



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in ITALY

Helsinki, 2011



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Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Italy. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Italy as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at [eaea-info\[at\]eaea.org](mailto:eaea-info@eaea.org).



Overview

The Italian situation is characterised by the existence of public and private adult education providers. According to the recent political evolution promoting the increase in competences of regional and local authorities, the responsibility for the adult education field has been gradually transferred to Regions.

An economic and social connotation is given to lifelong learning, as the most recent changes in the Italian social structure and composition show. The particularly diversified economic structure between northern and southern regions and the recent increase in the migration phenomenon during the last few decades has led the political authorities to focus lifelong learning on social inclusion. [1]

Local public institutions offer a range of courses for adult learners which give priority to basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as foreign languages and Information Technology (IT) competences. The private sector provides different categories of courses promoting the enhancement of adults' life skills. Private associations and organisation are financed by regional governments via public grants and competitions.

Politics and Law

In Italy, the first courses for adults were offered in 1947 with the creation of the so-called "**social schools**", with the purpose of promoting basic literacy and numeracy skills. After many social and economic changes, during the 1970s, the "150 hours" courses were introduced, as opportunities for workers to enhance their educational skills. In 1997 the "**Centri Territoriali Permanenti**" (CTP - Permanent Territorial Centres), whose purpose was to improve the legislation concerning adult education, were established.

The most recent development of legislation concerning adult education involves a number of legislative acts and agreements. The two Circolari Ministeriali 7809/1990 and 305/1997 promoted the development of evening classes and regulated their practical administrative organisation. Furthermore, the Ordinanza del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione 455/1997 improved the right to education and vocational training. An agreement between the government, regions, provinces and Comunità Montane reorganised and empowered lifelong learning adult education (Conferenza Unificata del 2 marzo 2000). The agreement achieved was influenced by the results of the International Conference of Hamburg in 1997, where the member states convened to recognise the growing importance of permanent education. The Conferenza Unificata was followed by



the Direttiva Ministeriale 22/2001, whose aim was to enforce the previous agreement.

The Circolare Ministeriale 26/2006 promoted the integration of foreign pupils, whereby the Legge 53/2003 (53/2003 Act) specifically encouraged lifelong learning and equal opportunities to develop high cultural levels and personal skills. [2]

Moreover, the Decreto Ministeriale 25/10/2007 transformed the existing CTPs into Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti (CPIA - Provincial Centres for Education of Adults), in order to reorganise their activity and management (which came into force from January 2009). [3]

The adoption of these rules was also due to the influence of the European Institutions and policies. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) of 2006 played an active role in this field.

Future trends/key concerns/directions

The Italian adult education system is currently being reformed, as the change that will transform the CTPs into CPIAs clearly shows. In fact, the Nota Prot. 1033 of April 2009 illustrates that these provisions should have come into force within the scholastic year 2010/2011, and so are very new in implementation. [4]

Structure overview

Permanent Territorial Centres (CPT) and **evening schools** are the main public structures specifically focused on the promotion of adult education activities. On the other hand, **private organisations** and companies work in a strict contact with public authorities; and many NGOs operate on the territory to provide non-formal adult education courses.

Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

'Non-Formal' Learning

- Permanent Territorial Centres (CPT)

CPTs and **evening schools** work in the field of both **formal and non-formal** education. The main purpose of CPTs is to promote **basic literacy**, develop and consolidate basic skills and specific knowledge, teach **foreign languages**,



Italian for foreign people and provide courses to obtain a **high education diploma** (diploma di scuola secondaria inferiore). CPTs' courses can be attended by adults and young people over 16 who have not obtained the first 'cycle' of education, or by people who want to enhance their education. Courses are free of charges and mostly financed by the Ministry of Education. **Teachers are selected from schools**, and they do not need any additional qualification (although it is considered an asset). A single CPT is composed of a 5 staff team, divided in four main teaching areas (Italian, mathematics, foreign languages and technology).

- Evening Courses

Parallel to CPTs, evening courses also provide assistance for people over 16 to obtain a **secondary school degree** (diploma di scuola secondaria superiore). Furthermore, they promote the **cultural and professional development** of adults who want to improve their personal situation, including people who have already obtained the high education diploma (diploma di scuola secondaria inferiore), or who have considerable working experience in a particular field. In the first case they can automatically attend the course; in the second a commission is asked to evaluate every application separately. A tuition fee is required for evening courses, but as in the case of CPTs, evening courses can be are financed by public funds (at a national or regional level). [5]

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs working within the field of Adult Education include:

- Unieda, Unione Italiana per l'educazione degli adulti. Italian Association for the Education of Adults
- Cnupi, Confederazione Italiana delle Università Popolari Italian Confederation of Folks Universities (Università Popolari)

A non-formal learning service is provided by the **Folks Universities** (Università Popolari), which are a series of private and public organisations whose specific aim is to promote the education of adults. They organise diverse typologies of activities, mostly addressed to adults, but are also open to younger people. The first universities were opened at the beginning of the 20th century, **following the Danish and Swedish examples**. The biggest university is **Upter**, based in Rome, which provides a wide range of courses (foreign languages, sport, Italian as a foreign language, etc).



- **Unitre** (National Association of Università per la Terza Età)

Another example of an NGO dealing with non-formal learning is the Università per la Terza Età, specifically dedicated to those over 50 years of age (**usually retired people**) who want to enhance their educational background. The association which coordinates these providers at a national and international level is called Unitre (National Association of Università per la Terza Età). Each Region provides different rules for the opening of these kinds of institutes, but several general requirements exist:

- They have to be recognised as regular associations,
- They must provide a minimum of 6 different courses of at least 100 hours each,
- Two thirds of the teachers must be graduates,
- They should be economically autonomous and have a regular administrative structure,
- They need to be a member of the national or international associations of Università per la Terza Età.

Vocational Institutions and career-related training

Vocational training is mainly provided through **Professional Training Courses**. Their main purpose is the integration of students into the world of work, but they also work to enhance the professionalism and qualifications of the student. Given the variability of the economic system, these courses are inherently flexible. There are a number of different types of courses:

First level. (Target group: young people between **14 and 18 years** who have completed their compulsory school attendance) The duration varies from two to three years. A certification is usually provided at the end of the course.

Second level. (Target group: young people between **18 and 25 years** who have completed their secondary education) The duration of these courses can vary between six hundred and twelve hundred hours. A diploma is provided at the end of the course.

Third level. Addressed to **young graduates or unemployed**, they are intended to provide a high level of **specialization**.

Professional qualifications. The purpose of these courses is to enhance professional experience of graduates. Organised on the initiative of **private associations**, they are usually co-financed by public institutions and are often subject to fees. [6]



The growing demand for training has enabled the development of a multitude of organisations who aim to exploit the potential deriving from the **European Social Fund (ESF)**, by providing free training courses. One of the objectives followed by these organisations is to decrease unemployment, and promote vocational training. Therefore the Ministry of Labour and Regions, via the ESF, provide a wide range of vocational training actions, enacted by private organisations, enterprises and public vocational training centres. Courses are free of charges and include different subjects, such as administration, trade, information technology, etc. At the end of each course a **certificate of attendance** is provided.

Universities

Universities offer highly professional courses to develop specific skills and abilities for the promotion of particular professions. To obtain the "Diploma of Specialisation", students must acquire a number of credits (between 300 and 360, depending on the course). Universities also promote collaboration with other public or private organisations and institutions. These courses are open to candidates who have already obtained a diploma or university degree.

e-learning

E-learning is currently **not extensively developed** in Italy. However, a research conducted by Assinform, the Ministry for Technology and Telecommunications and the Ministry of Education University and Research shows that during the last few years the field of e-learning education is gradually gaining importance in Italy. The study shows a diversified educational supply, focused on the private sector and orientated towards "**operative knowledge**". Nevertheless it is possible to underline the existence of courses offered by several e-learning providers. They usually concern **business planning, office automation, interpersonal communication**, etc. The first two courses are specifically addressed towards public companies, while the other concerns private learners.
[7]



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