal of which is to boost recognition of competences and qualifications to facilitate training and access to the labour market, as well as active labour market and social inclusion policies. The strategy is implemented through “*three systems<sup>4</sup>, closely connected to each other, through which are determined the conditions and tools necessary to build a broad and stable multilevel governance, capable of coordinating the different providers of education, training and work services, in the form of territorially integrated networks*” (Simoncini, Bastianelli et al, 2022). One of the systems is the National System for Certification of Competences (NSCC), which encompasses non-formal and informal learning: indeed, “*the system is based on the reorganization of a number of legal institutions, some pre-existing (such as certifications of formal learning pathways), others newly introduced (the identification, validation and certification of competences) acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts*” (Bastianelli, Simoncini, et al, 2022).

Concerning ‘lifelong learning’ issues the abovementioned law, introduced on 28 June 2012:

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<sup>4</sup> The **System of integrated territorial networks of education, training and work services**, LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraphs 55 and 56; the **National system for certification of competences (NSCC)**, LAW No. 92 of 28 June 2012, Art. 4, paragraphs 58 and 64 – 68; the **Unitary Information System of labour policies – SIU**, LEGISLATIVE DECREE No. 150 of 14 September 2015, art. 13, 14 e 15.

- a) re-launch the policies for lifelong learning through local networks made up of employment services, schools, universities, vocational education and training (VET) providers, enterprises;
- b) specific public services to re-trace and value formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- c) national rules for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences;
- d) the establishment of the National Repertory of Education, Training and Professional Qualifications.

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

The implementation of Law 92/2012 led to the adoption in 2013 of a national decree<sup>5</sup> fundamental for the establishing and implementing of the National System for certification of competences (NSCC) concerning Definition of general rules and essential levels of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and of the minimum service standards of the national system for certification of competences.

The Legislative Decree n. 13/2023 consists of 11 articles. It contains a section with a glossary of keywords and lays down some essential principles and institutional responsibilities and tasks within the new system.

The glossary defines formal, non-formal and informal learning in a way consistent with the European Commission glossary and other relevant terms such as entitling and entitled bodies within the public system of certification, validation of learning, and certification of competences.

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

- a) **validation as a central point** - in line with EU guidelines, the focus of identification/validation and certification is on the competences acquired by the individual in formal, non-formal or informal contexts;
- b) **a whole qualification or parts of it can be validated** - the entitled bodies can identify/validate and certify competences related to the qualifications or to parts of qualifications up to the total number of competences composing an entire qualification;
- c) **the centrality of the individual** - the identification/validation and the certification of competences is aimed at valuing the individual's study, work and life experiences. Therefore, the centrality of the individual in this process requires a simple, accessible, transparent, objective and confidential service as well as methodological accuracy, completeness, fairness and non-discrimination in the related procedures;
- d) **public documents** - the validation documents and certificates issued respectively at the end of the identification/validation and certification services are public documents;

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<sup>5</sup> Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013.



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

The NSCC designed by Decree 13/2013 is national and comprehensive as it covers all the range of qualifications from education, higher education (HE), VET and even the ones with legal value. It includes the professional qualifications and the regulated qualifications. It describes the three steps: identification, validation and attestation leading to certification of competences. In addition, an important regulatory element was introduced in January 2018 when the National Decree concerning the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) came into force. This Decree, besides providing the establishment of the NQF according to the Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The Decree also establishes the minimum criteria for referencing to the NQF/EQF of the various Italian qualification systems and the procedure for the referencing of all qualifications issued (at national and regional level) within the NSCC, for their inclusion in the National Repository as a mandatory requirement. It structured the procedures for referencing every qualification to the Framework through the National EQF Coordination Point established in ANPAL (National Agency for Active Labour Policies) and with the independent evaluation of INAPP (National Institute of Public Policies Analysis and formerly Isfol).

Repositories of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications codified by a Public Competent Authority at national, regional or autonomous province level are publicly available through the Atlas of Work and Qualifications (<https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>) in line with the provisions of Article 8 of Legislative Decree No. 13. the National Repository, constituted by the Repositories of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications codified by a Public Competent Authority at national, regional or autonomous province level, which is, within the National System for Certification of Competences, *“the unitary reference for the purposes of competence-based training design, the identification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts, and the customization of lifelong learning paths, certification and transparency, usability and recognition of qualifications at national and EU level”*. This implies that in Italy there is no database of qualifications that can be obtained through validation, but only through the certification of competences.

The institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the NSCC system is the National Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Labour and composed of all the Public Competent Authorities issuing qualifications (Entitling Bodies<sup>6</sup>). The system became fully operational in January 2021 with the adoption of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities of the NSCC<sup>7</sup>. *“The Guidelines aim at promoting transparency, usability, portability, and the increase of competences at national and European level, also in terms of credits recognition, in the different phases of the learning pathway, in order to promote the growth and enhancement of the entire cultural and professional heritage acquired by the person in his/her life, study and work history”* (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022).

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<sup>6</sup> According to Decree 13/2013 the entitling bodies are the following: Ministry of Education and Universities (for school and university qualifications) (now respectively Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research), Regions (for VET qualifications), Ministry of Economic Development - UE Policies Department (for regulated professions), Ministry of Labour (for non- regulated professions).

<sup>7</sup> [DECREE of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Minister of Education, the Minister of University and Research, the Minister for Public Administration and the Minister of Economy and Finance, after consulting the Minister of Economic Development, of 5 January 2021, for the implementation of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of Public Competent Authorities of the National System for certification of competences, implementing Article 3, paragraph 5, of Legislative Decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 \(GURI No. 13 of 18 January 2021\).](#)

Annex D of the National Guidelines provides the minimum service standards of the national competence certification system at the process, certification and system level. Such standards include, for instance, the adoption of awareness measures concerning the identification, validation, and certification services as well as the establishment of a publicly accessible and electronically searchable list of entitled bodies.

Moreover, an updated version (the first edition was released in 2013) of the EQF Italian Referencing Report (2022 version, Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022) was adopted by the Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in concert with the Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research, on 15 June 2023.

The approval of the Report enables the implementation of the NQF, while ensuring a better link between formal, non-formal and informal learning as well as better qualifications descriptions and more transparent learning outcomes.

In relation to skills audit, the process is described by a specific paragraph of the Decree 13/2013 (article 5), which states that “*Identification: phase aimed to identify and bring transparency to the individual’s competences relating them to one or more qualifications. In the case of non-formal and informal learning, this step involves specific support in the analysis and documentation of the experience of learning and in correlating the results to one or more qualifications*”. Moreover, within the Decree on National Framework of Regional Qualification of 30 June 2015, this step is better designed and articulated in the description of the functions in charge of it, namely the Function of Accompanying and supporting the identification and transparency of competences. The Guidelines, which refer to Decree 13/13 when it comes to the implementation of skills audit, provide the more detailed definition of the identification process: “*reconstruction and coding of the person’s learning experiences pertaining to his or her request; the putting into transparency of the activities carried out (with reference to the descriptors of the Atlas of Work and Qualifications) and the skills presumably acquired (with reference to the Directory of Qualifications pertaining to the entitled public body to which the request was submitted for access to the service); the development of an evidence dossier that collects and classifies documents, testimonies and items proving the experience carried out. At the end of the identification phase, provision is made for the elaboration of a document however denominated according to the norms in force at the respective entitled Public Bodies, identifiable under the common name “Transparency Document”, as a summary of the results of the identification phase*”.

Each Region in Italy has its own system to collect the assessed and identified competences. For instance, in Piemonte they are stored in an online database, the *Dossier del Cittadino*, which focuses on the skills that the worker, with the support of the operator, reconstructs through the analysis of experiences acquired in the sphere of work and social life, the so-called skills acquired “in non-formal and informal environments”. It is composed by two sections: “Dossier delle esperienze” and “Dossier delle evidenze”. It puts in the same document experiences, evidence and competences related. It is stored in an online database together with all certifications released in Regione Piemonte form formal, informal or non-formal learning (<https://servizi.regione.piemonte.it/catalogo/gestione-certificazioni-attestazioni>).

Another example is Regione Liguria, where on the website (<https://www.alfaliguria.it/index.php/valutazione-esiti-e-certificazione-competenze> and [ALFA Liguria - Certificazione Competenze](#)) of the regional Agency for employment, training and accreditation (‘Agenzia regionale per il lavoro, la formazione e l’accreditamento’ – ALFA) it is possible to find all relevant information concerning the IVC services available in the Region. For instance, one can access

the Ligurian Repertory of occupational profiles ('Repertorio figure delle figure professionali') (<http://www.laboratorioprofessionisti.it/>) which lists all the professions that can be certified through the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts.

For each competence considered strategic for the placement in the labour market, the collection of evidence documenting the indicated competences/skills/knowledge must be fulfilled, as well as the motivation why those particular types of evidence were selected and how. Such information can be accessed anytime by the operators of the Employment Centres and of the bodies accredited for employment services and of the bodies included in the regional list of entitled bodies.

It is also worth mentioning that the Gol (Guarantee of employability of workers) programme embraces the steps of the validation process, including the assessment phase. It aims at the upskilling, reskilling, overall social inclusion, of those workers benefitting from social buffers or other income support, vulnerable workers (young people, women with particular situations of disadvantage, people with disabilities, over 55), unemployed people without income support (<https://www.anpal.gov.it/programma-gol>). It assesses prior skills, digital skills, language skills (with reference to the European framework), technical/professional skills. Both public providers and accredited entities (Regions and employment centers) are involved in the Gol programme implementation.

The fact that the validation principles have been incorporated into the new active labour policies means that there is increasing awareness about the relevance of validation at national level.

As far as concerns skills audits in public employment services (PES) for specific target groups (i.e., migrants), Italy figures among those countries which: offers training courses (in Italian) to potential migrant workers in countries of origin prior to departure, by providing information on the Italian labour market, and specific vocational training on skills for which migrants might be hired in Italy. The skills on which potential migrants will be trained are identified by the main promoters, which are employers' and workers' organisations, public and international institutions, and NGOs that have been operating for at least three years in the area of migrant protection. The eligible countries are those having bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) with Italy (International Labour Organization, 2020).

The Italian government also designs curricula leading to certification valid in both origin and destination countries. An example is given by the Training Centre "Don Bosco" in Cairo, which issues competence certificates valid in both Egypt and Italy (International Labour Organization, 2020).

As far as concerns the Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), the debate is currently ongoing in the country between the different national authorities and the social parties involved in its foreseen implementation. Some issues were raised by the Italian trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL, Conti individuali di apprendimento e microcredenziali) on the nature and scope of ILAs, which might send the wrong message, namely that reskilling and upskilling fall solely on the workers' shoulders, even if they benefit from public incentives or subsidized tax regimes; on the contrary, it is also the responsibility of entrepreneurs to finance the training of their employees and apprentices.

## 3.2 Validation in education and training

The NSCC designed with Decree n.13/2013 and became fully operational with the adoption of 'National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent

Authorities is national and comprehensive as it covers all the range of qualifications from HE and VET sectors, regardless of whether they have legal value or not. As part of the NSCC, each Public Competent Authority, through their Public entitled bodies, is responsible for the implementation of the Guidelines in their field of competence (e.g., regions in the area of VET) can identify, validate and certify, also in terms of credits, the competences as parts of the qualifications (up to the total number of competence units of the entire qualification) included in their repertoires and in the National Repository.

The Repertory is a comprehensive collection of national, regional, and sectoral repertoires that already exist, under the responsibility of the public competent authorities ('entitling bodies'). The implementation of the National Repository is an iterative process since to be included in it the qualification must be referenced to the EQF and there has been progressive work of descriptive standardisation to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

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

- a) process standards that outline three main steps: identification, assessment and attestation (Article 5);
- b) attestation standards that outline what kind of information must be registered (Article 6);
- c) system standards that outline the roles and responsibilities and guarantee adequacy, quality and protection of beneficiaries (Article 7).

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

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

*a) the articulation into the following phases:*

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

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

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

- a) The Ministry of Education and Merit, the Ministry of University and Research<sup>8</sup>, for the qualifications related to the School and University systems;

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<sup>8</sup> According to Decree-Law Nov. 11, 2022, no. 173: The former Ministry of Education became 'The Ministry of Education and Merit' <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/11/11/22G00185/sq>

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

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

- a) to pursue the formal adoption of an encoded repertory of qualifications and competences previously referenced to the EQF;
- b) to ensure a clear single regulatory framework of conditions of use and guarantee of the services;
- c) to implement measures of guidance and information on the new validation opportunities for individuals and organisations;
- d) to ensure appropriate features and job requirements for validation practitioners;
- e) to put in place an interconnected information system (or a database) where all data concerning the validation and certification of outcomes can be found; each qualification authority's database should be inter-operational with the others;
- f) to establish conditions to ensure quality standards for the validation procedures (e.g., collegiality, objectivity, impartiality, and independence of the assessment).

Overall, in the past years, substantial progress has been made when it comes to validation in this sector, due to efforts implemented at national and regional level. The coordination between the Regions on the subject has improved a lot through the creation of the national group of validation, which allows to exchange on challenges and best practices of validation systems in place across the different Regions. However, some obstacles to validation in education, training and in the labour market still exist and they are confirmed by the low numbers, at regional level, of validation uptakes. Notably, the lack of information and awareness among the target groups of validation opportunities of non-formal and informal learning, as well as the costs of such services for the entitling bodies remain an issue. Moreover, despite the efforts made at the institutional level to collaborate with the Regions on validation matters (e.g., organisation of webinars by INAPP targeting the regions), there should be more cooperation between all the stakeholders involved in the process of validation (e.g., trade unions, enterprises, etc.) in order to reach a better understanding of what is happening on the ground and to allow for a successful implementation of validation processes. The trade unions consulted for this report stated that they would be very open to be more involved in implementing the validation process. However, in the Inter-ministerial Decree of 5 January 2021 concerning the adoption of the national guidelines for the interoperability of the competent public authorities of the National Skills Certification System (NSCC), it is established that "*In the case of an extraordinary maintenance procedure*" - and not also in the ordinary one -, "*the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in agreement with the Ministry of Education, University and Research, has the right to convene the economic and social parties in order to acquire the relevant opinion*".

### **3.2.1.1 Regional Vocational Training systems**

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

Within one year following the approval of this Decree, the Regions adopted the official provisions of the National Framework of Regional Qualifications and proceeded with their implementation. By July 2016, validation services had to be set up and made available to cover the 21 Regions according to the same methodological and system standards.

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

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

On the other hand, some Regions have introduced these measures later, in 2016/2017, by setting up provisions to regulate the validation and certification services. To name a few: Basilicata, P.A. of Bolzano, Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Puglia, Sardinia, P. A. di Trento. The remaining Regions of Abruzzo, Calabria, Marche, Molise, Sicily introduced the measures in 2018.

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

### **3.2.1.2 School and University systems**

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

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

Subsequent to the Law 92/2012, adult education was reformed and regulated by Presidential Decree No. 263/2012. After an initial experimental phase of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (the CPIA), through projects assisted by the Ministry of Education, 129 CPIA were activated so far since September 2014 (statistics updated to September 2022), located across all Regions (12 in Piemonte, 19 in Lombardia, 4 in Friuli Venezia Giulia, 7 in Veneto, 6 in Liguria, 12 in Emilia Romagna, 11 in Toscana, one in Umbria, 5 in the March, 10 in Lazio, 3 in Abruzzo, 2 in Molise, 8 in Campania, 7 in Apulia, 2 in Basilicata, 5 in Calabria, 10 in Sicily, 5 in Sardinia) .

The CPIA is the central administrative unit that manages and organises educational pathways for adult learners in an integrated manner. It interacts with the stakeholders in the territory that requires specific education and training needs. The CPIA are therefore in charge of designing and delivering the education and training offer taking into account the particular needs of adult learners, migrants and people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

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



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

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

### **3.2.1.3 University**

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

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

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

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

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

- a) to foster and support the participation of CPIA in the construction and operation of territorial networks for lifelong learning;
- b) promote and support - in accordance with the provisions of the Agenda 2030 and the New European Skills Agenda - the activation of Competences Guarantee Paths for the adult working age population aimed at acquiring basic skills (mathematical, alphabetic, linguistic and digital), transversal (ability to work in groups, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, ability to solve problems or to learn to learn and financial literacy);
- c) strengthen and consolidate the already existing research, experimentation and development centres for adult education;

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

A good practice example when it comes to the promotion of lifelong learning at the university level is the University of Bari lifelong learning centre ('Centro per l'apprendimento permanente' - C.A.P.), which promotes lifelong learning processes and the certification and accreditation of skills acquired in formal and informal contexts (<https://www.uniba.it/it/centri/cap/centro-apprendimento-permanente>). The services offered target both EU and non-EU citizens. Overall, the centre aims at the following:

- a) The transparency and certification of soft skills;
- b) The recognition of learning acquired 'on the job' and its translation into professional qualifications and/or university learning credits (CFU) spendable in university courses;
- c) The promotion of equivalence or recognition of learning credits for EU and non-EU citizens.

It is worth noting that for the first time the University of Bari, as a Third Mission service, has issued through the C.A.P. the first 28 certifications of competences, preliminary to a regional examination of professional qualification in application of the new operational model of Identification and Validation of Competences (IVC) for the professional figure of "Operator/Operator for Family Care Activities" (D.G.R. n. 632/2019) COD. 428 of the Regional Repertoire of Professional Figures (<https://www.uniba.it/it/centri/cap/servizi-accademici-di-terza-missione/sistema-regionale-competenze>).

### 3.3 Validation and the labour market

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

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

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

- a) The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, for the qualifications of those professions not organised in professional associations, chambers or colleges or otherwise regulated;
- b) The Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (former Ministry of Economic Development) - EU Policies Department (leading several other national authorities) for the qualifications linked to regulated professions.

The introduction of the National Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities (Decree of 5 January 2021) did not modify substantially the system in place, however, it represents an important step towards recognizing the importance of the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts. Moreover, it ensures a more organic and



well-defined approach towards the certification process across the national territory, by '*fostering the adoption of general rules (purposes, definitions and legal effects) and common principles valid for all public administrations responsible for qualifications (Public Competent Authorities), such as: subsidiarity, centrality of the person, simplicity, accessibility, transparency, objectivity, traceability, confidentiality of the service, methodological correctness, completeness, fairness and non-discrimination*' (Bastianelli, Simoncini, et al., 2022)

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

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

Overall, the latest Youth Guarantee Evaluation Report produced, which collects the views of a sample of around 21 000 young people who, between 2018 and 2019, started and finished an active policy path part of the programme, shows that the validation and certification of competences is still at an embryonal implementation stage in the country. Indeed, 72.2% of the respondents claimed to have received a document certifying their participation in the course. Of these, 72.8% obtained a certificate of attendance and just less than 20% a document of validation/certification of their competences (ANPAL., 2022).

Another relevant reform action envisaged in Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Mission 5, Component 1) to requalify active labour policy services is the Gol (Guarantee of employability of workers) programme. The Ministry of Labour oversees the programme, with the coordination role of Anpal, while its implementation falls under the Regions' responsibility. The program includes a range of integrated services, based on cooperation between public and private services. It envisages paths of accompaniment to work, professional upgrading or re-skilling, and paths linked to other territorial services (social, social-health, reconciliation, educational) in the case of complex needs, such as those of people with disabilities or fragility. The regional implementation plans of the programme (e.g. in Lombardia and Piemonte) stresses the need to bring to the surface those elements not available in the individual's administrative/employment history, such as experiences and skills gained in non-formal and informal settings.

As outlined in section 2.3 of this report, despite the increase of validation uptakes in some Regions, the number of participants in such processes is still too low due to a lack of awareness of the target groups of validation opportunities and of self-awareness of having developed certain skills in non-formal and informal settings. In general, efforts are still needed to reach out to the most hard-to-reach groups (e.g., unemployed people, migrants) as well as to the overall population who could potentially benefit from validation services. In this regard, some Regions, such as Piemonte, recently launched a campaign

<https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/temi/progetti-europei/fondo-sociale-europeo-fse/comunicazione-fse/metti-luce-tue-capacita-certificazione-delle-competenze>) called "Metti in luce le tue capacità!" ("Bring your skills to the fore!") for advertising validation and certification opportunities - mainly among those who dropped out their studies to start working; those who have been working for a long time in a sector, but they are lacking a professional qualification; the unemployed ones. The Piemonte Region is also organising a series of events on the territory to

bring together the different stakeholders involved in validation and certification (e.g., trade unions, enterprises) to advertise and discuss validation and certification practices. The first event took place on 25 May 2023 and it was a successful and rich experience which involved a lot of different stakeholders: trade unions, enterprises associations, third sector, commerce and crafts associations, public and private sector labour services and their entitled bodies.

### 3.4 Validation and the third sector

In the third sector, there is a strong interest in the validation on non-formal and informal learning for the very large body of actors involved in the validation in this context in Italy, including workers, volunteers, civil society organisations, and universities.

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

In addition, according to the periodic surveys conducted by INAPP, at the moment, one of the main target groups of processes for the recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings are the volunteers. This is also reflected in the most recent piece of legislation on the adoption of the Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public Competent Authorities of the National system for certification of competences, where the definition of non-formal learning states that *'characterized by a person's intentional choice, which takes place outside formal learning systems, in any organisation that pursues educational and training purposes, including voluntary, national civil service and private social work, and in enterprises'*.

Nevertheless, from the sample survey, administered to 21 000 young people, on the employment outcomes of young people enrolled in Youth Guarantee (see the latest Youth Guarantee Evaluation Report), it emerged a rather discouraging image of the validation in the third sector. In fact, 63.3% of young people received a certificate at the conclusion of the activity carried out. In 81.4% of cases though, it was a certificate of attendance and in 13% of cases a final attestation. Almost insignificant (only 5.9%) is the percentage of those who had the certification of the skills acquired.

## 4 Links to credentials and qualifications

According to Decree 13/2013, only competences belonging to qualifications included in the National Repertory of Qualification can be validated and/or certified, by each entitled body for its respective qualifications system. Every qualification can be certified either after education or training or after a validation process from a minimum of one competence up to one or more entire qualification. This principle is re-affirmed in the Decree of 5 January 2021 adopting the Guidelines.

In this context, the aim of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) in Italy is twofold:

- a) implementing the EQF Recommendation, with the aim of linking the Italian framework to those of other European countries;
- b) meeting the regulatory requirement of referencing Italian qualifications to the NQF for their inclusion in the National Repository, in order to coordinate the various systems of the lifelong learning offer and the services for the identification and validation and certification of competences (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022).

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

The National Framework of Regional qualifications is structured according to the classification of 23 economic-professional sectors plus a sector called the Common Area, and is intended to serve as a reference for the regional qualifications repertories with the following operational references:

- a) referencing to the national statistical codes and to the sequence of descriptors of the classification of economic-professional sectors;
- b) identification and description of qualifications and their related competences in line with the criteria of the EQF;
- c) referencing of qualifications according to the EQF for lifelong learning, carried out through the formal inclusion of these qualifications in the EQF national referencing process.

For the purposes of matching and recognising regional qualifications across the whole national territory, the National Framework of Regional qualifications represents:

- a) a professional reference in terms of occupational standards;
- b) a reference for the recognition of the regional qualifications and competences at national and European level;
- c) a performance reference for the assessment to be carried out within the services of identification, validation and certification of competences.

Each Region has its own repository of competences that can be validated and/or certified. Such repositories are normally available on the Regions' websites. Moreover, each Region has its own system of validating or certifying a certain competence. For instance, in Piemonte they award partial qualifications or part of a competence acquired to those who do not possess all the competences required for a complete qualification. Validation is used to test a certain competence, while certification, which is less common, is "limited" to those who already have all the competences needed and possessing all of them is not common according to the stakeholder consulted for this report. Validation allows the award of credits. A concrete example is the figure of the family caregivers, in Italy also known as "badanti", who have specific competences, but they are not certified.

In Piemonte, a specific project was set which allowed family care givers with previous professional experiences to obtain the "Family care giver Qualification" certificate through a mix of different actions. First thanks to validation services (called IVC) they got their previous competence validated, afterwards they got credits to access to a reduced complementary training and ultimately got their final certification after having passed the final exam. Afterwards labour services could provide them a new qualified job.

## 5 Standards

The Decree 13/2013 establishes the 'National Repository of education, training and professional qualifications' which is a comprehensive collection of national, regional and sectoral repertories that already exist, under the responsibility of the competent authorities or 'public entitling bodies'. The entitling bodies are the following: Ministry of Education and Merit, Ministry of University and Research (for school and university qualifications), Regions (for VET qualifications), Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (for regulated professions), and Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (for non-regulated professions). To be included in the National Repository the qualification

must be referenced to the EQF and over time there will be progressive work on the descriptive standardization to allow greater permeability between sub-systems and recognition of credits.

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

Aiming to make the 'National Repository of education, training and professional qualifications' accessible and active as a real single framework for the certification of competences, the national and regional institutions have promoted the implementation by INAPP of the Atlante del Lavoro e delle Qualificazioni (Atlas of Work and Qualifications) (<http://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>). The Atlante describes the contents of the work in terms of activities (processes and tasks) and of potentially deliverable products-services. The contents of the work are represented, and made available, through a classification scheme made of 24 professional economic sectors (SEP). The SEP classification was obtained using the classification codes adopted by Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT), concerning economic activities (ATECO 2007) and professions (Classification of Professions 2021), and is entirely connected to them. The SEP classification consists of 23 sectors plus a sector called the Common Area. The Common Area collects all those work activities not specifically characterized by a specific sector as activities concerning administration, marketing, communication and public relations, general affairs, human resources management. In this sense, the Common Area is therefore to be considered as an addendum compared to the other 23 sectors of which the classification is made up.

## 6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

The institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the system is the National Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and composed of all the Public Competent Authorities (entitling bodies).

The Decree 13/2013 (restated in the Decree of 5 January 2021) defines the following two main roles in the national certification and validation system: public entitling body and entitled body.

- a) 'public entitling body': this includes
- The Ministry of Education, University and Research, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to the qualifications of the school system and university;
  - Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to qualifications issued under the respective responsibilities in the VET system;
  - The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the identification, validation and certification of competences related to qualifications of non-regulated and non-organised professions in chambers or formal associations;
  - The Ministry of Economic Development<sup>9</sup> – EU Policies Department (coordinating the other competent authorities) in the identification and validation and certification of competences related to qualifications for regulated professions;

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy

- b) 'entitled body' means an organisation, whether public or private – including chambers of commerce, industry, trade and agriculture, schools, universities and institutions of higher education – that is approved or recognised by the public entitling authorities, according to national or regional law, and provides, in whole or in part, services of identification, validation and certification of competences.
- c) Italian national accreditation body means the national accreditation body designated by Italy to implement Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 9, 2008.

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

Concerning the overall coordination, at national and regional level institutions interact with regards to the design and implementation of validation through periodically convened interinstitutional discussion/consultation tables. However, there is room for improvement in involving more frequently certain stakeholders, notably the trade unions and the business sector to allow for a better coordination and implementation of validation services.

## **7 Outreach, awareness raising, provision of information, advice and guidance**

### **7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising**

Little information is available on such aspects as the services are mostly in a start-up phase. Overall, there are currently no data available on the correlation between awareness raising activities and take-up of validation. However, according to some of the stakeholders consulted to edit this report, there is a general lack of awareness about validation processes. More than 90% of the lifelong learning processes lack the interest of firms and employees (as they do not understand the advantage of this process).

Measures to increase awareness of validation are in place both at the national level as well as – and mostly – at the regional level, with some Regions (notably Piemonte) performing better than others. At the national level, the promotional activities consist of workshops and conferences. For instance, on 27 October 2022, a Biennale conference to discuss the Identification, Validation and Certification (IVC) of Skills was held in Rome (<https://www.officinacompetenze.org/progetti/>). During the event, a book which collects the developments in IVC over the last ten years was also distributed (Turrini, 2022). Another example is the online workshop (22 March 2023), 'First data on the outcome of the monitoring of the national system of certification of skills', organized by INAPP (<https://www.inapp.gov.it/eventi/primi-dati-sullesito-del-monitoraggio-del-sistema-nazionale-di-certificazione-delle-competenze>). The aim of the workshop was to present the first results of the Monitoring of the National System for Certification of Competences to the members of the National Technical Group and the Certification of Skills group. However, these institutional events usually have a limited audience and a national communication strategy for promoting validation is practically still missing.

At the regional level, the promotion is done via their websites by providing the information and documentation (e.g., brochures in PDF format) on the IVC available



for the citizens. The Piemonte Region has recently carried out a very nice campaign in this regard (<https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/temi/fondi-progetti-europei/fondo-sociale-europeo-fse/comunicazione-fse/metti-luce-tue-capacita-certificazione-delle-competenze>) already described under section 3.3 of this report. In addition, the Region has a webpage devoted to services available where individuals who benefitted from such services can be seen (<https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/temi/istruzione-formazione-lavoro/formazione-professionale/certificazione-delle-competenze/servizi-certificazione-delle-competenze-ivc>).

Validation in the third sector is gaining more and more attention in the public debate and promotional activities are often carried out by universities and other actors (e.g., civil society organizations, agencies). For instance, on 19 January 2023 the first conference dedicated to 'Youth, the Third Sector and Civic and Transversal Skills for a More Cohesive Future' was held to promote the spendability of the skills acquired in the labour market (<https://www.vita.it/it/article/2023/01/20/nelle-competenze-acquisite-il-valore-del-servizio-civile/165474/>).

In the past, some well-known promotion activities were also carried out. A notable one is from 2015 when INAPP in cooperation with RAI National Italian TV and with financial support from the ESF, produced a documentary called *L'esperienza vale* ('Valuing experience') (<http://www.raiscuola.rai.it/articoli/lesperienza-vale/30043/default.asp>). The documentary was an experiment and a new way of informing citizens and communicating public policy about validation of non-formal and informal learning. The pilot focused on four Italian and foreign stories of learners who found work, built their own ambitions for integration, or returned to training due to the system of validation and certification of their competences.

## 7.2 Information, advice and guidance

In Italy, there are several information and advice networks, but these are not always coordinated with each other. Their responsibilities are mainly to give information about the territory and job opportunities. Nevertheless, every regional validation system includes in its guidelines a clear reference to a duty of information and guidance prior to commencing the validation procedure, in line with the National Framework of Regional Qualifications of 30 June 2015. Awareness raising actions consist in providing information in the form of workshops, conferences, brochures/regional websites advertisement, since it is mandatory for regional systems to advertise certification and validation of opportunities on their websites. For example, on the website of Piemonte Region, a map of the validation services is available, which consists of a brochure explaining step by step the validation of the competences by providing information about: 1. The professional sector in which the individual has experience (e.g., construction, craft, culture, IT, third sector), 2. The territories in which the validation service is available, 3. How to contact the entitled body to provide validation services in that specific sector ([https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/sites/default/files/media/documenti/2022-03/Mappa%20Servizi%20IVC\\_0\\_2.pdf](https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/sites/default/files/media/documenti/2022-03/Mappa%20Servizi%20IVC_0_2.pdf)).

Regional authorities are the main actors responsible for implementing counselling and guidance measures to support validation. Nevertheless, in order to make the strategy effective and reach out to stakeholders who play a key role in the process of validation, some Regions, as already outlined in this report, such as Piemonte, are organising pilot events with such stakeholders (mostly trade unions and business) on the territory. Such events have a twofold objective: on the one hand to make these stakeholders aware of validation services, and on the other to make use of such stakeholders to further disseminate and advertise validation opportunities among the target groups. Indeed, the trade unions and the business sector are the actors in direct contact with those who might benefit from validation opportunities.

## 8 Validation practitioners

### 8.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The Decree on the National Framework of Regional Qualifications of 2015 defines the three functions in charge of the different steps of the validation process (re-stated in the Decree of 5 January 2021 introducing the National Guidelines):

**a) *Dossier counsellor* - function of accompanying and supporting the identification and transparency of competences.**

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

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

- document prior learning experiences;
- pre-code the identified competences in line with the qualifications targeted for the validation;
- support the elaboration of the “Dossier/Document of transparency”;
- recommend the service interruption in the case where the minimum conditions for success in the validation or certification of competences are not fulfilled;
- provide any information of use for the next steps, including possible recommendations for the assessment phase.

The following key activities have been identified:

- support with the application to access the service of identification, validation and/or certification of competences;
- preparation of the service agreement and / or the necessary documentation to start the process;
- management of information on the procedure in the information systems or documents required;
- planning of forthcoming meetings necessary for carrying out the work of identifying the competences required for the validation of the targeted qualification;
- conducting individual and group interviews aimed at documenting the prior learning experiences and making the competences acquired through formal, non-formal and/or informal learning transparent;
- identification and formalization of competences identified with reference to the qualifications and to the relevant repertories;
- support the composition of the Dossier of evidences through the application of the acceptability and relevance criteria;
- final drafting of the ‘Document of transparency’ referring the user to the next stages of the procedure or other services.

**b) ‘Assessment responsibility’ – function of planning and implementation of assessment activities**

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

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

amount and quality of the evidence presented in the Dossier through the application of the criteria of value and relevance of such evidence.

The following key activities have been identified:

- verification and evaluation of the documentation relating to the users entering the assessment process, including the documentary evidence produced in the ‘Dossier/Document of transparency’;
- planning the competences assessment process, taking into account the characteristics of each validation user, the context of exercise and the reference standards;
- planning the assessment procedure following the criteria of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence required in accordance with regional regulations as well as equity of the conditions and privacy of validation users;
- definition, where necessary, of the indicators observed and of the minimum standards of performance based on the professional reference standards;
- detailed planning of the testing procedures and definition of the relevant assessment criteria;
- implementation of procedures and tests in accordance with the project planning and with the reference rules of the system of validation and certification;
- monitor the entire process through reports and information systems or documents arranged.

**c) ‘Assessment sector expert’ – function of implementation of assessment activities concerning curricular and professional content**

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

- assessment of the technical quality of the incoming documentation including the documentary evidence produced;
- analysis of the activities and expected performance with reference to the qualifications’ professional standards and to the relevant repertoires;
- preparing and carrying out of technical interviews;
- fulfilment of situational tests by preparing appropriate settings with regards to the required professional standards;
- formulation of technical assessments required by the procedure in accordance with the provided documentation;
- participation in the assessment process in accordance with regional regulations while respecting the principles of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence.

The condition to access the role is that the expert should have at least five years of experience relevant to the contents of the assessment and exercised in the last 10 years, continuously or not continuously.

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



## 8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

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

To support the quality and optimization of practitioners training at a national level, INAPP developed a multimedia training package designed in an open-source environment (Moodle) and delivered on a MOOC platform (Massive Online Open Courses) to support the training of the operators of identification, validation and certification of competences ([PerCorso Vali.Co INAPP Individuazione Validazione Competenze](#)).

The training path accompanies the correct application of the standards and tools identified by the Legislative Decree. n. 13/2013, the Inter-ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 and the subsequent Inter-ministerial Decree of 5 January 2021 adopting the National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning, standards and tools that are then as we know implemented at regional level. From the operational point of view, the course aims at transfer to the operators of the services of identification, validation, and certification of competences a common basis of information, knowledge, methodologies, and tools useful to manage the different phases of the process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 8.3 Qualifications and experience

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

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

## 9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

### 9.1 Funding and costs

There are no new official data about costs. An unofficial estimation made within the validation system of the Region of Toscana estimated that the cost of an average process of validation would range from EUR 500 to EUR 1 200 per individual (depending on the complexity of the individual experience and on the need/opportunity for external assessment).

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

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

Usually, inter-professional funds are the instrument used at the regional level to establish and promote Validation and Certification (IVC) of processes acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. For instance, the Region of Piemonte has started a cooperation with Foragri, the National Joint Fund for Continuing Training in Agriculture ([FOR.AGRI - Fondo paritetico interprofessionale nazionale per la formazione continua in Agricoltura \(foragri.com\)](#)) to maximise the synergies between validation services provided by entitled bodies and complementary training financed by Foragri, in order to let workers achieve a whole qualification starting from the validation of competences they already have acquired on the job.

Overall, most of the stakeholders consulted (e.g., trade unions - UIL, Ministry of Education and Merit) agree that the costs of validation are high for both practitioners and beneficiaries, thus preventing some groups, notably the most vulnerable ones, from entering validation. Currently, for instance, there is a lack of sufficient financial resources to cover all the costs for the training of the school staff when it comes to validation.

### 9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

#### 9.2.1 Validation trends

At the national level, data on the take-up of validation are monitored by INAPP. The first data on the outcome of the monitoring of the national competence certification system were presented to the members of the National Technical Committee and to the Skills Certification Committee on 22 March 2023 during an online workshop ([Primi dati sull'esito del monitoraggio del sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze - Inapp](#)). INAPP will make them publicly available in the upcoming months.

Overall, there is data from some regional monitoring systems that indicates decreasing trend in the number of beneficiaries of validation, with a few peaks and troughs over the last five years, as in the case of Emilia Romagna outlined below.

#### **Emilia Romagna**

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

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

The latest data available are presented in Table 9.1 below:

**Table 9.1 Number of Certificates released in Emilia Romagna in 2018-2022**

Year	Certificates of Qualification	Certificates of Competence	Cards Skills and Knowledge
2018	115	341	40
2019	97	145	15
2020	65	175	7
2021	33	239	17
2022	71	193	15
Total (1568)	381	1 093	94

*Data for the period 2018-2022 of certificates issued as a result of validation and certification service of skills acquired in non-formal and informal settings<sup>10</sup>.*

## 9.2.2 Validation users

As mentioned above, the latest data on the monitoring of validation in non-formal and informal settings – including those on the profile of the users (e.g., age, gender etc.) have not been published yet. However, the main target groups of validation of non-formal and informal learning over the past years have been (Italian Government, Department of Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service):

- a) unemployed people or workers at risk of unemployment;
- b) workers in sectors which are poorly regulated and with the need for professional accreditation;
- c) migrant workers without formal qualifications that by now take up a permanent base in whole segments of the labour market (i.e. in the sectors of logistics, building, health and social assistance care);
- d) highly qualified young Italians who move abroad for work or study;
- e) volunteers, interns, apprentices.

## 9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

Migrants and refugees are considered as one of the most relevant target groups for validation and many pilot projects, listed in the box below, have focused on this target group. However, at the time of writing this report for the 2023 update, as for the 2018 inventory, there is no specific relevant initiative on validation in place mainly due to Italy having experienced a transition migration flow and only a small number of migrants have been interested in staying and working in Italy. Moreover, validation procedures are already very difficult to be accessed or completed by Italian citizens themselves due to its complex and bureaucratic nature.

The Ministry of Labour and Social policies' website (<https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Altre-info/e/4/o/16///id/39/Riconoscimento-delle-competenze-piattaforme-digitali-e-altri-link-utili>) provides an overview of the overall opportunities that migrants coming to Italy can benefit from to see their non-

<sup>10</sup> Data shared by Formazione e lavoro – Emilia Romagna Region <https://formazioneelavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/>.

formal and informal competences recognised. For instance, the use of the EC tool "Skills Profile Tool for third country nationals", allows for the completion of a questionnaire which enables the collection of data for profiling the formal, non-formal and informal skills of foreign nationals and offers individualized counselling on the paths to obtain recognition of diplomas or validation of skills, continue training or refer to employment support services.

Usually, the validation measures for migrants are offered at regional level (some Regions are more active than others in the field, notably Piemonte, Toscana and Friuli Venezia Giulia) by entities which operates at regional level, for example Enaip (Ente Nazionale ACLI Istruzione Professionale), an Italian training organisation founded in 1951 at the initiative of the ACLI association. It is recognized as a non-profit organisation and accredited with the Ministry of Labour. These validation measures are targeting various groups, mostly migrants landing in the most "popular"/attractive labour market sector (e.g., agri-food, catering, construction and manufacturing) and they are often funded by FAMI, the program Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (<https://migrazionicop.wordpress.com>).

### Box 1 Pilot projects on validation for migrants and refugees

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

- The EMBRACE (Enhancement of Migrants aBilities and Recognition of their Acquired Competences in Europe) project, funded by the Erasmus+ program (KA2 - Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education) had the specific objective of structuring and testing a methodology (intake model and toolkit) shared at the European level for the recognition (identification, validation and certification) of non-formal and informal skills acquired by migrants from non-EU countries in their countries of origin, in order to improve their opportunities for integration into the European labour market ([https://www.enaip.piemonte.it/mod/Notizie/page/progetti\\_internazionali/dettaglioNotizia/EMBRACE\\_167\\_153.html](https://www.enaip.piemonte.it/mod/Notizie/page/progetti_internazionali/dettaglioNotizia/EMBRACE_167_153.html)).

- DISCORSI - MIGRANTI – Dialogue inter-regional on Competences, Health and House for migrants integration (presented at the First Validation Festival in Brussels, 14-15 June 2018) (<https://migrazionicop.wordpress.com/>).

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

## 10 Validation methods

### 10.1 Methodologies and methods

At the present time, there is a formal agreement on the procedures and methodologies to be used to validate non-formal and informal learning in Italy.

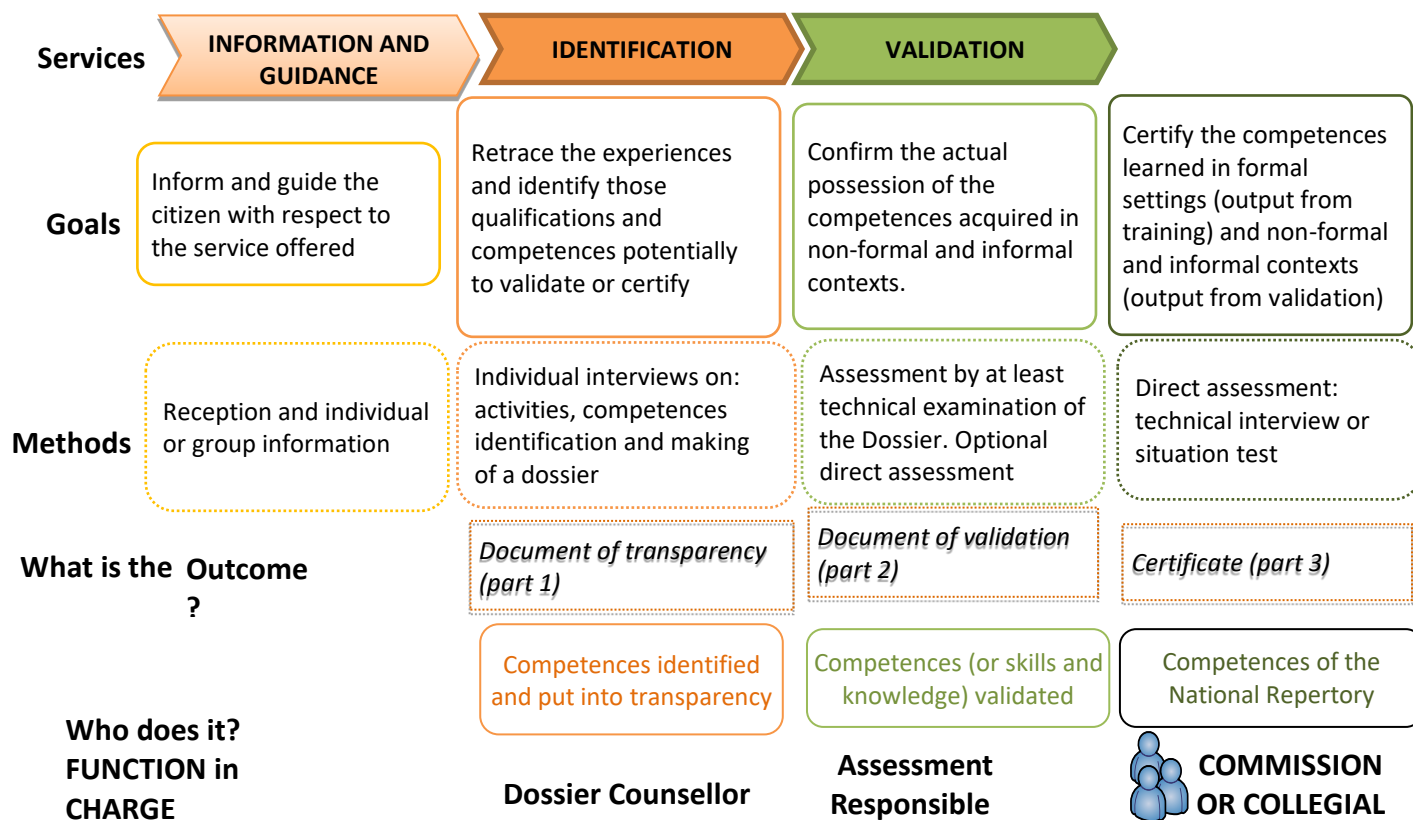
The Decree 13/2013 has established a first methodological framework. The National Framework of Regional Qualifications of 30 June 2015 created a more precise methodological framework, which is described and illustrated in Table 10.1 and Figure 10.2 below and which is also outlined in the Inter-ministerial Decree of 5 January 2021

adopting the National Guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

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

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

Figure 10.1 Summary of standard according to DI 30 June 2015 on National Framework of Regional Qualification



## 10.2 Use of ICT in validation

The unitary reference for the recognition of qualifications at national and EU level is the National Repository, which is made up of all repertoires of education and training qualifications that are based on minimum access standards.

There is the information database called “The Single Unified Information System of Labour Policies” which serves as a platform for interoperability of existing central and territorial databases and is a base for the creation and release of the Worker’s Electronic Booklet (formerly the Citizen’s training booklet).

The entitling public bodies shall ensure the registration of “Validation Documents” and “Certificates,” in accordance with the methods and standards for conferring data defined by the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL) also for the purpose of the realization of the electronic worker’s file referred to in Article 15 of Legislative Decree No. 150 of 14 September 2015, and in connection with the Unified Information System.

The management of the minimum information elements is the responsibility of the titular public agencies, through their own information systems, which should be interoperable with the single information backbone.

Moreover, in accordance with the minimum service standards of the national system for certification of competences (Art. 7, para. 1, lett. d of Legislative Decree No. 13/13), *“Public Competent Authority guarantee the availability of an informative system for the purpose of the monitoring, evaluation of the services and registration and maintenance of the “Validation documents” and “Certificates”, starting from the minimum informative elements referred to in paragraph 3 of the Guidelines, in accordance with the procedures and standards for providing data defined by the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (INAPP), also for the purpose of the employee’s electronic file referred to in Article 15 of Legislative Decree No. 150 and in connection with the unitary information system”* (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022).

# 11 Quality assurance

## 11.1 Quality assurance processes

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

- a) the conditions of use and service for access to qualifications and validation procedures;
- b) the adoption of measures for information and guidance services;
- c) compliance to the job requirements of personnel;
- d) an interoperable information system for monitoring, evaluation, traceability and preservation of the acts issued;
- e) compliance with the provisions on the procedures for simplification, access to administrative documents and protection of personal data;
- f) collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence at every stage of the procedure.

The quality assurance framework has been further developed through specific Guidelines, as per Decree of 5 January 2021 (see Annex D *“Minimum service standards of the national system for certification of competences”*; and Annex E *“Essential levels of performance of services for the identification and validation and certification of competences”*).



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

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

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

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

A good practice example to ensure reliable, valid, and credible assessments results is provided by the system in place in the Piemonte Region. In this context, all operators, namely all those who wish to rule the function of ‘**Assessment responsibility**’ (experts in applying the certification techniques - ETC is the name of the professional figure in Piemonte, which changes from Region to Region) are trained by the Region itself. In addition, the public administrators active and responsible for the area of validation and certification are monitoring the work of the ETCs with on the ground. Such activity mainly – but not only – aims at ensuring that the entitled bodies are properly advertising the validation services to reach the potential users with checks, support and guidance on the ground, and that any critical aspect is shared with the administrators in order to find a solution.

It is also important to consider the perspective of other stakeholders consulted for the editing of this report, who argued how often the Employment Centres operators do not possess the right skills required to perform the job. This highlights how important it is to train them properly.

## 11.2 Monitoring and evaluation

*“The monitoring and evaluation of the national system for certification is carried out jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (now divided into the Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of University and Research), and by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, with the support of the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL)” as per article 4.1 of the Guidelines.*

Article 4.2 specifies that *“the results of the monitoring and evaluation, transmitted by the entitled bodies referred to in paragraph 1, are collected by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, including through INAPP and ANPAL, and presented to the National Technical Committee for the purpose of verifying compliance with the minimum service standards and essential performance levels of the National Skills Certification System”.*

As stated under section 7.1, the first results of the Monitoring of the National System for Certification of Competences - carried out by INAPP - were presented to the members of the National Technical Committee and the Certification of Competences group, however they are not yet publicly available. Therefore, at the current stage there is no evidence of the impact on validation practices on users.



## 12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust

Since 2018, the perception of validation in the society among the different stakeholders has substantially improved, even though there is still room for improvement, especially when it comes to validation of competences acquired in informal contexts, as such contexts are often not perceived very positively by employers as well as by the array of public and private entitled bodies.

All in all, the opportunities for validation when they are visible and made available always appear very welcome and used by the beneficiaries; there is however no hard data on the perception of validation among the Italian society, but it is how this appears to the operators who manage the information in these services.

Over the last 10 years, validation in Italy has been a hot topic on the agenda at the national and regional level, leading to the adoption of the National Guidelines in 2021, establishing clear and robust minimum standards of the national competence certification system. The increasing attention given to validation also emerged from the latest version of the Italian Referencing Report of the qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework (Bastianelli, Simoncini et al., 2022), which addresses in detail several aspects of validation of competences gained in non-formal and informal contexts.

To conclude, it is difficult to provide an assessment of how validation outcomes can be considered socially reliable even in the labour market. It will inevitably take some time for the system to be fully launched and widely disseminated. Improvement is needed in designing and implementing awareness raising activities on validation opportunities to trigger the interest of employers and employees, but also efforts to make the service more accessible for both categories should be prompted.

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# European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

This report is part of the 2023 update of the [European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). The inventory provides a comprehensive overview of validation practices across Europe, covering 32 systems in EU-27 Member States and EFTA countries.

The European inventory is the product of a long-standing cooperation of the European Commission, Cedefop and ETF on the field. The inventory was endorsed by the [Council recommendation of 2012](#) on validation and works together with the [European guidelines](#) as a tool to support countries in developing and implementing validation arrangements.

A rich source of information, the inventory informs dialogue and learning between countries and stakeholders developing and implementing validation in Europe. Our key objective is to support Member States so that more learners and workers can acquire and make visible new skills, which will support their career and further learning and improve their quality of life.

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