



# Italian National Report

## WP2: Regulatory Analysis & Curriculum Redesign



Co-funded by  
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Project No: 2024-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000245540



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# Executive Summary

This report examines the current state of Work-Based Learning (WBL) in Italy, highlighting its crucial role in bridging the gap between education and labour market needs. WBL combines academic learning with workplace experience, providing students with practical skills and improving employability. However, its full potential is hindered by several challenges, including a mismatch between educational curricula and labour market demands, insufficient employer engagement, inadequate funding, and limited awareness and promotion of WBL opportunities. Apprenticeships, a fundamental component of WBL, remain underutilised due to regulatory complexities and a lack of awareness among employers and students. Additionally, regional disparities, particularly in Southern Italy, and digital skill gaps among students and staff pose barriers to the accessibility and implementation of WBL programmes.

Desk and field research reveal limited awareness of national and European WBL policies, with only 38.1% of respondents familiar with them. Stakeholders identified administrative burdens, the misuse of extracurricular internships, and insufficient collaboration between educational institutions and employers as key obstacles. Despite these challenges, stakeholders recognise WBL's potential to better align education with labour market needs and support workforce development.

The report offers several recommendations to address these issues. Raising awareness and improving the promotion of WBL opportunities is essential, as is fostering stronger partnerships between universities, employers, and policymakers to align programmes more effectively with labour market demands. Developing digital competencies among students and educators is critical to meet the needs of an increasingly technological labour market. Ensuring adequate funding and fair compensation for trainees and apprentices is also necessary to attract participants and encourage employer engagement. Additionally, phasing out improper practices, such as low-quality extracurricular internships, in favour of structured apprenticeships, and creating standardised frameworks for recognising WBL activities can enhance the system's quality and accessibility.

In conclusion, WBL has the potential to transform education and employment in Italy, addressing youth unemployment and preparing a skilled workforce for the future. By implementing the proposed recommendations, policymakers and stakeholders can build a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable WBL framework that benefits students, employers, and the broader economy.

# 1 Introduction

This report is part of the work undertaken in the framework of the Erasmus+ project “Work-Based-Learning Champion”. The project **seeks to elevate Work-Based Learning (WBL) as a leading methodology within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by developing a structured framework for effective implementation of this practice across the EU.** Recognising that WBL bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and labour market needs, this project aims to **enhance the integration of real-world experiences within educational curricula, ensuring students acquire job-relevant skills and greater job readiness.**

Although WBL policies exist within EU’s educational frameworks, inconsistencies in quality and implementation in the various countries of the Union hinder widespread adoption in HEIs. To address this, WBL Champion carries out a regulatory analysis of WBL policies, redesign HEI courses that are currently lacking WBL practices, develop a quality assurance toolkit and design three Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses to support HEI staff and industry mentors. Additionally, an online platform will foster collaboration among WBL practitioners and pilot testing in partner countries will validate the effectiveness of redesigned curricula with embedded WBL methodologies.

The project’s main targets are HEIs academics, students and staff, as well as companies and industry mentors that will be engaged with the project to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of WBL practices.

## **The WBL project outlines 3 key objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Enhance the digital competencies of HEI professionals, as a way to integrate digital tools into WBL practices, which will, in turn, support the digital transformation in Education. This will empower educators to effectively incorporate technology within WBL programmes, aligning with EU priorities for digital readiness.

**Objective 2:** Provide accessible, innovative tools for HEI staff, students, companies and industry mentors. By developing user-friendly resources, this project will ensure that all participants in WBL programmes can confidently engage with digital tools, fostering a streamlined approach to WBL across institutions.

**Objective 3:** Redesign six existing HEI courses to incorporate WBL within curricula, directly addressing the labour market's demand for graduates with practical experience. By embedding WBL in partner HEIs, this project will facilitate transitions for students into the workforce and strengthen the alignment between HE and VET programmes.

Through these objectives, the WBL Champion project will create a unified framework and tools to support HEIs and industry leaders, thus driving a more systematic and impactful use of WBL in higher education.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives the project is divided into Work Packages, each with their specific set of objectives. The project starts by establishing a strong foundation for enhancing WBL practices within higher education by analysing existing WBL policies in EU partner countries (Malta, Italy, Portugal, and Ireland) and at the European level and applying these insights to the redesign of HEI courses. This Work Package, hereinafter referred to as WP2, is essential to ensure that HEIs effectively integrate WBL into their curricula, thereby improving learning outcomes, fostering relevant skill development and aligning educational programmes with labour market demands.

The project's first main deliverable is the report on "Identification of National and EU WBL policies". It will be core output of the project's WP2 and it will provide detailed insights into existing WBL policies and practices across partner countries, as well as identify best practices that are currently being used in both HEIs and companies. This report is crucial for the project as it will serve as the basis for developing strategies, course designs and digital tools that align with the needs of HEI instructors and students, as well as guiding the effective implementation of WBL-integrated curricula, which will be the main focus of the succeeding phase of the project.

## Scope of this report

This report focuses on the identification of Work-Based Learning policies, best practices and the analysis of gaps and challenges **in Italy and** presents a set of related recommendations for the improvement and further uptake of WBL.

## Methodology

The report is based on both in-depth **desk research, as well as field research.**

**Desk Research** focused on a review of relevant literature, academic papers, government documents, and case studies on WBL in Italy that was published in the last 8 years. Case studies of successful WBL programmes within different industries or regions were collected and analysed to showcase specific examples of effective implementation and management of WBL. In addition, databases and publications from national bodies regulating work-based learning practices were analysed.

**Field research methods** were used to engage and receive information directly from the key target groups - academics, companies, as well as research organisations and students - via an

online questionnaire. The data and results obtained from the questionnaires can be found in annex, and the key elements have been integrated into the different sections.

Two interviews were undertaken to further gain insights and feedback from an expert on WBL.

## Importance and benefits of WBL

Work-Based Learning (WBL) directly addresses the disconnect between academic learning and the demands of the labour market. By integrating practical experience with theoretical knowledge, WBL provides students with a comprehensive learning experience that prepares them for real-world challenges in their respective fields.

As underscored by the European Training Foundation, **Work-Based Learning (WBL) offers significant benefits across various stakeholders, enhancing education, employment, and policy-making<sup>1</sup>:**

**Companies** benefit greatly from WBL as it fosters environments where continuous learning is encouraged, leading to increased innovation and productivity. This not only improves product quality and customer service but also reduces employee turnover by making jobs more engaging and thereby reducing recruitment and training costs.

**For learners**, WBL transforms educational programmes by making them more relevant and directly connected to the workplace. This practical approach not only makes learning more interesting but also significantly improves job prospects by equipping students with work-relevant skills and establishing direct connections with potential employers. This is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged groups, helping to expand opportunities and increase social inclusion in the labour market.

**Employees** also see substantial benefits from WBL. It makes their work more engaging and offers opportunities to learn new skills, which can lead to further professional development and career advancement. The dynamic nature of WBL ensures that employees continually adapt and remain competitive within their fields.

**Policy makers and public institutions** recognize WBL for its ability to produce high-quality, relevant skills that are more in tune with current workplace demands than traditional classroom-only learning. WBL strengthens the cooperation between educational institutions and businesses, which helps align educational outcomes more closely with the real demands of the labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-09/Work-based%20learning\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-09/Work-based%20learning_Handbook.pdf)

**Educational institutions** benefit from integrating WBL as it helps in developing essential soft skills such as teamwork and problem-solving, in addition to instilling basic work habits like punctuality. Showing students the practical application of their courses increases their interest in their studies and can be particularly important for increasing participation and improving outcomes among disadvantaged students.

Overall, the wide-ranging advantages of Work-Based Learning make it a cornerstone for modern education and employment strategies. It enhances the linkage between education and the labour market, making the workforce more adaptable and skilled. This not only benefits individuals in terms of employability and career progression but also enhances the competitiveness and innovation of businesses, ultimately contributing to economic growth and social stability.

## Definition of WBL

To establish a shared starting point, the partners agreed on a common definition of Work-Based Learning for the project. Based on the extant literature base (Bound and Solomon, 2001; Linehan et al., 2008; Sweet, 2018; Sheridan and Linehan, 2013; Jackson, 2017; Kerry and Bruce, 2020) and **for the purpose of this project, Work-Based Learning (WBL) is defined as:**

*“an educational strategy that integrates academic learning with practical workplace experiences, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. Through structured engagement with authentic work environments, students develop knowledge, skills, and competencies. WBL activities include those activities and experiences which are directly relevant to the students' fields of study and future careers, are linked to specific learning outcomes and are assessed for learning.”*

The following table outlines experiences that are considered included or excluded within WBL, focusing on **whether they enable learning outcomes to be assessed in a workplace-like environment**.

Included	Excluded
In WBL, included activities are those where students' progress and skills are assessed based on predefined learning outcomes in real or workplace-like environments.	Conversely, excluded activities are those that may support skill development but lack a direct, assessable link to predefined learning outcomes in a real or simulated workplace environment. These activities often focus on theoretical or observational learning without active, assessable participation in real-world tasks.



Example- Accredited placements	Example- Tasters/experiences that are not linked to learning outcomes and are not assessed as part of the academic programme
Vocational training employment: On-the-job learning assessed for competence and outcomes.	Case studies and reflective work: Useful for conceptual understanding but lack practical, real-world assessment.
Internships that support the assessment of learning outcomes	Simulations or role-plays that do not occur in a real workplace environment
Industry project which includes structured work assignments which might be evaluated against academic criteria.	Volunteering experiences that are not formally linked to learning outcomes or assessed for academic credit
Temporary work that supports the assessment of learning outcomes.	Job shadowing that is observational and lacks formal assessment tied to learning outcomes
Employment as part of vocational training that supports the assessment of learning outcomes	Online-only projects or virtual experiences not linked to real-world environments or assessed for workplace relevance



## 2 Overview of Italian and EU Work-Based Learning policies

### 2.1 EU Policies and Frameworks

Work-based learning (WBL) in the European Union is a key component of education and training, as well as youth and employment policies, **aimed at improving the employability of young people and adults while addressing the skills needs of the economy.** The EU's approach to WBL encompasses a variety of programmes and initiatives that foster practical learning experiences in workplace settings.

**The key initiatives related to work-based learning are:** The Erasmus+ Programme, the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area (EEA), the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the EU's Youth Guarantee, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaA), the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA), the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQUAVET).

The [Erasmus+ Programme](#) (2021-2027) is the EU's flagship initiative for education, training, youth, and sport. It is focused on expanding opportunities, promoting inclusion, supporting the green and digital transitions and enhancing Europe-wide cooperation in lifelong learning. Erasmus+ integrates WBL into its core priorities for both VET and HEIs in several ways. **One of its key initiatives is supporting cross-border mobility for apprentices, interns and both VET and HEI students, allowing them to gain hands-on experience in real-world settings in other EU countries.** This international experience enhances employability and skill development in a variety of fields. Additionally, Erasmus+ funds partnerships between educational institutions and industries, which are essential for creating WBL programmes that reflect real labour market needs.

The programme is also focused on developing digital and green skills, preparing participants for future-focused careers, and ensures that WBL is inclusive and accessible by offering financial support and resources to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and with fewer opportunities. Through these WBL-focused efforts, Erasmus+ (2021–2027) reinforces lifelong learning and adaptability as essential pathways to employability and skill development in a dynamic job market.

In Italy, the management of the Erasmus+ Programme is entrusted to three national agencies with different areas of expertise: the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (*Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa*) [INDIRE](#) for school education, higher education and adult education; the National institute for the analysis of public policies (*Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche*) [INAPP](#) for vocational education and professional training; and the Italian Youth Agency - [Agenzia](#)

[Nazionale per la Gioventù](#) for the youth sector and sport. Erasmus+ funding is managed through two types of actions, one at a national level, through the National Agencies of the countries participating in the Programme, and the other managed by the European Commission through the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the Research Executive Agency (REA).

[The European Skills Agenda](#) builds upon the ten actions of the European Commissions' 2016 Skills Agenda. Updated in 2020, the Agenda sets objectives to be achieved by 2025 and sets out **to enhance skills development across the EU**, aligning with the European Green Deal and Digital Strategy priorities. It emphasises upskilling and reskilling to address emerging labour market demands through WBL, promoting initiatives that support digital, green and foundational skills. The key objectives of the European Skills Agenda include **improving lifelong learning, fostering quality VET and strengthening partnerships with industry**. It supports programmes like the European Education Area and the European Pillar of Social Rights, aiming to build a highly skilled workforce and increase employability in the EU.

[The Pact for Skills](#) is one of the flagship actions of the European Skills Agenda, aimed at **fostering upskilling and reskilling across industries**. It is a partnership model that supports companies and organizations to offer high-quality apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities, fostering cooperation among businesses, training providers and public authorities.

The management and coordination of initiatives aimed at enhancing upskilling and reskilling in Italy are primarily overseen by the [Ministry of Labour and Social Policies](#), the [Ministry of Education and Merit](#) and Regional Governments. In addition, many actors, such as businesses, workers, education and training providers, national, regional and local authorities, chambers of commerce and employment services are among those who contribute to achieving their objectives. These entities work collectively to ensure the alignment of skill development initiatives with Italy's strategic objectives for economic recovery and workforce resilience.

In 2020, Italy launched its [National Strategy for Digital Skills](#), a key part of the [Digital Republic initiative](#) aimed at reducing Italy's digital divide with Europe and addressing internal disparities. The strategy targets four main areas: Higher Education and Training, Active Workforce, Specialist ICT Skills, and Citizens, each focused on enhancing specific digital skills. This approach seeks to boost nationwide digital competencies and inclusivity<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the [New Skills Plan](#), linked to the [National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza - PNRR) has the objective of reorganising the training of workers in transition and unemployed, by strengthening the professional training system and defining essential quality levels for upskilling and reskilling activities. The Plan also integrates

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/pagine/adottata-la-strategia-nazionale-per-le-competenze-digitali>

other initiatives, concerning measures in favor of young people - such as the strengthening of the dual system - and NEETs, as well as actions for the skills of adults, starting with people with very low skills.

The [European Education Area \(EEA\)](#), was introduced in 2020 with the goal of being fully established by 2025. This initiative replaced the former framework known as Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020). While ET 2020 served as a valuable foundation for cooperation in education and training across EU Member States, the EEA builds on this framework with updated priorities, including a stronger emphasis on digital transformation, inclusion, green transitions, and fostering a common European identity. The EEA aims to create a unified, high-quality education area where learning and skills recognition are seamless across borders, adapting to the evolving needs of the EU education landscape. **EEA promotes WBL by integrating it into its priorities for quality education, employability, and skills development across the EU.**

In [Italy](#), the Ministry of Education and Merit (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito - [MIM](#)) and the Ministry of University and Research (Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca - [MUR](#)) in collaboration with the regions, where applicable, are aligning Italian education policies with the broader goals set by the European Union, including enhancing educational opportunities, fostering mobility among students and teachers, and improving the quality and inclusiveness of education across all levels. Both ministries have several bodies and agencies that operate at a national level with representative, consultative, monitoring, and evaluative functions. These include the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema di Istruzione - [INVALSI](#)), the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa - [Indire](#)), and the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems (Agenzia Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca - [ANVUR](#)).

Introduced in 2021, the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) supports the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, focusing on **fair working conditions, equal opportunities, social protection, and inclusion**. The plan outlines specific targets to be achieved by 2030, such as having 78% of the EU's working-age population employed, providing training for at least 60% of adults annually, and reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 15 million. This Action Plan aligns with key EU initiatives, including the European Green Deal, the European Skills Agenda and the EEA, ensuring that social rights are a core part of the EU's post-pandemic recovery and long-term growth strategy.

In [Italy](#), the implementation of the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights is closely linked to the objectives of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which dedicates significant resources to key sectors such as education, labour, social policies and inclusion. With

regard to education and training, initiatives are planned to improve access to education and reduce educational inequalities. The aim is to improve digital skills and professional training, supporting schools and universities in promoting inclusivity and innovation. On the labour market front, the plan aims to increase employment, particularly for women, young people and the most vulnerable, through active policies and the strengthening of continuous training and professional requalification courses. Social protection is also a key focus, with measures to combat poverty and reduce inequality. At the same time, social inclusion is promoted through actions aimed at promoting gender equality and the integration of people with disabilities, while improving access to essential services such as healthcare and housing.

The EU's [Youth Guarantee](#) was **launched in 2013 and reinforced in 2020 with the Youth Employment Support initiative**. Its **goal is to ensure that all young people under 30 receive a good-quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education**. The Youth Guarantee is fundamental to European efforts to combat youth unemployment and promote successful transitions from education to the workforce across Member States.

The Youth Guarantee in Italy is managed through close collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Regions, the Job Centres and accredited private bodies. Previously funded through the National Operational Programme for the Youth Employment Initiative (PON IOG), the Youth Guarantee measures continue and are also included in the [National Programme for Youth, Women and Work 2021-2027](#), funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) and national funds. Specifically, the programme's priority 1 focuses on facilitating young people's entry into work. It aims to reach, involve and motivate young people between the age of 15 and 34, especially those furthest from work, and to offer them concrete opportunities through a personalized path, which starts with the reception at the regional offices, passes through specialized orientation, accompaniment and ends with an offer of work, apprenticeship, internship or training.

[The European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(EAfA\)](#) was **established in 2013** and continues to operate under the broader goals of the EEA and the European Skills Agenda, **focusing on improving the quality, availability, and attractiveness of apprenticeships across the EU**. EAfA remains instrumental in fostering public-private partnerships, **aligning training with labour market needs, and promoting apprenticeships as an effective form WBL**. This initiative also establishes collaborations with governments, businesses, social partners, chambers of commerce and VET providers to offer apprenticeships that enhance youth employability, reduce skills gaps and support lifelong learning opportunities. In recent years, EAfA has also expanded to include digital apprenticeships and green skills training, aligning with the EU's priorities.

In [Italy](#), the implementation of the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)** focuses on strengthening and promoting apprenticeships as a key tool for improving the transition of

young people from education to work. On 26 and 27 June 2023, the 10th anniversary celebration event of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) took place in Brussels, bringing together leading experts, policy makers and stakeholders, including **Emilia-Romagna**, who signed up to the Alliance on that occasion. The region is committed to promoting the various types of apprenticeship as a privileged channel of access to the world of work for young people<sup>3</sup>. **EURES Puglia**, acting on behalf of the competent department, has also submitted a project proposal to become a member of the alliance and make use of the apprenticeship tool in the local area<sup>4</sup>.

[The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships \(EFQEA\)](#) was adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2018 and **provides guidelines and criteria to ensure high-quality apprenticeships across EU Member States**. The framework focuses on improving both learning and working conditions for apprentices, setting out criteria such as fair remuneration, clear learning outcomes, and structured support. EFQEA is implemented and continues to be relevant within broader EU initiatives like the EEA and the European Skills Agenda, as it supports the EU's commitment to quality WBL. This framework also plays a key role in the EAfA and other EU-level programmes that aim to bridge the skills gap and enhance employability across the region.

In [Italy](#), the implementation of the **European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA)** is based on the integration of European guidelines into the national apprenticeship system, with the aim of ensuring a balance between theoretical and practical training and promoting high-quality apprenticeships that are effective for both young people and companies. It is regulated at a national level through the Consolidated Act on Apprenticeship which establishes the general rules for this type of contract. It is drawn up by the Government and Parliament, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Education and Merit define its guidelines and coordinate its dual training (alternating school and work).

The [European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training \(EQAVET\)](#) emerged in 2009 from a recommendation of the European Parliament and Council. It is a European wide framework to support continuous quality assurance (QA) and improvement in VET across the EU by helping Member States develop and improve QA systems within their VET programmes. EQAVET also supports the implementation of the [2020 recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience](#). This VET Recommendation describes how EQAVET can be used to strengthen the quality of initial and continuing VET and presents the complete EQAVET Framework.

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<sup>3</sup><https://formazione.lavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/notizie/2023/apprendistato-l-emilia-romagna-aderisce-all-alleanza-europea>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.sistema.puglia.it/portal/pls/portal/sispuglia.DYN\\_DYN\\_CONTENUTO.SHOW?p\\_arg\\_names=id&p\\_arg\\_v\\_alues=57274&p\\_arg\\_names=flag&p\\_arg\\_values=](https://www.sistema.puglia.it/portal/pls/portal/sispuglia.DYN_DYN_CONTENUTO.SHOW?p_arg_names=id&p_arg_v_alues=57274&p_arg_names=flag&p_arg_values=)



In Italy, the implementation of EQAVET is carried out through a structured system to guarantee the quality and effectiveness of vocational education and training programmes. It is coordinated by the **Ministry of Education and Merit** and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies**, which work closely with the **Regions** and the **Autonomous Provinces**. The latter play a fundamental role in the management and regulation of vocational training courses. To facilitate the implementation, a **EQAVET National Reference Point** has been set up in [INAPP](#) since 2006 to link the national and European levels, promoting the dissemination of good practices and tools developed. The National Reference Point for Italy has been based at since 2006 and carries out the following activities: promotion, implementation and development of the European Quality Assurance Framework; carrying out research and studies related to quality assurance provisions; adoption of new quality assurance tools such as self-assessment and peer review. The National Reference Point is supported by a National Board, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, INVALSI, School Heads Association, social partners, training experts, and representatives of vocational education and training providers.

## 2.2 Italian WBL Policies

In Italy, work-based learning (WBL) is governed by a **combination of specific laws, regulations, and policy frameworks** and **alignment with EU directives and guidelines**, designed to enhance the employability of young people and address the skills gap in the Italian labour market.

In Italy, the young people's transition to work is a priority, since the country has been facing high rates of youth unemployment and inactivity for a long time. Moreover, the ratio of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is among the highest in Europe. In this context, several measures have been taken by the Government and public authorities to promote youth employment, including tax incentives and subsidies for employers who hire young people, work-based learning programmes and measures to facilitate job readiness (skills certification systems, continuous vocational training, school-work experience, internships, apprenticeships); and support for self-employment<sup>5</sup>.

Italy has implemented a series of labour market reforms that have followed since 1997 with the Treu Law (Law 196 of June 1997) and later replaced with the Biagi Reform (Legislative Decree 276 of 2003), up to the so-called "**Jobs Act**" (2014) and "**Good School**" Law 107 of 2015. Active labour market policies in recent years have often 'crossed' with school reform policies. Therefore, common areas of intervention for development have emerged in which the centrality of training, understood in its broadest sense, has taken on profound significance with a view to both employability and the training of the subject-learner-worker (Marcone, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup><https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/italy/3-employment-entrepreneurship>

This marked **the beginning of the development of an Italian Dual System<sup>6</sup>**, the learning approach that combines classroom-based training (at an educational institution) with practical training in workplace settings (at a company or organisation). This model supports transition policies between education and employment, helping young people navigate the labour market, develop marketable professional skills, and reduce the time required to transition from education to professional experience.

Starting in 2021, with the adoption of the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** (Mission 5 - Component 1 - Investment 3, "Dual System")<sup>7</sup>, reinforced efforts were aimed at **aligning education and training systems more closely with labour market needs, promoting youth employability, and fostering the acquisition of new skills**. This initiative sought to strengthen the dual system by expanding its reach to a broader audience of beneficiaries.

## School - Work alternance

Historically, the Italian secondary school education system was designed around a sequential approach, with educational pathways from secondary to higher education characterised by a strong emphasis on theoretical learning. Teaching curricula, particularly in high schools, were predominantly classroom-based and followed a classical model in which students focused on academic studies first and entered the workforce only after obtaining a diploma or degree (Marcone, 2017).

With the **"La Buona Scuola" - Law No. 107 of 2015<sup>8</sup>**, this approach changed as the Italian government introduced significant reforms in the Italian education system, including the mandatory implementation of the so-called **"Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro" (School-work alternation)** programme in 2015, later renamed **"Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e per l'Orientamento" (PCTO)<sup>9</sup>** requiring students in upper secondary education to engage in work-based learning activities.

School-work alternation combines practical experiences with classroom learning, allowing students to solidify their knowledge and apply their skills in real-world settings. This approach enhances education while helping students shape their academic and career paths through curriculum-aligned projects. It is a mandatory component for all high school students in their final three years, including those in lyceums, reflecting the principle of the 'open school'. Students are required to complete at least 400 hours of work-based learning in technical and vocational schools and at least 200 hours in lyceums over the three-year period<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/orientamento-e-formazione/focus-on/sistema-duale/pagine/default>

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.mef.gov.it/export/sites/MEF/en/focus/documents/PNRR-NEXT-GENERATION-ITALIA\\_ENG\\_09022021.pdf](https://www.mef.gov.it/export/sites/MEF/en/focus/documents/PNRR-NEXT-GENERATION-ITALIA_ENG_09022021.pdf)

<sup>8</sup><https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2015-07-13:107!vig=>

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.mimit.gov.it/images/stories/digitale/Rivista/2023/PCTO\\_-\\_Percorsi\\_per\\_le\\_Competenze\\_Trasversali\\_e\\_per\\_lorientamento.pdf](https://www.mimit.gov.it/images/stories/digitale/Rivista/2023/PCTO_-_Percorsi_per_le_Competenze_Trasversali_e_per_lorientamento.pdf)

<sup>10</sup><https://alternanza.miur.gov.it/>



**With this reform, Work-based learning (WBL) has finally been introduced across all schools, including pathways traditionally considered unsuitable for such experiences,** such as the Lyceum. This approach moves beyond the traditional division between knowledge-based learning and practical training by integrating theory with practice and aligning knowledge with experience to prepare students for specific tasks or occupations. It represents a cultural shift where schools and enterprises, despite their distinct roles, are required to collaborate with greater educational and social co-responsibility to enhance students' personal and professional development, fostering sustainable and inclusive growth. The key features that are aligned with the ECVET ( European Credit system for VET) are (Bonacci, 2017):

- **Practical Learning Environment:** Part of the qualification is intended to be completed in a practice or work environment, enhancing the student's personal attitudes and creativity.
- **Units of Learning Outcomes:** Specific units of learning outcomes are identified for development during practical work experiences.
- **Flexible Educational Offerings:** Enterprises and organisations provide flexible, customised learning pathways to accommodate individual needs.
- **Competence Enhancement:** Experiences within organisations contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills (such as turning ideas into action) and other key competencies including creativity, innovation, risk management, and ability to manage projects, which are connected with European Recommendation 2006/962/EC (Key competences for lifelong learning).
- **Accumulation of Learning Outcomes:** Learning outcomes are accumulated over a three-year period, facilitating progressive skill development and qualification achievement.

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships were first introduced in Italy in 1955 as an employment contract for young people. It was reformed several times in the following decades, with major changes from the late 1990s, when youth employment measures started to be conceived and designed in connection to education and training policies. In 2003, apprenticeship took on the current structure of 3 apprenticeship types it still has today (CEDEFOP, 2017,p.14). With the **“Jobs Act”** - Legislative Decree **No. 81/2015**<sup>11</sup> (implementing decree of the Delegated Law 183/2014) the **apprenticeship system in Italy was reformed with the aim to enhance their effectiveness as a tool for entering the labour market.** It consolidates and simplifies the rules related to different types of apprenticeships, including conditions regarding the duration, compensation, and conditions of apprenticeships.

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2015-06-24&atto.codiceRedazionale=15G00095&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=10&qId=4534f7f9-3a80-4b9a-a206-878aaabd3ced&tabID=0.6929926767940564&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto>

As an open-ended employment contract aimed at training and employing young people, apprenticeships facilitate their transition into the workforce. It allows young workers to gain professional skills specific to a job or company role while being employed under a regular contract. For companies, apprenticeships offer tax incentives and flexible salary management.

**A key aspect of apprenticeships is training, which must be integrated with work activities and is mandatory for the apprentice.** Apprenticeships are an important part of work-based learning in Italy, with **three types available**<sup>12</sup>:

- **Type 1 Apprenticeships (Apprendistato di Primo Livello)** focuses on young people aged 15-25. It targets students who pursue vocational diplomas, upper secondary education diploma or higher technical specialisation certificates (IFTS) that consist of medium or high level technical-professional skills or highly operational practical skills.<sup>13</sup>

These schemes are regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces through specific State-regions conference agreements. Content, which is divided into theoretical and practical learning, the specific qualifications offered, and the number of training hours are established by the regions and autonomous provinces according to minimum standards agreed at national level.

These apprenticeship schemes last three or four years and offer the possibility to acquire qualifications at operator or technician level - professional operator certificate (EQF 3) or professional technician diploma (EQF 4). These qualifications are part of the national qualifications register. After obtaining the operator certificate, apprentices may proceed to the fourth year to obtain a technician diploma, in the same occupation. Access to university is possible after successful completion of secondary education and an additional one-year course at an education institute. Apprenticeships for a higher technical specialisation certificate (EQF 4) lasts a year and target young people who have fulfilled their right/duty to education and training<sup>14</sup>.

- **Type 2 Apprenticeships (Apprendistato Professionalizzante)** are for individuals up to 29 years old, providing the skills necessary for a specific occupation. Training comprises two parts: a) acquisition of key skills (120 hours over a three-year period) regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces and provided by training centres and award a regional qualification; b) acquisition of vocational skills for specific occupation areas provided directly by companies. The occupation areas and training

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<sup>12</sup><https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/orientamento-e-formazione/focus-on/apprendistato/pagine/default>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/orientamento-e-formazione/focus-on/formazione/pagine/formazione-tecnica-superiore>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/italy-2019>

content are defined by collective bargaining agreements. These programmes have a maximum duration of three years (exceptionally five years for the crafts sector).

- **Type 3 Apprenticeships (Apprendistato di Alta Formazione e di Ricerca)** combine training and research for higher education students and graduates.

This scheme leads to an array of qualification levels encompassing European qualifications framework levels 4-8. It targets 18 to 29-year-olds and fulfils various purposes. Learners can acquire qualifications that are normally offered through school-based programmes, in higher education or at universities, including a doctoral degree. Apprentices can also engage in research activities in private companies or pursue traineeship required to access the liberal professions (lawyer, architect, business consultant); the latter has not yet been regulated by collective bargaining. In agreement with the social partners and public education and training centres, the regions and autonomous provinces decide the duration of contracts and the organisation of programmes and ensure they are compatible with fully school-based curricula. They also define higher education credits learners obtain at schools, universities or training centres and the skills to be acquired through on the job training at a company. In the absence of a regional regulation, ad hoc arrangements between training institutes and companies are possible. Training cost allocation is defined by local authorities, based on national, regional and European social fund regulations <sup>15</sup>.

**Type 1 and Type 3 apprenticeships are designed to lead to the attainment of a degree or diploma, forming part of a dual education system that combines institutional training with on-the-job training at an enterprise.** In contrast, the Type 2 apprenticeship is not tied to earning a degree but focuses on providing a professional qualification <sup>16</sup>.

Apprenticeships distinctly position apprentices as full-fledged employees who receive a salary and gain practical experience, addressing a common barrier to employment.

The **criteria and compliance measure for apprenticeships** are regulated in the related legislative documents<sup>17</sup> and also align with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA) in some key aspects. These include the necessity for a written contract, an individual training plan (particularly for type 1 and 3 apprenticeships which involve both the training institution and the company), a minimum duration of six months, and mandatory social security and insurance provisions. The apprenticeship contract must outline the roles, responsibilities, terms, and conditions explicitly, including details like probationary periods, occupation tasks, wage progression, entry and final grade levels, and the qualification aim. Both

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/italy-2019>

<sup>16</sup> Decreto Legislativo 15 giugno 2015, n. 81, art. 43. (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Decreto Legislativo 15 giugno 2015, n. 81, art. 45, sezione 6. (2015).

the contract and the training program must be signed by the employer and the apprentice. As employees, apprentices are entitled to a comprehensive range of insurance benefits covering job injuries, occupational diseases, aging, disability, maternity, household allowances, and, since 1 January 2013, labour social security insurance. Moreover, the Italian government supports apprenticeships through incentives like contribution relief for small employers and hiring mandates for larger companies, ensuring a sustainable integration of apprentices into the workforce.

To emphasise the importance of apprenticeships, it is worth noting that the Italian government has intervened in crisis situations to support and encourage companies to enter into new contracts. In 2020, for example, employers with 9 or fewer employees who have entered into first-level apprenticeship contracts were able to take advantage of a 100% contribution relief for the contribution periods accrued in the first three years of the contract<sup>18</sup>. Companies hiring with an apprenticeship contract can benefit from numerous concessions. To avoid abuses in the use of this type of contract and to be able to hire new apprentices, companies with more than 50 employees must hire at least 20% of the apprentices at the end of the training in the last three years<sup>19</sup>.

### State of implementation of apprenticeships

Despite its advantages, apprenticeship is not experiencing a phase of widespread use (Marcone, 2017). The 22nd Report on Apprenticeship in Italy highlights a slight increase in overall apprenticeship employment for the year 2022 compared to 2021. The number of contracts signed during the year amounts to 569,264 (INAPP, Infante/Vaccaro, 2024). 98% of these are professionalising apprenticeships (type 2), while the remaining schemes involve significantly fewer participants: type 1 (vocational diplomas or higher technical specialization) contracts include 11,775 participants, and type 3 (higher education) contracts have 1,307 participants (D'Agostino & Vaccaro, 2025).

Despite efforts to modernise apprenticeships to better meet the needs of companies and young people, in 2023 they accounted for only 14.5% of employment activations for individuals aged 24 and under, and 6.5% for those aged 25 to 34 (MLPS, 2023). Moreover, just one in five apprentices participates in short off-the-job learning activities (INAPP, Infante/Vaccaro, 2024).

**As a result, apprenticeships currently represent a limited share of young people entering the labour market.** Drawing on experiences from other European countries, apprenticeships could play a larger role in facilitating school-to-work transitions and supporting adults in navigating changes across companies, occupations, and sectors throughout their careers (D'Agostino/Vaccaro, 2025).

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<sup>18</sup> MyAnpal. *Incentivo per giovani tra i 15 e i 29 anni - Assunzione con contratto di apprendistato*.

<sup>19</sup> <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/italy/35-traineeships-and-apprenticeships>

As outlined by (Marcone, 2017), the core element of apprenticeship is training, which must necessarily be integrated with the work activity and must be compulsorily provided to the apprentice. The main problem with this contract lies precisely in the insufficient valorisation of the training component, which often fails to adequately develop the worker's skills, thus limiting his or her potential for professional growth during learning and work.

## Traineeships

Introduced in Italy in 1997, traineeships are « *an orientation and training period carried out in a work context and aimed at integrating young people into the work context. It is not configured as an employment relationship*<sup>20</sup>». They are two different types - **curricular and extracurricular traineeships**.

The **curricular traineeship** is designed for young individuals enrolled in an education or training programme, with the goal of integrating academic learning with practical work experience. These internships are offered as part of a formal education or training curriculum, focusing on enhancing the learning and development process rather than directly promoting job placement. The educational content of the internship must align with the student's academic or training pathway<sup>21</sup>.

This type of internship is governed by the Institute or University Regulations and is promoted by schools, universities or accredited training bodies, which define all the aspects relating to internship agreements with companies, the promotion of internships and their formative recognition. The general reference legislation that schools and universities must comply with is art. 18 of Law 196/97 and its implementation regulation (Interministerial Decree 142/98). The curricular internship, unlike its extracurricular counterpart, does not oblige host organisations to provide payment for these internships, as they enable students to earn academic credits toward their university degrees although the company can, at its discretion, reimburse any expenses<sup>22</sup>.

**Extracurricular traineeships** focus on training while aiming to increase young people's awareness of the working environment and support their career choices without constituting an employment relationship. These internships can be initiated by graduates within 12 months of graduation and are activated through a "training project" contract, signed by the intern, the host, and a promoter (a third party responsible for ensuring the quality of the internship, monitoring the training process, and evaluating learning outcomes. The extracurricular internship is a widely disseminated and applied active policy training measure<sup>23</sup>.

Although extracurricular traineeships are regulated by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, common national standards are outlined in the **"Guidelines on Training and Orientation**

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/orientamento-e-formazione/focus-on/tirocinio/pagine/default>

<sup>21</sup> <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/italy/35-traineeships-and-apprenticeships>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.randstad.it/gestione-risorse-umane/selezione-del-personale/quantit-stagisti-puo-ospitare-un-azienda>

<sup>23</sup> <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/italy/35-traineeships-and-apprenticeships>

**Internships**” (State-Regions Agreement of 25 May 2017)<sup>24</sup>. These standards define qualifying elements such as the intern's activities, minimum allowances, and the purpose of internships as active policies to connect trainees with hosts, enrich their knowledge, develop professional skills, and facilitate employment or reintegration into the workforce.

Moreover, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in partnership with INAPP (the National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies), has issued the “Trainee's Manual,” a practical guide for extracurricular internships<sup>25</sup>, ensuring common national minimum standards.

### Criteria and compliance measures for traineeships

To start an internship, an **agreement must be concluded** between the educational institution and the public or private employer. For each traineeship, a **training plan** must be drawn up, specifying the objectives and the way in which the traineeship must be carried out, ensuring consistency between the student's academic pathway and the training activity carried out at the host organisation. The training project must also contain the names of the tutor appointed by the promoting body and of the company manager; the identification details of the insurance; the duration and period of the placement; the company sector of placement. Promoters must ensure the presence of a tutor as the organisational manager of the activities while hosts must indicate the company responsible for the placement of trainees to whom they refer.

Promoting organisations are obliged to insure trainees against accidents at work with the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL), as well as with an appropriate insurance company for third-party liability.

Internships (both curricular and extra-curricular) have a **maximum duration**:

- no longer than six months in case the beneficiaries are unemployed workers or unemployable persons including those registered in mobility lists;
- no longer than six months in case the beneficiaries are students of State professional institutes, of vocational training courses, students attending post-diploma or post-degree training activities, also in the eighteen months following the completion of the training;
- no longer than 12 months for university students, including those attending university diploma courses, research doctorates and specialisation schools, also in the 18 months following the completion of their studies.

There is a limit to the number of interns that can be placed in a company in each period. This limit depends on the activity of the company and the number of permanent employees. For example: companies with no more than five permanent employees can have only one trainee, whereas if the number of permanent employees is between six and nineteen, the company can

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.indicenormativa.it/norma/urn:nir:presidenza.consiglio.ministri:accordo.stato.regione:2017-05-25;86>

<sup>25</sup> <https://inapp.infoteca.it/ricerca/dettaglio/manuale-del-tirocinante-guida-pratica-al-tirocinio-extracurriculare/20155>



take on up to two trainees at the same time. Regulators introduced this legal limit to ensure that a proper learning experience is provided to the intern and that companies do not take advantage of the internship programme to replace employees or compensate for staff shortages<sup>26</sup>. Under Legislative Decree 81/2008 and subsequent amendments, as well as the State-Regions Agreements of 21/12/2011 and 07/07/2016, during the internship period students must therefore receive adequate training on health and safety in the workplace<sup>27</sup>.

### **State of implementation of internships**

As outlined by (D'Agostino, 2025), in 2022, nearly 313,000 traineeships were initiated, marking a decline of over 16,000 compared to the previous year. About 44.5% of traineeships led to an employment contract one month after completing the experience. Over time, this percentage increases, with the employment rate rising to 51.2% within the first three months and reaching 55.9% after six months. In nearly seven out of ten cases (69.5%) where a traineeship is followed by an employment contract within one month, the former trainee is hired by the same employer who hosted the traineeship. However, this percentage drops to 55.6% six months after completion. For medium-high and high-skill level occupations, 54% of completed traineeships result in job placements within one month, with this figure increasing to 65% after six months. In contrast, for low-skill occupations, the job placement rate after six months is only 34%. As mentioned above, the current legal framework relies on the definition of minimum standards at national level, established through agreements between the state and the regions and inspired by the European Traineeship Quality Framework, and based on further regulations issued by the regions.

## **Work-based learning in Higher Education**

In Italy, work-based learning is predominantly integrated within vocational education and training. Our desk research revealed that information on integrating WBL at the higher education level, beyond internships, is somewhat limited, particularly regarding collaboration between higher education institutions and companies in curriculum design and delivery.

Universities promote WBL by integrating academic learning with practical workplace experiences to meet labour market demands. Acting as intermediaries between students and employers, they establish partnerships with organisations to create internships, apprenticeships (Type 3), and project-based learning opportunities, formalised through agreements that ensure quality and compliance with regulations. They also offer career services and mentoring to support students in transitioning from education to employment.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.randstad.it/gestione-risorse-umane/selezione-del-personale/quantit-stagisti-puo-ospitare-un-azienda/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.unive.it/pag/10356>



## Curricular Traineeships

Traineeships are widely practiced and often a mandatory component of academic programmes. They are typically available to students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees and are governed by both national and regional laws. Fields such as business, engineering, architecture, and health sciences place particular emphasis on internships as a way to connect academic learning with practical, real-world experience. More than half of graduates declared that they have completed a traineeship during their degree (D'Agostino, 2025).

## Type 3 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships represent another form of work-based learning (WBL) in Italian higher education, although they are less common than internships. These programmes, also known as Type 3 Apprenticeships (Apprendistato di Alta Formazione e Ricerca), integrate part-time work in a company with university studies, allowing students to earn a salary while completing their master or doctoral degree. This type of apprenticeship presents significant benefits, such as tax breaks, reduced labour costs, and, in some regions, specific financial incentives. It also allows companies to build stronger partnerships with higher education and research institutions, fostering innovation and increasing their competitiveness. Additionally, companies that hire individuals under the age of 30 who have completed a research apprenticeship within six months of obtaining their qualification can benefit from full exemption from social security contributions. This exemption is capped at €3,000 per year and applies for up to 36 months<sup>28</sup>.

Italian universities usually promote internships and apprenticeships through a dedicated page on their website and with an office to support students. This designated office is typically called "career services" and performs various functions<sup>29</sup>. First of all, it promotes internships and placements directly offered by the university in collaboration with partner companies. It provides career counselling, orientation services, and helps students design pathways for developing soft skills. It offers assistance with administrative procedures, such as drafting agreements between companies and universities, and supports students in the activation and management of internships<sup>30</sup>.

## WBL Governance and Quality Assurance

Work-based learning in Italy is a collaborative effort involving multiple multiple institutional actors at national and regional level, each playing an important role in its implementation and success.

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<sup>28</sup><https://www.adecco.it/servizi-per-le-aziende/somministrazione-di-lavoro/apprendistato-di-terzo-livello>

<sup>29</sup><https://www.unive.it/pag/4809/>

<sup>30</sup><https://www.careerservice.unict.it>

## The role of Government Ministries and Regions

In Italy, the government plays a central role in WBL as a regulator, ensuring a structured connection between education and the labour market. Primarily coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Merit<sup>31</sup>, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies<sup>32</sup>, WBL programmes are governed by a legal and institutional framework and State-Regions agreements that adapt these programmes to local needs. The Ministry of Labour works with Regions, Autonomous Provinces, and training institutions to define national standards for internships, apprenticeships, and orientation courses.

The regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for the planning, programming, organisation and implementation of interventions provided for within the scope of vocational education and training pathways, higher technical education, higher technical education and training, post-vocational education and training pathways, and post-university education for most types of apprenticeship-based training and for publicly-funded continuing training interventions.

Additionally, the government has leveraged funds from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (2023)<sup>33</sup> to promote reforms and investments aimed at strengthening WBL pathways and enhancing the link between education and employment.

## The role of Social Partners

Social partners in Italy play an advisory role in the formulation of training policies and contribute to their interpretation into the pathways that then constitute the training offer. They also play a key part in promoting in-company, sectoral and territorial training programmes funded by the regions or realised thanks to joint interprofessional funds for continuing training; they help to elaborate and organise active policies in the labour market. Beyond their advisory role at national and local levels, social partners play a crucial part in professional apprenticeship regulation<sup>34</sup>.

They advocate for the rights and interests of students and workers, ensuring that WBL programmes are fair, equitable, and beneficial for all participants. They work to guarantee that WBL experiences are properly recognised and valued, contributing to their overall quality. Social partners also strive to ensure that students receive adequate training and that their work-based experiences are protected from exploitation. Moreover, they collect feedback from students and workers to assess programme effectiveness and propose improvements, ensuring policies and practices remain relevant and responsive to sectoral needs<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.mim.gov.it/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/g7-labour/ministro-e-ministero/ll-ministero>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/dossier\\_tematici/nextgenerationeu-e-pnrr/](https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/dossier_tematici/nextgenerationeu-e-pnrr/)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/italy-u3>

<sup>35</sup> Memoria predisposta per l'audizione del 12 giugno 2024 presso la XIV Commissione Politiche dell'Unione europea della Camera dei deputati, in merito alla Proposta di direttiva del Parlamento europeo e del Consiglio, relativa al

The main "social partners" are the employer organizations (Confindustria) and the three main trade union federations (CGIL, CISL, and UIL) who engage in collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue.

## The Role of National Institutes

The **National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP)**<sup>36</sup> is a public research institution supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy that carries out the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of labour and employment services policies, education and training policies, social policies and, more in general, the policies which impact on the labour market.

INAPP is the National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme for the sphere of Vocational Education and Professional Training and since 2018 it has been operating as the Intermediate Organism of the ESF+ National Programme Youth, Women and Work 2021-2027, delegated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

The institute is the national reference point for EQUAVET (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) since 2006 and carries out the following activities: promotion, implementation and development of the European Quality Assurance Framework; carrying out research and studies related to quality assurance provisions; adoption of new quality assurance tools such as self-assessment and peer review, to support the implementation of the EQAVET Network programme; and to promote the development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), which aim to align skills with labour market needs.

The National Reference Point is supported by a National Board, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, INVALSI, School Heads Association, social partners, training experts, and representatives of vocational education and training providers

INAPP promotes the professional training of students, apprentices, young graduates, teachers, trainers and operators through internship and job shadowing experiences abroad, interalia through stage4eu<sup>37</sup>. Emphasis is placed on innovation and the digital transformation of education and training systems aiming both at the development of work-based learning models and at transnational mobility and cooperation to acquire skills required by the job market<sup>38</sup>.

INAPP is the intermediate organisation of the National Programme Youth, Women and Work 2021-2027. The agency is delegated the functions related to the actions of the Modernisation

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miglioramento e alla garanzia del rispetto delle condizioni di lavoro dei tirocinanti e alla lotta ai rapporti di lavoro regolari camuffati da Tirocini ("Direttiva sui tirocini") - COM(2024) 132 Final del 20 marzo 2024.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.inapp.gov.it/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://stage4eu.it/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.inapp.gov.it/istituto/funzioni-e-compiti>

of Employment Services and Active Policies priority and the Technical Assistance priority of the Programme.

Furthermore, INAPP is Italy's national partner institution for the CEDEFOP ReferNet project to provide information on Italy's vocational education and training (VET) system and policies, it coordinates the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning and participates in the OECD-PIAAC survey. Finally, it is a member of the European Consortium ERIC-ESS and is responsible for the European Social Survey for Italy.

A tool promoted by INAPP is *'the Atlas of Work'*, which emerged from research-intervention work in support of the Technical Group formed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, ANPAL, the Coordination of Regions and the Regions, with the technical assistance of Tecnostruttura delle Regioni (Interministerial Decree of 30 June 2015). It constitutes a detailed map of work and qualifications, organised in three sections: Atlas Work, Atlas and Qualifications and Atlas and Professions. The tool serves as a support for the permanent learning system and employability services<sup>39</sup>.

The **National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE)**<sup>40</sup> has been the point of reference for educational research in Italy for 100 years. Since 1925, it has been investing in training and educational innovation, supporting school improvement processes. The Institute develops new didactic models, experiments with the use of new technologies in education, and promotes the redefinition of the relationship between learning and teaching spaces and times.

In addition, it deals with the training of teaching, administrative, technical and auxiliary staff and school managers and has been involved in some of the most important e-learning experiences at European level.

Together with INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training system) and the inspectorate of the Italian Ministry of Education, INDIRE is a part of the *National Evaluation System for Education and Training*<sup>41</sup>. In this field, the Institute develops actions to support educational improvement processes to raise teaching quality and pupils' achievements.

INDIRE observes and documents the development of technical and vocational education and training curricula, and school-to-work transition, by means of quantitative and qualitative monitoring, data banks and research reports.

INDIRE is also the Italian National Agency for Erasmus+ in the areas of School education, Higher education, Adult education. Additionally, it is the National Support Organization for eTwinning<sup>42</sup> – the community for teachers to connect, collaborate and share ideas in Europe – as well as for

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<sup>39</sup> <https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.indire.it/en/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://snv.pubblica.istruzione.it/snv-portale-web/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.indire.it/en/progetto/etwinning/>

Epale – the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe – and for Eurydice, the network providing information on education systems and policies in 37 countries. INDIRE is funding projects in the field, including this Erasmus+ project – Work-Based-Learning Champion and other projects, such as the two-year project ‘Innovative Models of School-Work Alternation’ aimed at understanding and modelling the training processes that accompany school-work experiences in teaching practices, organisation methods, and product results<sup>43</sup>.

The **National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System (INVALSI)**<sup>44</sup> plays a crucial role within Italy's national evaluation system. Its primary objective is to ensure the functional coordination of the national evaluation system, which implements quality assurance in the education and training system, from primary school to upper secondary school. The institute is responsible for proposing evaluation protocols and organising visits to schools by external evaluation units. It also develops indicators of efficiency and efficacy to pinpoint schools and training institutes that require priority support and external evaluation. Moreover, INVALSI creates tools to facilitate evaluation-related actions for schools and training facilities. It defines indicators specifically for evaluating school directors and is involved in selecting, training, and managing the registry of experts for external evaluation units. Additionally, INVALSI compiles periodic reports on the state of the education and training system and represents Italy in international surveys and other evaluation-related initiatives, contributing to a comprehensive understanding and continuous improvement of educational standards.

## 3 Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to key stakeholders to solicit feedback on both national and European policies, and work-based learning practices in Italy<sup>45</sup>. The response rate was lower than expected, likely impacted by the timing of distribution during the busy months of December and January. To improve engagement, direct contact methods such as phone calls were prioritised. Despite these efforts, the response was still limited, particularly from SMEs. Out of nearly 150 stakeholders contacted, the key performance indicator (KPI) was only achieved by 84%, with 21 responses received instead of the targeted 25.

The survey included 21 Italian participants from various sectors. The majority (**47.6%**) of participants work in higher education, with 7 out of 10 employed by universities **23.8%** were

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.indire.it/progetto/modelli-innovativi-di-alternanza-scuola-lavoro/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php>

<sup>45</sup> More details can be found in Annex.

**students or recent graduates. 9.5%** were both **vocational education and training professionals** and **company representatives**. The sectors of work vary from ICT and research and development to commercial, cultural and legal.

## **Awareness and Experience with Work-Based Learning**

The survey reveals that a large portion of participants, 85.7%, report some level of familiarity with WBL practices within their organisations. Specifically, 42.9% of respondents indicated they were "somewhat familiar," 28.6% were "slightly familiar," and 14.3% described themselves as "very familiar." Despite this relatively high awareness, 14.3% of respondents admitted to having no familiarity with WBL practices. These results underscore a diverse range of familiarity levels among respondents, although it is evident **that more than half of respondents are familiar with WBL practices**.

Regarding their **involvement and direct experience with WBL programmes** or initiatives, such as apprenticeships, internships, or dual education systems, the majority of respondents were **engaged as educators or academics** (40%), followed by participants (28.6%), **supervisors** (19%), and **programme coordinators** (14.3%). In contrast, only a few participants served as employers or acted as intermediaries between companies and educational institutions. Furthermore, 9.5% of respondents indicated they had no direct involvement with WBL in their organisations, underscoring potential participation gaps among different stakeholder groups.

The majority of participants, 66.7%, reported recent or frequent **engagement with WBL practices**, either within the last year (42.9%) or on a daily basis (23.8%). Additionally, 19% stated their last involvement was between 1 and 2 years ago, while 9.5% interacted more than 2 years ago. Only 4.8% of the respondents indicated they had never engaged with WBL practices. These findings suggest that **WBL is an active component** of professional and educational landscapes **for the majority of the respondents**, highlighting its importance and the value placed on practical, experiential learning models. The data suggests a need for continued support and possibly updates for those who have been out of touch with WBL for over two years, to ensure all professionals remain equipped with the most current and effective practices.

## **Evaluation of National and European Policies**

A crucial issue emerged regarding the knowledge of national or European policies supporting WBL: only 38.1% of participants are aware of them. **This highlights a significant gap in awareness and understanding of existing frameworks or initiatives that aim to support WBL programmes.**

Only about 25% of respondents named **the policies with which they are familiar, with** the most frequently mentioned well-known policies and mechanisms include **internships**,



**curricular and professionalising traineeships, apprenticeships, school-work alternation, the Erasmus+ programme and the dual system in vocational education and training.**

The low response rate may **reflect either a lack of awareness and understanding of national and European WBL policies and learning modalities** among stakeholders, **unfamiliarity with the terminology used** (such as "Work-based Learning" or "Apprendimento basato sul lavoro"), **or both**. This situation underscores the **need for enhanced educational and communication strategies** to better acquaint stakeholders with these important terms and policies.

### **Most significant challenges in the current national WBL policies**

The **top challenges** identified by participants include a **mismatch between educational curriculum and job market needs, and a lack of awareness about WBL opportunities**, each cited by 57.1% of respondents. These challenges highlight a critical disconnect between educational offerings and labour market demands and suggest that many potential participants or stakeholders are not fully aware of the existence or advantages of WBL programmes, which impairs their adoption and effectiveness.

Additionally, over half of the participants (52.4%) pointed out that **WBL opportunities are not promoted sufficiently**, indicating a gap in marketing these programmes/learning modalities to potential beneficiaries like students, employers, or educators. Furthermore, 47.6% of respondents noted **limited employer engagement** as a significant obstacle, reflecting difficulties in fostering collaborations between educational institutions and the business sector, which are essential for effective WBL.

**Other** concerns included administrative burdens and complexity (28.6%), which may deter involvement, particularly from small or medium enterprises, and a lesser emphasis on funding issues (19%), suggesting that financial constraints are not perceived as the primary barrier. A small percentage (4.8%) of respondents also mentioned more specific challenges such as improving the integration of education with the workforce, enhancing the quality of WBL experiences, addressing regional disparities in programme availability, and facilitating access for vulnerable groups.

### **European Union policies and initiatives**

Participants have a generally positive perception of EU policies and initiatives like Erasmus+ and the European Framework for WBL, with nearly half of the participants expressing support. However, a significant portion of respondents either remained neutral (33.3%) or were not aware of these policies (19%), pointing to a need for increased awareness and clearer communication about EU efforts in supporting work-based learning.

**Key recommendations for improving the policies include:** increasing funding and salaries, the need to simplify bureaucratic processes, making WBL more accessible. Additionally,



recommendations included strengthening the connection between corporate activities and the educational system, expanding WBL practices within universities—especially in Southern Italy—and increasing the promotion of WBL benefits and applicable methodologies. There was also a call for the promotion of small and medium enterprise involvement to foster practical skills development, the addition of human resources to support WBL initiatives, and the creation of paid internship opportunities to facilitate smoother transitions for students into the workforce.

## Digital Competencies and WBL Tools

**Digital skills were highlighted as crucial for implementing WBL programmes**, with most participants rating their importance highly—42.9% scored them 4 out of 5, and 28.6% gave the maximum score. However, the survey revealed a need for targeted digital training for both students and staff to meet the demands of an increasingly technological labour market. Challenges such as navigating university portals and the poor usability of WBL-related websites were also identified.

Despite the importance of digital skills, only 14.3% of participants were familiar with digital tools relevant to WBL in Italy, such as SELFIE and Stage4eu. Participants found e-learning platforms like Moodle and Trello, program management software, and platforms connecting universities and companies to be the most useful. However, many reported facing technical difficulties and administrative resistance when using these tools, highlighting barriers to their effective implementation.

## Testimonies and future recommendations

### Successful WBL Practices

Among the WBL practices considered successful, participants mentioned programmes such as Erasmus+, internships and apprenticeships linked to company visits, and specific projects such as those of the Fondazione Sant'Agata and INAPP. These examples demonstrate the potential of WBL experiences when supported by effective coordination.

### Recommendation to improve WBL programmes in Italy or across Europe:

Recommendations for improving WBL programmes at both national and European levels emphasise better coordination, recognition, and accessibility. Key proposals include greater dissemination and coordination to ensure curricular recognition of activities creating a common framework for recognising WBL, enhancing collaboration between universities, companies, and student services, and advancing digitalisation alongside increased funding. Additional measures involve training company tutors, organizing awareness events, ensuring fair salaries, and improving interaction between education and the labour market through quality standards and financial support. Finally, establishing networks and partnerships among

stakeholders is crucial to reducing disparities, improving access for vulnerable groups, and fostering an inclusive and effective WBL system.

## **Collaboration**

Regarding the willingness to participate in future workshops on WBL and digital skills, 52.4% said they were in favour, while 47.6% responded negatively. These results highlight a strong interest in the topic of WBL, but also the need to address significant challenges to ensure its effective and inclusive implementation.

## 4 Best Practices

### DUAL APPRENTICESHIP: HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The best practice consists of a dual apprenticeship for higher education and research developed by the engineering faculty of the University of L'Aquila (UnivAQ) and Enel. Founded in 1962, Enel is the largest electricity company in Italy, and it has always contributed to its economic and social development.

A selection of 11 students attending the second year of a master's degree in electrical engineering are hired by Enel with an apprenticeship contract to gain direct experience in the field of electricity generation and distribution. **UnivAQ** and **Enel** created an integrated curriculum with notions that meet the current needs of the manufacturing world, the energy transition and the digitisation of work processes. The programme alternates between lectures and classroom study and technical-professional training carried out directly in the factory and students will be supported by a tutor from UnivAQ and one from Enel as well. Starting from the academic year 2023/2024, 15 second-year students of the master's degree course in Electrical Engineering alternate lessons and study with technical and professional training in the company.

The **main objective of the first edition** was to develop *a practical and in-depth understanding of processes and technologies in the energy sector* which is highly competitive and very dynamic. For Enel the initiative aims to impart new skills but also aligns with the Group's commitment to provide quality training. Enel wants to inspire young people with greater awareness of the countless opportunities in the energy sector and to attract the best talents. **The objective of the second edition** is, in fact, to obtain a university degree enriched by highly professionalising educational content.

No challenges were encountered in the implementation of the programme. The only critical aspect concerns the fact that the number of participants decreased from 15 to 11 compared to the first edition of the project which took place in 2023. Enel's reputation may be considered a facilitator in the implementation of the practice since its attractiveness as an employer. The primary **impact** observed is that students acquire practical knowledge in their field of work before completing their studies. Enel, on the other hand, has been able to attract and select excellent resources that have already been trained with specific skills.

In October 2025 the third edition of the experimental programme of Higher Education and Research Apprenticeship will be released. Enel will offer 15 students the opportunity to start a working relationship as **apprentices** at the same time as they complete the final year of their Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering. The apprenticeship programme is developed through the alternation between attending lessons at the University and being present at the Company for technical-professional training and to simultaneously start a work experience consistent

with the studies carried out, in a dynamic work context, which allows the acquisition of skills that can be immediately used at work.

## EUNICE - EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

The University of Catania is part of the project ***Eunice - “The European University of Customised Education”***, financed by the **Erasmus+ programme** from 2020 to 2023 (first call) and then from 2023 to 2027 (second call). The consortium is made up of **ten European universities**, including, in addition to the University of Catania, Brandenburg University of Technology (Germany), Polytechnic University of Hauts-de-France (France), Poznan University of Technology (Poland, Coordinator), University of Mons (Belgium), University of Cantabria (Spain) and University of Vaasa (Finland), the University of Peloponnese (Greece), the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu (Portugal) and Karlstad University (Sweden).

The main **objective** is the establishment of **transnational alliances** of higher education institutions from all over the EU that come together for the benefit of students, lecturers, public bodies and companies. The University of Catania joins the new **24 European Universities**, transnational alliances of higher education institutions from all over the EU that come together for the benefit of students, lecturers, public bodies and enterprises. The funding obtained will enable the implementation of actions aimed at facilitating the insertion of students in the world of work and encouraging their international projection.

Main **purposes** of the first call were:

- Establishment of the foundations: the long-term **strategy** where quality education meets research, innovation, society and industry;
- Create a EUNICE **campus**: a unique, inter-university space where students and staff are inspired by the mobility, customised (student-oriented) curricula and work-based tasks;
- **European identity** based in cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Create **bridges** between students, researchers, industrial partners and society actors: through industrial research and challenge-driven training.

The second call has **innovative aspects**. EUNICE will continue developing its activities and fostering:

- The development of EUNICE [Key Competencies](#) and [experiential learning](#);
- [Communities of practice](#): among employees in key areas of activity to enable joint problem solving;
- Reviews of academic and administrative policies and processes to enable **innovation** across institutions in terms of enrolment, mobility and programme development;

- Enhance **regional engagement** so our universities have a positive impact on education but also on transferring knowledge and answering the needs of society.

The University of Catania, with the aim of facilitating the insertion of young people into the world of work, has designed the **“EIIIP - Eunice International Internship Portal”**, encouraging mobility and international projects. The opportunities are open to university students, undergraduates and graduates but also to young people enrolled in high schools, in order to introduce them to the context of cooperation between academia and business. Among the 200 companies registered on the portal, the University of Catania is associated with: the Municipality of Catania, the Chamber of Commerce, Confindustria, Distretto Tecnologico Sicilia Micro e Nano Sistemi, INFN, CSFNSM, CNR, **STMicroelectronics**, Enel Green Power, Fidia Farmaceutici, SIFI, Medivis, Sasol and Parmalat.

In addition, thanks to the **“EUNICE - International Thesis Portal”**, the service also extends to the possibility of international mobility related to PHD research projects. More than 100 professors and researchers from various fields of study have already indicated their willingness to host Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students <sup>46</sup>.

## ENGINEERING STAGE IN STMICROELECTRONICS

In 2021, the University of Catania signed an agreement with **STMicroelectronics** concerning training and research activities in power electronics. ST is a global high-tech company creating semiconductor technologies with more than five thousand employees in the city of Catania. In 2024, the company announced an investment of 5 billion euro for the construction of a new production plant that will be operational from 2026 and is expected to employ around 2,700 new workers.

The aim of the collaboration is to **foster the academic and professional training of students** in the organisation of multidisciplinary courses and the coordination of research projects, dissertations and post-graduate internships in the field of power electronics. The joint activities are aimed at researching new types of applications and developing new power devices using innovative methodologies on both currently used and new materials. In addition, the company financed **12 study prizes**, each worth EUR 8,000, to 6 male and 6 female students from the University of Catania enrolled in the Master's degree course in Electronic Engineering for the academic year 2023/2024. In addition to the prize, mentorship by STMicroelectronics' technical staff is being provided for the duration of the studies. The winners take part in training meetings, follow a specific individual plan to be agreed upon with the company contact persons, and will be able to carry out their degree thesis and/or an internship in the offices and laboratories of STMicroelectronics.

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<sup>46</sup> <https://eunice-university.eu/project/eunice4u/>

## STAGE4EU

Stage4EU is a project implemented by **INAPP** in 2019, as a natural evolution of the experience gained with the 'Internship Handbook in Europe'. It is a mobile app and a website offering a free service that publishes advertisements for *internships in national and international public institutions and entities, internationally recognised organisations and multinational companies*. The Stage4eu project is co-financed by the national 'Youth, Women and Work ESF+ Programme 2021- 2027'. Its **target group** is composed mostly of University students or recent graduates, between 20 and 30 years old, but it may also include younger or older people. No challenges were encountered in the implementation of the programme. The **main impact** is to allow students to acquire professional skills in an international context, acquiring soft and hard skills, such as the spirit of enterprise, the ability to adapt by confronting different cultural and organisational models and, last but not least, learning to speak a foreign language fluently. In addition, it is very likely, depending on the obligation in some countries, that the traineeship is paid or compensated with benefits such as accommodation, public transport passes, meal vouchers, etc. Also, companies will have qualified and trained staff from a different country.

## 5 Analysis of gaps and challenges

Based on the desk and field research carried out, the following key gaps and challenges related to WBL policies and programmes in Italy have been identified:

- **Mismatch between educational curricula and labour market needs**

57.1% of participants highlighted a disconnect between educational curricula and job market demands, resulting in students graduating without the skills needed to secure jobs in their chosen fields.

- **Lack of awareness of WBL opportunities**

57.1% of respondents noted a lack of awareness regarding available WBL opportunities. Desk research also revealed difficulties in locating relevant programmes and information.

- **Lack of promotion of WBL opportunities**

52.4% reported insufficient promotion of WBL opportunities. Experts from Confindustria emphasised that a lack of structured relationships between training institutions and companies negatively impacts the quality and variety of internships offered<sup>47</sup>.

- **Lack of effective WBL training**

The lack of effective WBL training fails to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to succeed in the labour market and hinders students' understanding of how their studies align with potential career paths. Consequently, many students may be compelled to pursue careers in entirely new sectors

- **Lack of competent training tutors**

There is a shortage of qualified professional tutors in companies who are capable of providing the necessary training. This deficiency hampers the ability of trainees/apprentices to acquire the essential skills needed to perform their job tasks effectively. Particularly in Southern Italy, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges in hiring tutors to train new recruits due to resource constraints. The necessity of training both teachers and trainers has also been highlighted by CEDEFOP as a challenge.

- **Limited employer engagement**

47.6% of participants identified limited employer involvement as a barrier to effective WBL implementation, reflecting difficulties in fostering collaborations between educational institutions and the business sector.

- **Regulatory barriers and legislative gaps**

Italy faces some challenges in harmonising national WBL regulations with European directives, such as the Proposal for a European Directive COM (2024) 132 on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees and combating regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships ('Traineeships Directive'). Stakeholders cited difficulties in defining "trainee," lack of clarity in on-the-job training tools, and inconsistent legislative and financial frameworks.

- **Administrative burden**

28.6% of participants cited administrative complexity as a challenge, including bureaucratic hurdles that deter employers from adopting WBL programmes.

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<sup>47</sup> Confindustria Position Paper on Curricular Internships p.3.



- **Lack of funding**

19% of respondents highlighted funding shortages as a major issue, including inadequate financial support for trainees. Allowances for trainees vary widely by region, creating inequalities, and there is no provision for allowances in curricular internships.

- **Apprenticeships underutilised**

Apprenticeships remain an underutilised tool in Italy due to regulatory complexity, high perceived costs, and limited awareness among young people and employers. Companies often favour more flexible contracts, such as fixed-term contracts, over apprenticeships. CEDEFOP<sup>48</sup> also emphasises the importance of strengthening apprenticeships to better integrate training and employment for young people within a dual system. This involves enhancing apprenticeship programmes for higher education and training, simplifying current legislation, and making apprenticeships more attractive to businesses.

- **Improper use of traineeship contracts**

Stakeholders reported mixed opinions on control mechanisms to prevent the misuse of internship contracts. Unions and student associations advocate for stronger controls, while Confindustria believes current mechanisms are sufficient. Apprenticeships are suggested as a more effective alternative to extracurricular internships<sup>49</sup>.

- **Minimum health and safety standards**

Stakeholders agreed on the need to ensure minimum health and safety standards for trainees, equivalent to those provided to employees with standard contracts.

- **Lack of Policy Awareness**

There is a gap in awareness and understanding of national and European policies supporting WBL and a potential unfamiliarity with the terminology used ("Work-based Learning" or "Apprendimento basato sul lavoro").

- **Other Challenges**

Territorial disparities and difficulty accessing programmes for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/italy-2019>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.bollettinoadapt.it/direttiva-tirocini-la-posizione-delle-associazioni-di-rappresentanza-italiane/>

These gaps and challenges underscore the need for enhanced alignment between educational curricula and labour market requirements, improved awareness and promotion of work-based learning opportunities, and stronger connections between educational institutions and businesses. Additionally, there is a critical need for more competent training tutors, particularly in SMEs, simplified regulatory frameworks, increased employer engagement in WBL programmes, and a re-evaluation of the apprenticeship system to make it more accessible and attractive to both young people and employers.

## 6 Recommendations

The following is the list of recommendations to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of WBL in Italy focussing on enhancing coordination, recognition and accessibility:

- **Improve WBL policies**
  - Implement policies aimed at further nurturing the interaction between the education system and the labour market and guaranteeing adequate quality standards of WBL experiences.
- **Increase awareness of WBL policies and practices**
  - Improve understanding of national and European WBL policies to address the current low levels of familiarity and ensure stakeholders are well-informed.
  - Extend knowledge of WBL programmes to companies to help integrate young people into the workforce and promote the involvement of small and medium sized enterprises to enhance practical skill development.
  - Foster active engagement in WBL practices to dispel misinformation and enhance a comprehensive understanding of the benefits and processes involved.
  - Host open days to increase awareness among students and professionals about the opportunities available through Work-Based Learning, encouraging greater participation.
  - Organise private, paid WBL programmes that provide comprehensive training for youth, focusing not only on professional skills but also on civic and social responsibilities.
- **Strengthen coordination between key stakeholders to align educational curricula with labour market needs**
  - Strengthen the dialogue between public institutions, policy makers, beneficiaries and companies.
  - Create networks and effective partnerships to involve all stakeholders in the planning, implementation, evaluation of WBL programmes.
  - Improve collaboration between universities, companies, and student services to ensure curricular recognition of WBL experiences, creating standard instruments for recognition and address cross-country equivalence issues.
  - Develop a structured "training pathway," from school to university to allow progressive skill development and avoid overlap between similar tools.

- **Create increased and better quality WBL opportunities for students**

- Extend the duration of curricular internships within existing study plans to provide students with sufficient time to develop professional skills.
- Enhance university placement and orientation services to ensure that students consciously choose their promoting entities.
- Strengthen apprenticeships and ensure that the training component is more effectively valued in both apprenticeships and internships.
- Create salaried internship opportunities to facilitate students' transition into the workforce.
- Train company tutors in mentoring to enhance the skill acquisition of staff.
- Provide financial support for initiatives that improve the quality and accessibility of WBL experiences.
- Increase curricular internships within degree programmes by integrating the dual system. This would reduce the need for extracurricular internships and help address the NEET phenomenon.
- Address territorial disparities, enhance access for vulnerable individuals, and elevate the overall quality of WBL experiences.

- **Increase funding and ensure fair compensation**

- Provide greater funding for companies to support WBL initiatives and guarantee adequate salaries for apprentices, creating more job opportunities for those completing their training.

- **Enhance digital skills**

- Improve digital skills among students and staff to better implement and manage WBL practices, aligning with the needs of an increasingly technological labour market.

## 7 Conclusion

The report highlights the critical role of Work-Based Learning in bridging the gap between education and labour market needs in Italy. Despite the growing recognition of its importance, several gaps and challenges persist, including a mismatch between educational curricula and job market demands, limited employer engagement, insufficient funding, and lack of awareness and promotion of WBL opportunities. Additionally, regulatory barriers, administrative

complexity, and the underutilisation of apprenticeships hinder the full potential of WBL in fostering employability and skills development.

The findings emphasise the need for a more cohesive and inclusive approach to WBL implementation. Key recommendations include increasing awareness of WBL policies and practices, strengthening collaboration between universities, companies, and policymakers, addressing territorial disparities, and enhancing digital skills to support modern WBL programmes. Furthermore, greater funding, fair compensation, and the elimination of improper practices—such as the misuse of extracurricular internships—are essential for improving the quality and accessibility of WBL initiatives.

The best practices identified in this report, such as dual apprenticeships and tools like Stage4EU, demonstrate the potential of WBL when supported by effective coordination and innovative strategies. By implementing the proposed recommendations and fostering partnerships among key stakeholders, Italy can strengthen its WBL framework, better prepare students for the workforce, and contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive labour market.

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- <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/orientamento-e-formazione/focus-on/apprendistato/pagine/default>
- <https://www.cgil.it/ci-occupiamo-di/mercato-del-lavoro-politiche-attive-del-lavoro/memoria-cgil-audizione-su-proposta-di-direttiva-tirocini-xmmqa2wl>
- <https://www.mur.gov.it/it/pnrr/misure-e-componenti/dalla-ricerca-allimpresa>
- <https://www.unive.it/pag/10356>
- <https://www.cisl.it/cose-la-cisl/>

- <https://www.repubblicadeglistagisti.it/article/focus-alto-apprendistato-terzo-livello>
- <https://www.secondowelfare.it/primo-welfare/lavoro/perche-in-italia-non-funziona-apprendistato/>
- <https://www.bollettinoadapt.it/lapprendistato-che-non-ce-alcune-riflessioni-a-partire-dallultimo-report-inapp-inps/>
- <https://corporate.enel.it/carriere/notizie/2024/05/seconda-edizione-apprendistato-duale-ingegneria-elettrica-univaq>
- <https://www.unict.it/it/internazionale/eunice-european-university>
- <https://www.unict.it/it/internazionale/news/progetto-eunice-al-formare-una-nuova-generazione-di-europei-creativi#:~:text=di%20europei%20creativi-Progetto%20EUNICE%20al%20via%20per%20formare%20una%20nuova%20generazione%20di,e%20finanziato%20dal%20programma%20Erasmus%2B>
- <https://eunice-university.eu/project/eunice4u/>
- <https://internships.eunice-university.eu/>
- [https://www.st.com/content/st\\_com/en.html](https://www.st.com/content/st_com/en.html)
- <https://www.archiviobollettino.unict.it/articoli/unict-e-stmicroelectronics-firmano-accordo-di-collaborazione-attivit%C3%A0-di-formazione-e>
- <https://www.unict.it/it/didattica/news/stmicroelectronics-assegna-12-premi-iscritte-unict>
- <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita-orientamento-e-formazione/focus/xxii-rapporto-di-monitoraggio-apprendistato>
- <https://snv.pubblica.istruzione.it/snv-portale-web/>
- <https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php>
- <https://www.anvur.it/en>

- <https://formazionelavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/notizie/2023/apprendistato-l-emilia-romagna-aderisce-all-alleanza-europea>
- [https://www.sistema.puglia.it/portal/pls/portal/sispuglia.DYN\\_DYN\\_CONTENUTO.SHOW?p\\_arg\\_names=id&p\\_arg\\_values=57274&p\\_arg\\_names=flag&p\\_arg\\_values=](https://www.sistema.puglia.it/portal/pls/portal/sispuglia.DYN_DYN_CONTENUTO.SHOW?p_arg_names=id&p_arg_values=57274&p_arg_names=flag&p_arg_values=)

## 9 Annex: Italian Online Questionnaire Data and Best Practice Tables

An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to key stakeholders to solicit feedback on both national and European policies, and work-based learning practices in Italy<sup>50</sup>. The response rate was lower than expected, likely impacted by the timing of distribution during the busy months of December and January. To improve engagement, direct contact methods such as phone calls were prioritised. Despite these efforts, the response was still limited, particularly from SMEs. Out of nearly 150 stakeholders contacted, the key performance indicator (KPI) was only achieved by 84%, with 21 responses received instead of the targeted 25.

The survey included 21 Italian participants from various sectors. The majority (**47.6%**) of participants work in higher education, with 7 out of 10 employed by universities **23.8%** were **students or recent graduates**. **9.5%** were both **vocational education and training professionals** and **company representatives**. The sectors of work vary from ICT and research and development to commercial, cultural and legal.

### Italian Questionnaire Data

#### Questionario online: Pratiche e politiche di apprendimento basate sul lavoro (Work-Based Learning)

*Il seguente questionario è relativo al progetto Erasmus+ “Work-Based-Learning Champion” (WBL Champion), un’iniziativa volta a considerare l’apprendimento basato sul lavoro come sistema educativo ottimale per preparare gli studenti al successo nel mercato del lavoro e a migliorare le competenze digitali del personale degli istituti di istruzione superiore. Questo questionario è stato progettato per raccogliere opinioni sulle politiche nazionali e dell’Unione Europea (UE) e sulle attuali pratiche di WBL nel vostro Paese.*

*Ai fini di questo progetto, per apprendimento basato sul lavoro (Work-Based Learning-WBL) si intende: Una strategia educativa che integra l’apprendimento accademico con esperienze pratiche sul posto di lavoro, consentendo agli studenti di applicare le conoscenze teoriche in contesti reali.*

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<sup>50</sup> More details can be found in Annex.

*Attraverso un impegno strutturato con ambienti di lavoro autentici, gli studenti sviluppano conoscenze, abilità e competenze.*

*Le attività di WBL includono quelle attività ed esperienze che sono direttamente rilevanti per i campi di studio e le future carriere degli studenti, sono collegate a specifici risultati di apprendimento e sono valutate per l'apprendimento.*

*Per questo progetto si considerano le seguenti attività come WBL:*

- Un tirocinio in cui lo studente intraprende un lavoro per conto di un'azienda come esperienza di apprendimento approvata e valutata come parte dei suoi voti durante il programma di studio.*
- Un progetto formativo che lo studente intraprende per conto dell'azienda come esperienza di apprendimento approvata e valutata come parte dei suoi voti durante il programma di studio.*

*Per questo progetto le seguenti attività non possono essere considerate WBL:*

- Progetti di ricerca*
- Lavoro a tempo parziale che non è stato approvato come WBL dall'università di riferimento come parte del programma di studio*

*Si prega di notare che i dati personali raccolti in questo sondaggio sono protetti in conformità con il Regolamento generale sulla protezione dei dati (GDPR). Le vostre risposte rimarranno anonime e saranno utilizzate solo dal consorzio del progetto WBL Champion allo scopo di creare un rapporto sulle pratiche e le politiche di apprendimento basato sul lavoro.*

*I vostri dati personali non saranno condivisi o diffusi al di fuori del consorzio, a meno che non diate il vostro esplicito consenso. Il sondaggio dovrebbe richiedere circa 15 minuti per essere completato.*

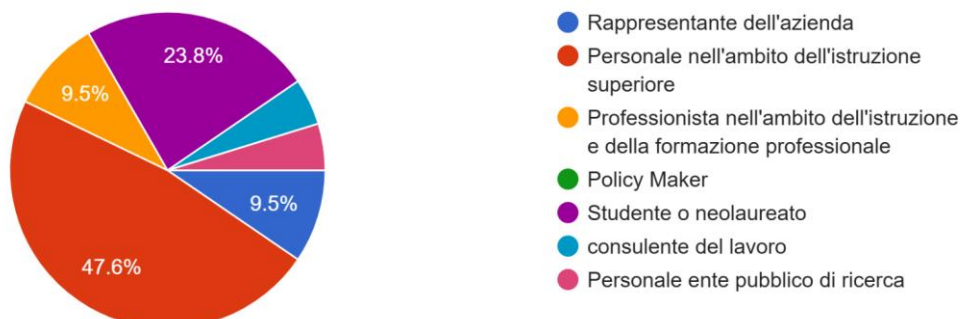
**21 responses were collected through the Italian Questionnaire:**

## **Informazioni generali**



### Quale categoria la descrive meglio?

21 responses



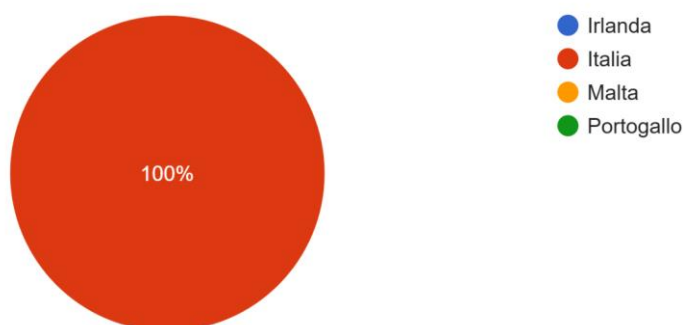
The 21 respondents were asked to identify their **category**, choosing from the following options: company representative, higher education staff, vocational education and training (VET) professional, policymaker, student or recent graduate, employment consultant, or public research organization staff.

The results showed that:

- The majority (**47.6%**) were **higher education staff**.
- **23.8%** were **students or recent graduates**.
- **9.5%** were both **vocational education and training professionals** and **company representatives**.
- **Employment consultants** and **public research organization staff** had the lowest percentages, each at **4.8%**.

### Paese di residenza:

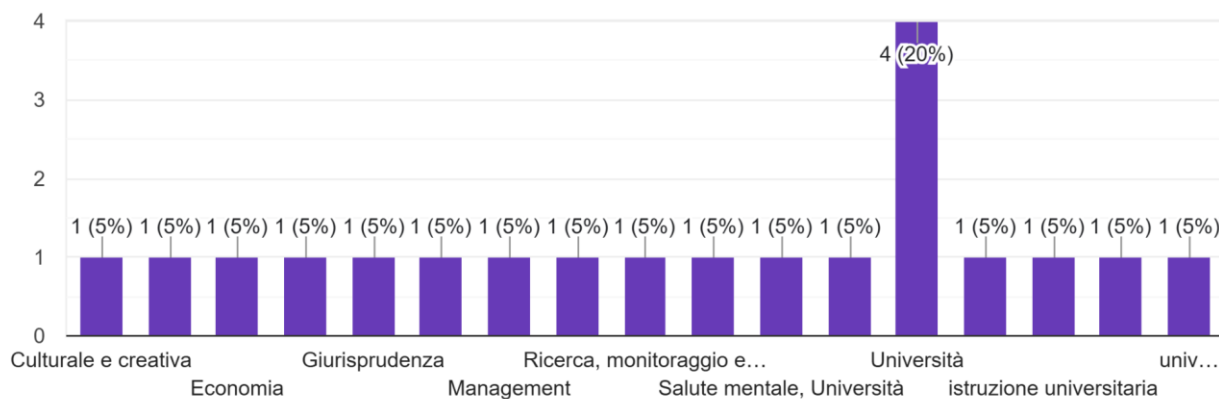
21 responses



The survey was conducted in Italy and only Italians were interviewed.

In quale settore/industria lavora principalmente?

20 responses



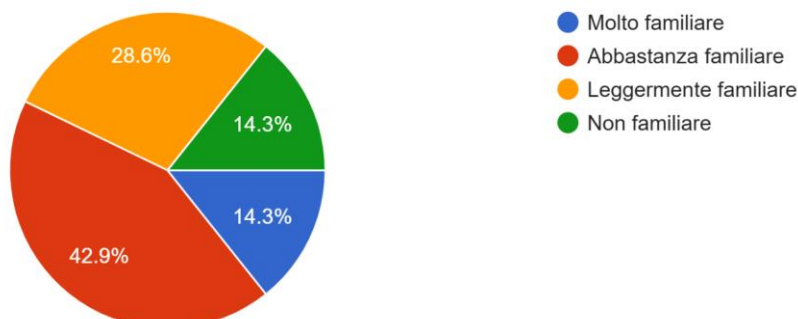
Stakeholders were asked about the sector or industry in which they primarily work. The majority of respondents (**7 out of 20**) stated that they work in **universities**. Additionally:

- **5 respondents** work in **ICT, research, and development**.
- **3 respondents** are employed in **business and management**.
- **2 respondents** work in the **cultural sector**.
- **1 respondent** works in **youth education**.
- **1 respondent** is involved in **human resources**.
- **1 respondent** works in **law**.
- **1 respondent** did not answer.

**Consapevolezza ed esperienza con l'apprendimento basato sul lavoro (Work-Based Learning - WBL)**

Quanta familiarità ha con le pratiche di WBL nella sua organizzazione?

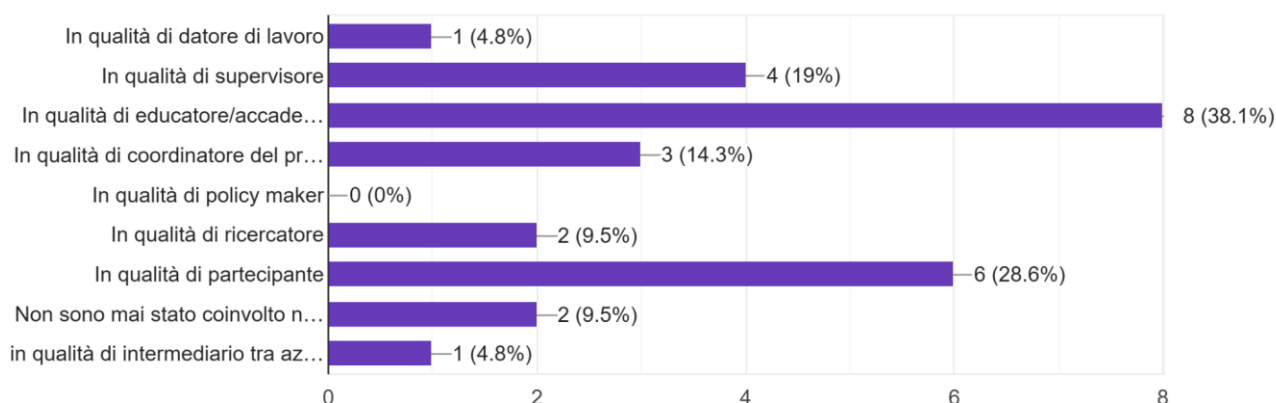
21 responses



In response to the question, “How familiar is your organization with WBL (Work-Based Learning) practices in your organisation?”, **42.9%** of respondents indicated they were **“fairly familiar,”** while **28.6%** reported being **“slightly familiar.”** Additionally, **14.3%** described themselves as **“very familiar,”** and another **14.3%** stated they were **“not familiar.”** These results highlight a diverse range of familiarity levels among respondents, although it is evident **that more than half of respondents are familiar with WBL practices.**

Qual è/era la natura del suo coinvolgimento in programmi o iniziative WBL (ad esempio: apprendistato, stage, sistemi di istruzione duale, altri)? (è possibile scegliere più risposte)

21 responses

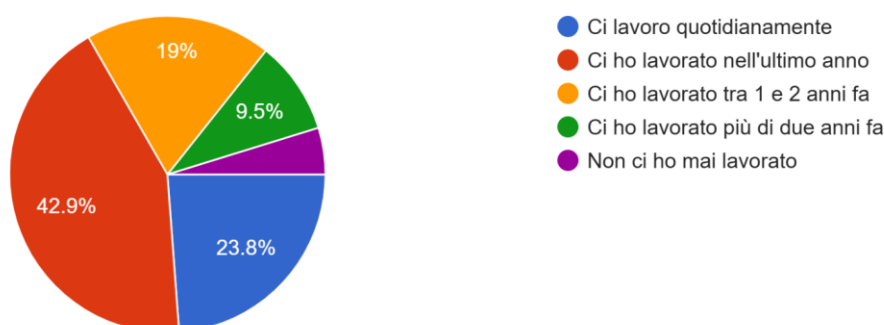


The survey asked participants about **their involvement in Work-Based Learning programmes or initiatives**, such as apprenticeships, internships, or dual education systems.

- **Educator or Academic (38.1%, 8 participants):** The largest group of respondents were involved as educators or academics
- **Participant (28.6%, 6 participants):** A significant portion of participants experienced WBL programs solely as learners, highlighting the importance of WBL as a direct training tool for individuals.
- **Supervisor (19%, 4 participants):** Supervisors represent a smaller but important group, overseeing the practical implementation of WBL programmes in workplace settings.
- **Programme Coordinator (14.3%, 3 participants):** Programme coordinators play a key role in managing and organizing WBL activities, though their representation in the survey is relatively limited.
- **Researchers (9.5%, 2 participants):** The inclusion of researchers indicates some level of academic or institutional interest in studying and improving WBL systems.
- **Employers (4.8%, 1 participant):** Only one employer participated in the survey, which may suggest limited direct involvement by businesses in the respondents' WBL programmes.
- **Intermediaries (4.8%, 1 participant):** One participant identified as an intermediary, representing a bridging role between companies, educational institutions, or research centers.
- **No Involvement (9.5%, 2 participants):** A small portion of respondents reported no involvement in any WBL programme, indicating that not all participants have direct experience with WBL.

Quanto recentemente si è impegnato in pratiche di apprendimento basate sul lavoro (implementando, supervisionando, come partecipante, ecc.)?

21 responses



Participants were asked how recently they had engaged with work-based learning (WBL) practices, whether through implementation, supervision, or participation. **The majority, 42.9%, reported having interacted with WBL practices within the last year. Additionally, 23.8% stated they engage with them on a daily basis,** while 19% indicated their involvement

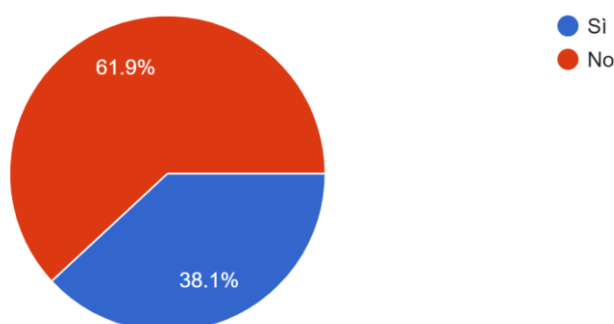
was between 1 and 2 years ago. A smaller group, 9.5%, reported their interaction occurred more than 2 years ago, and only one participant (4.8%) stated they had never interacted with WBL practices.

**The majority of participants (66.7%, combining "within the last year" and "daily engagement") reported recent or frequent interaction with WBL practices.** This suggests that most respondents are actively involved in WBL and likely have relevant, up-to-date perspectives.

## Valutazione delle politiche nazionali ed europee

Conosce le politiche nazionali o europee a sostegno del WBL?

21 responses



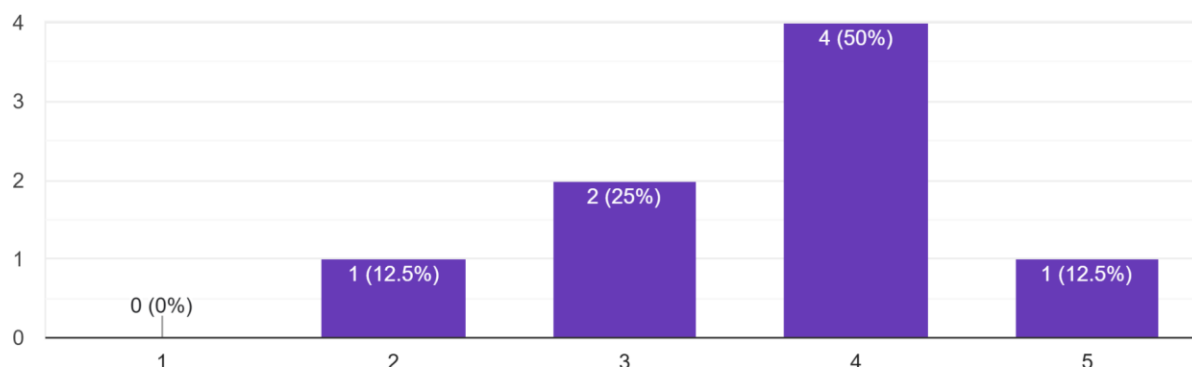
The survey asked participants if they were aware of **national or European policies supporting Work-Based Learning (WBL)**, with a simple "yes" or "no" response.

- **Limited Awareness (61.9%, No):** The majority of respondents indicated they were not aware of national or European policies supporting WBL. This highlights a significant gap in awareness and understanding of existing frameworks or initiatives that aim to support WBL programmes.
- **Awareness (38.1%, Yes):** A smaller proportion of respondents reported being aware of these policies, showing that some stakeholders are informed but that awareness is far from widespread.

**Key Findings:** Lack of awareness of national or European policies supporting WBL.

Se ha risposto "Sì" alla risposta precedente, come giudica l'efficacia delle politiche nazionali o europee nel sostenere il WBL nel suo Paese?

8 responses



Participants who answered "yes" to the previous question were asked to rate the effectiveness of national or European policies in supporting work-based learning (WBL) in their country, using a scale from 1 to 5. Among the **8 respondents, the majority (50%, 4 participants) gave a score of 4, indicating a positive outlook**. Additionally, 25% (2 participants) rated the effectiveness as 3, while 12.5% (1 participant) gave a score of 2, and another 12.5% rated it a perfect 5.

This suggests that while improvements could be made, the **existing European and National frameworks are fundamentally supportive and beneficial to the implementation of WBL initiatives in Italy**.

### Può citare le politiche che conosce?

5 responses

TIROCINI FORMATIVI - APPRENDISTATO PROFESSIONALIZZANTE-ALTERNANZA SCUOLA LAVORO

Alternanza scuola lavoro, Vocational Training

Erasmus+;

Alternanza scuola lavoro, apprendistato, tirocinio curriculare e stage, tirocinio extra-curriculare

Sistema duale IEFP, Apprendistato



The survey asked participants who answered "yes" to name the national WBL policies they were familiar with. **Only 5 participants responded, identifying the following policies:**

- Internships and traineeships
- Apprenticeships
- School-work alternance
- Vocational training
- Erasmus+
- The dual system in vocational education and training

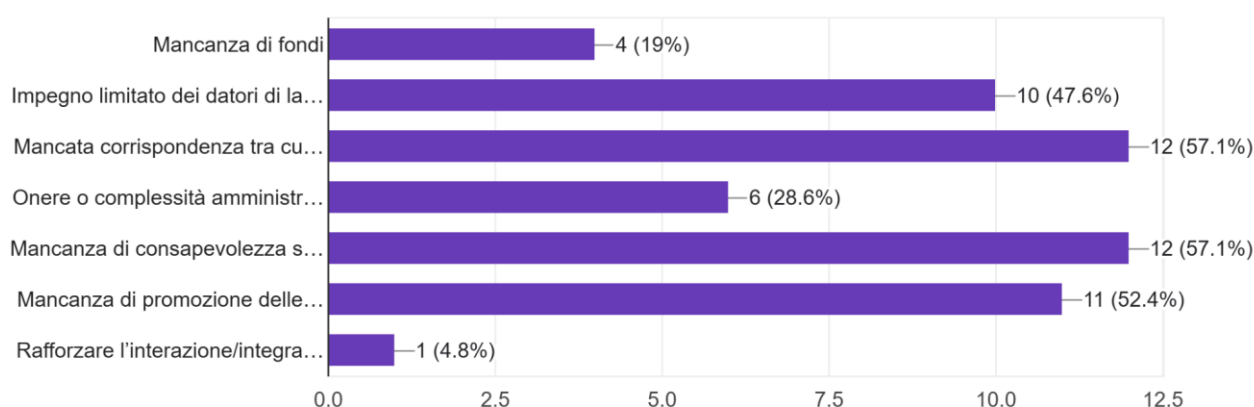
**Low response rate:** Out of all participants, only 5 provided an answer, which could indicate limited familiarity with or confidence in discussing national and European WBL policies. This suggests that **awareness of specific WBL policies may be relatively low among the group, or participants may simply not have detailed knowledge of the policies in place.**

**At the same time, the responses include a mix of well-known WBL mechanisms/learning modalities,** such as internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training, as well as specific initiatives like Erasmus+ and the dual system.

**The low number of responses suggests a need to improve awareness and understanding of national and European WBL policies and learning modalities among stakeholders.**

Quali sono, secondo lei, le sfide più significative nell'ambito delle attuali politiche nazionali sul WBL? (Selezionare fino a 3 opzioni)

21 responses



**All 21 participants identified the most significant challenges in current national WBL policies,** with the option to select up to three.

### Top Challenges:

- **Mismatch between educational curriculum and job market needs (57.1%)**

Over half of the participants identified this as a key challenge, highlighting a critical gap in aligning education with labour market demands.

- **Lack of awareness of WBL opportunities (57.1%)**

Equally cited as the top issue, this suggests that many potential participants or stakeholders are unaware of the existence or benefits of WBL programmes, hindering their adoption and impact.

### **Significant Challenges:**

- **Lack of promotion of WBL opportunities (52.4%)**

More than half of the participants pointed out insufficient promotion, indicating that even when WBL opportunities exist, they may not be adequately marketed to students, employers, or educators.

- **Limited employer engagement (47.6%)**

Nearly half of the respondents agreed that engaging employers in WBL programmes is a challenge. This reflects the difficulty in building partnerships between education providers and the business sector, which are critical for effective WBL.

### **Moderate Challenges:**

- **Administrative burden or complexity (28.6%)**

Over a quarter of participants identified bureaucracy as a barrier, suggesting that the processes for implementing and managing WBL programmes may deter stakeholders, especially small or medium-sized enterprises.

- **Lack of funding (19%)**

While funding is often a concern, fewer participants selected it as a primary challenge, indicating that financial barriers may not be as significant as structural or awareness issues.

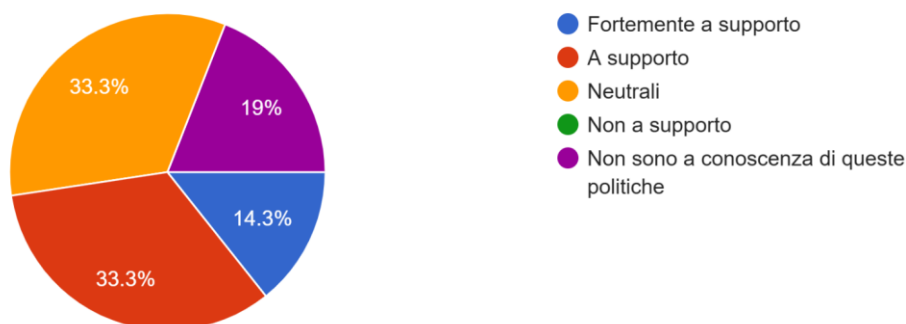
### **Other Challenges (4.8%, 1 respondent):**

One participant mentioned specific, nuanced issues, including:

- Strengthening the integration between the education system and the world of work.
- Increasing the quality of WBL experiences.
- Addressing territorial disparities in WBL programme availability.
- Encouraging and facilitating access for vulnerable groups.

In che misura ritiene che le politiche e le iniziative dell'Unione Europea (ad esempio, Erasmus+, European Framework for WBL) stiano sostenendo il WBL nel suo Paese?

21 responses



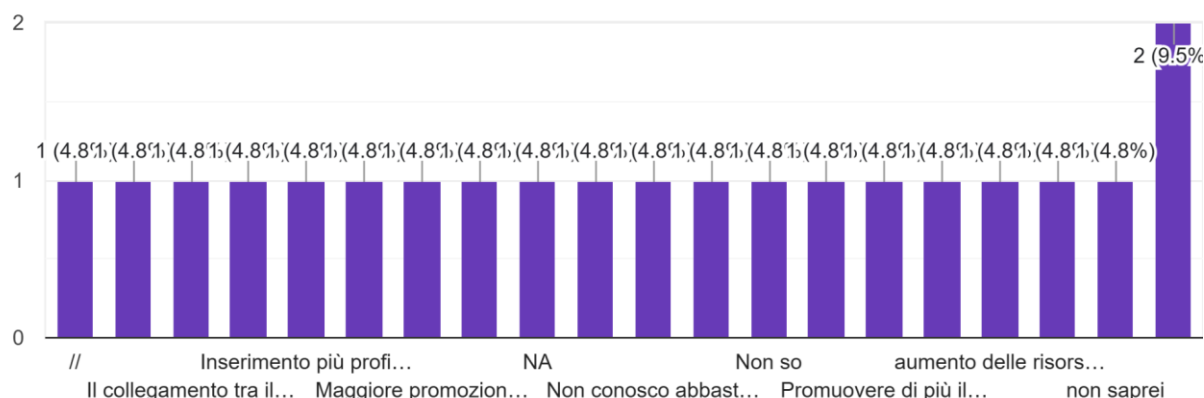
**Participants were asked to what extent they felt European Union (EU) policies and initiatives (e.g., Erasmus+, European Framework for WBL) were supporting WBL in their country:**

- **33.3% (Support):** A third of participants indicated they felt EU policies and initiatives were supportive of WBL in their country, reflecting a positive perception of the EU's role.
- **33.3% (Neutral):** Another third remained neutral, suggesting that they either lacked a strong opinion or felt the impact of these policies was neither particularly helpful nor unhelpful.
- **19% (Not Aware):** A large portion of participants admitted they were not aware of these policies, highlighting a lack of knowledge or engagement with EU initiatives.
- **14.3% (Strong Support):** A smaller group expressed strong support, indicating they believed EU policies were making a notable positive impact on WBL in their country.
- **0% (No Support):** No participants indicated that they did not support these policies, suggesting that there is no outright opposition to EU initiatives among respondents.

Overall, the survey results indicate a generally positive perception of EU policies and initiatives like Erasmus+ and the European Framework for WBL, with nearly half of the participants expressing support or strong support for their impact on WBL in their countries. However, a significant portion of respondents either remained neutral or were not aware of these policies, pointing to a need for increased awareness and clearer communication about EU efforts in supporting work-based learning.

Ci sono aspetti delle politiche WBL dell'Unione Europea che ritiene debbano essere migliorate per rispondere meglio alle esigenze del suo settore?

21 responses



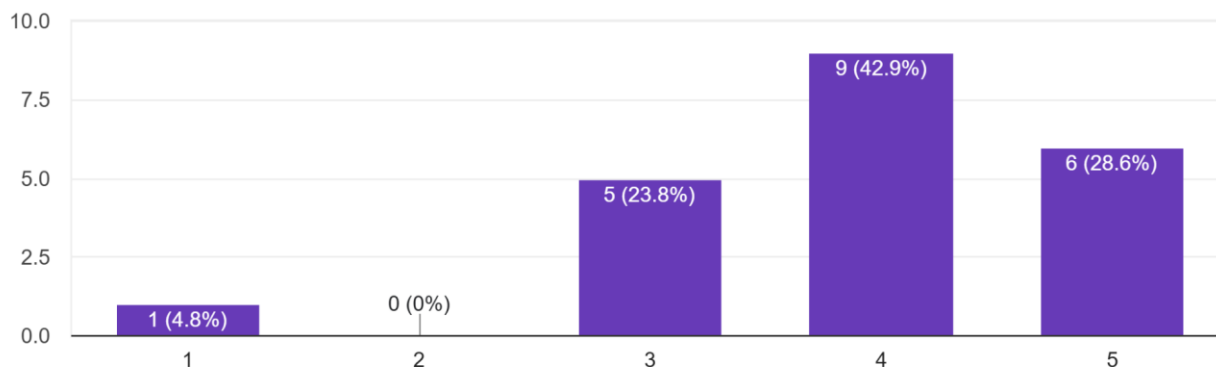
Interviewees were asked to **identify aspects of European Union WBL policies that need improvement** to better meet the needs of their sector. The data collected shows that, while 5 participants didn't know the answer and other 2 participants didn't know the issue, other replies indicated:

- 2 participants reported the **need for improvements in funds and salaries.**
- **Strengthening the relationship between company activities and the education system.**
- 2 participants suggested **simplifying bureaucratic processes to make WBL more accessible.**
- **Expanding the spread of WBL practices in universities, particularly in Southern Italy.**
- 3 participants highlighted the **need for greater promotion of the benefits of WBL and the methodologies that can be applied.**
- **Promoting the involvement of small and medium enterprises to enhance practical skill development.**
- **Increasing human resources to support WBL initiatives.**
- **Creating salaried internship opportunities to help students transition into the workforce.**

## Competenze digitali e strumenti WBL

Quanto ritiene importanti le competenze digitali per un'efficace attuazione dei programmi WBL?

21 responses



Stakeholders were asked to rate the **importance of digital skills for the efficient implementation of WBL programmes**, using a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). All participants responded, with the following results:

- **42.9% (score of 4):** The majority of participants **rated digital skills as very important**, showing a strong acknowledgment of their relevance to WBL programs.
- **28.6% (score of 5):** A significant portion of participants considered **digital skills to be essential**, emphasising their critical role in WBL implementation.
- **23.8% (score of 3):** Nearly a quarter of respondents rated digital skills as **moderately important**, suggesting that while they see value in digital skills, they might not view them as a top priority.
- **4.8% (score of 1):** Only one participant **rated digital skills as unimportant**.

**71.5% (scores of 4 and 5) of participants view digital skills as highly important**, demonstrating a strong consensus on their importance. The data highlights the significant role digital skills play in enhancing the efficiency of WBL initiatives, with most participants assigning them a high importance.

Si prega di spiegare le ragioni della scelta della valutazione nella domanda precedente.

21 responses

1. Il mercato del lavoro qualificato è sempre più orientato verso il digitale e le sue applicazioni competenze necessarie come abilità di base;
2. Sia il PTA che si occupa delle pratiche sia la popolazione studentesca dovrebbero essere in grado di reperire e usare facilmente le conoscenze disponibili su internet, applicare, comunicare tramite canali digitali. Al tempo stesso, spesso l'informazione alla base nei siti internet universitari è difficile da trovare, e spesso la popolazione studentesca lamenta che i siti web relativi alle opportunità citate non sono facilmente navigabili né ben indicizzati. Io sono dentro l'organizzazione da un anno, e forse anche noi docenti (seppur non direttamente coinvolti nelle procedure) dovremmo ricevere divulgazione e formazione per orientare opportunamente i discenti;
3. Maggiore fluidità e trasparenza delle procedure attuative;
4. I ragazzi spesso sono nativi digitali ma poco informati sull'effettivo funzionamento delle piattaforme che usano tutti i giorni. Si sta perdendo dimestichezza con i programmi base di lavoro;
5. Per facilitare l'apprendimento e la formazione anche a distanza e in modalità agile.
6. Le competenze specialistiche possono essere acquisite durante la fase di attuazione della formazione.
7. Le competenze digitali rappresentano ormai un elemento costitutivo nell'attuazione dei programmi WBL e, più in generale, una condizione essenziale per l'accesso al mercato del lavoro.

Interviewees were asked to explain the reasoning behind their previous response:

Most participants in the survey emphasised that **digital skills are essential** for the efficient implementation of WBL programmes and for success in the current labour market, which is increasingly driven by digital technology. They noted that **digital skills are now indispensable** for performing almost any job.

Participants observed that **today's young people**, born in a technological era, have often developed **IT skills independently**. However, critical issues were highlighted, such as a **lack of familiarity with work-based programmes among young people**, emphasizing the need to provide **specific digital learning opportunities** to help them transition into companies seeking employees with strong digital competencies.



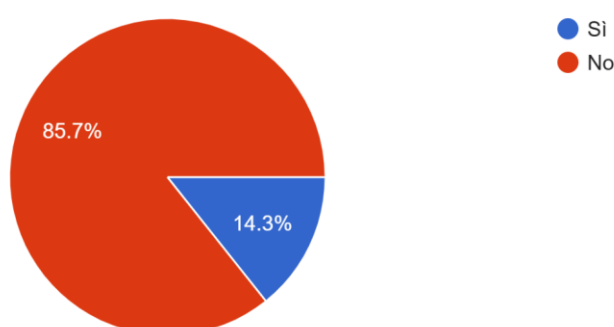
It was also widely agreed that **both students and staff involved in WBL programmes should receive adequate training** to fully leverage digital tools and meet the growing demands of companies.

In universities, participants pointed out that both **technical and administrative staff** handling paperwork and students should have the ability to easily access, apply, and communicate information through digital channels. However, they noted that **university websites often lack navigability and proper indexing**, making it difficult for students to find relevant information.

Students frequently complained about these usability issues, and participants stressed that **both students and teachers**, even if not directly involved in administrative procedures, should receive **proper training and information** to better guide students. This would improve the overall accessibility and efficiency of digital tools related to WBL programmes.

È a conoscenza di strumenti digitali attualmente utilizzati per supportare il WBL nel suo Paese o sua istituzione?

21 responses



Participants were asked if they were aware of any **digital tools used to support Work-Based Learning in their country or institution**, with a choice of "yes" or "no." The majority (85.7%) responded "no," while only 14.3% answered "yes."

These results highlight a **significant lack of awareness regarding digital tools for WBL in Italy**, suggesting that this is an area requiring greater attention and communication.

**Se ha risposto “Sì” alla domanda precedente, può condividere il nome e la funzione principale di tale strumento?**

4 responses

SELFIE

SELFIE for Teachers

Portale europeo per i giovani, è una piattaforma in cui vengono elencati tirocini e lavori disponibili nei paesi membri.

L'Inapp mette a disposizione diversi strumenti a supporto del WBL: Stage4eu (piattaforma per studenti e laureati che intendono svolgere uno stage in Europa), l'Atlante del lavoro e delle qualificazioni, la piattaforma interistituzionale Competenze e Lavoro, il Portale delle professioni ecc.

Participants who responded “yes” to the previous question were asked to name the digital tools they were aware of. Among the 4 responses:

- **Two participants** mentioned **SELFIE**, an application developed by the European Commission to support teachers' digital competence and enhance learning in the digital age.
- **One participant** referred to the **European Youth Portal**, which provides information on internships and jobs available in partner countries.
- **One response** highlighted tools provided by **INAPP**, including:
  - **Stage4eu**, a platform for students and graduates planning internships in Europe.
  - The **Atlas of Jobs and Qualifications**.
  - The inter-institutional platform **Competenze e Lavoro** (Skills and Work).
  - The **Portal of Professions**, among others.

These responses show a limited but diverse awareness of tools supporting WBL, with several focused on European initiatives and platforms.

**Quali sono gli strumenti digitali più utili per sostenere i programmi WBL (ad esempio, piattaforme online, sistemi di gestione dell'apprendimento, strumenti di valutazione digitale)?**

In response to the question about the **most useful digital tools for supporting WBL programmes**, most interviewees highlighted the general use of online platforms and e-learning tools, such as **Moodle** and **Trello**, for work organization.

Other examples mentioned include **LMS (Learning Management System) software**, which supports the management, documentation, tracking, reporting, automation, and delivery of educational courses, training programmes, or learning and development initiatives.

Additionally, interviewees emphasised the importance of **screen sharing and remote desktop platforms**, as well as tools that facilitate connections between universities and companies, which are particularly useful for implementing evaluation systems.

### **Quali sfide ha incontrato (se ne ha incontrate) quando ha cercato di integrare gli strumenti digitali nelle pratiche WBL?**

When asked about the **challenges encountered in using digital tools in WBL practices**, responses highlighted several key issues:

- **9 participants** reported that they had not faced any difficulties.
- **3 participants** mentioned challenges such as **technical difficulties**, **lack of basic digital skills**, and **unfamiliarity with the tools**.
- **1 participant** noted **resistance from administrative staff** regarding the implementation of WBL platforms.
- **8 participants** stated that they had **never used digital tools** for WBL.

These responses underline the importance of addressing technical issues, improving digital skills, and overcoming organisational resistance to enhance the adoption of digital tools in WBL practices.

### **Testimonianze e raccomandazioni future**

**Condivida esempi specifici di pratiche WBL di successo nel suo Paese o nella sua organizzazione (se possibile, fornisca i link).**

The survey participants shared **specific examples of successful WBL practices from their own countries or organizations**.

**3 participants** mentioned the **Erasmus+ programme** as a notable example.

**6 participants** highlighted **training internships or apprenticeships** linked to company visits.

Other responses referred to initiatives offered by the participants' own organisations. Examples of noteworthy practices include:

- The work conducted by the **Confucius Institute** in Macerata.
- The activities of **CESIE ETS**, a European study and initiative center focused on vocational training.

- The initiatives led by the **Sant'Agata Foundation**, such as: **“Change: Decarbonising Culture”**, which includes two weeks of job shadowing following online lessons. **“Green Culture”**, a training programme aimed at supporting the ecological transition in the cultural sector.
- The **Crui Foundation internships** organized by MAECI (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation).

Digital tools and platforms provided by **INAPP**, such as the **“Stage4eu” platform**, which supports young people in pursuing internships in Europe.

These examples showcase a variety of successful approaches to integrating WBL practices across different sectors and regions.

## Quali raccomandazioni darebbe per migliorare i programmi WBL nel suo Paese o in tutta Europa?

21 responses

- Più divulgazione, e maggior coordinamento in Europa su come riconoscere queste attività a livello curricolare. Il problema delle equipollenze delle attività, anche lavorative, è ancora piuttosto marcato. Se ognuno di noi non conosce come vengono valutate certe attività lavorative negli altri Paesi e non decidiamo una linea comune, si rischia che l'esperienza WBL non sia poi riconosciuta come valore aggiunto a livello di CV. Inoltre, nel caso dell'Italia, anche più raccordo tra le università o le aziende e altri erogatori di servizi agli studenti. Ad esempio, non solo fornire una borsa di studio ma anche opportunità di alloggio per tutti.
- sono fondamentali per l'inserimento nel mercato del lavoro, quindi vanno assolutamente incrementati. Gli studenti devono entrare in contatto con le aziende non solo durante gli stage ma anche prima per comprendere le sfide del presente e del futuro per poi poter sviluppare le competenze adeguate.
- maggiore sviluppo delle digitalizzazione; maggiori fondi alle imprese
- Maggiore pubblicità e consapevolezza dei programmi attraverso open day per professionisti e ragazzi.
- Retribuzione e maggiore possibilità di assunzione nell'ente in cui si fa la pratica visto che si è formati secondo le esigenze di quel posto di lavoro
- Più raccomandazioni pratiche
- Rafforzare il dialogo tra pubbliche istituzioni, policy maker, beneficiari e aziende.
- Formare i tutor aziendali al mentoring
- Implementare politiche volte a: alimentare ulteriormente l'interazione tra il sistema dell'istruzione e il mercato del lavoro; garantire adeguati standard qualitativi delle esperienze di WBL; incrementare la diffusione di esperienze di WBL di qualità e facilitarne l'accesso ai soggetti deboli; ridurre le disomogeneità territoriali.
- Costituire reti e partenariati che coinvolgano attivamente i vari attori a diverso titolo coinvolti nella progettazione, attuazione e valutazione delle esperienze di WBL.
- sostegno economico delle iniziative
- Creazione di strumenti standard per il riconoscimento.

Recommendations for improving WBL programmes, both at the national and European levels, focus on **enhancing coordination, recognition, and accessibility**:

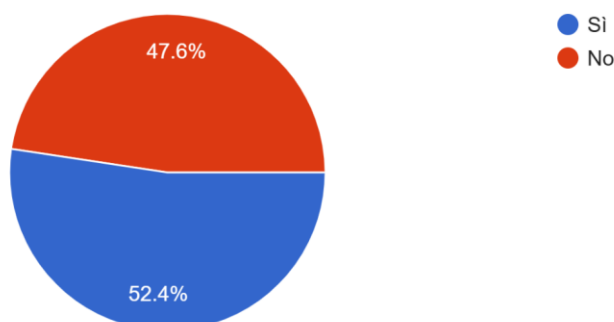
- **Greater dissemination and coordination** are needed to ensure curricular recognition of activities and address the issue of equivalences between countries. A **common framework for valuing WBL experiences in CVs** is crucial.
- In Italy, it is recommended to improve **coordination between universities, companies, and student services**, providing not only training but also accommodation and other forms of support.
- **Further digitalisation** of processes, **increased funding** for companies, and **strengthened dialogue** between public institutions, companies, and beneficiaries are essential steps.

Additional recommendations include:

- **Training company tutors** in mentoring to improve the quality of guidance provided to students.
- **Organising open days** to raise awareness among students and professionals about WBL opportunities.
- **Guaranteeing fair salaries** and creating **more job opportunities** for those who complete apprenticeships.
- Improving **interaction between education and the labour market**, adopting **quality standards** for WBL experiences, providing **financial support** for initiatives, and creating **standard tools for recognition** of WBL achievements.
- Finally, a key proposal is to create **networks and partnerships** that actively involve all stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of WBL experiences. This would help reduce **territorial disparities**, improve access for **vulnerable individuals**, and ensure a more inclusive and effective WBL system.

Sarebbe interessato a partecipare a futuri workshops o tavole rotonde sul WBL e sulle relative competenze digitali?

21 responses



Finally, the last question asked if they are available to participate in future workshops on WBL and related digital skills. Of the 21 responses, 52.4% answered “yes” while 47.6% preferred “no”.

## Best Practices Tables

### DUAL APPRENTICESHIP: HIGH EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

<b>Title of the best practice</b> <i>(if there is no specific title write a short description):</i>	Dual Apprenticeship: Higher education and research (Partnership between Enel and the University of L'Aquila)
<b>Type of entity implementing</b> <i>(Public school, Private school, Center of training of teachers/schools, High-Education institutes or Universities, Teacher's career management centres, Ministry or Department of Education, or Other)</i> <u>Please be specific here</u>	<b>University of Aquila</b> (UnivAQ) <a href="https://www.univaq.it/">https://www.univaq.it/</a>  in collaboration with <b>Enel Italia S.p.A.</b> , a multinational power company and a leading integrated player in the global power, gas, and renewable energy markets. It is headquartered in Rome, Italy, and was originally established as a state-owned entity in 1962. Over the decades, Enel has grown to become one of the largest players in the European energy sector and has expanded its operations across North America, South America, Africa, and Asia.  <a href="https://www.enel.it/">https://www.enel.it/</a>
<b>At what level is/was it being applied:</b>  <i>(School level, company level, corporate network, local level, regional level,</i>	National level

<p><i>National level, European Level, other (please specify))</i></p>	
<p><b>Year of starting</b> (month/year)</p>	<p>2023</p>
<p><b>Is it still ongoing?</b> (In case the practice is still ongoing, please put "Yes". If completed, please indicate the last year of implementation).</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>New call for the academic year 2025/2026 can be found here:  <a href="https://www.ing.univaq.it/studenti/doc/Apprendistato_Enel_Bando_studenti_UNIVAQ_2025_26.pdf">https://www.ing.univaq.it/studenti/doc/Apprendistato_Enel_Bando_studenti_UNIVAQ_2025_26.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Key objectives</b></p>	<p>The aim of the course is to obtain a university degree enriched with highly professional training content.</p> <p>Students develop a practical and in-depth understanding of processes and technologies in the energy sector which is highly competitive and very dynamic.</p>
<p><b>Brief description of best practice</b></p>	<p>Enel Italia S.p.A. and the University of L'Aquila have signed a protocol to launch an experimental programme of Higher Education and Research Apprenticeship (Art. 45 of Legislative Decree 81/2015): starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, 15 male and female students in the second year of the master's degree course in Electrical Engineering were involved, who alternated lectures and study with technical and professional training in the company.</p>



	<p>Students who participated in the Dual Apprenticeship were offered a study curriculum called 'Energy', which, in addition to offering the consolidated training in Electrical Engineering provided by the University of L'Aquila for more than 50 years, was enriched with additional content, defined and developed jointly by the University and the company and responding to the current needs of the productive world, related to the phase of energy transition and technological and digital transformation of work processes, in particular for activities related to power generation and electricity networks.</p> <p>The integration between classroom learning and work experience was supported and facilitated for each 'student-apprentice' by a company tutor and a university tutor.</p> <p>The Higher Education and Research Apprenticeship resulted in the achievement of a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering within the duration of the course of study.</p> <p>In the second year, 11 students participated and currently (March 2025), the third call has been published for the academic year 2025/2026 to take in another batch of 15 students.</p>
<b>Key actors involved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Tutor</li> <li>• Company Tutor</li> <li>• Student-Apprentice</li> </ul>
<b>Target group(s)</b>	Students from the master's degree in electrical engineering of UnivAQ
<b>Sources</b> (website, links, documents)	<a href="https://www.ing.univaq.it/cdl/apprendistato-ingegneria-elettrica.php">https://www.ing.univaq.it/cdl/apprendistato-ingegneria-elettrica.php</a>

	<a href="https://www.ing.univaq.it/studenti/doc/Apprendistato_Enel_Bando_studenti_UNIVAQ_2025_26.pdf">https://www.ing.univaq.it/studenti/doc/Apprendistato_Enel_Bando_studenti_UNIVAQ_2025_26.pdf</a>  <a href="https://corporate.enel.it/carriere/notizie/2024/05/seconda-edizione-apprendistato-duale-ingegneria-elettrica-univaq">https://corporate.enel.it/carriere/notizie/2024/05/seconda-edizione-apprendistato-duale-ingegneria-elettrica-univaq</a>
<b>What methodology was used in the application of this BP?</b>	The two partners develop an integrated curriculum with notions that meet the current needs of the manufacturing world, concerning the energy transition and the digitisation of work processes.
<b>Elements that facilitated the implementation of the best practice</b> <i>(institutional, economic, social, and environmental)</i>	
<b>Main challenges encountered in delivering this best practice, and how were they overcome?</b>	No challenges were encountered in the implementation of the programme.
<b>What was the overall impact of implementing this practice?</b>	<p>Students gained practical knowledge in the workfield before the completion of their studies.</p> <p>Enel has been able to attract and select excellent resources that have already been trained with specific skills.</p>

## ENGINEERING STAGE IN STMICROELECTRONICS

<b>Title of the best practice</b> (if there is no specific title write a short description):	Partnership between the engineering faculty of the University of Catania and STMicroelectronics .
<b>Type of entity implementing</b> (Public school, Private school, Center of training of teachers/schools, High-Education institutes or Universities, Teacher's career management centres, Ministry or Department of Education, or Other) <u>Please be specific here</u>	University of Catania
<b>At what level is/was it being applied:</b>  (School level, company level, corporate network, local level, regional level, National level, European Level, other (please specify))	University level and post graduate, national and regional level
<b>Year of starting</b> (month/year)	2023
<b>Is it still ongoing?</b> (In case the practice is still ongoing, please put "Yes". If completed, please indicate the last year of implementation).	yes

<b>Key objectives</b>	Foster the academic and professional training of students in the organisation of multidisciplinary courses and the coordination of research projects, dissertations and post-graduate internships in the field of power electronics.
<b>Brief description of best practice</b>	Planning of multidisciplinary courses;  Coordination of research projects and dissertations;  Post-graduate internships in the field of power electronics;  12 study prizes for students enrolled in the Master's degree course in Electronic Engineering.
<b>Key actors involved</b>	University of Catania (engineering faculty)
<b>Target group(s)</b>	Students, potential students of electronic engineering, researchers in power electronics
<b>Sources</b> (website, links, documents)	<a href="https://www.unict.it/it/didattica/master-universitari/2024-2025/power-electronics-devices-and-technologies">https://www.unict.it/it/didattica/master-universitari/2024-2025/power-electronics-devices-and-technologies</a>  <a href="https://www.unict.it/it/didattica/news/stmicroelectronics-assegna-12-premi-iscrittite-unict">https://www.unict.it/it/didattica/news/stmicroelectronics-assegna-12-premi-iscrittite-unict</a>
<b>What methodology was used in the application of this BP?</b>	The company is directly involved in the academic system, offering training courses and the possibility of internships and post-graduate work at their facilities
<b>Elements that facilitated the implementation of the best practice</b> (institutional, economic, social, and environmental)	The direct collaboration with the University of Catania, the availability of the company and the funds it offers.

<b>Main challenges encountered in delivering this best practice, and how were they overcome?</b>	No significant challenges identified
<b>What was the overall impact of implementing this practice?</b>	Encouraging students

### EUNICE - EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

<b>Title of the best practice</b> <i>(if there is no specific title write a short description):</i>	<b>Eunice - “The European University of Customised Education”</b>
<b>Type of entity implementing</b> <i>(Public school, Private school, Center of training of teachers/schools, High-Education institutes or Universities, Teacher’s career management centres, Ministry or Department of Education, or Other) Please be specific here</i>	It is a project financed by the Erasmus+ Programme implemented by the University of Catania
<b>At what level is/was it being applied:</b> <i>(School level, company level, corporate network, local level, regional level, National level, European Level, other (please specify))</i>	University and Regional level

<b>Year of starting</b> (month/year)	2020 (first call), 2023 (second call)
<b>Is it still ongoing?</b> <i>(In case the practice is still ongoing, please put "Yes". If completed, please indicate the last year of implementation).</i>	yes
<b>Key objectives</b>	<p>Main <b>objectivess</b> of the first call were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the foundations: the long-term <b>strategy</b> where quality education meets research, innovation, society and industry;</li> <li>• Create a EUNICE <b>campus</b>: a unique, inter-university space where students and staff are inspired by the mobility, customised (student-oriented) curricula and work-based tasks;</li> <li>• <b>European identity</b> based in cultural and linguistic diversity;</li> <li>• Create <b>bridges</b> between students, researchers, industrial partners and society actors: through industrial research and challenge driven training.</li> </ul> <p>The second call has <b>innovative aspects</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of EUNICE <a href="#">Key Competencies</a> and <a href="#">experiential learning</a>;</li> <li>• <a href="#">Communities of practice</a>: among employees in key areas of activity to enable joint problem solving;</li> <li>• Reviews of academic and administrative policies and processes to enable <b>innovation</b> across institutions in terms of enrolment, mobility and programme development;</li> <li>• Enhance <a href="#">regional engagement</a> so our universities have a positive impact on education but also on transferring knowledge and answering the needs of society.</li> </ul>

<b>Brief description of best practice</b>	Establishment of <b>transnational alliances</b> of higher education institutions from all over the EU that come together for the benefit of students, lecturers, public bodies and companies.
<b>Key actors involved</b>	The consortium is made up of <b>ten European universities</b> , including, in addition to the University of Catania, Brandenburg University of Technology (Germany), Polytechnic University of Hauts-de-France (France), Poznan University of Technology (Poland, Coordinator), University of Mons (Belgium), University of Cantabria (Spain) and University of Vaasa (Finland), the University of Peloponnese (Greece), the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu (Portugal) and Karlstad University (Sweden).
<b>Target group(s)</b>	Students, teachers, public bodies and companies
<b>Sources</b> ( <i>website, links, documents</i> )	<a href="https://eunice-university.eu/project/eunice4u/">https://eunice-university.eu/project/eunice4u/</a>
<b>What methodology was used in the application of this BP?</b>	
<b>Elements that facilitated the implementation of the best practice</b> ( <i>institutional, economic, social, and environmental</i> )	Cooperation through a solid network of crossed interactions between educational institutions, industry and business partners, as well as other social, cultural, artistic and sports stakeholders.
<b>Main challenges encountered in delivering this best practice, and how were they overcome?</b>	No challenges were encountered in the implementation of the programme.



<b>What was the overall impact of implementing this practice?</b>	<p>The University of Catania, with the aim of facilitating the insertion of young people into the world of work, has designed the “EIIIP - Eunice International Internship Portale”, encouraging mobility and international projection. The opportunities are open to university students, undergraduates and graduates but also to young people enrolled in high schools, in order to introduce them to the context of cooperation between academia and business.</p>
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## STAGE4EU

<b>Title of the best practice</b> <i>(if there is no specific title write a short description):</i>	Stage 4 EU
<b>Type of entity implementing</b> <i>(Public school, Private school, Center of training of teachers/schools, High-Education institutes or Universities, Teacher's career management centres, Ministry or Department of Education, or Other) Please be specific here</i>	<p>Stage4EU is a mobile app and a website offering a free service implemented by INAPP, as a natural evolution of the experience gained with the 'Internship Handbook in Europe'.</p>
<b>At what level is/was it being applied:</b> <i>(School level, company level, corporate network, local level, regional level, National level, European Level, other (please specify))</i>	University level
<b>Year of starting</b> <i>(month/year)</i>	2019

<b>Is it still ongoing?</b> <i>(In case the practice is still ongoing, please put "Yes". If completed, please indicate the last year of implementation).</i>	Yes
<b>Key objectives</b>	To offer young university students or recent graduates the opportunity to do traineeships abroad
<b>Brief description of best practice</b>	It is a service that offers vocational training to students, which satisfies the needs both of young people as they specialise in a field and enjoy experience abroad, and of multinational companies that train valuable personnel experienced in the sector. In addition, it is very likely, depending on the obligation in some countries, that the traineeship is paid or compensated with benefits such as accommodation, public transport passes, meal vouchers, etc.
<b>Key actors involved</b>	Companies and Youths
<b>Target group(s)</b>	Mostly university students or recent graduates, between 20 and 30 years old
<b>Sources</b> <i>(website, links, documents)</i>	<a href="https://stage4eu.it/">https://stage4eu.it/</a>
<b>What methodology was used in the application of this BP?</b>	The programme uses a practical methodology, offering students the possibility of working abroad, which allows for the development of many skills.
<b>Elements that facilitated the implementation of the best practice</b> <i>(institutional, economic, social, and environmental)</i>	Clarity of the website, much positive feedback from students involved in the project, direct correspondence with an INAPP employee working on the initiative.

<p><b>Main challenges encountered in delivering this best practice, and how were they overcome?</b></p>	<p>No challenges were encountered in the implementation of the programme.</p>
<p><b>What was the overall impact of implementing this practice?</b></p>	<p>The impact that mainly emerges is the students' acquisition of professional skills in an international context, acquiring soft and hard skills, such as the spirit of enterprise, the ability to adapt by confronting different cultural and organisational models and, last but not least, learning to speak a foreign language fluently. Also, companies will have qualified and trained staff from a different country.</p>



# **wbl**champion

