

**Validation of NFIL in Italy: local experiences and trade-unions**  
Synthesis of the study visit in Italy (16<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012)

**Nicolas Fleury**

May 2012

*Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission*



## OUTLINE

<b>INTRODUCTION: FRAGMENTED EXPERIENCES LINKED TO THE VALIDATION OF NFIL</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. TRADE UNION AND VALIDATION OF NFIL: FRAGMENTED EXPERIENCES AND INTERESTS</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. The employees side	4
1.2. The employers side	7
<b>2. LOCAL AND REGIONAL EXPERIENCES OF VALIDATION OF NFIL</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. The Emilia Romagna region experience	9
2.2. The Marche region example: the ‘Libretto de Formativo’ and other experiences	10
2.3. The Roma Tre University experience as an illustration of university initiatives	12
<b>3. TOWARDS A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF VALIDATION OF NFIL</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1. Political and institutional context: what has been done so far?	13
3.2. The previous limits to establish a national system of validation	15
3.3. The recent planning of national system of validation	16
3.3.1. The need of a system of validation?	16
3.3.2. The feasibility of a national system?	16
3.3.3. The planned institution of a national system of validation	17
<b>CONCLUSION: SOME SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED FRAMEWORK OF VALIDATION?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>APPENDIX: MEETINGS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>APPENDIX: DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>20</b>



## Validation of NFIL in Italy: local experiences and trade-unions

### Introduction: fragmented experiences linked to the validation of NFIL

Since many years, a rather large consensus on the principle of validation of NFIL exists in the Italian society and especially for trade unions of employees. While there is no *implemented* national framework of validation, many ‘local’ experiences of validation or ‘certification’ have taken place in the last years, at the regional level or in some universities. Furthermore, some very recent developments (April to June 2012) prepare the ground for the development of a system of validation-certification of competences at the national level. This document firstly focuses on the interests and involvement of trade unions in the field of training and ‘validation’ (section 1). Then, some particular ‘local’ experiences, from two regions and one university are exposed (section 2). Finally, the conditions for the birth of a national system in Italy and the factors that had limited so far the possibility of a national framework of validation are discussed, and the recent developments that plan a national system of validation in Italy are presented (section 3).

### 1. Trade union and validation of NFIL: fragmented experiences and interests

#### 1.1. *The employees side*

##### ***General situation.***

In Italy, there are no shared national professional standards, but many works on these subjects have been made, and a recent agreement between regions and the government has been found for the creation of a national system of certification of competences on apprenticeship, and the Law of June 2012 on the labour market reform include principals about validation and certification of competences (see section 3). Training in Italy is not necessary for the worker’s career, which depends mostly of his loyalty to the firm and to his seniority. In some sectors as the Health sector, it is possible for a worker to benefit from training, to enhance his professional standing. But normally it is not possible in the private sector, with some notable exceptions for sectors like building and textile, (where newly hired workers benefit from a mandatory training).

Since several years, 28 social partners (4 trade Unions and 24 employers), with Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, ministry of education and research and regions are involved, to create joint national professional standards (that may lead to the validation of competences), but the work in progress is rather slow.

##### ***About the building sector.***

The Building sector<sup>1</sup> is one of the first driving forces of the Italian economy. This sector experiences an important change of culture since a few years. For instance, in 2011, there was

---

<sup>1</sup> The sector benefits from the existence of *Formedil (Ente Nazionale per la Formazione e l'Addestramento Professionale Professionale nell'Edilizia)*, a national organization for vocational training in the building sector,

a national initiative aiming at the training of the sector's human resources (*"to change our way of thinking"*).

Some specific requirements in terms of skills in the building sector include some hours of mandatory training (safety, and link between work and health and safety) as a beforehand condition to hiring<sup>2</sup>. Also, in many works, firms have to show that their workers have the necessary competences<sup>3</sup>: for instance, some specific skills are mandatory to gain access to public works (technical knowledge, driving licence, *etc.*). Finally, some certifications are required for some works in the field of architecture, restoration.

Some important tools linked to skills and training are used in the building sector. The first one is the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* (*cf. infra*), which corresponds to a skills/training portfolio, here coordinated by Formedil. The second (and very important) tool used in the sector is the *borsa lavora*. The *borsa lavora* is a database in charge of the matching of supply and demand (it recapitulates personal details, CV, *etc.*). It stands at the 'experimentation' level ('pilote' phase). The *borsa lavora* is based on individual declarations (mainly unemployed people) that may be checked by the director of the training centre. The matching between demand and supply is observed: for instance, the individual may have to follow a one week course to get all the required skills (these skills are defined at the national level). Another important aspect is that *Borsa Labora* has strengthened the work done in the building sector. Finally, there also exists a *database for training in the building sector*. This database offers a wide job supply in building sector, useful also to support mobility of companies, needs and supplies of skills in some specific areas. It may also help to erase the 'black market' problem. On the 2009-2011 period, 40 000 people belonging to 30 000 companies were trained and included in the database. There are currently more than 150 000 individuals in that national database.

#### ***About the textile sector.***

The textile sector has a large importance in Italy, with 700 000 workers<sup>4</sup>. Textile is the only business sector in Italy that has dedicated training centres and taken in charge by social partners. During the last decade, the sector has experienced some strong restructuring<sup>5</sup> and the crisis. As a consequence, new strategies have been developed for the sector to be more competitive, based on innovation and high-value-added products (*i.e.* competition not based on the cost). One central fact is the *quality* of the training that is needed: specific competences and professions had to be re-thought.

There exists a strategy for sector defined at the joint European and Italian level by social partners. Many things in the last years had to be renewed in the sector. Some political and industrial agreements, common activities with trade unions and the Italian government have been made to get a rethinking of industrial policy in the sector, and training was considered as central.

---

it has its own resources coming from the sector. More than 600 people are currently in the training centres in Italy and 3000 people are working as consultants in that field.

<sup>2</sup> This was the result of collective bargaining and recognized by *Formedil* and has been 'crowned' by a dedicated law, common to all Italy, of the 21<sup>st</sup> of December between state and regions: recognition of initiatives of 16 mandatory hours, and considers training modules for employers and safety officers.

<sup>3</sup> Specific skills may be acquired through training programs with 'Building school' (1 school per province).

<sup>4</sup> Note that one third of the European employees of the sector works in Italy.

<sup>5</sup> These very strong structural changes at the national level are particularly due to the end of the multi-fibre agreement (AMF) and to the entry of new partners in the world trade organisation (WTO).

The textile sector has specific training difficulties because it is organised on small scaled companies that do not necessary understand the importance of the recognition of skills in training. It is also difficult to organize training courses. Finally, as the sector changes at a quick pace, it renders uneasy to include specific skills in the possible recognition/validation. In the sector, some committees in charge of monitor training policies, articulate education and continuous training, lifelong learning and apprenticeship have been created. They run some projects that try to ensure bilateralism at different levels (political, project and implementation level).

Last December 2011, in the framework of the European social dialogue, European textile social partners (EUROTEC, *etc.*) have created a project funded by the European commission: a European network of professional competences for the sector<sup>6</sup>.

One problem for the recognition of skills is the attitude of some firms is that they may well find young people in colleges with technical competences but do not recognize their skills (*e.g.* stages, apprenticeship). The recognition of skills has to be subsequent to initial experience, according to some actors of the sector. Finally, it is reported that in a sector rapidly changing as textile, certification and identification of new skills are both difficult and relevant.

### ***On the establishment of a national system of validation.***

The Italian trade unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL<sup>7</sup> have a common willingness of a national system of validation for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. That's why a negotiation forum with regions and social partners was started. The differences between all the involved actors render complicated to find an agreement. Professional and training standards (including for apprenticeship) at national level were discussed, but no agreement is yet fund on how to describe the job profiles, the training contents, and how to certify competences and skills. It was a very slow process, notably difficult because of different point of view from the ministries. One of the problems is the lack of a strong political authority on this subject. Social partners have also asked different sectors how to design the definition of job profiles and skills, but the work was stopped due to a lack of leadership/political involvement.

Another problem is that the creation of a national system may be self-centered. Firms are very much linked to their own sectors, as well as regions: this could an important problem to solve. Shared principles at the whole national level (and compatible with the local need) must be fund, so the 'least common denominator' has to be fund. This is especially a challenge with so many actors, where each actor wants to preserve his own role.

There is also a problem of coordination coming partly from the respective fields of competences (education for central government, and training by regions). To go ahead, mandatory guidelines of constraints, to have knock-on effects could be useful, at a national level, but also possibly at the European level (*e.g.* European directives and guidelines about the European qualification Framework were important to start the building of a national system of qualification).

---

<sup>6</sup> The project focuses on textile and leather (not including shoe). Some difficulties in the project come from the fact that Italian bodies from the sector that bargain are not recognized at that level. Another difficulty comes from the counterparts, as employers do not want to do something that involves costs.

<sup>7</sup> *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori and Unione Italiana del Lavoro.*

There is also a problem of culture in the delay of Italy to build a national system of validation as a large share of Italian workers can't understand the relevance of the valorisation of learning. Indeed, most of the time, workers do not see further than the mandatory skills. The concept of validation of NFIL may seem theoretical from the life's individual. Furthermore, workers who have acquired some skills at workplace are not aware of this validation possibility, are not willing, or do not even want these skills. It is a very relevant subject visible in the trade unions work, unions considering the individuals at the core of the process. Especially, trade unions put a special focus on training to favour the worker's career in a lifelong learning perspective ('European approach').

## 1.2. *The employers side*

From a general perspective, trade unions of employer report a *quite important lack of link between school and labour market*<sup>8</sup>. Yet, the recent reforms of Education and apprenticeship introduce:

- More labour market-oriented activities at schools (and more English courses).
- The creation of scientific committees for technical/vocational education, destined to define a strategy and to follow the appliance of the reform. Some firm representatives participate to these committees.
- Multi-territorial projects, as the "club of the 15"<sup>9</sup>, and another project that aims at improving the presence of firms inside the schools (the "pilote" region is *Lombardia*).
- The *implementation* of the recognition of the on-the-job training in the company as a part of the general training, as an important part of the reform of apprenticeship, usually considered as "not attractive".

Some employers' representatives stress the facts that it is difficult in Italy to build a national system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The governance is complex for different involved actors (ministries, regions and social partners) and competence in this field. In any case, employers' organizations underline the importance of collective bargaining in this area.

There currently exists a big controversy about the industry-based Training Funds<sup>10</sup>, a kind of training resources considered as public: these funds that could rather be organized as a private organisation, and not as a public organisation, as it is currently the case. It is reported to be difficult to use public resources for training.

One important limit to the recognition of skills is that companies usually want to recognize their own specific qualifications: each firm wants to recognize its own skills, its own labour

<sup>8</sup> Note the existence of *Confindustria Education*, an important project from *Confindustria (Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana)*, now on the 8<sup>th</sup> edition. One of its main goals is the link between school and the labour market. The importance of technologies is particularly stressed in the subjects.

<sup>9</sup> This club is an association of 15 firms, and 15 technical schools focusing on the manufacturing sector. It aims to offer more possibilities for students to find a job, and for companies to find the best curricula.

<sup>10</sup> The Sectorial Funds activity starts in 2004 and these are the new actors in the Italian CVT system; they are set up through agreements between Social Partners and the authorization of the Ministry of labour, they are not-profit organization on voluntary basis and Social Partners have a joint responsibility in organizing and managing the Funds, because the management boards are composed by an equal number of representatives from employers and employees; they can finance training plans at corporate, sectorial, local and individual level - by call for proposal - for workers employed by private company. The activities' plan must be concerted by Social Partners - through a signed agreement - and answer to specific training needs - the plan and the implement project must reasonably motivate the whole aim of training activities.

force. Each collective bargaining agreement has its own ‘area’ (e.g. *Confindustria* members depending of 70 different collective agreements).

There are some cases where firms would be particularly interested in recognition: in the context of restructuring or if there is a need to change, to get some innovations to adapt. These features happened to come in the last years with important changes in the Italian economy.

Furthermore, the recognition of the on-the-job training is especially difficult because of the social and historical background of the Italian companies. For instance, during many years, vocational education schools, considered as not attractive, were abandoned by students. Organisations of employers put a lot of pressures to favour this type of education, very important for the manufacturing sector and an industrial country such as Italy.

Another limit for the development of a national system of validation also comes from the fact that Italy is often described as “*Italy is a land of provinces*”.

One important feature of the Italian economy is the very large majority of *small and medium-sized enterprises* (smes, 95-98% of the Italian firms). For example, some *Confapi* (*Confederazione italiana della piccola e media industria private*) representatives stress the fact that in smes, most of the learning is informal. One central question is the following: “*how can you recognize all the learning that you can have?*” One of the rigidity about the smes comes from the fact that “they can’t achieve to recognize learning and training because they are not able to use the resources of the training fund”<sup>11</sup>. It is a central challenge for them to stay competitive: in that perspective, the recognition of learning is central. It is also reported that it is even more difficult for micro-companies<sup>12</sup> to approach the issues of recognition. The mismatch between supply and demand of skills is even a bigger problem for these firms.

Firms sometimes use the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* instrument, which is not widespread in Italy (see *infra* for a description, e.g. in the experience from the *Marche* region), which is used for the registration of different kinds of training (e.g. health and safety, and other specific obligations of training for a job). Some companies use it as it is the only way to “register” some of the training, skills. It stays experimental at the regional level, without any legal value at the national level.

The activities by trade unions of employers related to training and validation include notably:

- The *Confindustria* work with regions in some experiments to foster innovation and changes in the smes where it is often difficult to introduce new practices. For instance, in *Toscana*, non-formal learning (cultural activities, etc.) is financially supported by regional authorities as adult learning, sometimes developed with social partners.
- The realization of a common document on professional standards by association of employers and employees in Italy and ministry of labour, with a special focus on apprenticeship in Italy (“*an efficient way to enter the labour market in Italy for young people*”). For the firms, it may be an open door to the reform of professionals and training standards.
- Signed in 2010, an interconfederal agreement with trade unions has been made on the position regarding the valorisation of experience of people working in companies during apprenticeship, that could be included in the libretto.

---

<sup>11</sup> In Italy, only 0.3% of salaries of firms goes to the interprofessional fund for training. If the firm has the capability to imagine itself in a way to develop, training plan would be done, but would not normally think about the validation of NFIL. Also, managers have in general very little time to develop this kind of activities.

<sup>12</sup> This kind of firm are composed of an average of 3.5 individuals (including the owner).



- Some specific categories of workers are targeted by some projects. One of the projects is financed by the European commission for people who are older than 40 years old (*Mayaouta* project). For migrants, other projects are run by local branches of *Confapi* in *Piemonte*, *Lombardia*, for 'loans' of workers between companies, and giving importance to NFIL.

## 2. Local and regional experiences of validation of NFIL

### 2.1. *The Emilia Romagna region experience*

*Emilia Romagna* is one of the few Italian regions that have developed a system of validation on the theoretical and practical sides<sup>13</sup>. The first tools have been created in 2003-2005 and the system was firstly operational in 2005. This is an implemented system, but also a 'process', which can evolve, according to the national and European contexts.

The *Emilia Romagna* Region has now a very large repertoire of professional standards<sup>14</sup>. The validation system is strictly related to the vocational system, *i.e.* focuses on adults (employed/unemployed) or on the 16-year-old people and more. In that process<sup>15</sup>, one to four competences may be certified. In the process of validation, an important step is the 'check for evidence' which corresponds to some 'proofs' to produce. These proofs may be very diverse (projects made at workplace, official documents, coordination activities...). The individual in the process may go to the exam if necessary: it is decided by an expert<sup>16</sup> which analyses the provided documents. If the provided evidence is assessed as "enough", the individual is certified. Different kinds of certification may be awarded:

- A certification of qualification ('complete') which gather together 4 competences.
- A certification of competences (1, 2 or 3).
- A card of knowledge or capacity, which is just created upon declarations, with the involvement of teachers.

The main idea behind validation is very important: each person can be certified *whatever the way the skills are acquired*. However, it shall be noted that around 95% of people obtain certificates which are the results of training courses, the rest obtaining their certificate though validation of 'experience'.

The role of social partners is pretty weak in the process of validation itself. But on a more general perspective, social partners play a very important role in the development of the regional training system. Indeed, the system is more related to the vocational educational system than to the labour market. Trade unions discuss with the *Emilia Romagna* region on the questions related to labour market. But, one important problem is: "*does the labour market recognize the qualification system?*". Another important question is, to what extent companies are interested by the possibilities of validation? The match between formal certifications and the needs of the labour market is, in particular, difficult to be fund.

<sup>13</sup> Please note that the *Emilia Romagna* region has also tested the *Libretto Formativo Del Cittadino*.

<sup>14</sup> It is not directly with European frameworks, but a work in that field at the national level is started. Each qualification has the same template. Each qualification is composed of four competence-units, each of them being composed of four different skills.

<sup>15</sup> Document 2 in Appendix presents the process of validation.

<sup>16</sup> Different kinds of experts are involved in the process: 1 – an expert of the assessment process which certifies that the process is correct (often someone from an education centre), 2 – an external expert, which is an expert from the sector, of the professional qualification.

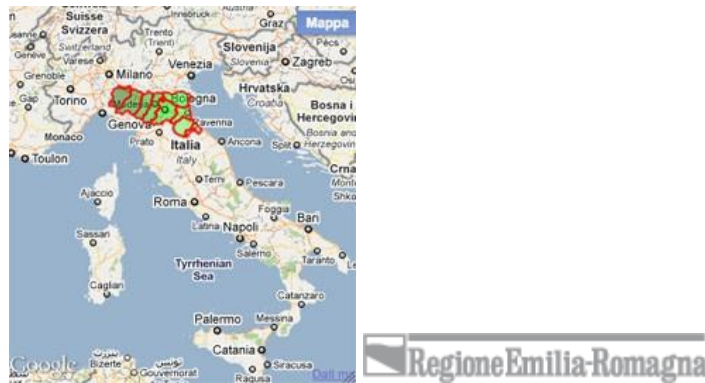
The process of validation in *Emilia Romagna* has a cost of around 300€ per individual, even if it may be lower for a group, and higher for a sole individual.

Theoretically, many ‘target groups’ could benefit from validation: employed, unemployed, adults, *etc.*, but it is very difficult to assess the impacts of validation in practice, as it is particularly difficult to relate qualification and salary or professional position. However, some professions are strictly related to national qualifications, with a mandatory formal certification (*available in all regions*), like nurses, caretakers, or hairdressers.

One practical limit for the application of the system in *Emilia Romagna* is related to the information and publicity of the system (VET centres know the system, employees not too much).

Some projects lead by the Region and which also could be recognized as best practices include the Leonardo coordinated project *Real window*<sup>17</sup>, with some countries like Austria, Czech, Italy (*Toscana, Emilia Romagna*). This project has been recognised as ‘best practice’ by ISFOL<sup>18</sup>. There also exists a work consisting in a reflection on the qualifications of migrants and about their content<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, according to some experts of validation and training from *Emilia Romagna*, an important step in the development of validation would be to involve the social partners, as the current system could work better with a stronger matching with the labour market.



## 2.2. *The Marche region example: the ‘Libretto de Formativo’ and other experiences*

The *Marche* Region has two main experiences related to certification and validation, even it does not correspond to ‘strict’ validation of NFIL. The first experience concerns the validation of competences of social operators (“care”, housewives, *etc.*). Many women, mostly of them with a low level of education, used to work in this sector, and benefit from a lot of experience but without any formal certification. An institutional table has been built

<sup>17</sup> Two main objectives are pursued by this project: (i) creating tools and instruments directed to the comparison of the national/regional qualification system in the engineering area of the countries involved and (ii) creating and testing a device (procedures, tools and instruments) for the transparency and validation of the competences (inherent in the engineering area) acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. See <http://www.projectrearwindow.com/>

<sup>18</sup> *Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori* (Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers, depending to the Italian Ministry of Labour).

<sup>19</sup> Many migrants work in the region, so represent a potential interesting target for validation.

with social partners and social cooperatives<sup>20</sup>. The main question was: “*how to recognize the precedent experiences?*”. It was a complicated process that involves firms, the women from the sector, the social services sector and some vocational training units. Their role was to establish a standard training path, on the basis of training credits to get a diploma. The people benefiting from the process participate to some of the training courses (more ‘theoretical’), to realize “*how we can do this thing well*”. This has been recognized as a ‘good practice’ by the public administration.

The second experience corresponds to the certification of job profiles in the vocational training sector, that concerns managers, administrators, teachers, coordinators, *etc.* The system of accreditation and the system of certification are organised with the principle of quality warranty. To benefit from European funds, a project must be accredited at the regional level, and involve people who must be accredited. Acts related to training and to administration specify that vocational traditional units should establish a list of new professionals. People that want to be accredited should provide evidence, documents for their experience in the field. The *Marche* region does not have a process to search for proof for this kind of ‘accreditation’: there are some commissions that verify documents, declarations, contracts, but this isn’t a work of examination (it does not correspond to ‘real’ validation). This ‘system’ only stands for the vocational training sector.

Even it does not neither represent a ‘strict’ experience of validation, the *Libretto Formativo Del Cittadino* has also been tested in the region<sup>21</sup>. The same standard of *Libretto* applies in all Italia. In the *Libretto*, you choose what you want to communicate. The owner of the *Libretto* is the individual. This is different from a *curriculum vitae* based on declaration, as you have to demonstrate, in the *Libretto*, that you have the competences. The *Libretto* is built with the help of qualified operators. That tool was particularly demanded by social partners in the context of economic crisis, as well as the *bilan de compétences*. At the end of 2011-beginning of 2012, the *Libretto* is a new instrument for the *Marche* Region. In the context of the crisis, the *Libretto* will be targeted on adult workers that are registered in job centres. The first step is the making of a short version of the *bilan de compétences*, whose information will be integrated in the *Libretto*. In the first section of the *Libretto* is presented all that is certified, training experiences (*e.g.* continuous training, safety, *etc.*). The second section concerns “non-formal” learning. The main difficulty is to incorporate non-formal and informal learning into the *Libretto*. *Marche* Region wants to introduce more information related to un-continuous training and training for safety<sup>22</sup>. The *Libretto* will also be transformed in a database at the regional level in a near future.

In June 2011, a cooperation document with the *Toscana* region has been created to acquire some data of job profiles, to adopt the same system than *Toscana*’s.

Other examples and projects include guidelines accreditations of training agencies and a project for the certification of competences for volunteers. Another regional project focuses on adult continuous training for the analysis of the needs in training and qualification. One of

<sup>20</sup> These cooperatives may be from two types: those providing social services or those employing disadvantaged people.

<sup>21</sup> The *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* that has been tested on the 2006-2009 period in 13 Italian regions. Please refer to the document 3 in appendix for a fac-similé of the *Libretto*.

<sup>22</sup> In *Marche* Region, the question of safety at work is a particularly relevant question. Moreover, a recent national law on safety edicts that every related training course has to be written in the *Libretto*.

the results of this work is the necessity to provide specific profiles (an agency is in charge to build these profiles). Another project has been run after to build training process for the creation of professional figures and to experiment on people with experience. The specific content was aimed to raise skills and competences and to test the new profiles. At the end, the creation of new profiles was gotten.



### 2.3. *The Roma Tre University experience as an illustration of university initiatives*

In Italy, the relations between University and validation of NFIL are weak, and the institutional framework is quite unfavourable in that perspective. The recognition of NFIL though University credits is not very relevant especially because:

- There are not national policies concerning this issue.
- The European document 'Universities for Lifelong Learning guidelines' is not yet adopted as a strategic perspective for Universities.
- A recent Law from December 2010 has seriously limited the possibility to recognize prior learnings whatever the settings, in terms of University credits<sup>23</sup>.
- It is very difficult to involve external partners in these activities (social, economical, institutional actors) because of a lack of attention about this question.

But, some Italian universities, notably *Roma Tre University* (Roma III University), have nevertheless good experiences in that field:

- To develop and guarantee the possibility for adults to (re-) enter University.
- To create new methods to reduce the gap between formal learning and NFIL.
- To increase the quality of human resources in terms of knowledge and competencies, and also the quality of the economic and social development.

In the field of recognition of prior learning, *Roma Tre University*<sup>24</sup> has done some research action, didactic, organizational and institutional activity. Some benchmarking analysis have been made, in particularly with the French *VAE* system and the British *APEL* model. An Italian model for procedures and methodologies for validation has been built and put in practice through activities which have gathered together 145 adults on the 2008-2010 period and attending a degree course in Education and Development of Human Resources. In that perspective, the criteria needed by student to apply for validation had be defined, based on the development of competences-based strategies as a key element to support life transitions. It was also necessary to change the regulations of the Degree Courses, to introduce new rules

<sup>23</sup> This law for Universities has reduced from 60 to 12 the numbers of credits that may be recognized in that regard.

<sup>24</sup> The document 4 in Appendix provides an overview of the initiatives of validation at *Roma Tre University*.

(acknowledgment to apply for validation, definition of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, ability and competences, procedures to produce evidence, CVs, new activities and guidance, tutoring service, tools as Jury/committees to involve teachers [internal and external professionals]).

Some new locations of discussion and promotion of recognition of NFIL at university have been created. The Research and Service Centre for Bilan de Competences and Competences Certification has been decided at *Roma Tre* University. Also, an Italian Network of Lifelong Learning has been created, on the model of the European Universities Charter. In terms of external competences of different professional sectors used in the project, experts or teachers have provided resources in terms of finance, work organisation and human resources management.



### 3. Towards a national system of validation of NFIL

#### 3.1. *Political and institutional context: what has been done so far?*

Four main steps may be identified in the 2000's in the process leading towards a national framework of validation of NFIL:

1. From 2000 to 2006, Ministries of Labour and Education, social partners and regions have created a national table to build a national qualification framework, strictly related to the European qualification Framework. The involvement was very high in that phase. But there was uncertainty on what the Italian government would do after that.
2. From 2006 to 2011, the work in progress was stopped due to the ministry of Labour (to do a new plan), even if regions and social partners were in the line to continue the work.
3. From 2011 to now, the initiative has to be taken away from the agenda. Uncertainty prevails now, with a new Italian government and the economic crisis. Indeed, at this time, the question of validation is not viewed at the central level as a priority, a relevant political issue.
4. The agreement of the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 between Italian regions and the government, which plans the institution of a system of validation - certification of competences at the national level for Apprenticeship, then the agreement of the 20<sup>th</sup> of April and the Law of the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2012.

At the present time, there is not yet an implemented qualification framework in Italy, but the majority of the work for such a framework has been done by the government, regions and social partners<sup>25</sup> and an agreement was finally found between on the development of a national system of validation. Regions think or have developed practices of validation standards since 2004. In one project, regions have built new positions' certifications. All

---

<sup>25</sup> The role of social partners is important not only at national level but at the regional model of governance as well. In the regional committees, participation to procedures, discussion for the actions of the regions, resources and funds have to be approved by these committees in a cooperative and social dialogue approach. For example, for discussions on the need of skills, regional committees gather together region representative, local representative, trade unions of employees and employers, etc.

regional systems of ‘certification’ have been analysed, assessed and the existent was summed up, to put in light a design of the processes. The goal was to achieve some minimum standard level for each region (to ensure inter-regional mobility). There is a lack of professional standards at a national level but regions have built a document which links national standards to professional regional standards to describe the profiles.

Italian regions and provinces have competences about training<sup>26</sup>. To build a system to validate competences the role of regions and provinces is very important, in that perspective. The quality of the system of vocational training is granted by the regions, by the agreements from 2008, in which regions have renewed the accreditation system. All regions are involved in the *IeFP (istruzione & formazione professionale)* system of quality.

The experiences of Italian regions in terms of NFIL validation are very diverse and fragmented (see *supra* for a presentation of the *Emilia Romagna* and *Marche* experiences)<sup>27</sup> and include in particular the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* that has been tested on the 2006-2009 period in 13 Italian regions. For instance, in *Toscana*, the *Libretto* was generalized for unemployed economically supported workers in 2011, as well as in the *Sicilia* and *Lazio* regions.

Some Italian institutions are particularly involved in studying validation, as ISFOL and *Tecnostruttura*. ISFOL (*Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori*), an Italian agency dedicated to training, has mandated a workgroup on the topic of validation, recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Surveys<sup>28</sup> presenting an overview of what is being done and what has been done, monitoring all experiences (regional, national, stake holders) have been completed, which provides a good overview on validation in Italy, with a systematic survey on validation and other benchmarking studies<sup>29</sup>. *Tecnostruttura* is a technical association that works for the regions to carry about training, education (*etc.*) policies and other ESF (European Social Fund)-based projects. Since around

<sup>26</sup> Vocational education and training is a competence shared by the national and regional levels.

<sup>27</sup> In January, *Toscana* Region has completed 18000 *Libretto* for unemployed people, to build the worker’s experience until he gets back onto the labour market. A compilation of *Libretto* has been made at the province level in the employment agencies. It helps individuals on the labour market to rebuild their experience, helps to find the competences that may be certified, to prepare the exam. Once an individual has passed the exam, the region certifies his competences and put them inside the *Libretto*.

In the *Lombardia* region, competences should be related to formal qualifications, to the regional system of qualifications. Moreover, the catalogue of qualifications is less complete in *Lombardia* than in *Toscana* (there are 240 regional figures in the regional catalogue). All kinds of experiences may be certified, but inside formal activities.

The *Valle d’Aosta* Region has a system of training credits to warrant the transfer or the valorisation of learning. There exist two procedures and rules, the first one evaluates the learnings acquired in all kinds of context, and credits are given through a commission. The second one consists in a system of certification built on the 2006-2009 period. In this system, professional standards and a set of rules to maintain regional professional standards have been defined.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Elisabetta Perulli and Gabrielle di Francesco, *European Inventory on Validation of Non- formal and informal learning 2010. Country Report: Italy*, CEDEFOP and GHK, 2010:

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/93PUGKCL8G6JN8CYHVDVGO1VDU163RIIBY4AKI7K1YUT7JG1V1J-27712?func=full-set-set&set\\_number=000144&set\\_entry=000035&format=999](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/93PUGKCL8G6JN8CYHVDVGO1VDU163RIIBY4AKI7K1YUT7JG1V1J-27712?func=full-set-set&set_number=000144&set_entry=000035&format=999)

<sup>29</sup> In one work made by ISFOL, 47 initiatives and good practices have been checked off, and a little database has been built, with relevant information on practices. Another work reports a 3 cases study (Germany, Denmark, Spain) regarding the validation of NFIL, different approaches of building a system of validation at a national level. An overview has been done on all 21 Italian regions were moving initiatives dealing with validation, 6 of these regions have a ‘good starting’ and 11 other regions are in an experimentation phase, working on some targeted groups.

ten years, *Tecnostruttura* worries about building a “national” system of validation by providing assistance in the whole process (documents, *etc.*). One working commission of *Tecnostruttura* is dedicated to job and education policies.

Regions have tried to have bottom-up process to enhance the planning of a national system of validation, but they were waiting for national guidelines. When the central government leads or follows the process, regions can go ahead, but in absence of central governance, regions had to work together through some inter-regional projects on a national possible system. The main problem comes from the fact that at the central level, the interest in validation of NFIL corresponded to a non-continuous initiative.

For the future, it would necessary to complete the work done by the drawing of an entire system, in particular for the recognition of CFU credits (training credits at the university). The building of a system of validation requires defining a real national framework for NFIL validation. ‘Minimum’ standards on validation have to be found to find an agreement on that. But, one again, this couldn’t be decided or enhanced without the involvement of the ‘central’ government.

### **3.2. *The previous limits to establish a national system of validation***

A first difficulty that restrained the possibilities for Italy to get a national framework of validation of NFIL lied in the question of timing, because of the economic and political current contexts. Indeed, while a recent law from September 2011 on apprenticeship notably specifies that learning outcomes must be registered in the *Libretto*, the recent Reform of University (December 2010) has reduced the number of credits that universities may recognize for learnings acquired in non-formal contexts (see *supra*).

Moreover, a reform of the labour market is currently starting in Italy, with many questions to be dealt, and validation is not regarded as a major issue or a priority.

Italy benefits from many local experiences, which may render difficult to create a common system, even if there some similarities or common points may exist between the different local experiences. Another part of the difficulties to build a national framework in Italy could be explained by a certain divergence in terms of interest regarding validation: while most of the social partners and regions as well are interested, historically in Italy, the ministry of Education was not very sensitive to that question.

In addition, ‘hard’ evidence on the impacts of validation (in terms of rising qualifications, on employment, on salaries, *etc.*) is rather hard to find at the regional level, which do not provide (possible) additional reasons to build a national system. But, it shall be noted that in the qualitative surveys about the ‘local’ projects or certification/validation, operators, stake holders and final beneficiaries give encouraging views on these experiences.

The other following points may partly explain the delay for the building of a national framework of validation in Italy, so far:

- The relationships between actors (regions and ministries...) render the agreements difficult to find, even if social partners are very sensitive to the issue.
- Some regions are so advanced that it may be difficult for them to go one step behind.
- Some other regions have not the willingness to start the process.
- The institutional competences are not well shared.

- There is no national institution dedicated to validation (unlike to many countries). More largely, in the governance approach, there are no national committees to discuss on this topic.
- There is a general problem of funds dedicated for training. Furthermore, there is no central institution of training than can collect fund for validation.
- The information for potential beneficiaries of local initiatives of ‘validation’ is not widespread in the public. There does not exist a strong communication towards workers on their rights about training. In particular, regions that do experiences do not spread information to everyone, mostly because it is not possible in the current situation to offer the process to ‘users’ (this is costly).
- The interests of different sectors, at the regional and national levels, may be very diverse.
- From a general point of view, the rigidities of the Italian society or economy.
- In practice, it may be difficult at first sight to implement a national system of validation in a region where a ‘local’ system already exists.

### ***3.3. The recent planning of national system of validation***

#### **3.3.1. The need of a system of validation?**

Some well-targeted people could theoretically gain much benefit from validation of some of their non-formal or informal skills, especially those who experience some problems of unemployment, and particularly temporary unemployed people who are financially supported by the government and migrants. Regarding these stakes, validation may be seen as an interesting way to recognize some previous skills of workers, especially in a context of a lack of resources devoted to vocational training, and also in the context the current crisis.

In addition, somewhat strange situations may occur in Italy as it is possible to benefit from recognition of competences in some regions, and not in other regions. In the same time, learning that have been recognized in a given region will be available in any Italian region, which creates ‘asymmetries’ inside the national Italian area for workers. In that perspective, the building of a national framework for validation could favour equality between regions.

#### **3.3.2. The feasibility of a national system?**

To implement a national system of validation, it is necessary to have some guidelines (technical guidelines, on the people in charge of validation...) and ideas on critical points, competence of operators, *etc.*, to find some agreements about standards of competences, and to have a definition on what is non-formal and informal learning, credits, lifelong learning, *etc.*

Does the current period represented a good timing to build a national framework of validation of NFIL? On the one hand, it could be assumed that recent political and economic features (the new government, reform of the labour market make there are many subjects to be treated) limit the feasibility of such a framework. On the other hand, it could also be stressed that possibly, the economic crisis may also render a validation framework more desirable than ever.

According to many actors, practically, it would not be so difficult to build a national system of validation in Italy at this period of time. It was often advanced that one of the main factor to go ahead was the political willingness. Indeed, in the last ten years, many steps have been achieved with the works and discussions between regions, government, social partners (they



work together, then split, *etc.*). According to certain actors, to build a system of validation with clear goal, political wish could take around two years, by capitalising on the all the experience and work that has been done at the local' level. There is some quite strong willingness coming from social partners, and some institutions as *Tecnostruttura* may work to support regions in such a project. But the only way to get a national system was to get a consensus between the central government and the regions.

### 3.3.3. The planned institution of a national system of validation

A political consensus between government and regions was finally found in the first months of 2012. As a result, very recently, two agreements and one draft Law prepare the setting up of a system of validation-certification of competences at the national level:

- On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, an agreement was found between the Italian regions and the government, that plans the setting up of a national system of validation and certification of competences for apprenticeship, and including 'minimum' norms of certification. Also, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, Italian regions sign an agreement where they decide to strengthen the agreement with the government, by planning follow-up actions at the regional level.
- Then, Regions and both Ministry of Education and of Labour decided that, waiting for the implementation of a national certification system, the agreement of April concerns all the formal, non formal and informal learning
- On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012 was enacted the national law on labour market reform, that includes principles about validation and certification of competences from formal, non formal and informal learning.

### **Conclusion: some sufficient conditions for the establishment of a unified framework of validation?**

The multiplicity and the diversity of the existing Italian local experiences of 'validation' and also the involvement of social partners on the question of training and validation have created some good conditions and a favourable ground for the building of a national framework of NFIL validation. Even if some disagreements existed at some levels, many conditions to a national system seemed to be acquired. Finally, the political willingness allowed a consensus between government and regions on the setting up of a national system of validation, and has permitted to go ahead. In the context of the reform of the labour market which currently takes place in Italy, the possibility of validation of NFIL could be a chance for the Italian Economy. The best practices of the 'local' Italian experiences are very important, in that perspective, to strengthen the setting up of the planned framework of validation at the national level.

## Appendix: meetings

**Trade Unions of Employees (CGIL, CISL, UIL) and FORMEDIL**, CGIL Headquarters  
(16th January 2012)

**Roberto Pettenello**, CGIL, Training and Research  
**Francesco Lauria**, CISL, Labour and Training  
**Milena Micheletti**, UIL, Labour and Training Policies  
**Clemente Tartaglione**, FILTEA CGIL (construction workers)  
**Marcello Guardinelli**, FEMCA CISL (textile workers)  
**Giuseppe Moscuza**, FILCA CISL (construction workers)  
**Emilio Correale**, FENEAL UIL (construction workers)  
**Giovanni Carapella**, FORMEDIL

**Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL)**, (16<sup>th</sup>  
January 2012)

**Gabriella Di Francesco**, Systems and methodologies for learning  
**Elisabetta Perulli**, Systems and methodologies for learning

**Trade Unions of Employers**, (17<sup>th</sup> January 2012)

**Fernando Ippoliti**, CONFAPI, International and European Affairs and Training  
**Silvia Ciuffini**, CONFARTIGIANATO, Labour market and Vocational Training  
**Carmella Mazza**, CONFINDUSTRIA, Education and Labour Policies  
**Daniela Tebaldi**, CONFINDUSTRIA, Industrial Relations, Safety and Social Affairs  
**Bruno Scazzocchio**, FONDIRIGENTI, CONFINDUSTRIA, Institutional Relations,  
 Communication and Training Plans  
**Anna Felli**, FONDIRIGENTI, CONFINDUSTRIA, Consultant

**Ministry of Education, University and Research**, Directorate General for Education and  
 Higher Technical Education and his Relationships with the Educational Systems of the  
 Regions (18<sup>th</sup> January 2012)

**Luca Tucci**, Head of Office  
**Patrizia Capitali**, Professor  
**Sebastian Amelio**, School Manager  
**Enrica Tais**, School Manager  
**Nicoletta Puccinelli**, Professor

**TECHNOSTRUTTURA**, (18<sup>th</sup> January 2012)

**Constanza Bettoni**, Director  
**Alessia D'Andrea**, Consellor  
**Flavio Manieri**, Training

**University of Roma Tre** (18<sup>th</sup> January 2012)

**Aurelia Alberici**, Training and Development of Human Resources

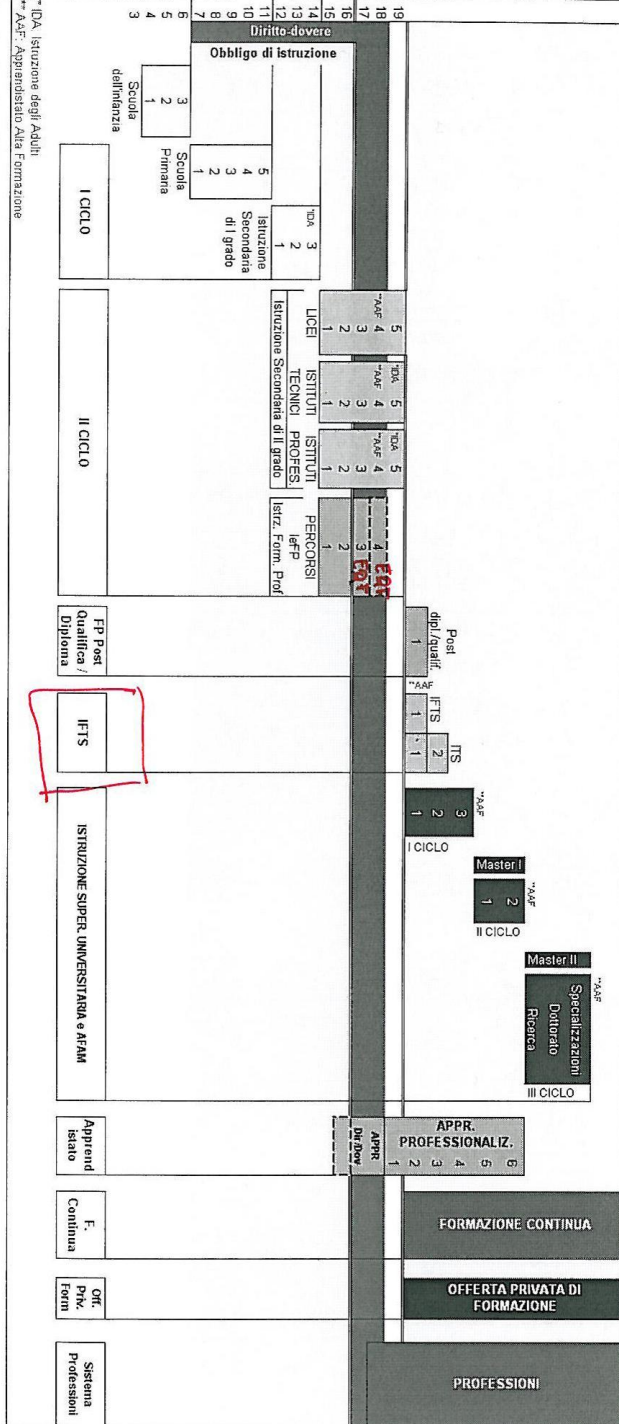
**Emilia Romagna, IAL Innovazione Apprendimento Lavoro Emilia Romagna Srl**  
**Impresa Sociale (19<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**  
**Daniele Calzori, Manager**  
**Giovanni Primavera, Vocational Training**

**Marche Regione (19<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**  
**Raffaella Triponi, Project Coordinator**  
**Paola Paolinelli, Servizio Istruzione Formazione Lavoro**

Appendix: documents

Document 1: the Italian system of education

RAPPRESENTAZIONE GRAFICA DELLA SEZIONE I



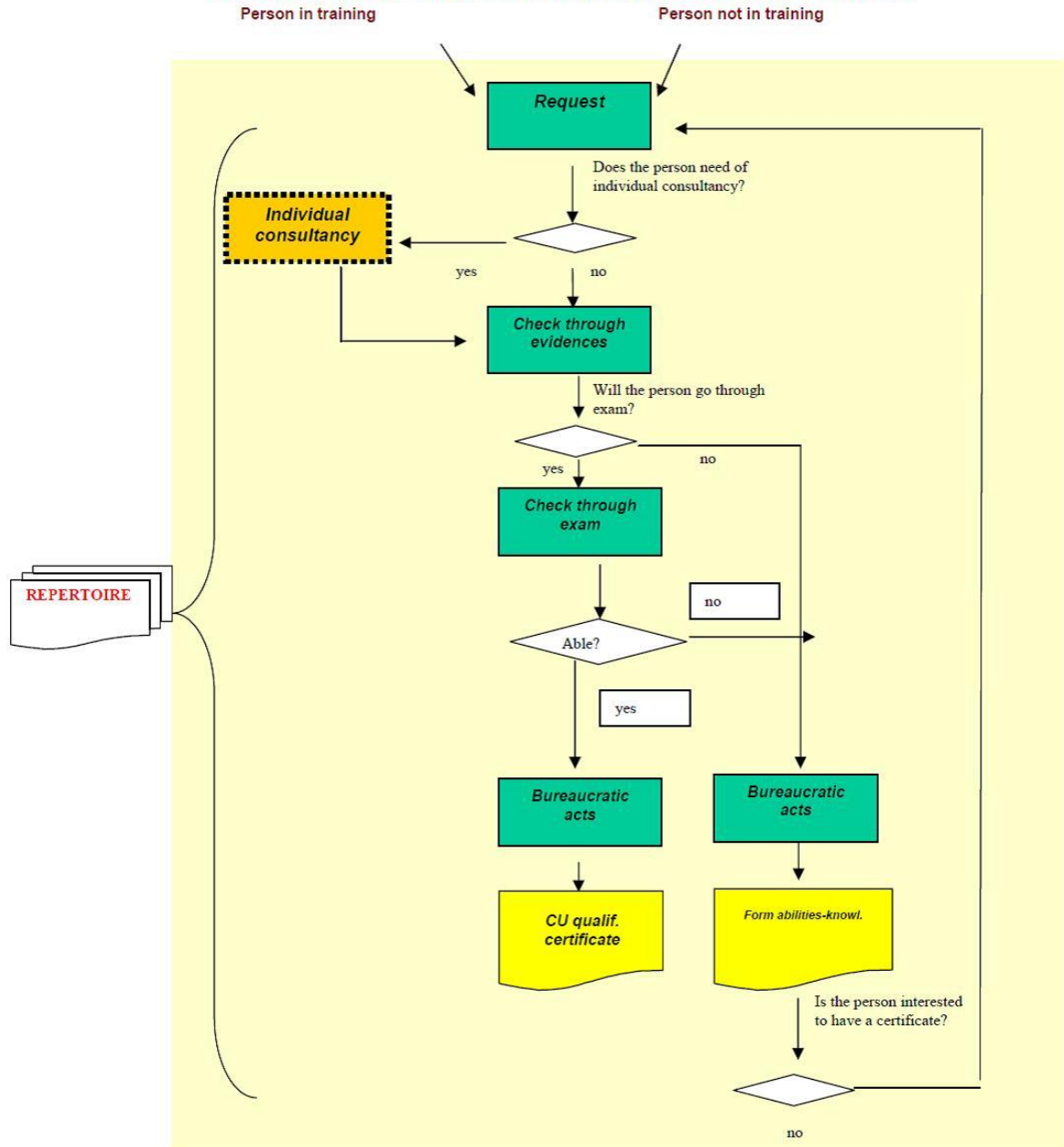
*Nota 1: ai corsi serali IDA possono accedere adulti, anche stranieri non in possesso del titolo di studio del I ciclo o che non abbiano assolto l'obbligo di istruzione (anche Ienni) o non in possesso del titolo di scuola secondaria di II grado*

*Nota 2: All'apprendistato per l'Alta Formazione (IAPF) ovvero per il conseguimento di un titolo di studio secondario possono accedere soggetti dai 18 ai 29 anni*

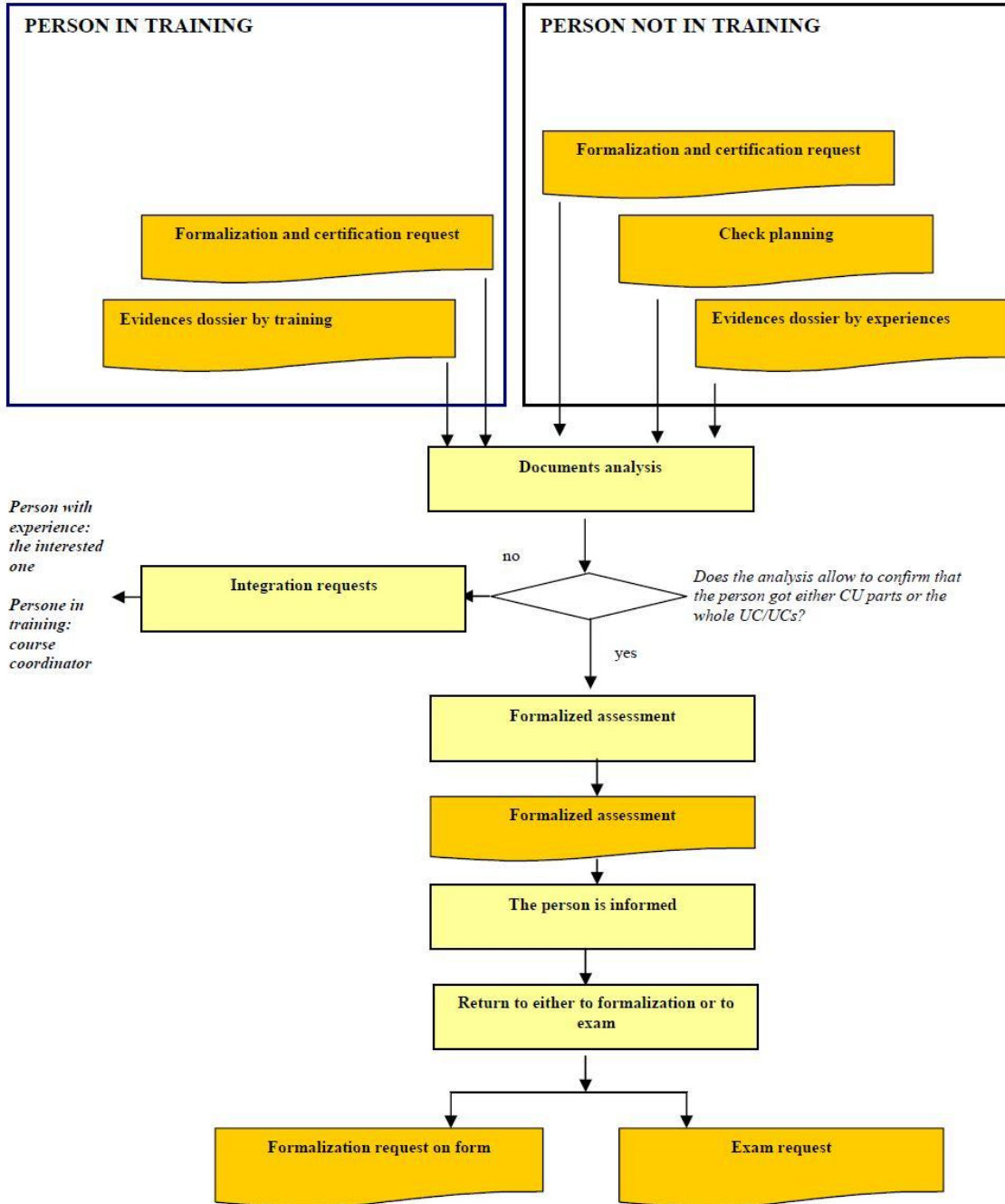
Document 2: The competences certification process in Emilia Romagna region



**FORMALIZATION OF COMPETENCES CERTIFICATION PROCESS**



**CHECK THROUGH EVIDENCES**



Document 3: The Libretto Formative Del Cittadino

**LIBRETTO FORMATIVO  
DEL CITTADINO**

RILASCIATO DA ... (soggetto abilitato/autorizzato)

NELLA REGIONE/PROVINCIA.....

DATA DI PRIMO RILASCIO .....

DATA DI ULTIMO AGGIORNAMENTO .....

**SEZIONE 1**

1. INFORMAZIONI PERSONALI	
Nome e Cognome	_____
Codice Fiscale	_____
Sesso	_____
Data di nascita	___/___/___
Comune ( o Stato estero) di nascita	_____
Provincia	_____
Nazionalità	_____
Comune di residenza	_____CAP_____Provincia_____
Indirizzo di residenza	_____
Comune di domicilio	_____CAP_____Provincia_____
Indirizzo di domicilio	_____
Numero di telefono cellulare	_____
Numero di Telefono	_____
Numero di Fax	_____
Indirizzo di posta elettronica	_____


2. ESPERIENZE LAVORATIVE / PROFESSIONALI (*)	
Tipologia contrattuale	_____
Data di inizio del rapporto di lavoro	___/___/___
Data di cessazione del rapporto di lavoro	___/___/___
Mansione svolta (qualifica SIL)	_____
Settore economico (codice ISTAT)	_____
Principali attività svolte	_____
_____	_____
Nome del datore di lavoro	_____
Indirizzo del datore di lavoro	_____

(\*) da ripetere per ogni esperienza citata





Document 4: an overview of the initiatives of validation at Roma Tre University.


ROMA TRE  
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI

**RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

**FOR ADULT LEARNERS AT UNIVERSITY "ROMA TRE":**

**QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO GUIDANCE**


**BACKGROUND**

Starting from the change approach proposed by the *Bologna Process* and by the *European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning*, the modernisation and innovation in the Italian University system depends on the response that can be given to social, economical and cultural challenges.

This assumption generates the need to identify a third innovative *mission* for Universities, besides the two traditional missions of research and higher education: a new mission related to the necessity to provide adequate feedback to potential beneficiaries who are already integrated in a work context and to fulfil newly acquired educational needs.

The valorisation of competences become crucial in a lifelong learning-oriented system also including the educational institutions of higher education, such as universities. The development of qualitative strategies competence-based turn out to be a key element to support transitions of individuals towards the job market and educational system. The qualitative methodologies, applied to adult, reinforce their capacity of reflection on their educational and work paths/experiences, and of developing a critical and proactive thinking on their life experience.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES' CHARTER ON LIFELONG LEARNING




**The PRIN (Nationally Relevant Research) project** - Universities of Roma Tre, Firenze, Salento - Duration: 2008-2010 - People involved: n.100  
 "Recognition and validation of professional and experiential competencies of adults (re) entering university, in a lifelong learning perspective"  
 The research project aimed to define procedures and build specific tools in the field of guidance to the recognition of prior learning.

The main focus was on the following areas:

- validation of learning taking place in relation to formal education and training settings;
- validation of learning taking place in relation to the labour market (enterprises, public organisations and economic sectors);
- validation of learning taking place in relation to voluntary and civil society activities as well as in community learning.

The methodology, that combined a qualitative and quantitative approach, has developed a national survey by questionnaire involving all Italian universities and qualitative methods of guidance such as *bilan de competences* and *biographical laboratory*.

**BILAN DE COMPETENCES**



The *bilan de compétences* was experimented as an individualized proactive tool for the guidance to analyze the prior experiential learning. The *bilan de compétences* had an auto-training value, with the aim of strengthening adult students capacity of self-analysis and self-evaluation and of empowering adult students and helping them planning their university studies and post-university outplacement.

**BIOGRAPHICAL LABORATORY**

The biographical laboratory allowed adults to think over themselves through the narration, to interact in groups, to recognize themselves and their story of life, which has a great importance for adults who face the challenge of re-entering educational paths. The biographical laboratory promoted reinforcement of adult students' capacity to reflect on their educational and work paths/experiences and to develop a critical and proactive thinking on their life experiences.

**RESULTS**

- ⇒ The results call for the adoption, in the Italian academic context, of APEL procedures, individualised educational offer, different curricula at different "speed" for this particular audience.
- ⇒ They put in evidence that is necessary a shift to biographical and learner centred approach in teaching, as well as to enhance guidance and re-guidance tools to accompany adults replanning their educational projects.
- ⇒ The results of this research confirmed the conceptual framework telling us that fostering active citizenship means first of all giving fair opportunities to this peculiar audience (adults often workers) to access the university and to recognize and assess their prior informal learning.

**IMPLEMENTATION PHASES**

Definition of tools for the establishment of a service aimed to:

- Students placement and empowerment
- Certification and validation of prior learning
- External service dedicated to adult workers or institutions for the benefit of active work policies
- Research of partnerships and fund raising activities to support university's programmes

**"ROMA TRE" UNIVERSITY**

Aureliana Alberici  
[aalberici@uniroma3.it](mailto:aalberici@uniroma3.it)

Paolo Di Rienzo  
[pdrienzo@uniroma3.it](mailto:pdrienzo@uniroma3.it)

<http://www.uniroma3.it/>

<http://host.uniroma3.it/centri/cres>

Research and Service Centre for  
 Bilan de Competences

