

Career guidance in Italy¹

1. The framework of careers guidance in Italy

In Italy careers guidance falls under the competence of the Ministry of Labour (adult careers guidance), the Ministry of the University (careers guidance of students at the university), the Ministry of Education (careers guidance of students at primary and secondary schools), the Regions and the Provinces. More in detail, after the reform of the Italian Constitution that in 2001² has given more autonomy to the Regions, the Central Government has to agree with the Regions the general framework under which careers guidance is delivered. The Provinces are in charge for managing the careers guidance services for adults and young people 14-18 who are not working nor studying, while the delivery of careers guidance to students is entrusted to schools and universities. So far all the different actors have not been able to agree on the name and nature of the services in careers guidance and on the requisites for working in the field.

Careers guidance is currently available for all the adult and young unemployed and students in most of the Italian Regions. The main breakthroughs have been A. the reform of the network of the public employment offices, that in 1999 have been regionalized. Following the European Employment Strategy³ the Presidential Decree 181/2000⁴ has provided the delivery of careers guidance in all the public employment offices. B. the Law 144/1999⁵ that provides the delivery of careers guidance to all young people 14-18 who are not working nor studying, and entrusts this task to the employment offices. C. The insertion, several years ago, of a module of careers education (20-40 hours) in all the vocational courses leading to a qualification. Due mainly to these developments, at moment the people working full time in the field are estimated to be around 10.000.

In 2003 the law n.30/2003⁶ has allowed many different organisations (schools, universities, local town councils, trade unions, employers organisations, private companies) to act as employment offices, but this development has not yet had an impact on guidance activities and public employment offices, because so far very few organizations have take advantage of it.

¹ by Leonardo Evangelista <http://www.leonardoevangelista.it/english.htm> Updated at September 2008. Available at the address <http://www.orientamento.it/english/careerguidanceitaly.pdf> Can be reproduced for personal non commercial use quoting Author and website.

² See <http://www.aedon.mulino.it/archivio/2001/3/cost.htm>, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

³ See http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

⁴ See <http://www.professioneorientamento.it/download/Dlgs21-4-2000.doc>, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

⁵ See

<http://db.formez.it/GuideUtili.nsf/07db9c51ab3e8a77c1256c8500414699/bd452370eaa88e7bc1256e9a003a7b12?OpenDocument>, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

⁶ See <http://www.professioneorientamento.it/download/Legge30-2003.doc>, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

In Italy careers guidance services adopt a dual approach based on *information* (the supplying of information with no or limited involvement of an officer) and *advice* (activities –such as assessment, help with drawing up action plans or follow up- that require a in-depth examination of the client’s situation).

The supplying careers guidance information (Annex 2, pag.57 of Ministerial Decree 166/2001⁷) is described as:

- ‘providing information, on vocational and training opportunities that is relevant to the needs of clients’
- ‘preparing a data bank which can be used to supply useful information that is relevant to the needs of clients’

The supplying of careers guidance advice is described as:

- ‘carrying out a complete, in-depth analysis of the various factors and combinations of factors which influence decision processes’
- ‘assisting the client in drawing up a realistic personal action plan to include aims, timescales, courses of action, contacts, resources.’

The main information services are:

- self help information services, usually delivered through websites developed by employment offices and careers guidance organizations or printed materials placed inside employment or careers guidance offices
- information interview⁸ (‘colloquio di accoglienza’ or ‘colloquio informativo’), usually delivered at a counter or by telephone or email message on a first in first served base. The face to face or telephone information interview lasts 10-20 minutes
- group or small group information sessions (‘incontri informativi di gruppo’)

The main advice services are:

- in depth interview⁹ (‘colloquio di orientamento specialistico’), one ore more 1 hour consultations usually delivered on appointment in a reserved space
- ‘bilancio di competenze’, several in depth weekly interviews to help an adult to identify a professional target and to develop an action plan
- small group sessions and courses, usually addressed to 10-20 people on themes such as job search techniques (‘corso sulle tecniche di ricerca attiva di lavoro’ or how to choose a profession (‘corso su come scegliere una professione’)

During advice services, several activities (i.e. role playing) finalized to help participant(s) to develop career development skills can also be carried out.

In the public employment offices usually both information and advice services are available, while in most schools only the information services.

⁷ See <http://www.professioneorientamento.it/download/DM166-2001.doc>, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

⁸ Please note the interviewee is the officer

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2. Who delivers career guidance in Italy

The information careers guidance services in employment offices are usually carried out by the employees of the offices. Before the regionalization of the offices, the personnel was mainly concerned with administrative tasks. Later some employees have been retrained to deliver careers guidance information services. Most of employment offices personnel is middle aged and don't hold a degree.

The advice careers guidance services are instead delivered a. inside the employment office by external personnel hired as a free lance or belonging to organizations specialized in career guidance that have won a competitive tender or in alternative b. (less common) in the premises of private organizations specialized in careers guidance that have won a competitive tender. The advice services are delivered mostly by psychologists or people holding a degree in topics such as law, political sciences, education, economics. As until 2-3 years ago there were in Italy very few formal training possibilities in careers guidance, most of these people (including the psychologists) have usually learned how to work in careers guidance through internships in careers guidance organizations, self administered study, short courses.

The information careers guidance services in schools are usually delivered by teachers.

3. Accreditation frameworks for people delivering career guidance

In Italy the occupations of careers guidance are loosely regulated.

The requirements for working in the field were initially set by the Ministerial Decree 166/2001. The Decree sets a series of criteria (including qualifications for careers guidance staff) which must be satisfied by all public and private organisations that use funding from the European Social Fund to carry out training and/or careers guidance activities.

The Decree identifies two occupations that deal with careers guidance:

- 'orientatore' (career officer?) in charge of information and advice services (including defining and planning careers guidance activities)¹⁰ and
- 'tutor dell'inserimento' ('social worker in charge of professional insertion') in charge of all the steps of projects for the professional insertions (planning internships, training and advising people on job search, supporting people during internships and jobsearch. Tutor dell'inserimento are also in charge of advice and support to employed people.¹¹

The main differences between the two occupations are A. that 'tutor all'inserimento' works with people that have a low employability and b. works with occupied people, while 'orientatore' is said to work with medium or high employability unemployed. These two

¹⁰ See Annex 2, pp.57-58 of DM 166/2001.

¹¹ See Annex 2, pp55-56 DM 166/2001.

figures are not coherent with other classifications of the occupations in careers guidance. One of the most widespread in Italy provides instead two different figures: the ‘operatore di sportello’ or ‘operatore di prima accoglienza’ (information officer) in charge of all the information activities, and the ‘consulente di orientamento’ (career adviser) in charge of all the advice activities, including support to people during their job search and career counseling to employed people.

The Decree set a framework where the competences of the occupations of careers guidance and vocational education are competence based and certified at national level. It describes the tasks and the competences of ‘orientatore’ (see table 1 below) and ‘tutor dell’inserimento’ (see table 2 below), and provides an assessment system based on a portfolio and on direct examination through role playing, project work, case analysis.

	Areas of competence	Tasks	Competences requested
A01	To make a diagnosis the careers guidance needs	-to analyze the request of the client -to contract service with the client	-to analyze the different elements on which the request of the client is based -to offer the right service for the client -to prepare and to prove the agreement with the client
B02	To define and plan careers guidance activities	-to define and plan careers guidance activities	-to write realistic plans
C01	To screen the clients	-to collect information about the clients and their needs -to introduce them the services -to redirect them to other services when needed	-to collect and store information about the clients and their needs -to give information about the careers guidance services and other services when needed
C02	Informing	-to deliver careers guidance information -to organize and upgrade an archive with careers guidance information	-to deliver the information requested --to organize and upgrade an archive with careers guidance information
C04	Advising	-to help clients to deepen their knowledge of their internal resources and of the external context -to analyze CV and personal features of the clients -to help the clients to select professional targets and to draw	-to analyze clients and context -to support clients in choices -to support the client to draw action plans

		action plans -to support clients during their actions	
E01	Networking	-to identify local actors and sources of information -to network with them	-to develop a data bank -to network

Table 2. Tutor dell'inserimento

	Areas of competence	Tasks	Competences requested
A12	Analysis of local labour market	-search and analysis of information about local labour market -development and upgrade of data banks to be used for work	-identify and process useful information
B12	Definition and planning of projects for the professional insertions	-to define and plan professional insertion activities -to help the clients to select professional targets and to draw action plans -to organize internships	-to organize sessions or module to inform/train clients participating in the projects
C11	Advising and supporting	-advising and supporting clients on job search -supporting clients during their actions	-supporting clients during all the steps
E11	Networking	-to collect and store job openings -to network with vocational education services -to network with employment offices	-to develop data banks
CF3	Advice and support to employed people	-to define and plan the activities -to develop tools for monitoring and evaluating the activities -to advice and support clients	-to define and plan the activities

From a methodological point of view, it seems that in many cases tasks are set too wide, so they overlap almost in full with competences, and their utility is nil.

The Decree' provisions for the occupations have never been enforced, because as already said in 2001 the Constitutional Reform gave more autonomy to Regions. In 2002 the Central Government and the Regions agreed the credentials of people working in careers guidance and vocational education would have been first defined and assessed at regional level through regional regulations, and only later a general framework should be agreed¹².

¹² Agreement Central Government-Regions of 2 August 2002

So far, only 8 Regions and Autonomous Provinces¹³ (Basilicata, Bolzano, Campania, Lombardia, Molise, Sardegna, Sicilia, Veneto) have defined the credentials for careers guidance occupations, and the general national framework has not been agreed. The credential requested are no more competency based, are different in every Region and are assessed mainly only through the exam of the curriculum vitae (see table 3 below¹⁴). The credentials are verified by regional auditors.

Table 3		
Region or Province	Minimum requisite for delivering careers guidance	Way of assessment
Basilicata	For information services 1 year previous experience. For delivering advice services 'Specific sociopsychological competences' with 'harder to help' clients ¹⁵ are requested	CV exam
Bolzano	Previous experience or training	CV exam
Campania	For information services degree plus 2 years previous experience. For delivering advice services 'Specific sociopsychological competences' with 'harder to help' clients are requested	CV exam 'Audit'
Lombardia	2 years experience for holder of a diploma or qualification. 10 years experience for people without a diploma or qualification. For working with 'harder to help' clients previous experience is requested	CV exam
Molise	Competences certified by the Region	Direct examination
Sardegna	Psychologist, social worker, 'orientatore'	CV exam
Sicilia	For information services 2 years previous experience, diploma ¹⁶ training in careers guidance ¹⁷ . For delivering advice services 'Specific sociopsychological competences' are requested	CV exam
Veneto	Degree or diploma or vocational qualification plus previous experience and training in careers guidance. For working with 'harder to help' clients degree in psychology or education, plus 1 year previous experience, plus training in careers guidance.	CV exam

¹³ The Provinces of Bolzano and Trento have the status of 'Autonomous Provinces' that gives them powers very similar to that of Regions.

¹⁴ Source: Evangelista L. (2005). *Professione Orientamento. Una guida per inserirsi nel settore*. Edizioni Sonda, Casale Monferrato, pp-81-82.

¹⁵ Ex offenders, illegal substance abusers, disabled, young drop out from school, immigrants, etc.

¹⁶ Here I refer to ordinary secondary school generic diploma

¹⁷ Regione Sicilia has developed its own qualification of Orientatore (about 400 hours course) and trained all the practitioners working in the career guidance desks ('sportelli multifunzionali') delivering career guidance with ESF funding.

In the Regions where the credentials have not been defined every single Province can choose different requisites. For example in Tuscany for delivering advice services inside the public employment offices Pistoia Province requires a degree in Occupational Psychology, Pisa Province a degree in Psychology, Florence Province no degree. To make things even more complicated some Regions decided to recognise the vocational qualification of ‘consulente di orientamento’ that can be obtained by attending a vocational training course¹⁸.

In Italy there are two Associations of careers guidance practitioners: ASSIPRO Associazione Italiana Professionisti dell’Orientamento¹⁹ and SIO Società Italiana per l’Orientamento^{20 21}. It may be interesting to describe the requisites requested by each Association for standard membership.

ASSIPRO identifies two different occupations, ‘operatori di sportello’, that deliver information careers guidance services and ‘consulenti di orientamento’ that deliver advice careers guidance services. The minimum requisite to be admitted in the Association (standard membership as junior) is 500 hours of paid activities in information or advice. Up to 100 hours of participation in training courses in careers guidance can be considered as paid activities. With over 2000 hours of paid activities you can be registered as senior. The possession of the requisites is verified by an exam of the CV.

SIO identifies the ‘professionista dell’orientamento’, but is not clear if it is a real occupation. The minimum requisite to be admitted in the Association (standard membership) is three years professional activity, plus a degree. Two members have also to support the request of membership. The possession of the requisite is verified by an exam of the CV.

¹⁸ The course is about 600 hours long, but its content differs by Regioni. The qualification is not requested by Regioni to work in public career guidance services or with ESF funds. So for the moment the qualification is useless and not widespread (only few dozens of people probably own it outside Sicily).

¹⁹ Website www.assipro.it retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

²⁰ Website www.sio-online.it, retrieved on 3rd of Novembre 2006.

²¹ An update on this point: on December 2006 ASSIPRO (the association I chaired) agreed to merge in SIO (the association chaired by Soresi) on the base of an agreement outlined on a letter of intent. In 2007 I closed ASSIPRO, but SIO didn’t do what promised, so most of ex ASSIPRO members have not renewed their membership in SIO for 2008 and at moment I am out of the board of SIO.