

3.1 The institutional framework

Austria

In Austria, compulsory education lasts 9 years, from age 6 to 15 included. Compulsory schooling ends with the first year of upper secondary education. Vocational training plays an important role in the Austrian educational system, with a broad range of vocational training paths leading to different qualifications, including apprenticeship training. Generally speaking, upon completion of lower secondary education (Hauptschule), young people wishing to take up apprenticeship training may attend an introductory year at the Polytechnische Schule, after which they move on to the apprenticeship scheme. No special prior qualifications are required for apprenticeship training.

Apprenticeships are regulated by the Vocational Training Act (Berufsausbildungsgesetz or BAG), containing binding rules issued by the Ministry of Economy for workplace training. Only apprenticeships in agriculture and forestry are subject to specific rules laid down by the Vocational Training Act for agriculture and forestry (Land- und Forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz or LFBAG).

For each type of apprenticeship the law sets out a corresponding job profile; this is defined and structured, over the various years of apprenticeship, as a set of professional skills that the apprentice must receive through workplace training. For recently regulated apprenticeships, the law also provides, alongside the competences required for the relevant job profiles, a description – in the form of a short list – of the activities the apprentice should be able to perform.

Apprenticeships normally last between 2 and 4 years. To help young people choose the apprenticeship best suited to them (out of a total of no less than 204 profiles), the State offers special guidance and support:

- the Guidance Service offered by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), which deals with training placement activities, matching young people and the enterprises notifying their apprenticeship vacancies;
- the competent apprenticeship agencies of the Chambers of Commerce of the single provinces, which have an in-depth grasp of the local situation and needs and can provide preliminary information and guidance to apprenticeship seekers (www.bic.at);
- the Federal Chamber of Commerce which, in partnership with the AMS, has developed a service for online research of enterprises offering apprenticeships (www.ams.at/lehrstellen).

All vocational training paths lasting more than 2 years, besides delivering the concerned professional qualification, also qualify for tertiary education, either directly, by sitting a final exam, or indirectly, based on the grades received in extra exams. Apprenticeship certificates are equivalent to ISCED level 3B.

Besides workplace training, apprentices are also required to attend a part-time professional school providing the basic theoretical knowledge connected with the employment, as well as supporting and integrating the workplace training and broadening the apprentices' trivia.

Germany

In Germany compulsory education lasts 10 years. Young people interested in apprenticeship training do not require any special qualifications.

In Germany, the 16 Länder are responsible for all legislation relating to education and culture, so they have joined forces in a Standing Conference (KMK) to ensure a certain degree of uniformity and comparability at Federal level, especially with regard to school and higher education policies. Legislation, in fact, differs only slightly among the various Länder.

Vocational training, instead, is governed with the involvement and coordination of the Federal Government, the Governments of the Länder, the enterprises and the trade unions, all on an equal footing and according to the 'principle of consent'.

The legal basis for vocational training is the Consolidation Act on Vocational Training (Berufsbildungsgesetz BBiG) and the Trade and Crafts Code (Handwerksordnung HWO).

The Federal Government is responsible for workplace training, while the Länder are responsible for regulating vocational training in the schools and, therefore, are also responsible for professional schools.

Workplace training has led to the development of a third system, in between the market and the State, subject to joint control. Dual system governance is characterised by a strong partnership between the State and the trade unions.

The Federal Government is responsible for defining the contents of the State-recognised vocational training figures (in the dual system), except in the case of school-based training; it provides funding for special research projects, to ensure the continuous updating of vocational training.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is responsible for general policy issues in the field of vocational education and training, while the recognition of the single jobs requiring specific vocational training is the task of the Regional Ministries having competence in the respective employment sector.

In the vast majority of cases, the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology (BMWi), but approval by the BMBF is always required.

Therefore, the BMBF's role is to manage and coordinate the vocational training policies, with respect to all of the single training paths related to the different job profiles. The key national institution for building consensus among the partners involved in vocational training is the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), which performs researches on workplace training and provides consulting services to the Federal Government and to trainers.

The work on the regulations concerning training and curricula is coordinated by all the partners involved. A key role is played by the enterprises and trade unions; the Chambers of Commerce provide consulting and monitoring services to the enterprises with regard to the training paths, the contracts and the overall organisation of exams; the social partners agree – without the involvement of the Federal Government – on the details of vocational training, especially with regard to the allowance paid to apprentices, within the framework of free collective bargaining.

There are about 330 recognised professional figures over all sectors, most of which are organised within the dual system framework, while only several of these are based on full-time schooling (healthcare sector).

Apprenticeships last between two and three and a half years, depending on the professional sector.

Intensive guidance is provided, from the ninth year of schooling:

in schools, with the support of the representatives of the regional Employment Agencies;

through agencies offering youth consulting services, such as the Jugendberufsagentur (youth vocational consulting agency) and the Berufsinformationszentrum (vocational information centre);
 through the Employment Centres, which provide information on professional jobs and apprenticeship vacancies;
 through the Chambers of Commerce, which provide a full range of information on training vacancies in the dual system, as well as consulting services;
 training vacancy ads in newspapers and on the Internet.

Italy

The Italian partners - the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Autonomous Provinces of Bolzano and Trento – refer to the same nationwide regulatory framework, which is presented below, while the local authorities have a certain degree of legal, institutional and enforcement autonomy.

The central government in Italy is exclusively responsible for laying down general rules on education and employment and determining the minimum standards to be guaranteed throughout the country.

The regions and autonomous provinces have concurrent legislative powers in the fields of education and employment (and therefore on apprenticeships, with regard to the employment relationships) and exclusive powers in the field of vocational education and training and apprenticeship training.

Under the Italian Constitution, schools have a degree of didactic, organisational and research/experimentation/development autonomy.

National law rules (Law 53/2003 and Legislative Decree 76/2005) establish the right/duty of all citizens to education and training for at least 12 years, or until the attainment of a 3-year professional qualification within the age of 18. This right/duty includes a compulsory education period of 10 years (from 6 to 16 years of age), consisting of 8 years of primary and lower secondary education and the first 2 years of upper secondary education (DM 139/2007). Upon completion of the first 8 years of primary and lower secondary education, the last 2 years of compulsory education (from 14 to 16 years of age) may be completed at either an upper secondary school run by the State (licei, i.e. upper secondary schools specializing in humanities, science etc., as well as technical and professional schools), or in vocational education and training paths organised by the regions (Law 133/2008).

The last compulsory education year (corresponding to the 10th year, at about 15 years of age) may also be completed in an apprenticeship programme (Law 183/2010 and Legislative Decree 167/2011 Consolidation Act on Apprenticeship).

Upon completion of compulsory education, each student (on his or her request) is issued a certificate of the basic skills attained throughout his or her compulsory school career.

Upon completion of the lower secondary school, young people may choose between either 5-year upper secondary paths (licei, technical and professional schools) subject to nationwide regulations, or (3 or 4-year) vocational education and training paths organised by the regional governments.

On 13 July 2015, a law was enacted reforming the national education and training system and providing for reorganisation of the existing law provisions, called “La Buona Scuola” (The Good School) (Law No. 107 dated 13 July 2015), which has innovated and improved the organisation and realisation of educational and training paths, without, however, affecting the organisation of the curricula, which was reformed in 2010.

There are three different types of apprenticeships, regulated by Legislative Decree No. 167 dated 14 September, 2011 (known as the Consolidation Act on Apprenticeships):

apprenticeships for attaining professional qualifications, opening up job opportunities for young people aged between 15 and 25 years under training contracts of no more than three years, or four in the case of the so-called “4-year regional diploma”. The training curriculum (theory and practice), the specific qualifications awarded and the number of training hours are established by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces consistently with the minimum national standards (see the agreements signed by the State-Region conference). The minimum national training standard is 400 hours per year.

apprenticeships for attaining professional skills or trade contracts, opening up job opportunities for young people aged between 18 and 29 years, or 17 in the case of persons holding a professional qualification, for acquiring technical-professional and specialist skills depending on the relevant professional profiles and lasting no more than three years as concerns the training part, or five in the case of the crafts specified in the relevant collective bargaining arrangements.

apprenticeships for higher training and research, targeting students aged between 18 and 29 years, or 17 in the case of persons holding a professional qualification, for research activities or for obtaining a diploma or attending higher training paths.

Vocational training is, of course, part and parcel of an apprenticeship contract, which, together with the related training plan, must be signed by both the employer and the trainee.

Under the apprenticeship arrangements, the employer is obliged to both remunerate the trainee for his/her work and provide the necessary training for obtaining the professional (re)qualifications.

This type of contract contains a number of tax and other facilitations for the enterprises participating in the scheme.

Apprentices are paid for the number of hours of actual work and the hours of training as well.

The rules governing apprenticeships have recently been amended by Legislative Decree No. 81 dated 15 June 2015, implementing Law No. 183 dated 10 December 2014 (known in Italy as the “Jobs Act²”), which has radically reformed the apprenticeship regulations.

The new apprenticeship arrangements also feature three different types, with substantial changes to the first and third type, i.e. the apprenticeships leading to formal qualifications. There now are:

apprenticeships for attaining professional qualifications and diplomas, the upper secondary school diploma and the advanced technical specialisation certificate (art. 43 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2015);

apprenticeships for attaining professional skills (art. 44 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2015);

apprenticeships for higher training and research (art. 45 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2015).

The innovations concern the definition of apprenticeship, the nature of which is confirmed as an “open-ended contract aimed at training and employment”, while the internal structure of the three types of apprenticeship has been deeply modified. The first type has been broadened in its scope and now allows to obtain not just a 3-year qualification or professional diploma within the framework of the regional

² Law No. 183 dated 10 December 2014, delegating the Government to take due measures with respect to the reform of the social safety net schemes, the employment and proactive policy services, and to reorganise the rules concerning employment contracts as well as inspection activities and measures for the protection and reconciliation of care, life and work requirements”, effective from 16 December 2014

vocational education and training paths, but also an upper secondary school diploma or advanced technical specialisation certificate. The broadening of the scope of this type of apprenticeship has determined the downsizing of the scope of the third type of apprenticeship, which concerns non-academic tertiary education (advanced technical diplomas granted by Higher Technical Schools), university training (bachelor, specialist and master degrees, research doctorates), research activities and internships for access to the regulated professions. There are few innovations regarding apprenticeships for professional skills, except for the abolition of the so-called “trade contracts” envisaged in the 2011 Consolidation Act.

Type 1 and 3 apprenticeships are aimed at “training”; they are structured in such a manner as to be organically integrated “in a dual training & work system” and, as such, represent the Italian version of the German model. In the case of type 1 and 3 apprenticeships, the training plan is compiled by the training institution, with the involvement of the enterprise. Furthermore, the general tasks of the national collective bargaining have been downsized: this is now responsible for the overall regulation of the system and no longer of the minimum duration, illegitimate dismissal and contract withdrawal, which are all defined within the regulation.

The regulation of the system still falls under the responsibility of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. Changes have been made to the procedures through which type 1 and 3 apprenticeship contracts can be concluded, introducing the obligation, for the employer, to sign a specific protocol beforehand with the training establishment which the prospective apprentice is attending, and the individual training plan, which was already provided for under the previous regulations.

The maximum length of off-the-job training provided by the training establishments is defined, with regard to the various types of final qualifications granted in accordance with the type 1 and 3 apprenticeships. The internal workplace training is also defined differently, as the difference between the defined length of the learning path and the off-the-job training.

The remuneration structure for the type 1 apprenticeships is entirely overhauled, by subtracting from the apprentice’s “wage” the total hours spent in off-the-job training. With regard to the internal workplace training, an amount equal to 10% of the remuneration due is recognised, unless otherwise provided by the relevant collective bargaining rules. This amounts to a significant reduction of costs, to which we must add the economic incentive measures provided by article 32 of the Decree for proactive policies (Legislative Decree No. 150 dated 24 September 2015).

The new regulation provides for definition of the apprenticeship training standards, which will be adopted with an ad hoc decree by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, in agreement with the Ministry of Education, University and Research and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, subject to a prior agreement with the State-Region Conference, which was decided on 1 October 2015. This understanding, that will be followed by the adoption of the relevant decree, is particularly significant because it sets out the key traits of the dual system introduced by this reform.

Alongside apprenticeships, that to all intents and purposes constitute an employment relationship, there are other regulated forms of work-based learning that can also be linked to one another, namely school-work alternance and various types of workplace training.

School-work alternance is a teaching method that combines upper secondary school education and vocational education and training. It consists in alternating classroom work and periods of workplace training. The recipients of this method are students aged 15 or more who are willing to participate in this educational path. The recent educational reform law has extended to and made it compulsory for all students attending the last three years of upper secondary schools to take part in a school-work alternance scheme for at least 200 hours in the case of *licei*, and 400 hours in the case of technical schools.

Traineeship may be classified, together with apprenticeship, as the main work integration instrument for young people, a sort of bridge that closes the gap between schools and enterprises and includes curricular traineeships, summer traineeships and orientation traineeships.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

The region Friuli-Venezia Giulia has set up 3-year vocational education and training paths (IeFP = VET): a first year is for orientation aimed at choosing a professional path, while the subsequent 2 years focus on attaining a professional qualification, after which the trainee may choose to either find a job straight away, continue the training path for a further year to attain a professional diploma, or continue in one of the 5-year nationwide paths mentioned above.

The training is provided by temporary groupings of vocational training centres, officially authorised by the Region on the basis of a public call for applications.

The 3-year training courses may also be provided by State professional schools.

Autonomous Province of Bolzano

In the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, vocational training is one of the primary competences recognised by the State to the Province and, therefore, this latter has the authority to regulate the matter. Instead, education and employment (and, consequently, apprenticeships) are secondary competences, which means that the Province may regulate the details, albeit within the general framework, and in accordance with the principles, laid down by the central government.

Upper secondary schools (licei, technical or professional schools) and vocational training are divided into three independent language-based systems: Italian, German and Ladin.

Upon completing the lower secondary education (the former middle school or scuola media), pupils may choose to enrol in either an upper secondary school, in a full-time vocational training path or in an apprenticeship scheme (in the latter case, the pupil must first attend 1 year of preliminary training at school, because apprenticeship training is not allowed below 15 years). Upon completion of this path, after sitting an exam, pupils are granted a 3-year qualification or a 4-year professional diploma.

The over 20 qualifications or diplomas, in a broad range of subjects, granted in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano are recognised at national and EU level.

Effective from the 2014/2015 school year, a further year has been introduced to prepare for the so-called "State exam", awarded after the professional diploma.

Apprenticeships are based on a dual training model; this means that young people, in order to obtain a 3-year professional qualification, are required to attend both workplace training (in accordance with the workplace training framework put into place by the enterprise) and classroom training (in accordance with the relevant teaching programme).

Apprentices are required to personally apply for apprenticeship vacancies (with the assistance of the local authorities), after which the employer notifies the hiring to the provincial apprenticeship office and the latter then enrolls the pupil in the respective professional school. Apprentices, therefore, cannot personally enrol in a professional school.

Under this apprenticeship model, training is provided only in the sectors and for the professional roles for which there is a demand, thus avoiding mismatches between training decisions by young people and the actual demand by enterprises.

Autonomous Province of Trento

The Autonomous Province of Trento (PAT) is a province enjoying a very broad autonomy (under a statute approved in 1948 and reformed in 1972), which further characterises it compared to ordinary Italian regions.

With regard to the national framework, which in all its measures refers to the special autonomous status of the provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the PAT has primary competence in all vocational training matters (including the training component of apprenticeships) and concurrent competence in education and employment matters.

As a result of its special status, the PAT has always greatly invested in:

- a vocational training system, since 1959 (first provincial law on vocational training), systematically innovating its paths, which were increased to 3 years in 1994 (nationwide in 2003), and introducing in 2003 (nationwide in 2010) a fourth year leading to obtainment of a professional diploma;
- a school system, the relevant implementation rules of which were issued in 1988, which has entailed provincial competence in school staff, nevertheless ensuring employee mobility outside the province as well;
- employment policies (see Provincial Law 19/1983),

acting in many cases as a forerunner with regard to reforms and orientations subsequently applied nationwide.

The decisions taken at provincial level with regard to the upper secondary school paths concern:

- the non-activation of the entire Vocational Education (IP = VE) offering, with the exception of the sectors and paths that could not find an outlet in Technical Education (IT = TE) and in Vocational Education and Training (VET=leFP);
- the continuity, in the first 2 years of upper secondary school, with the underlying primary and lower secondary school paths, and the unitary nature of the whole upper secondary education cycle, in order to ensure the training equivalence of the various (educational and vocational training) paths within the compulsory education system.

The provincial vocational education and training (VET) paths are grouped into three sectors (agriculture and environment, manufacturing and crafts, services), 12 courses, 9 branches, 12 options leading to 24 professional qualifications and 21 professional diplomas, and are organised as follows:

- an initial 2-year period, followed by a third year for attaining the professional qualification, and by a fourth year for attaining the professional diploma;
- a 4-year period, comprising two 2-year periods, for special paths identified by the Provincial Government, upon completion of which a professional diploma is awarded (without the possibility of leaving the path on the third year).

The VET system of the Province of Trento also enables students who have attained a professional diploma to sit an ad hoc State vocational training exam after attending a special 1-year course.



The 1-year course for sitting the State exam (CAPES) is one of a range of other opportunities offered by the province for moving from vocational education and training to upper secondary education (preferably in a technical school, although this step can also be made to the licei) and for integrating upper secondary level education and training paths.

Assistance is provided in the transition from the initial vocational training institution to the various types of upper secondary schools, and represent an important example of permeability between the different types of upper secondary paths in the Trentino educational system.

As concerns apprenticeships based on the dual approach, the Autonomous Province of Trento has only recently started defining the model for attaining a professional qualification and diploma that will come up beside the full-time VET (vocational education and training) paths, and implemented it for the first time through the so-called “Garanzia giovani” project.

Poland

According to article 70 of the country’s Constitution, Poland recognises the right to education of each person and the public authorities guarantee universal and equal access to education for all citizens. The Constitution provides for free education in public schools and, since 1997, compulsory education has been extended to 18 years.

Under the Polish educational system, vocational training can be undertaken upon completion of lower secondary education and, following the 2012 reform, the following options are available:

- a basic 3-year vocational training, upon completion of which the student qualifies as an apprentice following an apprenticeship exam, or a professional diploma if the student sits qualification exams for a specific job, and which also entitles to continue training in an adult secondary school;
- a 4-year technical secondary school, upon completion of which the student is awarded a diploma qualifying him or her to practice a specific profession, following an exam, and to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate, after having sat a further exam;
- a post-secondary school for students who already have a secondary education, for a training period of no more than two and a half years;
- a special 3-year school preparing for work, for students with mental or physical disabilities.

From 2011, the professional profiles and relevant educational and training paths have been overhauled and it has been established if and which professional qualifications can be granted upon completion of a non-school-based education qualified as a vocational training course.

The new classification of the jobs taught at professional schools includes 200 professions and 252 qualifications within the said professions.