

**VALUE: ITALY National Report**  
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This document reports on the interaction between University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and volunteering in Italy.

## **1. Overview of volunteering – university interaction**

### 1.1 Volunteering in Italy

Volunteering in Italy has undergone changes in its development and mission through time, albeit always retaining the primary values of solidarity and gratuitousness. The third sector constitutes a momentous and differentiated galaxy of different juridical categories, united by the common element of not being run by the state and not making profit.

The third sector in Italy includes: voluntary organisations, social promotion organisations, social cooperatives, civil law foundations, foundations of banking origin, NGOs for development of international cooperation, committees, Public Charity and Assistance Institutes, and religious charities.

One of the most recent statistics (2001, ISTAT) reveals the existence of 235.232 not for profit organisations, among which 26.400 voluntary organisations.

An up warding trend, anyway, is confirmed by the most recent survey (2007, CSVnet) which states that voluntary organisations were at that time 43.500.

According to a survey of 2003 (ISTAT), their distribution is homogeneous: 28,5% are in the North West, 31,5% in the North East, 19,3% in the Centre Regions and 20,7% in the South and Islands. As regards their relation with other institutions, public or private ones, 49,2% of voluntary organisations declare they cooperate in a formal way, by signing written agreements. For the 64,8% of the cases, voluntary organisations collaborate with public institutions, while just for 4,7% collaborate with profit organisations and businesses. Among the public institutions, most of the agreements are signed with municipalities (47,8%), followed by local health institutions (27%).

In order to have agreements with public institutions, notably local authorities, voluntary organisations need to be registered in Regional registers. In 2003<sup>1</sup>, the voluntary organisations (VOs) officially included in regional and provincial registers were 21,021. If we compare this with the previous census (2001) we can see that the number of VOs has increased by 14.9%.

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<sup>1</sup> The following data are from the ISTAT (National institute of Statistics) Report dated 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005 "The Voluntary organizations in Italy – year 2003".

The human resources involved in (officially registered) VOs are 868,000 people, of which 826,000 are volunteers, and 12,000 paid staff, while the rest is made of 13,000 contract workers, 7,000 clergy men and women and 9,000 young people involved through National Civil Service programme<sup>2</sup>.

Health (28%) and Social Care (27.8%) are the fields where the greatest number of VOs are active in. The percentage of VOs active in Culture and Recreation, though, increased from 11.7% in the year 1993 to 14.6% in the year 2003, while the ones active in Civil Protection increased from 6.4% to 9.6%.

Data in the table below show the services offered by officially registered VOs.

#### Main services offered by voluntary organizations - year 2003

Services	Number of organizations	%
Listening, support, emotional care	4.174	19,9
Blood donation	3.658	17,4
Leisure and recreation	3.047	14,5
Social inclusion	2.743	13,0
Implementation of specific courses	2.720	12,9
Organization of entertainment events	2.642	12,6
Realization of theatre, music and cinema shows	2.554	12,1
Awareness raising campaigns	2.482	11,8
Home help and similar	2.477	11,8
Mobility services for the elderly and the disabled	2.397	11,4
Civil protection exercises	2.381	11,3
Aid and transport services to the sick	2.248	10,7
Rights advice	1.958	9,3
Reception	1.814	8,6
Telephone help-line	1.796	8,5
Guided trips	1.766	8,4
Organization of sport events	1.715	8,2
Interventions in emergency and disasters situations	1.704	8,1
Traffic control during public events	1.690	8,0
Organizations of residential vacations	1.625	7,7
Environment protections	1.561	7,4
Health services	1.432	6,8
Fire fighting	1.428	6,8
Cleaning of parks and pathways	1.225	5,8
School help	1.052	5,0
Collection and distribution of clothing, food and medicine	1.019	4,8
Legal and fiscal aid	1.003	4,8
Financial help abroad	992	4,7
Child sponsorship	986	4,7
Adult and the aged education	982	4,7

The sum of percentages is over 100 because each organisation can offer more than one service.

<sup>2</sup> National Civil Service, set up with the law 06-03-2001 n° 64, originally an alternative to compulsory military service but from the year 2005 on a completely voluntary basis, is the opportunity offered to young Italian citizens aged 18 to 28 to devote one year of their life for a solidarity commitment intended as a commitment for the common good. Volunteers acquire thus experience useful in their future careers and also get a basic allowance for their time spent doing the civil service which amounts to 433.70 euro in the year 2009.

The total amount of incomes of VOs is 1,630 million euro. This amount is equally divided between public (agreements with public authorities) and private funds (donations, offers, inheritance, members' contributions).

The activities done by VOs are mainly in the social sector, followed by health, culture and recreation, civil protection, education and research, environment, protection of rights and sport.

According to the second bi-annual report on volunteering in Italy, by the National Observatory on Volunteering, the number of voluntary organizations has been growing steadily in the past few years. National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) data show that the number of voluntary organizations increased by 152% from 1995 to 2003, while the number of volunteers has increased in the same period by 71.4%. This figure shows that the average number of volunteers per organization has decreased: in 1995 was 58, in 2003 is 39, and over half (53.3%) of VOs operates with less than 21 volunteers. The share of small organizations, having fewer than 11 volunteers, has also increased by 6.8% in the years under scrutiny (1995-2003). There are more men volunteers (54.4%), although the percentage of women has increased from 40.2% to 45.6%. The largest age group among volunteers are adults aged 30 to 54 (41.1%), educated to upper secondary school or university level (57.2%) and in employment (52.2%).

## 1.2 University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in Italy

Italy is encountering more difficulties than other European countries in meeting the Lisbon objectives as far as Lifelong Learning is concerned<sup>3</sup>. Only 6.2% of the Italian adult population (aged 25 to 64) took part in the year 2005 in Lifelong Learning activities in Italy, while the European average is 10.8%. The Lisbon objective in this field is to reach 12.5%. The reasons for Italy's poor performance are thought to be the following.

- Scarce, if not inexistent, flexibility of the educational system. Universities, schools, vocational training institutions, etc. are not adequately equipped and are not geared institutionally for adult education and training.
- Low percentage of people educated to university level, which is less than half the rate in Western European countries. In Italy there are fewer people with higher education and therefore minor capacity for initiative and self-learning, and the system and individuals alike are less able to react when faced with many changes and instable work environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 2006. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE LISBON OBJECTIVES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING – Report based on indicators and benchmarks. Report 2006. (Brussels, 16.5.2006 – SEC(2006) 639).

### 1.3 The political and legislative context in Italy

#### *1.3.1 Volunteering policy*

The third sector has not yet been placed into a juridical framework that encompasses the entire sector, rather laws have been provided only for its specific components. Volunteering for example has been dealt with by the Framework Law on Volunteering (Law n° 266/1991) disciplining only voluntary organisations. (The law does not cover other types of not for profit organisations which also involve volunteers, like NGOs for international solidarity and development, social cooperatives or social promotion organisations in sports and culture.)

The Framework Law on volunteering, law n° 266/1991, recognises the social value and the function of volunteering as expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism. It defined the definition of voluntary activities and organisations and relationships between voluntary organisations and public authorities.

##### a) Definition of voluntary activity and organisations

The Republic of Italy recognises the social value and function of voluntary activities as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism. It promotes its development by safeguarding its autonomy and favours its original contribution towards social, civil and cultural aims defined by the State and local authorities.

This Law defines as voluntary activities those given in person, spontaneously and freely, through an organisation of which volunteer is a member, with not for profit aim direct or indirect, exclusively for solidarity reasons.

Voluntary activity can not be paid in any way, not even by the beneficiary. The volunteer can only be reimbursed by the voluntary organisation of which he/she is a member for the direct expenses incurred necessary for the activity itself, within limits previously determined by the voluntary organisations themselves.

Being a volunteer is not compatible with any form of paid work within the same organisation.

According to the Law, voluntary organisation are free of charge for beneficiaries, their aim is solidarity towards target users or towards common goods, their yearly balance is approved by the assembly of members and they are not for profit. Furthermore, they have a democratic internal structure, their representatives are elected and not paid, their members have rights and duties and there are criteria for admission and dismissal of members.

Insurance is obligatory for injury and sickness related to activity, and for third party liability and, within agreements with public institutions for the provision of services, the local authority or public institution is obliged to pay for the insurance of volunteers involved.

As well as specific laws, very important for volunteering are also the laws that led to profound changes in the relationship between the State and local authorities, and in the relationship between local authorities and citizens and their

organizations. These laws reformed the institutional competencies on the principle of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity<sup>4</sup>. Along the lines of the Law on Volunteering (Law n° 266/1991), the last paragraph of the reform of the Book V of the Constitution<sup>5</sup> highlights the importance of volunteering, affirming that the pursuit of “general interest” is not the exclusive competence of public institutions, but also regards the action of citizens.

The framework Law on volunteering regulates volunteering on a national level, but each Region draws up specific Regional laws to regulate volunteering at regional level.

#### Fiscal benefits

Registered voluntary organisations are exempted from payment of certain state taxes. For persons and firms there are fiscal deductions for liberalities. In 1998 fiscal benefits for not for profit organisations of social utility were defined by a decree, and registered voluntary organisations included among beneficiaries. In 2006 a state provision allowed citizens to indicate a voluntary organisation to which five per thousand part of yearly taxes on earnings are to be given.

#### 1.3.1.1 Volunteering infrastructure

##### The Voluntary Support Centres (VSCs)

The Voluntary Support Centres are foreseen by the Law 266/91 and by the Ministerial Decree of 8<sup>th</sup> October 1997. They are at the service of voluntary organisations and, at the same time, managed by them, following the principle of volunteering autonomy that the Law 266 aimed to affirm. They are in every Italian region, except the autonomous Province of Bolzano. Following the Law, they are financed by bank foundations.

Amongst 77 VSCs, 64 are active at a provincial level, 9 are regional and 4 are established at an interprovincial or sub provincial level. If we count all the local points and delegations, we have a total of 414 branches and info points for supporting voluntary organisations. The 94% of members is constituted by 8,800 voluntary organisations and by their coordination bodies or federations that in total represent 48% of the volunteering in Italy.

CSVnet – National Coordination of Volunteer Support Centres - was formally constituted on 11th January 2003 with the aim of gathering, giving continuity to and strengthening the experience of the National Association of Service Centres, constituted in 1999. Today it unifies and represents 72 Volunteer Support Centres (VSCs).

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<sup>4</sup> The reform process commenced with Law n° 266/1991 *Regulation of Local autonomies* and Law N° 241/90 commonly known as “Law on transparency”.

<sup>5</sup> “The State, Regions, Provinces, Cities and Municipality foster the autonomous initiatives of single citizens and/or groups of citizens; to carry out activities of general interest on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity.”

### Areas of activity

In 2007, the system of Italian VSCs received 108 million Euro of core funding and delivered services to 25,000 VO.

According to the CSVnet 2007 yearly monitoring report, VSCs delivered 67,045 consultancies in great majority to VO, brokered 18,541 citizens towards volunteering opportunities and organised 25,324 more complex accompanying activities.

The areas of activities can be divided as follows:

- promotion;
- consultancy;
- training,
- information, documentation and research,
- project support.

### *1.3.2 Lifelong learning policy in Italy*

The Italian Ministry of Education formally recognises the importance of Lifelong learning as an instrument of growth for the individual and the society as a whole, and the need of coordinating priorities and strategies for policies in this field at higher education level, with special consideration of the Lisbon objectives and therefore has formally set up on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2007 a working group on Lifelong learning. Such a group is made of experts from universities and research bodies operating in cooperation with the general Directorate for University of the Ministry itself<sup>6</sup>. So far, guidelines have been drawn for future policies to be implemented:

- Strengthening, stimulating and coordinating Lifelong learning activities together with the Regions, in the frame work of a law being drawn together by different Ministries.
- Creating a coordinated and effective national and regional system for university lifelong learning.

To advance from the current stage to a proper structural action the Ministry deems necessary a joint commitment among the institutional actors to implement:

- A Law of principles and a national action plan funded by the State.
- Framework agreements between the Ministries, the universities and major state bodies.
- Experimenting new models of initiative and organisation for the universities in the frame of the regional system for the higher lifelong learning.

The Ministry proposes to create Lifelong Learning Centres in Universities to help individuals in their professional development, to train new trainers and to carry out an effective partnership with the territory, the organisations and the enterprises. These Centres should operate within a regional and national

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.miur.it/0006Menu\\_C/0012Docume/0015Atti\\_M/6459Decret\\_cf2.htm](http://www.miur.it/0006Menu_C/0012Docume/0015Atti_M/6459Decret_cf2.htm)

framework which needs the implementation of a system of accreditation of prior learning (formal, informal, not formal) on the basis of national guidelines linked to the future national system of accreditation, defining minimal standards of competences and accreditation, with a view of integrating the different educational systems (according to the EU strategies such as ECVET, Europass, EQF, etc.). The Regions will have the task of coordinating and integrating the educational provision within systems for lifelong learning on a territorial and thematic basis, involving Universities and other stakeholders.

The actuation of such declaration of intents is still to come.

The level of development of the current policies on validation of formal and informal learning places Italy in the group of countries with an average level of development, where validation is still an emerging process<sup>7</sup>. That means that an integrated and global national approach has yet to be identified, although there are some significant pilot schemes.

As stated in an ISFOL volume on the subject<sup>8</sup>, in Italy at the moment a “system response” is lacking. In the nineties various experiences were started, but the path to accreditation and validation of informal learning is “still today... far from representing a viable tool for the professional and career development of adults and workers”.<sup>9</sup>

What we lack still is an “institutional and formal national system of validation” anchored to a standard competences system.

The most interesting and (also internationally) acknowledged experiences have been so far<sup>10</sup> :

- The introduction and experimentation in some Regions of the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* (Citizen Training Record), an instrument to collect, summarise and document the different learning experiences of citizens and workers as well as their competences achieved in a variety of formal, informal, and not formal contexts, aiming at improving the expendability of competences and employability of individuals. It was set up through the Inter-ministerial decree of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2005 and is given out by Regions since professional training and accreditation of competences is their prerogative. The Booklet can be considered the Italian equivalent of Europass<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> European inventory in validation of non-formal and informal learning, European Commission, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> See: Perulli (2006).

<sup>9</sup> See: page 15, Perulli (2006).

<sup>10</sup> See: Otero, Hawley, and Nevala (eds) (2008); Perulli (2006); Di Francesco G. (2008) and Aribaud M. (2008)

<sup>11</sup>

<http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Lavoro/Europalavoro/SezioneCittadini/Formarsi/FormazionePermanente/Libretform.htm>

- The validation of training credits, intending to place value on the individuals' prior learning to give access to training even to those without formal qualification, or an adaptation of the length and contents of the training process.
- The regional systems of accreditation of competences of the Emilia Romagna and Tuscany Region, which are one of the few examples in Italy of a complete structure (for a "Regional Qualification system") where learning can be validated.
- The Equal project "Investing in People" of the town of Macerata, representing an interesting experience of identifying and valorising informal and not formal learning with the cooperation of human resources management enterprises and public institutions interested in maintaining employability conditions.

Also there are some forms of acknowledgement of competences acquired through work, apprenticeships, or volunteering and civil service in the universities (Ministerial Decree 3/11/1999, n.509) albeit there are not any data available to evaluate their outcomes.

#### 1.4 The volunteering – university interaction in Italy.

There is virtually no research that explores the volunteer perspective on ULLL in Italy.

Systematic interaction between volunteering and universities is also practically non-existent as well as formal practices, although there is instead an ample programme set up nationally by the Ministry of Education which provides for interaction between volunteering and secondary schools, through the intervention of VSCs which hold meeting/seminars/lessons in school and allowing school students the possibility of obtaining school credits through volunteering carried in out in approved VOs.

Volunteering - university interact mainly in the following ways:

1. Representative protagonists of the volunteering world are invited to Universities as testimonials of their practical experiences to render visible and to promote the work of VO and to show the impact of volunteering. The representatives talk to the students about what they do, their motivations, the needs and challenges encountered in their volunteering work. Another important aspect in this consists in illustrating how volunteers complement the professional service provision especially in social and health sectors and to vulnerable target groups.
2. Universities organise for their students work experiences or apprenticeships in voluntary organisations, NGOs, and the students are awarded university course credits upon completion.

3. University Lecturers offer their time to voluntary organisations providing training to volunteers on specific issues, depending on their personal interests.
4. National Civil Service: Civil service is work of public interest. Initially a replacement for a military obligation to which one objects, with the demise of compulsory military service, is now open to all young people aged 18 to 28. All are offered the opportunity of acquiring work experience in a not for profit organisation, on a specific project and with important focus on learning, practising solidarity and acquiring competences. Selected youth get a small salary paid to them by the State. If an ad-hoc agreement is in place between a specific faculty and a voluntary organisation, university students spending one year doing civil service are awarded by their Department University credits for it.
5. Agreements between Universities and voluntary organisations to carry out research in partnership.

Good intentions are not lacking, but practically the autonomy of the Regions as far as Lifelong learning is concerned led to the creation of a very differentiated scenario. At a regional level the need is felt of activating the formalisation and institutionalisation of a system of validation of prior learning, too. The professional standards to be certified, the instruments of certification (commission, certificates, etc) and the activation of procedure of recognition/sharing are still to be defined.

At the moment what emerges are fragmented and localised initiatives, hampered by the lack of an organic framework legitimising and consolidating individual practices.

## **2. Good practice examples and effectiveness of the interaction**

### **2.1 Successes and challenges**

It should be noted that activities of structured and consistent lifelong training of people of all ages and backgrounds are provided by Volunteer Support Centres and Voluntary organisations to prospective volunteers, especially those involved in personal or health care and civil protection.

The opportunity for volunteers of benefitting from lifelong learning is proportional to their level of commitment to the voluntary action, normally is of short of medium length. About 65% of volunteers enjoy various types of training courses offered by the voluntary organisation they belong to.

Training offered directly by VSCs is articulated in courses, seminars and training workshops led by experts chosen and selected by the Centres, or in collaboration with VOs.

Lifelong learning achieved through volunteering can benefit the volunteering itself, but could also have a positive effect outside the organisation (for example in future employment) , if the competences acquired were recognised by systems other than volunteering, for example by:

- University credits for certified volunteering activities in registered VOs (similarly to what is already in place for university students spending one year accomplishing civil service in a voluntary organisation).
- The accreditation within procedures of certification to be implemented in the regional context when the regional system of accreditation of competences will be in place.
- The possible valorisation of long term voluntary involvement within pathways to public examinations for accessing public administration employment.
- The possible recognition by the job market, linked to the transparency of the competences acquired.

The idea that volunteering can represent also a way of developing one's own competences and skills is probably still far from emerging culturally, although it represents a possible element of change to work on.

A further challenge can be found in that validation of competences acquired through volunteering can represent for some of the people involved in volunteering a form of "pressure", to be avoided. Similarly, the introduction of standard elements and/or procedures (i.e. the simple request of producing "evidences") can imply the perception of more limited flexibility, which normally is seen as an important feature of volunteering, so any risk of "institutionalisation" of volunteering paths should be avoided.

## 2.2 Good practice examples and principles

### *2.2.1 Examples of good practice*

Examples of good practice of the existent types of volunteering-university interactions mentioned above are:

**1 Antea Formad, the Centre for Training and Research in Palliative Medicine of the Antea Association.** Antea is an important local voluntary organisation providing free home assistance and hospice care to terminally ill patients of all ages in the city of Rome. It collaborates with "Tor Vergata" University of Rome, organising every year a masters course and implementing master courses, trainings and workshops in Palliative Care & Palliative Medicine. The project includes professional training, refresher courses, stages, seminars and workshops characterised by practical activities and theory.

Antea Formad represents a point of reference for many Italian regions, Hospitals and Universities of Rome, especially with "Tor Vergata" one, which Antea Association is collaborating with for implementation and training courses in order to provide a real and qualified apprenticeship to doctors and nurses thanks to the multi-year experience of the Antea Teachers.

The Clinical Tutors will follow constantly their students personalising the goals, the apprenticeship and the whole vocational training.

**2 FQTS Formazione Quadri Terzo Settore Project (Training for Managers and Elective Representatives of the Third Sector organisations).** Promoted by the Fondazione Sud, the Forum of the Third Sector, the Consulta Nazionale on Volunteering, Convol and CSVnet. The project aims to train a group of the leading persons of the Third Sector in the Southern Regions of Italy with a joint collaboration of University Lecturers, researchers and experts of the volunteering world. The project provides for residential workshops, research and Distance Learning. This project has the following aims:

- Strengthening among the directors the awareness of the identity of volunteering and third sector and its components, its organisational and governance models, the mission towards citizens and communities, the institutions and other subjects of society and economy;
- Promoting the managerial development, through innovative training interventions to augment the competitiveness and efficiency level and to facilitate the organisational adaptation to the trends of their territories.
- Consciously working on the recovery of cognitive, social, civic capital and on the quality of the context, pinpointing factors critical to the development of the third sector and volunteering organisations and to social inclusion.

The two year long training combines various elements:

- Interregional seminars to favour the exchange among directors of the third sector, thanks to the participation of experts in the field and in the reality of southern Italy, and the elaboration of a common mid –to – long term strategy of support to civil society, democratic participation, social and cultural renewal and development of the south.
- Research - Intervention
- Long-distance learning: implementation of an open-source training platform with three long-distance learning modules, duration 120 hours in total.
- Regional training workshops: 4 workshop of 7 hours each for every region involved.
- Implementation of community of networked practices, as instrument for infrastructure-building in the South and for life-long learning.
- Project-work events. In each region, exercises of participated planning of actions among different social actors on specific territories.

In FQTS are directly involved 50 responsables for each of the 6 Italian southern regions, for a total of 300 learners.

By the end of the projects, it is expected that about 3000 people will have been indirectly involved through the project.

**3. Volunteers as testimonials in universities. An example.** Up until the year 2008 (proposed to continue in 2010, after a halt for administrative

reasons), CIESSEVI, the Milan Voluntary Support Centre, organised at the University of Milan, Faculty of Medicine, an optional credit-awarding training module for students called “experiences of volunteering in Lombardy”. Voluntary organisations active in the health sector shared their experiences with the students, coming into the university to talk about them. Similar programmes are rather numerous, present in different regions and regarding different sectors of voluntary activities.

#### **4. University students doing as a compulsory part of their course an (unpaid) apprenticeship in voluntary organisations and obtaining credits from the University for it.**

For example, the University of Pavia offers three paths of this type of interaction, in the faculties of Political Science, that of Letters and Philosophy, and in the faculty of Sport Sciences. During the job placement, which can take place during the second or third year of the degree course at several accredited VOs (i.e. UNICEF Pavia, “D.I.D.I” a VO involved on immigration issues, “Per fare un albero” a VO working with deprived minors, etc.) - the student is assisted by one or two tutors. One of the tutors is from the University, the other from the Voluntary organisation and will be looking after the student throughout its period there. At the end of the job placement the VO tutor will provide the University tutor with an assessment of the work done by student. Depending on the faculty, the placement can last from a minimum of 150 hours (Political Sciences) up to a whole academic year (Sport Sciences). Upon the successful completion of the placement the student is awarded university course credits (from a minimum of 6 to up to 20 credits). Another successful example of this type of interaction is the agreement between the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Faculty of Psychology, and Telefono Rosa Voluntary Organisation for the protection of women from violence and abuse. Psychology students, as part of their degree, are requested to acquire one year practical experience through an internship/placement in the field and the VO provides the opportunity for them of doing so, assigning them a Tutor from the organisation during the experience and, upon completion, a certificate attesting their attendance. During the placement the students will have to follow a specific training path taking into account the professional competences provided for in the specific degree course.

**5. Trainings organised by VSC: collaboration and recognition by the University.** Since the year 2007 the VSC of Milan has been offering IT courses to volunteers with a lecturer indicated by the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. In addition, the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan provides volunteers with the option of taking the ECDL exam and contemplates the possibility of attending some courses, organised in partnership with voluntary organizations in its Lifelong Learning facility at a concessionary fee<sup>12</sup>. Thanks to

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www3.unicatt.it/pls/unicatt/consultazione.mostra\\_pagina?id\\_pagina=649](http://www3.unicatt.it/pls/unicatt/consultazione.mostra_pagina?id_pagina=649)

an agreement between VSC and the University, the participants to IT training courses offered by the VSC will be able to take the ECDL exams at the Department of Lifelong Learning of the Catholic University in Milan, at a reduced concessionary fee normally reserved to graduates of the University itself.

6. Agreement between SPES – Roma and Lazio VSC and the Università Pontificia Salesiana of Rome, Faculty of Sciences of Education for validating the time students spend doing National Civil Service experiences in SPES projects as part of their internship, a mandatory requirement for obtaining their degree.

### *2.2.2 Principles of good practice*

- Having in place a recognised and standardised system of giving university credits to students for the time spent doing voluntary activities, relevant to their course of study, in a registered voluntary organisation. By placing mainstream attention and recognition of volunteering also within the academic curriculum, it could encourage more students to become an active part in addressing community and world problems. Besides gaining experience in a specific field of engagements, students would be solicited to experiment participating to an organised democratic environment, thus gaining direct experiences of participative democracy. Engagement in voluntary organisation is always an important bridge among different generations and, often, also cultures. For VO, this could represent an opportunity to open themselves more to being challenged by new, young, perspectives.
- Having a tutor in charge both in the organisation and in the university. Both for university students and for life long learning paths, it is important that the preparation, tutoring and competence validation is followed in direct cooperation between the university and the voluntary sector people. The two different competences and perspectives can thus complement each other and lead to better understanding and more coherent future developments of collaborations.
- Identifying within VOs and/or within VSCs a function of “responsible for valorisation of competences of volunteers”. For Universities it would represent a necessary clear and competent point of reference. Most importantly, this could provide a chance to introduce into VOs an attention for recognising and cultivating the non formal processes of learning and competences acquired.
- In universities, involving VOs representatives in devising a specific contribution from volunteering to the course of study. From the academic point of view, it offers an insight into the functioning of the principle of subsidiarity and highlights the role of volunteering contribution to social (and economic) cohesion. It is also an excellent device to complete the theoretical learning with real life experience and practical examples. For

VOs it is a good promotion tool and can contribute to better credit with larger public and local institutions.

### **3. Barriers and opportunities for future development**

#### **3.1 Barriers**

The main barriers for development of a successful volunteering- university interaction comes from:

1. The Universities and the public Institutions which control and administer them
  - Lacking and/or insufficient existence, in practice, of an institutional and its accompanying legal framework.
  - Lack of funding investment.
  - Absence of a codified policy and practice of LLL.
  - Great discrepancy in the provision of LLL among the different regions, due to the fact that albeit education is managed by the Ministry of Education, vocational training is the competence of the individual Regions. This has lead to fragmentation and a wide gap among the performance of the northern regions, where there is a more consolidated practice, and the historically poorer southern regions where provision is extremely scarce if any.
  
2. The Universities and the academic world
  - University world is extremely remote from non formal education, it has never involved itself in adult education and training.
  - LLL is a niche interest, seen as irrelevant academically.
  - There is not any common policy among the different universities for the recognition and validation of non formal education.

The system of adult education in Italy is managed by the so-called “people’s universities” which are further education centres, not involved at all with the Universities. Courses are taught by further education lecturers, usually not university lecturers. There are also reading circles, courses run by voluntary organisations and numerous other not for profit associations, and further education courses held by the CTP (Permanent Territorial Centres for Adult Education and Training) set up by the Ministry of Education and intended to integrate vocational training, territorial services and state schools. Universities have never been involved in the system.

#### **3 Voluntary organisations**

- There is a lack of awareness in the voluntary organisations about the importance of the validation of the competences acquired through volunteering.
  - Culturally, in Italy, the concept of LLL is not yet very widespread nor the recognition of prior learning is usually practised.
  - There is little attention, drive and experimentation focused on analysing and putting value to non formal learning that occurs during voluntary activity.
- 4 Government and public institutions
- Although training of volunteers is given importance to and supported, there is no public recognition of the importance and extent of learning occurring through volunteering and there is no mention of volunteering in terms of contribution to life long learning.

### 3.2 Opportunities

- The existing experimental and pilot projects could be built upon and widely expanded through a concerted action between universities and VSCs.
- Awareness raising campaigns on the importance of volunteering and Lifelong learning, making use of the experiences of other European countries.
- Universities and volunteering could work together for codifying a model for the recognition of cross-sectional competences of citizenship, standardization being the foundation for evaluation and assessment, to be integrated in the European Qualification Framework (EQF).
- Through European collaborations “volunteer passport schemes” could be experimented with VOs.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

In Italy, apart from theoretical declarations of intents, the institutions have not yet developed a practical and workable framework for any effective volunteering – university collaboration and interaction. There is great disparity among what is being done in the different Regions, since the competence for vocational training is not a State but a Regional matter. Universities too do not have any common policy for, nor are showing a great degree of openness towards, the validation of any sort of non formal learning or competences acquired non academically. There are not any Lifelong Learning Centres in State Universities that could allow to bridge the gap between universities and the voluntary sector. Culturally, people are still not very familiar with the concept of LLL, which is still very limited and does not take place at Universities but through further education centres on the territory, or through voluntary organisations; this is linked also to scarce work force mobility.

Consequently, experiences of volunteering - university interaction are occasional and isolated, left to the initiative of single VOs or VSCs. Given the current context, we cannot expect any momentum from the Institutions and the Universities but it is the volunteering world which should have a driving role in proposing positive change, in policy and in practice. This process has good starting grounds in the mention of volunteering as element of life long learning also in the “Manifesto of Italian volunteers for Europe” published in 2009.

1. Mainstream the attention for the valorisation of competences acquired through volunteering and for the contribution of volunteering to life long learning into the development programmes of VSCs and develop knowledge, trainings and networking in order to provide services, support and experimentation possibilities to VOs at local level and to national federations and networks.
2. Pursue alliances for academic research, proposals and experimentations with University professors interested in the value and contribution of non formal learning, in order to stimulate public and academic debate and develop jointly good practices.
3. Use European experiences and models as source and reference for trainings and practice and pursue development on this theme through European projects.

## **5. Further information**

### **5.1 Bibliography and references**

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## 5.2 Further resources

### *5.2.1 Websites*

Italian Ministry of Education  
<http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it>

Ministerial Decree for the institution of a working group on Lifelong Learning  
[http://www.miur.it/0006Menu\\_C/0012Docume/0015Atti\\_M/6459Decret\\_cf2.htm](http://www.miur.it/0006Menu_C/0012Docume/0015Atti_M/6459Decret_cf2.htm)

CSVnet – Italian Federation of Voluntary Support Centres  
[www.csvnet.it](http://www.csvnet.it)

ISFOL “The Italian vocational and educational system”  
[http://www.isfol.it/isfol/download/vs\\_the%20italian%20vocational%20and%20educational%20system.pdf](http://www.isfol.it/isfol/download/vs_the%20italian%20vocational%20and%20educational%20system.pdf)

ISTAT National institute of Statistics  
Report on Volunteering in Italy in the year 2003

[http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20051014\\_00/statbreve\\_volontariato2003definitivo.pdf](http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20051014_00/statbreve_volontariato2003definitivo.pdf)

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<http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV-MOVEconferenceReport.pdf>

### 5.2.2 Glossary

#### *Educazione informale* (Informal learning)

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

#### *Educazione non formale* (Non-formal learning)

Learning which is embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification. Non-formal learning is sometimes described as semi-structured learning.

#### *Riconoscimento dell'educazione informale / non formale* (Validation of informal / non formal learning)

The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts, for example through education, work and leisure activities.

#### *Tirocinio* (Apprenticeship/Internship)

A compulsory part of the degree course, taking place during the course or immediately after completing it. It is normally a practical experience of certain duration in an organisation different from the educational institution. It is always governed by a contract between the university / school and the hosting organisation, which defines also the role of the tutor.

#### *Credito formativo* (Training credit)

Value attached to the competences acquired by attending a training segment (for instance a teaching module) or from individual experience (for instance work or voluntary work) that may be recognised for entry into a subsequent education or training pathway. The institution which the person is entering recognises the training credit, taking account of the features of the new pathway (for instance academic credits are recognised by universities nationally and/or between the universities of countries taking part in the European ECTS programme; training credits acquired in vocational training may be recognised in the case of people wishing to return to school pathways).

*Libretto formativo* (Training record)

Used to document the competences that people acquire over time.

National Action Plan

Document setting out the action priorities for the development of employment in Italy.

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Participants to the CSVnet working group on Value project and the valorisation of learning through volunteering have built this report through contribution of information, ideas and experiences.