



ERASMUS+ KA2 PROGRAMME 2022 COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTOR KA220-ADU
INTRA -INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES OF RESPONSIBLE AUTOMATION
2022-1-IT02-KA220-ADU-000085744



REPORT ON REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ON THE CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES IN ITALY

1ST PROJECT RESULT – REPORT 2A (31/03/2023)



Summary

INTRODUCTION	3
I. DEFINITION OF COMPETENCES	4
II. DEFINITION OF CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES	13
III. LEGAL ORIGIN IN FORCE IN ITALY	14
IV. CERTIFICATION BODIES	16
V. THE STAGES OF CERTIFICATION	21
Accreditation and Orientation.....	21
Identification	23
Evaluation	25
Attestation.....	27
VI. NATIONAL MODELS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF SKILLS IN ITALY	29
VII. TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURES IDENTIFIED FOR CERTIFICATION	32
VIII. MODELS ALREADY IN USE, CRITICALITY AND ANY NEW PROPOSALS	35
CONCLUSIONS	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SITOGRAPHY	39



INTRODUCTION

If training plays a decisive role in transitions in the labour market, which are increasingly frequent because of the flexibilization of employment relationships, the certification of skills becomes the tool for transferring them from one place to another, thus strengthening the employability of workers.

The certification of skills also helps the emergence of tacit skills that can therefore facilitate job reintegration, through the process that allows to enhance the so-called training periods carried out outside the labor market. The skills acquired in non-formal contexts can represent a discriminating element for job placement. Therefore, having the possibility of being able to spend as professional skills training courses in contexts completely unrelated to formal circuits, means multiplying the possibilities of approaching the labor market of people.

The increase in the individual endowment of skills throughout the life course should not be understood only towards the specialized or advanced ones, but also to the urgency of developing basic or soft skills to the widest mass of people. Unfortunately, statistics tell us that young people of working age have a low level of language and numeral skills, while adults do not have digital skills for computer use.

In this paper we will first analyze the definition of competences, referring to the key competences for lifelong learning as per the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2018 together with the definition of certification of competences. Subsequently, we will deal with the regulatory origin in force in Italy together with the competent bodies for certification with an in-depth analysis of the individual phases of the certification procedure. Finally, mention will be made of the national models adopted in Italy, the technological infrastructures identified to support this process, as well as a conclusion on the critical issues that have emerged and on any new proposals on the subject.



I. DEFINITION OF COMPETENCES

Defining what a competence is is not always easy, and, since the task of the European Commission is to assess its possession, these difficulties can turn into procedural errors if its meaning is not clarified first. The 2015 Ministerial Guidelines implicitly adopt the definition of competence of the 2006 European Qualifications and Qualifications Framework, which introduces the tripartite division into knowledge, skills and competences (*knowledge, skill, competence*) and defines competence as a critical integration of the first two:

- Knowledge: indicates the result of assimilation and information through learning. Knowledge is the set of facts, principles, theories, and practices, related to a field of study or work; Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or practical.
- Skills: indicate the ability to apply knowledge and to use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems; skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) and practical (which involve manual skill and the use of methods, materials, tools).
- Competences: means the proven ability to use personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, skills and abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development; Competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

4

If we want to translate it into simple terms, competence is something that we can attribute to someone by observing how he puts it into practice. We can see it by observing an activity that would not be possible to carry out without possessing this competence (for example, if I claim to know how to make excellent cakes, my statement is not enough, but the best thing is that someone observes me while I prepare one and then can taste what I have prepared).

For some years now, there has been an in-depth discussion at European level on the issue of the skills that individuals must acquire to guarantee their full development. This is a key theme, with cascading implications that affect the issues of training, education and orientation to work and social well-being. The result of this long journey has been the identification of the eight European key



competences (also called key citizenship competences) by the European Union, a path started in 2006 and deeply innovated in 2018. A complex process that has seen Parliament and the Commission work in synergy and that the Member States of the European Union are called to transpose, facilitating its acquisition by all citizens. The reference text that crystallizes and defines them is the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (with its European Framework of Reference Annex), approved by the European Parliament on 22 May 2018.

Therefore, the definition of competence then derives that of "key competences" which, according to the Recommendation of the European Council of 22 May 2018, are *"those that everyone needs for personal fulfillment and development, employability, social inclusion, a sustainable lifestyle, a fruitful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship. They develop from a lifelong learning perspective, from early childhood to adult life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in all settings, including family, school, workplace, neighbourhood and other communities."*

The Recommendation then proceeds to identify the European key competences, which, as mentioned, turn out to be eight, not hierarchically ordered but to be considered all of equal importance:

5

1. Functional literacy skills;
2. Multilingual competence;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence;
6. Social and civic competence in citizenship;
7. Entrepreneurial competence;



8. Competence in cultural awareness and expression.

Let's analyze it and one by one:

1. In the list of eight identified competencies by the Council for the European Union as fundamental for active citizenship and lifelong learning, the one that leads the way is Functional Literacy Competence.

The European Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 states: *“Functional alphabetical competence indicates the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts, and opinions, both orally and in writing, using visual, sound and digital materials drawing on various disciplines and contexts. It involves the ability to communicate and relate effectively with others in an appropriate and creative way. Its development forms the basis for further learning and further language interaction. Depending on the context, functional literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of school education and/or the official language of a country or region. Functional alphabetic competence therefore includes critical thinking and the ability to evaluate information and use it.”*

6

Alphabetical competence is therefore not limited to knowing how to speak, read and write. It needs to be functional, that is, useful to understand others to communicate with them effectively.

It is not only knowing how to decode a message, but it is being able to understand the emotions that it conveys. And greater competence implies being able to recognize facts, opinions, and concepts in a more effective and creative way. This competence includes knowledge of reading and writing and understanding of written information, assuming knowledge of vocabulary, functional grammar, and language functions.

It also involves knowledge of the main types of verbal interaction, several literary and non-literary texts, the main features of different styles and registers of the language. People should then be able to modulate and adapt their communication according to the situation in which they find themselves. This competence includes the ability to distinguish and use



different types of sources, to seek, collect and process information, to use aids, to formulate and express arguments in a convincing and context-appropriate manner, both orally and in writing.

Due to its characteristics, functional literacy is of crucial importance, because it also serves to acquire other key competences. It would not be possible, in fact, to develop multilingual competence without having at least a basic level of competence in one's mother tongue. Similarly, being competent in other areas would be difficult without adequate linguistic proficiency.

Understanding others and knowing how to relate is the first step of citizenship. Learning to communicate with others is therefore the first objective at the base of civil coexistence.

2. The European Council has included communication in foreign languages – or multilingual competence – among the key competences. This is because communicating effectively with those who speak a different language from ours allows us to broaden our horizons and appreciate different cultures. *“Multilingual competence defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for the purpose of communicating.”* In general, this competence shares core skills with functional literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form – oral comprehension, oral expression, written comprehension and written expression – in an appropriate range of social and cultural contexts.

In addition, language skills include a historical dimension and intercultural competences. The ability to mediate between different languages and media is also required. Multilingual competence may include the maintenance and further development of mother tongue skills or the acquisition of the official language or languages of a country. Communication in foreign languages requires knowledge of the vocabulary and functional grammar of different languages and awareness of the main types of verbal interaction and linguistic registers. But idioms are not disconnected from those who use them, so it is necessary to know social conventions, the cultural aspect, and the different languages.



The essential skills for this competence consist in the ability to:

- Understand oral messages;
- Initiate, sustain, and end conversations;
- Reading, understanding and writing texts.

People should be able to use language tools appropriately and learn languages in a formal, non-formal and informal way. A positive attitude involves appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as interest and curiosity in languages other than one's own and in intercultural communication.

The study of foreign languages is one of the fundamental points on which the interest of the European Commission is focused, which, at the 2017 meeting Strengthening European identity through education and culture, focused on education and culture.

“Being European citizens means preserving one's cultural identity, but it also means knowing how to relate and integrate with other cultures. In this, the learning of foreign languages is a priority, because the process of European integration cannot be separated from the acquisition of good language skills.”

8

Today, however, knowledge of a second language is a real challenge, as about half of EU citizens speak and understand only their mother tongue. The objective that the Union has set for the various member countries is to improve language learning: by 2025, all young Europeans who complete a secondary education cycle must have a good knowledge of two languages in addition to their mother tongue (or mother tongues).

3. Among the eight key competences for lifelong learning we find one that is divided into two distinct but interconnected headings:
 - Mathematical competence;
 - Competence in Science, Technology and Engineering.

Due to its importance, the level of literacy in these two disciplines is measured both every four years by the IEA TIMMS survey and every three years by the OECD PISA survey, which



evaluates them together with *Reading Literacy*. Many educational systems then monitor the evolution of the *mathematical literacy* of their students at various times of their educational path.

“Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and understanding to solve a range of problems in everyday situations.”

It is based on the mastery of arithmetic-mathematical competence and involves the ability to and the willingness to use mathematical models of thought and presentation: formulas, models, constructs, graphs, diagrams.

“Competence in science refers to the ability to explain the world around us using the body of knowledge and methodologies, including observation and experimentation, to identify problems and draw conclusions that are based on empirical facts, and the willingness to do so.”

“Skills in technology and engineering are applications of such knowledge and methodologies to respond to the desires or needs felt by human beings.”

9

Competence in science, technology and engineering therefore allows us to understand the changes brought about by human activity and makes us aware of the individual responsibility that each of us citizens have towards society and the environment. This competence includes an attitude of critical evaluation and curiosity, an interest in ethical issues and attention to both safety and environmental sustainability, about scientific and technological progress in relation to the individual, family, community and issues of global dimension. Being competent in mathematics, science, technology, and engineering therefore means having acquired a mode of thinking that allows you to combine the order and rigor of mathematics with the curiosity and critical spirit of the scientific approach.



This mix of logic and intuition, rules to follow and creative thinking, awareness and sustainability allows us to contribute to the progress of society, at all levels: from the individual to the family, as citizens in proximity or globally.

4. Regarding digital education, the OECD believes that: *“Becoming digitally competent is essential to enable young people to participate effectively in a digitalised society and economy; Not engaging in these skills risks exacerbating the digital divide and perpetuating existing inequalities.”*

In a few lines, a crucial aspect is clearly underlined: digital competence can be a tool for equity and social redemption or, on the contrary, it can make the gap in the socio-economic fabric even clearer.

Italy accepts the EU definition that places digital competence among the key competences for lifelong learning and which reads: *“Digital competence implies the safe, critical and responsible use, and involvement, of digital technologies for learning, at work and in participation in society.”*

10

5. The European Union has defined Learning to Learn as: *“The ability to persevere in learning and to organize one's learning also through effective management of time and information.”*

You never stop learning, even as an adult. For this reason, the school must train children to know how to learn independently even when they are not at school or will no longer be in the classroom. We must therefore think in terms of *Lifelong Learning*, or lifelong learning.

And to meet the goal of being able to learn new knowledge and skills permanently, it is necessary to be able to Learn and Learn.

According to the EU, this competence includes:

- Awareness of one's own learning process and needs;
- Identification of available opportunities;
- The ability to face and overcome obstacles to learn effectively.



This is aimed at continuing lifelong learning, with a view to shared knowledge and learning as a socially shared process.

6. The Council of the European Union has included citizenship competence among the key competences for lifelong learning. In the European Framework of Reference, we find its definition: *“Competence in citizenship refers to the ability to act as responsible citizens and to participate fully in civic and social life, based on an understanding of social, economic, legal and political structures and concepts as well as global evolution and sustainability.”*

For the European Union, *“the ability to engage effectively with others to achieve a common or public interest, such as the sustainable development of society, is indispensable. This requires critical thinking skills and integrated problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to develop arguments and participate constructively in community activities, as well as in decision-making at all levels, from local and national to European and international levels.”*

To be an active citizen requires the ability to access, critically interpret and interact with both traditional and new media, and to understand the role and functions of the media in democratic societies. Respect for human rights, the basis of democracy, is a prerequisite for a responsible and constructive attitude.

Furthermore, *“constructive participation includes supporting social and cultural diversity, gender equality and social cohesion, sustainable lifestyles, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, as well as a willingness to respect the privacy of others and to be environmentally responsible.”*

7. The European Council Recommendation states that *“entrepreneurial competence refers to the ability to act on the basis of ideas and opportunities and to transform them into values for others. It is based on creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, initiative and perseverance, as well as the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that have cultural, social or financial value.”*



Entrepreneurial competence therefore consists in:

- Being able to realize ideas to offer added value to society;
- Critically analyze the creative idea with a *view to problem solving*;
- Give life to projects that bring greater well-being to others, realizing them by cooperating with others.

Entrepreneurial competence therefore implies being able to look beyond, imagining new scenarios and perspectives. But it is not enough to have broad views; Doing business means being able to define the times and methods to achieve the set goal. But in addition to peering into the distance, those who possess the entrepreneurial spirit must be able to look around them, paying attention to the objectives to be achieved and the people with whom and for whom to achieve them.

8. Competence in cultural awareness and expression is last on the list, but it is certainly no less important than the others. The 2018 Recommendation states that: *“Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves understanding and respecting how ideas and meanings are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and across a range of arts and other cultural forms. It presupposes a commitment to understand, develop and express one's ideas and sense of one's function or role in society in a range of ways and contexts.”*

This competence extends our ability to communicate with those around us, because literacy does not always allow us to easily convey complex concepts such as cultural identity. Knowing how to interpret and recognize all forms of cultural expression allows us to appreciate the essence of people both in small realities and in global society. This competence requires knowledge of local, national, regional, European, and global cultures and expressions – including their languages, expressive heritage and traditions – and cultural products. In addition, the Competence in Cultural Awareness and Expression is based on an understanding of how such expressions can influence each other and affect the ideas of individuals.



II. DEFINITION OF CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES

The certification of skills is a system aimed at enhancing and recognizing the skills and knowledge acquired by the person during his work, training, and life experience through a path of reconstruction and evaluation of these experiences.

It is aimed at any citizen who intends to demonstrate that he has gained consistent learning experiences in his life with respect to a specific professional qualification among those provided at provincial level. The provincial professional qualifications are contained in the “Provincial Directory of Education and Training Qualifications and Professional Qualifications.”

The citizen can obtain free information on the functioning of the services provided by each accredited subject.

The request for access to the service is drawn up by the citizen concerned by means of an application submitted directly to one of the subjects accredited by the province who will accompany step by step in the process of certification of skills. The process of providing the services of the provincial certification system is divided into several phases that will soon be analyzed.



III. LEGAL ORIGIN IN FORCE IN ITALY

The process of building the Italian system of certification of skills is divided into three main phases, “readable” through five fundamental legislative documents. The first step was taken in 2012 with Law 92/2012 on the reform of the labor market (the so-called “Fornero” law) and its implementing decree of 2013. In January 2018, the National Qualifications Framework formally introduced in 2015 came into force, defining a common set of descriptors, identifying what kind of knowledge, skills and elements of autonomy/responsibility are attributable to each level. To this was added the interministerial decree of 5 January 2021, which dictates the Guidelines for the effective functioning of the system, filling a gap that had lasted since 2013.

The assessment of skills is an integral part of every educational path and therefore also of those offered by CPIAs. In CPIAs, however, evaluation assumes a particularly important role and value: skills, which are the cornerstone of educational planning, are evaluated and certified not only at the end of the courses, as also happens in other types of schools, but also at the beginning, giving students the opportunity to be recognized, as hourly credits, the skills they already possess. The initial evaluation, to which these Guidelines are dedicated, is in turn closely linked to the definition of probably the most characteristic tool of CPIAs – the Individual Training Pact.

More generally, the direct and fundamental relationship that binds the CPIAs to the general system of certification of skills is given by the central role entrusted by the 2015 Guidelines to the CPIAs in the field of lifelong learning, as governed by paragraphs 51-68 of Article 4 of Law 92 of 2012: *“The CPIA, as a Territorial Service Network of the education system, responsible for the realization of both educational activities for the adult population and RS&D activities in the field of Adult Education, it is a public reference subject for the establishment of territorial networks for lifelong learning, pursuant to art. 4, Law no. 92 of 28 June 2012. In fact, the strategies and priority actions of the territorial networks for lifelong learning, as punctually defined in art. 4, paragraph 55, Law 92/2012, find in the*



CPIA a public subject of reference able to contribute efficiently and effectively to their implementation". (Decree of 12 March 2015).

This same reference is explicitly taken up by the Interministerial Guidelines of 5 January 2021: *"The national system of certification of skills, referred to in Article 4, paragraph 58, of Law no. 92 of 28 June 2012 and subsequent Legislative Decree no. 13 of 16 January 2013, is part of the broader national process for the individual right to lifelong learning enshrined in the same article, paragraph 51. In this context, the recognition and certification of skills, acquired by the individual in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, together with the creation of territorial networks referred to in paragraph 55 of the aforementioned Law and the creation of the single information backbone through the interoperability of existing central and territorial databases, represent a determining factor to encourage and support a concrete increase in the participation of people in the formation"* (Decree of 5 January 2021).

CPIAs, as central hub of the lifelong learning system, have a direct relationship with other education systems and with the world of work. This relationship takes place precisely through the certification function of skills, as recalled for example in the MIUR Circular no. 22381 of 31 October 2019: *"The CPIAs, understood as an administrative unit and a teaching unit – taking into account the provisions of Legislative Decree no. 13 of 16 January 2013 – certify the acquisition of the skills acquired also in order to promote guidance for the continuation of studies and combat early school leaving, as well as facilitating integration into the world of work. The certification is also aimed at making transparency of the skills acquired by adults in the perspective of lifelong learning, also in order to promote the connection between the first level and second-level Adult Education paths, as well as the connection between the paths of Adult Education and those of vocational education and training."* (MIUR Circular no. 22381 of 31 October 2019).



IV. CERTIFICATION BODIES

“Territorial networks for lifelong learning” are the backbone of the lifelong learning system. They include all education, training and employment services linked to strategies for economic growth, access to employment for young people, welfare reform, active ageing, the exercise of active citizenship, including by immigrants.

The networks, therefore, represent the institutional places appointed to "take charge of adults" and here the citizen can access integrated services.

Universities, enterprises, chambers of commerce, industry, crafts, and agriculture, as well as employment centres, social partners and local authorities, among others, contribute to the development of territorial networks for lifelong learning.

Territorial networks for lifelong learning therefore ensure:

- Support for people's construction of their own formal, non-formal and informal learning paths;
- The recognition of training credits;
- The certification of learning acquired in any case;
- The use of lifelong guidance services.

16

The CPIA, the Provincial Centre for Adult Education, as a Territorial Service Network of the education system, responsible for carrying out both educational activities for the adult population and Research, Experimentation and Development activities in the field of adult education, is a public reference subject for the establishment of territorial networks for lifelong learning.



The CPIA can represent a stable, structured, and widespread institutional reference point to coordinate and implement - as far as it is competent - reception, orientation and accompaniment actions for the "taking charge" of the adult population.

The CPIA is also the institutional reference point for coordinating and implementing actions aimed at the adult population that promote the raising of education levels and the consolidation of key competences for lifelong learning.

The CPIA, as a territorial service network divided into three levels, carries out the following activities:

1. Adult education courses aimed at obtaining qualifications and certifications;
2. Initiatives to expand the training offer aimed at integrating and enriching adult education paths and / or encouraging the connection with other types of education and training paths;
3. Research, experimentation, and development activities in the field of adult education, aimed, among other things, at enhancing the role of the CPIA as a "service structure".

17

1. Adult education pathways

Adult education courses are organized in the following three types:

- a. First-level education pathways;
- b. Second-level education paths;
- c. Italian language literacy and learning paths



a. The first level courses, carried out by the CPIA administrative units, are divided into two teaching periods:

- The first allows to obtain the final qualification of the first cycle;
- The second allows to obtain the certification attesting the acquisition of the basic skills related to compulsory education relating to the activities and general teachings common to all the addresses of vocational institutes and technical institutes.

b. The second level courses, carried out by the CPIA teaching units, allow to obtain the diploma of technical, professional, and artistic education. They are divided into three teaching periods respectively referring to the first two years, second two years and fifth years of the corresponding regulations of technical, professional, and artistic institutes.

c. The Italian language literacy and learning courses, carried out by the CPIA administrative unit, allow to obtain a qualification attesting to the achievement of a level of knowledge of the Italian language not lower than level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, drawn up by the Council of Europe.

18

Adults who enroll in education courses are intended for specific reception and orientation activities. These activities are aimed at producing the individual training agreement, which allows you to customize the path. The participation of the adult in the definition of the individual training agreement is equivalent to the attendance of a part of the teaching period of the path requested by the adult himself at the time of enrollment to an extent, not exceeding 10% of the teaching period itself. As part of these activities, further preparatory activities may be carried out for the definition of the Pact, aimed - among other things - at strengthening and/or leveling, and maintenance and implementation activities of the same.



2. Initiatives to expand the training offer

The initiatives to expand the training offer - in line with the provisions of Article 9 of Presidential Decree 275 of 1999 - consist of activities consistent with the aims of the CPIA and which consider the needs of the cultural, social and economic context of local realities. To this end, CPIAs promote integrated education and training projects, which require collaboration with other public and private training agencies, including by participating in regional, national or Community programmes. The CPIA can:

- Enter into agreements with universities, regions and public bodies;
- Enter into contractual agreements with associations and individuals;
- Participate in temporary associations with public and private agencies that carry out synergistic collaborations for the implementation of particular training projects.

3. Research, Experimentation and Development (RS&D) activities

The CPIA as an autonomous educational institution also carries out Research, Experimentation and Development (RS&D) activities in the field of adult education, aimed at:

- Develop the areas, referred to in Article 6 of Presidential Decree 275 of 1999: training planning and evaluation research; training and cultural and professional updating of school staff; methodological and disciplinary innovation; didactic research on the different values of information and communication technologies and their integration into training processes; educational documentation and its dissemination within the school; exchanges of information, experience and teaching materials; integration between the various branches of the school system and, in agreement with the competent institutional subjects, between the various training systems, including vocational training;
- Enhance the role of the CPIA as a “service structure”, through the preparation - in line with the European objectives on the subject - of the following "system measures": reading of the training needs of the territory; construction of adult profiles defined on the basis of the needs of social and work contexts; interpretation of the skills and knowledge needs of the adult



population; reception and guidance; improving the quality and effectiveness of adult education;

- Prepare system measures designed to promote appropriate connections between the educational paths carried out by CPIAs and those carried out by educational institutions that provide second-level courses (definition of criteria and methods for the common management of the functions attributed to educational institutions, by Article 14, paragraph 2 of the Decree of the President of the Republic 275/99); drafting of the POF of the CPIA, common design of the first and second level paths);
- Implement the lifelong learning system through actions aimed, as far as it is competent, at implementing the national plan for guaranteeing the skills of the adult population also with a view to developing networks for lifelong learning.



V. THE STAGES OF CERTIFICATION

The process of providing the services of the provincial certification system is divided into several phases:

- Reception and Orientation
- Identification
- Evaluation
- Attestation

Accreditation and Orientation

The certification phase of skills begins when an adult presents himself to a CPIA (Provincial Center for Adult Education) to enroll in one of the training courses offered. The analysis, verification and, where possible, certification of previous skills is in fact part of the initial reception phase. The certification of skills also takes place at other times, for example at the end of the course, when outgoing skills must be certified. (Even the Italian language test to obtain the residence permit is structured as a certification of skills, even if it formally gives rise only to a certificate because the official language certifications can only be obtained from one of the four Italian certification bodies).

The typical path of the adult who enters a CPIA is divided into different phases and subphases, of which the main ones are the reception and orientation, the actual learning path and the closing phase. The evaluation dimension is a constitutive part of each of these stages, even if with different purposes and methods. To ensure that the overall architecture of the system is clear, and we can move on to focusing on the certification process of interest of these Guidelines – i.e. the certification of incoming skills – it is necessary to briefly retrace the different occasions in which skills are evaluated.



The reception and orientation phase serves, both for the adult and at the CPIA, to get to know each other and to decide together which path is best to take and in what ways. During this phase, the assessment intervention can take two forms: the entrance test necessary to identify the level group in which to insert the student and the certification of incoming skills, to which these Guidelines are dedicated. The nature and objectives of these two forms of evaluation are completely different; Therefore, it is crucial to make a preliminary differentiation.

The placement test (or placement test or initial test) is a diagnostic evaluation that is typically administered to all students enrolled in the CPIA and allows you to set up the teaching activities well according to the level of mastery of certain skills. In this regard, language entry tests are typical, which serve to select the level of enhancement best suited to the stage of development already reached. The result of the entrance test is therefore one level (A1, A2, B1 etc. for languages; other levels for other types of tests). On the other hand, there are tests for the certification of incoming skills, which are administered if, and only if, the conditions are met, that is, if the adult believes he has relevant skills and asks to be able to certify them. This type of test is therefore aimed at a much smaller audience of people and, consequently, its content is often different from that of the entrance test. If the adult succeeds in this test, he will receive the certificate relating to the skills possessed and the recognition of the corresponding hourly credits.

22

Once the reception phase is over, the adult begins the path most suitable for him. This path, like all training courses, contains numerous moments of evaluation. This is the formative or ongoing evaluation, which constantly accompanies the teaching-learning process and can take a plurality of different forms, until it “disappears” completely in the didactic action, without there being any external manifestation – this is the case of the continuous feedback that the teacher records and provides during the interaction in the classroom. The formative evaluation allows the continuous remodulation of the didactic action, during the same lesson or within wider time segments. The evaluation carried out during the course can lead, in some cases, to the revision of the Individual Training Pact (PFI) and to the modification of the path to be followed, such as in the case of two-year



courses, for which, at the end of the first year, the intermediate evaluation of the expected skills is foreseen.

At the end of the course there is the closure phase, which, depending on the different situations, can be configured as a transition to a further training course, inside or outside the CPIA, or towards the world of work. The typical evaluation of this final phase is the summative or final one, which summarizes the path taken by describing the achievement or not of certain levels of skills and offering judgments and forecasting indications on the possible continuation of the formative life. It is important to underline that the principles and criteria that are defined for incoming certification also apply to outgoing certification – as for any other type of certification of skills, regardless of when it is carried out.

The process of certification of competences during the initial reception and orientation phase is called “credit recognition”. This process is initiated at the request of the person concerned and is conducted by the Commission for the definition of the Individual Formation Agreement. During this process, the needs of the adult are analyzed, his personal history is reconstructed, the skills possessed are verified, the possible certification of these skills is carried out and the Individual Training Pact is stipulated. From both a conceptual and practical point of view, the credit recognition process is divided into three phases: identification, evaluation and attestation.

23

Identification

According to the Decree of 12 March 2015, the Identification is that aimed at identifying and making transparent the skills of adults acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning, attributable to one or more expected skills at the end of the teaching period of the path requested by the adult at the time of enrollment. In this phase, the Commission, having acquired the application for enrolment, supports the adult "in the analysis and documentation of the learning experience" also using personal and professional history documentation devices. In this respect, the Commission should provide adequate documentation arrangements consistent with the transparency instruments already



adopted at European level, such as those defined in the Europass Decision. In this context, the preparation for each adult of a personal booklet (personal dossier for the IDA) that allows, among other things, the collection of qualifications, certificates, certifications, declarations and any other “useful evidence” assumes particular significance. To this end, it is necessary to use exploration tools, including the interview set according to a biographical approach. At this stage, the Commission can identify a teacher – part of the Commission itself – to whom to entrust the task of accompanying and supporting the adult in the process of identifying and making transparent the skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning and in the composition of the personal dossier. Without prejudice to the general criteria set out in these Guidelines, each Commission identifies organizational and operating methods that also consider the territorial context of reference.

We remind you that “Per formal learning means that which is implemented in the education and training system and in universities and institutions of high artistic, musical and dance training, and which ends with the achievement of a qualification or a professional qualification or diploma, also achieved in apprenticeship in accordance with the consolidated text referred to in Legislative Decree 14 September 2011, n. 167, or a recognized certification” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 52).

24

“Non-formal learning means that characterized by an intentional choice of the person, which is carried out outside the systems indicated in paragraph 52, in any body that pursues educational and training purposes, including volunteering, national civil service and private social and in companies” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 53).

“Informal learning means that which, even regardless of an intentional choice, is realized in the performance, by each person, of activities in the situations of daily life and in the interactions that take place in it, within the context of work, family and leisure” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 54).

The main purpose of this first phase of the credit recognition process is to make the skills possessed transparent, describing them through a dedicated document that typically takes the form of a personal booklet and that records, in a standardized way, the experiences of education, training,



work and other types that can contribute to defining the skills potentially possessed by the person. Next to this document, you can fill in the Europass CV and/or other type of European transparency tool. The documents produced in this phase contribute to creating the personal Dossier, a sort of portfolio that documents the phases and results of the path taken within the CPIA.

As far as European transparency tools are concerned, alongside the Europass curriculum there are other tools, some of which have been developed specifically for immigrants with insufficient documentation. This is the European Passport of Qualifications for Refugees, developed by the Council of Europe, which takes into account the specific difficulties of this type of user and proposes an integrated linguistic support for the compilation of the different fields, suggesting, moreover, possible correspondences with national and European qualifications and skills. A further possibility is to refer to European credit systems: the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) for academic skills and ECVET (*European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training*) for professional skills.

Evaluation

According to the Decree of 12 March 2015, the Evaluation is the phase aimed at ascertainment of the possession of the skills of adults acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning, attributable to one or more competences expected at the end of the teaching period of the path requested by the adult at the time of enrollment. At this stage, the Commission proceeds, together with the adult, to ascertain the possession of the skills already acquired by the adult for the purposes of the subsequent certification. In the case of skills acquired in formal learning, "useful evidence" is provided by those issued in the systems indicated in paragraph 52, of art. 4, of Law 92/2012. In the case of skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning, this phase implies the adoption of specific evaluation methodologies and feedback and tests suitable to prove the skills possessed consistent with those prepared by INVALSI in the context of the RICREATE and SAPA projects for the purposes



of the provisions of Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Regulation. In any case, this phase must be carried out in such a way as to ensure fairness, transparency, collegiality, and objectivity.

Therefore, the evaluation phase is aimed at ascertaining the possession of the skills attributable to those expected because of the requested teaching period. Unlike the collection and recording of relevant information made with identification, the evaluation must assign a value to the collected data and decide whether to consider them valid or not, and then be able to officially certify them in the next step. This task can be difficult to perform, especially in the absence of documentary media or complete information provided by the candidate. In fact, it can be difficult to understand to which competence or part of it the information collected can be traced back and what can, consequently, really be certified. Other times, moreover, there is the problem of the obsolescence of skills: the certificates tell us that the competence has been acquired, but the student himself fears that he no longer possesses it because the acquisition took place a long time ago. This may be one of the cases in which the models proposed in these Guidelines and the concrete examples selected for each disciplinary axis come in handy.

26

To carry out the task of evaluation in the best possible way, the Commission may decide to behave differently depending on the type of evidence collected and its “weight”. Where the supporting evidence is judged sufficient, the Commission may decide to fully validate the corresponding competencies, without subjecting the candidate to any test. This solution is more frequent with evidence of formal competences – for example, where diplomas are clearly related to certain competences are available.

If, on the other hand, there are doubts or the evidence is scarce, incomplete, or unclear, the most practiced solution is that of administering tests. In the latter case, the Commission selects the most suitable tests and administers them to the candidate. This operation implies the availability of tests already prepared and validated, built according to certain quality criteria. It is therefore appropriate that the CPIA equip itself with a system, possibly computerized, which facilitates the choices of the Commission and makes it possible to administer the tests also by a non-expert teacher – the administration of the tests, in fact, should be a standardized task and easy to carry out by all teachers,



even if of disciplines, different levels and periods. Different, of course, is the case of the evaluation of the tests, which, if they are not automatically correctable, must necessarily be corrected manually by expert teachers. The analysis of evidence and the administration of evidence are documented by the Commission in order to ensure fairness, transparency, collegiality and objectivity, as required by the Guidelines. If successful, we move on to the next stage of attestation, otherwise the process stops there.

Attestation

According to the Decree of 12 March 2015, the Attestation is the phase aimed at issuing the certificate of recognition of credits for the personalization of the path, standardized according to the criteria below; in this phase the Commission certifies the possession of the competences, identified and evaluated in the previous phases, and recognizes them – according to the methods and within the limits previously established by it – as credits attributable to one or more competences expected in outcome of the educational period of the path requested by the adult at the time of enrolment; in line with the provisions of D.Lgs. 13/13, the certificate of recognition of credits for the personalization of the route – which has a public nature – contains the following minimum elements:

- a) the data of the public body holder (MIUR) and of the titled entity (CPIA);
- b) the personal data of the adult;
- c) the skills expected at the end of the teaching period of the path requested by the adult at the time of enrolment, recognized as credits;
- d) the procedures for establishing each of the competencies recognised as claims;
- e) the signature of the Commission, of the school director of the CPIA and, for the adult enrolled in one of the teaching periods of the second level courses, also of the school director of the school institution where the second level path is hinged;
- f) date and registration number.

Therefore, the attestation phase is aimed at issuing the certificate of recognition of credits. The Commission certifies the possession of the identified skills and recognizes them as credits



attributable to one or more expected skills, formalizing this recognition in the Individual Training Agreement.

There are two very important regulatory constraints to consider that have been reiterated again by the Ministry of Education within the project:

- The attestation process takes place "by competence" and not by fractions or parts of them. It is not possible, in other words, to attest to the partial possession of skills, nor different levels of mastery. For this reason, it is necessary to establish threshold criteria, based on which it is clearly decided whether to possess a competence. For example, it is necessary to establish with which minimum score or judgment, referring to the available evidence or to the conduct of tests, the competence can be considered possessed.
- The maximum percentage of hours that can be recognized as credits following the certification process is 50% (Ministerial Circular no. 3 of 17 March 2016).

The attestation of skills therefore takes place in a precise space, defined, on the one hand, by the desire to enhance the experience of the adult and to personalize his training path and, on the other, by the two regulatory constraints described above. Within this perimeter, it is necessary to find a balance between the different needs and structure an agile and effective certification system.



VI. NATIONAL MODELS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF SKILLS IN ITALY

The Provincial Centre for Adult Education issues:

1. The certification of competences, issued at the end of the first level adult education course in the first teaching period;
2. Certification attesting to the acquisition of basic skills related to compulsory education referred to in Ministerial Decree 139/2007, issued at the end of the first level adult education course according to the teaching period;
3. The qualification certifying the achievement of the A2 CEFR level of knowledge of the Italian language.

Evaluation and certification in the first level adult education courses of the first teaching period:

The evaluation of the learning of adults attending the first level courses of the first teaching period for each of the cultural axes (axis of languages; historical-social axis; mathematical axis; scientific-technological axis) is expressed with marks in tenths, without using decimal fractions, which indicate different levels of learning.

The evaluation with a vote in tenths of the axis contributes to the levels achieved for each of the skills relating to the same axis, including those for which, as a result of the procedure for the recognition of credits, the possibility of exemption from attendance of the relative number of hours has been arranged, to an extent normally not exceeding 50% of the total number of hours of the teaching period attended. To this end, without prejudice to their autonomy, CPIAs may adopt, for the preparation of the evaluation document, the following correspondence: Initial Level = 6; Basic level = 7; intermediate level = 8; Advanced Level = 9/10; the Board of Teachers establishes the criteria for the exact correspondence of the vote. In case of non-attainment of the Initial Level, the grade is expressed in tenths less than 6.



The evaluation is carried out collectively by the teachers of the level group who are part of the Class Council. Teachers, even of other school levels, who carry out activities and teachings for all adults or for groups of the same aimed at expanding and enriching the educational offer, provide cognitive elements on the interest expressed and, on the profit, achieved by each adult. The counting operations are chaired by the head teacher or his delegate.

The first level courses of the first teaching period end with the State exam.

Admission to the State exam is arranged by the teachers of the level group after ascertaining the actual performance of the PSP, it being understood that adults who have not attended at least 70% of the course provided therein cannot be admitted to the exams, without prejudice to any motivated derogations approved by the Board of Teachers.

Adults who pass the final State examination of the first level education courses in the first teaching period are awarded the final diploma of the first cycle of education and the certification of skills.

Evaluation and certification in first-level adult education courses according to the teaching period:

30

The evaluation of the learning of adults attending the first level courses according to the teaching period for each of the cultural axes (language axis; historical-social-economic axis; mathematical axis; scientific-technological axis) is expressed with marks in tenths, without using decimal fractions, which indicate different levels of learning.

The evaluation with a vote in tenths of the axis contributes to the levels achieved for each of the skills relating to the same axis, including those for which, as a result of the procedure for the recognition of credits, the possibility of exemption from attendance of the relative number of hours has been arranged, to an extent normally not exceeding 50% of the total number of hours of the teaching period attended, To this end, without prejudice to their autonomy, CPIAs may adopt, for the preparation of the evaluation document, the following correspondence: Initial Level = 6; Basic level = 7; intermediate level = 8; Advanced Level = 9/10; the Board of Teachers establishes the criteria for



the exact correspondence of the vote. In case of non-attainment of the Initial Level, the grade is expressed in tenths less than 6.

The first level courses of the second teaching period end with a final ballot.

Adults who, at the end of the final ballot, are found to have achieved at least the initial level of learning in all cultural axes, are issued with the certification of skills.

The certification is useful evidence for the recognition of credits relating to the activities and teachings of the general area of the second level courses of the first teaching period.

The achievement of the aforementioned certification also allows the adult to enroll in the second level courses according to the teaching period, subject to successful attendance of a supplementary module, relating to the activities and teachings of the address area of the second level education path chosen by the adult, organized by the secondary school institutions in agreement with the CPIA, administrative unit, of reference.

31

Assessment and certification in the Italian language literacy and learning paths:

The evaluation of the learning of adults attending the literacy and learning paths of the Italian language for each of the areas provided (Listening; Reading; Oral and written interaction; Oral production; Written production) is expressed with marks in tenths, without using decimal fractions, which indicate different levels of learning.

CPIAs may adopt, for the preparation of the evaluation document, the following correspondence: Initial Level = 6; Basic level = 7; intermediate level = 8; Advanced Level = 9/10; the Board of Teachers establishes the criteria for the exact correspondence of the vote. In case of non-attainment of the Initial Level, the grade is expressed in tenths less than 6.

The Italian language literacy and learning courses end with a final ballot.



Adults who, at the end of the final exam, are found to have achieved at least the initial level of learning in all areas, are issued with the title certifying the achievement of the A2 CEFR level of knowledge of the Italian language.

VII. TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURES IDENTIFIED FOR CERTIFICATION

In adult education, thanks to the recent reorganization of the CPIA sector and Secondary Education Institutes with attached evening courses, there has been a significant innovation for some time, namely the possibility of using 20% of the teaching hours remotely for students (Presidential Decree 263/2012 - Regulation laying down general rules for the redefinition of the educational organizational structure of adult education centers, including evening courses).

In fact, according to the "Guidelines for the transition to the new system in support of the organizational and didactic autonomy of the provincial centers for adult education" (Decree of 12 March 2015), still in force: *"Distance learning is one of the main innovations of the new organizational and educational structures outlined in the Regulation, the new adult education system, in fact, provides that the adult can use remotely a part of the teaching period of the path requested at the time of registration, to an extent usually not exceeding 20% of the total number of hours of the teaching period itself. The use at a distance favors the personalization of the educational path. The remote use meets the particular needs of users, unable to reach the place where educational activities are carried out for geographical or temporal reasons. Distance learning contributes to the development of "digital competence", recognised among the eight key competences for lifelong learning set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of 18 December 2006. For the purposes of the Regulation, distance use means the provision and use of learning units (or parts of them) in which the educational paths referred to in art. 4, paragraph 1 of the Regulation through the use of new information and communication technologies".*



It is important to underline that, in this context, the acronym FAD is to be understood as Distance Fruition and not as training; in fact, the assessment of the acquisition of skills by the students must still take place in the classroom.

To facilitate the fruition, the creation of Agorà has also been planned, videoconference rooms activated by virtue of conventions, in which the students, appropriately identified and registered, can follow the lessons remotely from the traditional places of delivery (eg associated offices of the CPIAs). In fact, the Guidelines state that *“If - in the face of documented needs - the remote use provides for the performance of synchronous activities (online video conference) between the teacher present in the offices (associated and / or operational) of the CPIAs and level groups present in the remote classrooms, called AGORA' (Interactive Environment for the Management of the Educational Offer Aimed at Adults) identified for this purpose in the context of specific agreements with Universities and / or local authorities and / or other public and private entities, the hourly fee referred to in art. 4, paragraph 9, lett. c) of the Regulation can be increased, provided that the identification and presence of the adult in the AGORA are duly registered in the manner provided for by the aforementioned agreements.”*

33

These regulatory indications support the recognized advantages of distance use, particularly in training courses for adults; Strengths are, in fact, the economization of travel, time flexibility, the reduction of paper, the expansion of communication channels, the greater involvement of users, the personalization of the route and more. We are talking about indications and not guidelines, because now no detailed specifications have been issued on operating methods and tools. Something is moving for their drafting, because both the National Institute for Documentation Innovation Educational Research (INDIRE), the Italian Network for Adult Education (RIDAP), and the regional Research and Development Centers of the CPIAs are developing proposals.

In the educational offer of the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA) currently the FAD is present according to different methods of delivery, also based on the technical-professional skills present within them.



To date, the only unitary model, albeit in a largely experimental way, is the INDIRE platform “Adults in training”, dedicated to sharing models and contents for FAD; the basic idea is to provide a common and free workspace, based on a Moodle environment, which can be fed by the contents created and shared by the teachers, in order to create a single virtual library for the Italian training system. Such experimentation could be a useful tool to ensure national uniformity or try to converge towards a single environment experience started with different technical and fruition methods. INDIRE and the regional Research and Development Centers of the CPIAs are also working on the preparation of a card for the validation of the contents to be included in the "Adults in Training" platform. The latter is an important aspect, because in the experimental experiences of activation of remote fruition tools, in rare cases a control or validation of the contents has been carried out. This problem is also closely linked to the certification of skills leaving adult education courses because, when designing and inserting UdA (Learning Unit) in FAD, it is necessary to define which skills will produce compared to those required and present in the Guidelines and certification models.

Regarding the contents, the ideal would be to develop them in an autonomous and original way, also in consideration of the particular target to which it is addressed (often disadvantaged users, foreigners or in any case students little "equipped" culturally), however, currently, in the individual national experiences we tend to reuse and share content already present on the net and not developed for the reference user, but this presupposes attention to aspects related to copyright.



VIII. MODELS ALREADY IN USE, CRITICALITY AND ANY NEW PROPOSALS

Clearly, the new regulatory framework as described in the 2013 Decree provides for competence as the foundation of the employment relationship. Competence should be measured based on specific indicators such as knowledge to be possessed and skills to be demonstrated. In fact, the system is focused on the development of usable knowledge that gives greater value to the worker who seeks a job, to make it more attractive, as it is more in line with the real needs of the company's production and organizational systems.

It follows that, in the system of skills, the historical distinctions between job and qualification, traditionally understood as measures of the quality of performance, suitable to guarantee functional flexibility and stability in the employment relationship, lose value. In fact, the job, as a task in the fulfillment of the service, and the qualification, as a more complex service able to identify the knowledge guaranteed with diplomas and qualifications and to prescribe the skills for the purposes of contractual classification, lose centrality as qualifying standards of professionalism, because they are no longer able to demonstrate the actual skills possessed by the worker.

35

On the contrary, in the certification of skills, the certifying act benefits both parties of the synallagma: the employer, who is guaranteed using an extremely qualified workforce; to the worker, as an objective and formal attestation of the possible performance to be offered in the contractual relationship.

Nevertheless, the first critical issue to be noted, which has prevented a full take-off of the institute until now, precisely concerns the communicability between the current personnel classification systems and the innovative method of analysis and cataloguing of professionalism.

Currently, in fact, the certification of skills is presented as a parallel dimension to collective bargaining, as certifiable work profiles do not have a timely correspondence in contractual declarations.



The real challenge, therefore, will be communication between collective agreements and the register of professions. From this point of view, many of the criticisms addressed to the path that led to the current structure of the legislation on the subject concerned the absence of the social partners at strategic moments of the process that outlined the structural characteristics of the institute. In fact, the social partners were not allowed to intervene in the definition of general rules, in order to identify shared standards to validate and certify competences. In other words, there has been no real dialogue between the institutions and the parties to the industrial relations system, which would certainly have helped to better align the competences to be certified with the contractual systems for classifying personnel. This would have represented a fundamental opportunity for the implementation in terms of the system of such an important reform.

On this front, however, there is the greatest cultural resistance. Meanwhile, the collective agreement is required to update itself not easily, as it implies overcoming the limited vision of qualification, now unable to summarize the real potential of workers' professional knowledge. And then there is a technical problem, due to the excessive number of profiles contained in the current national collective labour agreements, which makes it difficult to effectively revise them.

36

Now, however, the greatest difficulty concerns the understandable concern of the social partners, with respect to possible claims, including economic ones, of workers involved in processes of validation and certification of skills. This is the intra-company dimension of skills certification, which is currently one of the most controversial aspects of the institute. It has been seen, in fact, that the training underlying the certification of skills performs a double occupational function: one oriented towards the "creation of new job opportunities", the other aimed at guaranteeing the protection of existing job positions. From this last point of view, one of the most interesting aspects concerns the continuing distinction between subjective professionalism and objective professionalism. The first indicates the professional aptitude of the worker, the second refers to the performance deduced in the contract and has a practical value, alluding to the tasks that the worker is called upon to perform.

This is the main limitation of the certification of intra-company skills, since, at the current state of the legislation, any enrichment of knowledge and skills of the worker in the workplace would only feed a



sense of personal affirmation, to be asserted only outside the contract and not inside it. The theme intersects one of the most discussed aspects of the so-called in-company training, of which the discipline of employment contracts with training purposes shows the enormous limits. Emblematic, in this sense, is the system that governs the apprenticeship contract, where training is delegated to a third party, disregarding any type of role to the company, probably also because of the shared fears that an extension of work could lead to a maximization of profits behind the words in the paycheck “training hours”.

This is why one of the main criticisms levelled at the Italian training system concerns precisely the difficulty of establishing correct links between those who provide training and the labor market, when in reality it is precisely from the needs of the production system that it is necessary to start to provide good training, in order to really increase the opportunities for meeting demand and supply of labor.

Other practical critical issues concern the responsibility for the slowness with which the system is asserting itself. As in the case of the reported excessive bureaucratization of the mechanisms for verifying the requirements for certification, which risks making the system too cumbersome and therefore ineffective. The system, even in the most advanced regions, is often cumbersome, but above all lacking in terms of knowledge. Citizens know little and make little use of certification systems that are not adequately publicized and whose fundamental usefulness cannot be transmitted. These are aspects that seem marginal, but which, in a de jure condendo perspective, must be considered.



CONCLUSIONS

Market transitions require very important choices. Workers will increasingly experience periods of unemployment between jobs. It is therefore necessary to support people in these transitional phases, strengthening their skills and directing them towards the jobs of the future.

The moment we are experiencing is of great potential, with the adoption of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), Italy will be able to design a country capable of making the economy more sustainable and competitive. If so, however, growth must be sustained by providing the right skills to support change.

A decisive role in this context can be played by the certification of skills that focuses attention on the right of the individual to the certification of his skills and is part of a broad system logic that hinges on the identification of some and certain professional standards, to be correlated to a national repertoire of professions. Based on these standards, workers can have their skills acquired during their working lives recognised, which are made legible to positively address employment transitions within the labor market.

38

In conclusion, people have a wealth of skills to invest that constitutes added value for the labor market, for companies that will be able to let themselves be contaminated by the knowledge and skills of workers who enable and transversal. To restart with confidence and dynamism, companies need to be able to find skills and citizens to be able to see them recognized.



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