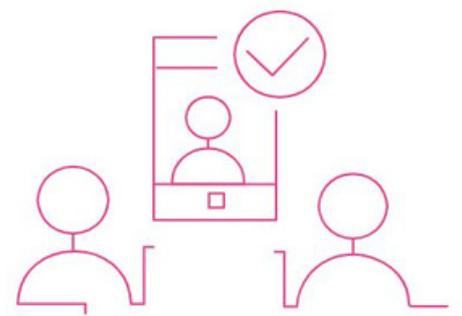
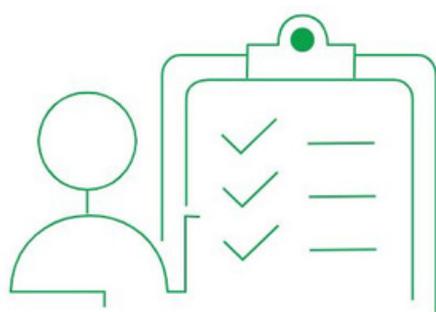
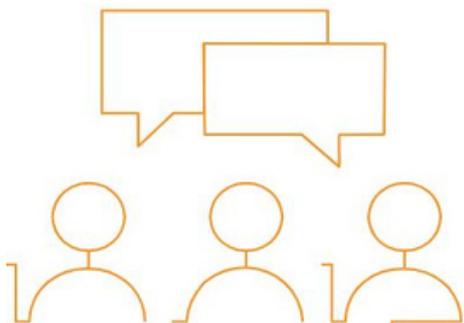


Resources for
Post-Pandemic
Effective Training

Country Snapshot

Italy

<https://project-reset.eu>



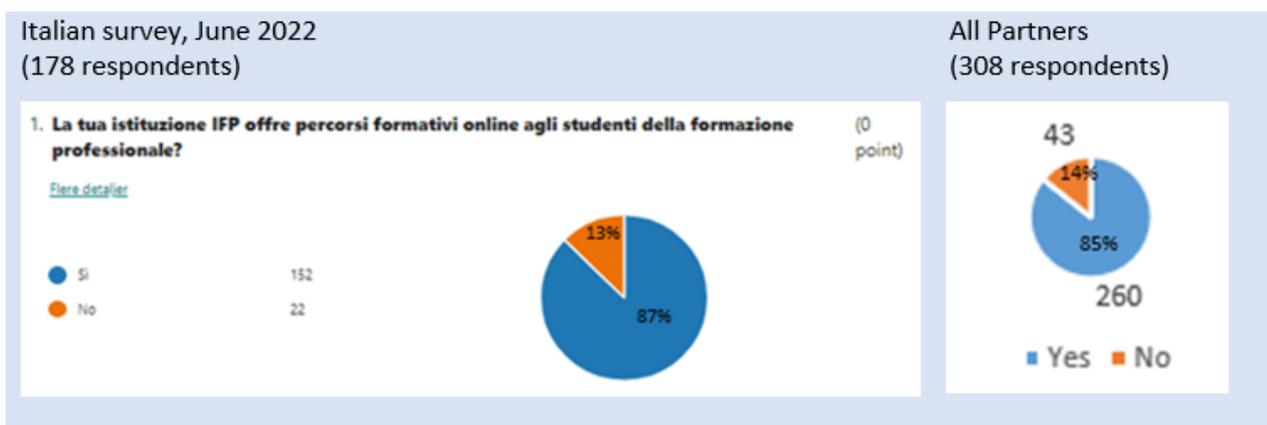
A. Survey – primary level

Introduction

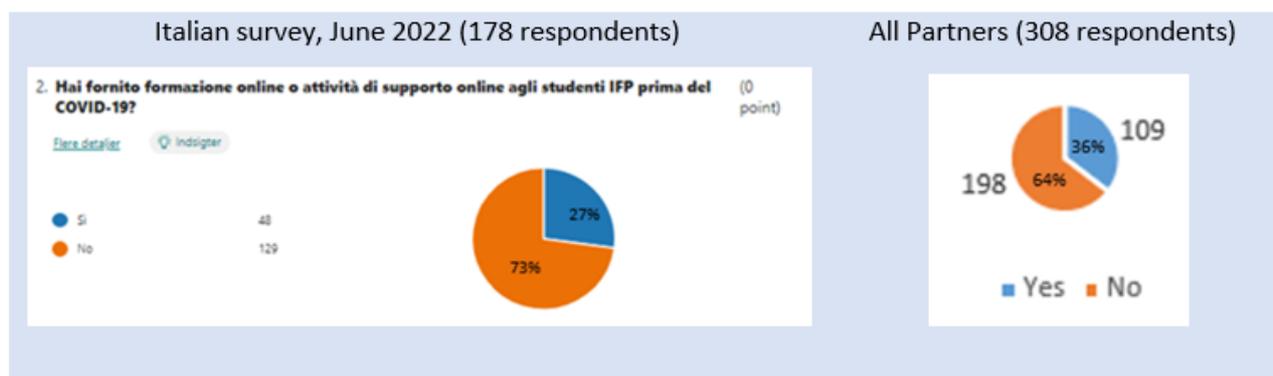
The first part of this Country report offers an analysis of the data gathered at national and international level to investigate on the digital competence needs of VET practitioners. Italy, Spain, Germany and Denmark have been participating countries to a specifically designed survey. Furthermore, IHF project Partner gathered data at European level. Beside understanding the actual needs on digital competences at national level, this report also aims at doing a comparison among participating countries. Below, a concise analysis for each question and, following, some consideration regarding the Italian situation.

Data comparison: the Italian and the other Partners' countries situation

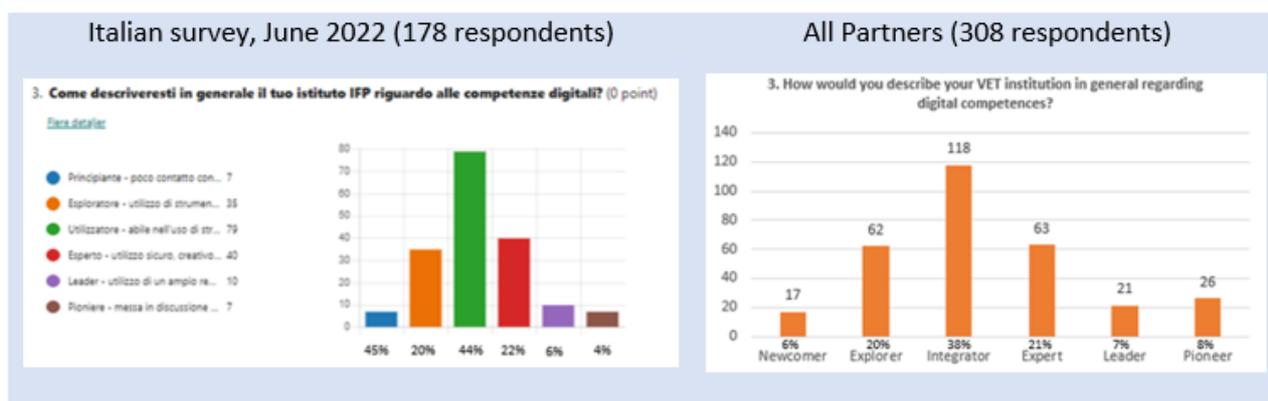
1. With regards to the first question of the survey, "Does your VET institution offer online education to VET learners?", no major differences can be spotted between the Italian situation and the average situation from the participating countries. The great majority of respondents gave positive answers, stating that their VET institution does offer online education.



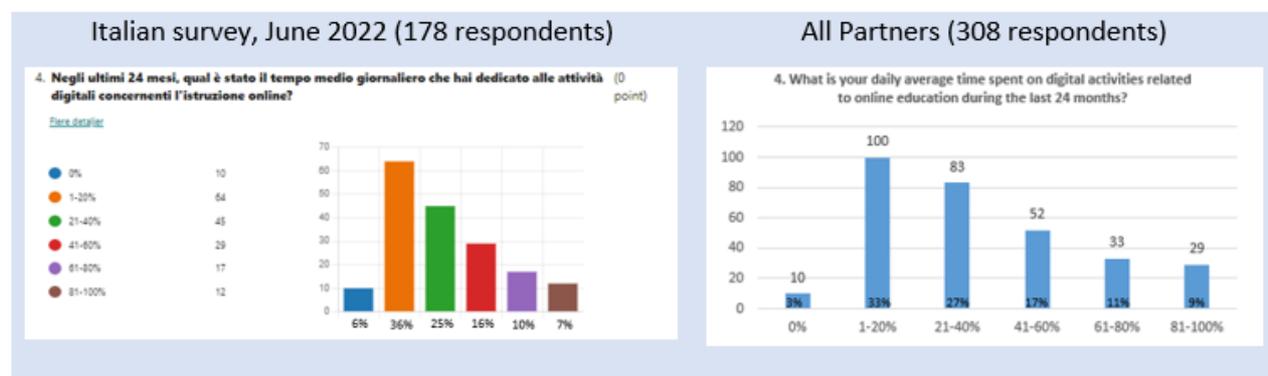
2. A different scenario is offered when it comes to "Have you participated in online education for VET learners before COVID-19?". In this case, the answers are less encouraging, both at Italian as well as general level, with about 70% of negative answers.



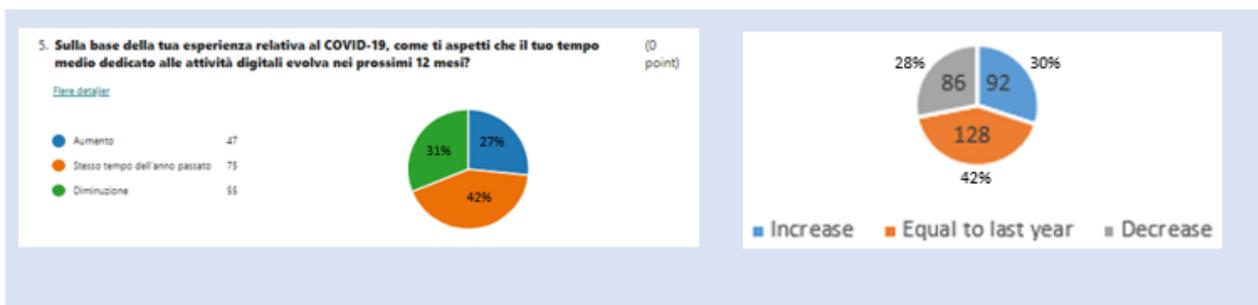
3. When respondents were asked to describe their VET institution regarding digital competences, answers were pretty similar, if comparing the Italian and the general situation. However, it must be pointed out a higher lever of “Pioneers” from the average of all Partners answers. The Italian scenario is more oriented toward the “Integrator” level.



4. Almost identical answers were given with regards to the daily average time spent on digital activities related to online education during the last 24 months.

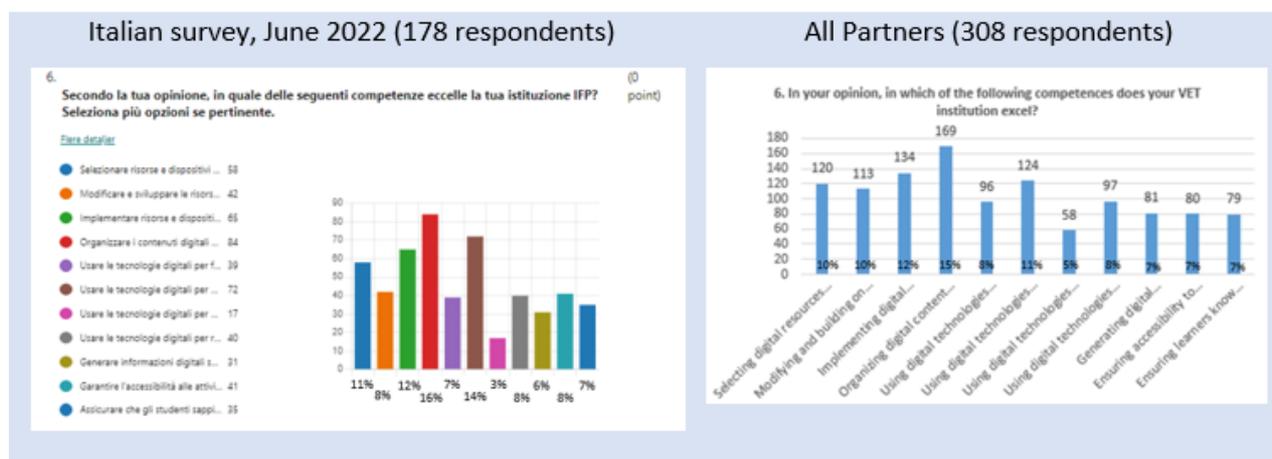


5. Same observation with regards to the expected average time to be spent on digital activities to develop in the coming 12 months, with 42% of respondents stating they will spend the same amount of time on digital activities compared to the previous year.



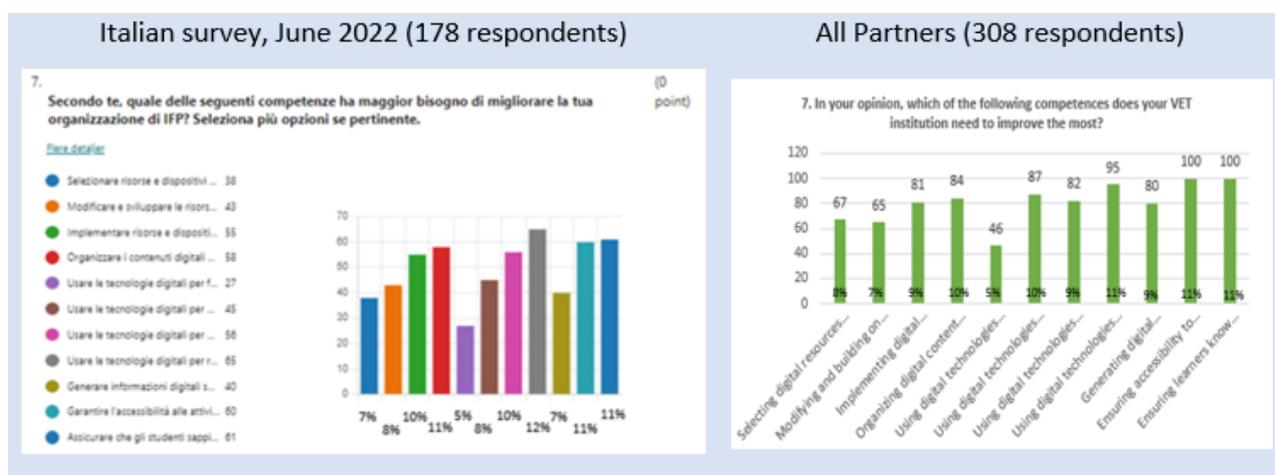
6. Both in the Italian situation as well as in the average situation of all participating countries, respondents highlighted some competences in which their VET institution excel, such as:

- Organizing digital content and making it available to learners;
- Using digital technologies to enhance learner communication and collaboration).

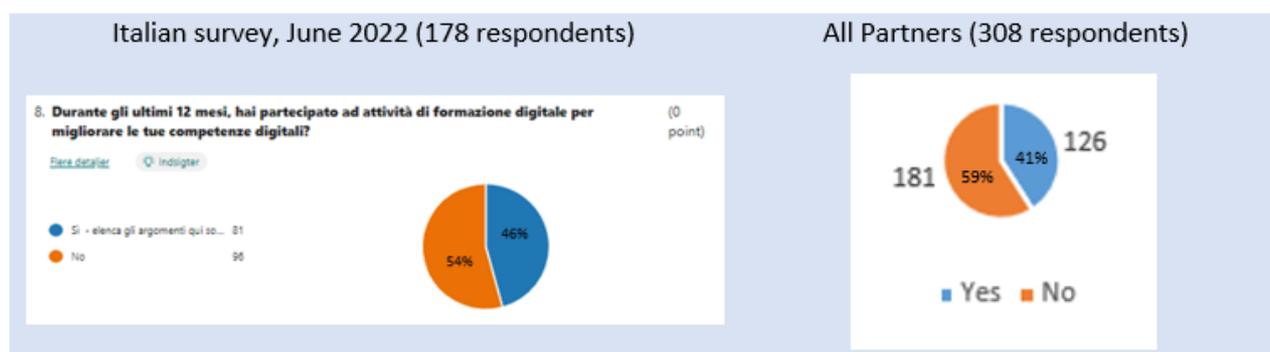


7. Great homogeneity of answers regarding the digital competences to be improved at VET institution level:

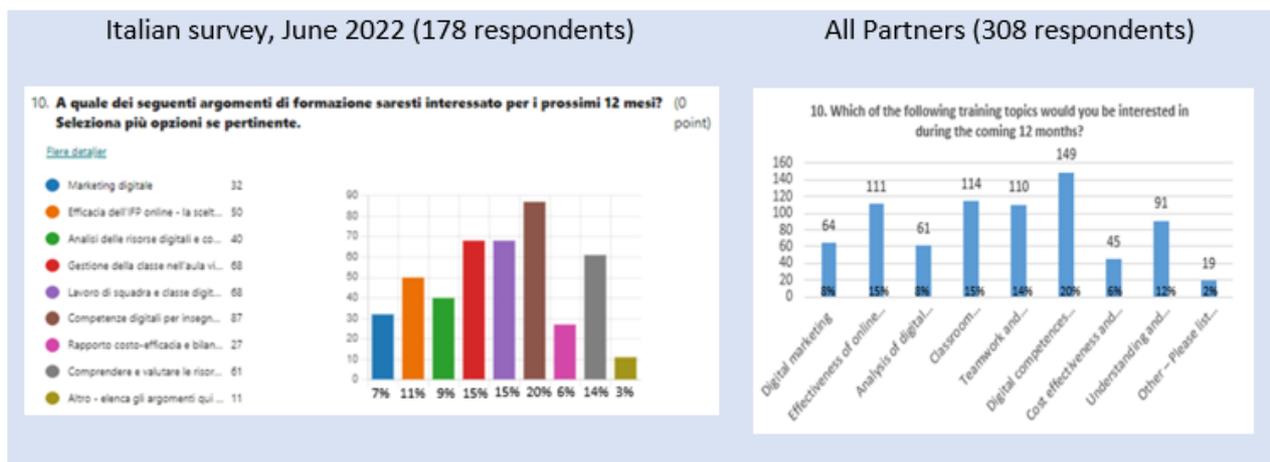
- Using digital technologies to address learners' diverse learning needs by allowing individual learning following different levels, goals and speeds;
- Ensuring accessibility to learning activities for learners with special needs;
- Ensuring learners know how to manage risks and use digital technologies safely and responsibly).



8. 46% of Italian respondents stated they participated to digital training activities to improve their digital skills during the past 12 months, a slightly higher rate compared to the 41% of respondents from the average of all participating countries.



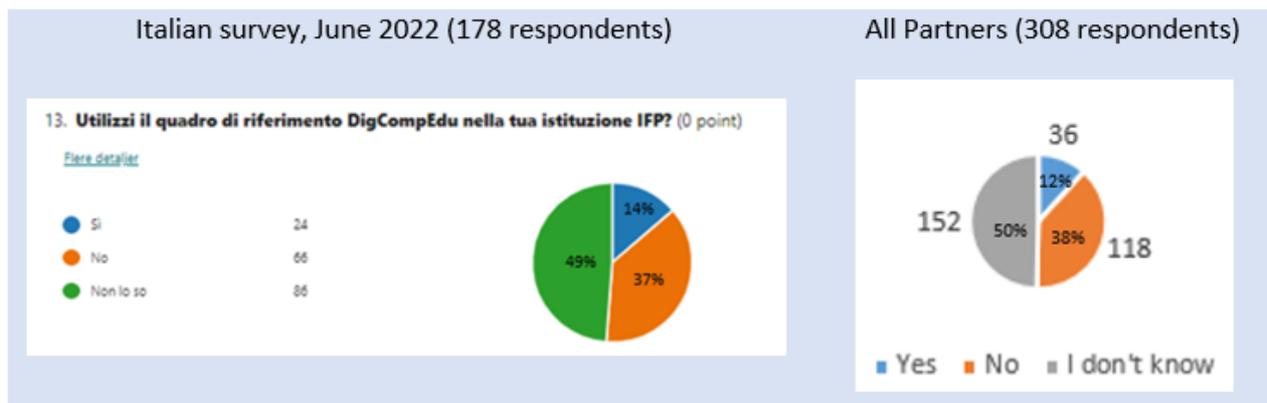
9. Concerning the most interesting training topics for the coming 12 months, respondents highlighted “Digital competences for teachers and tutors”, both at Italian as well as all Partners’ countries level.



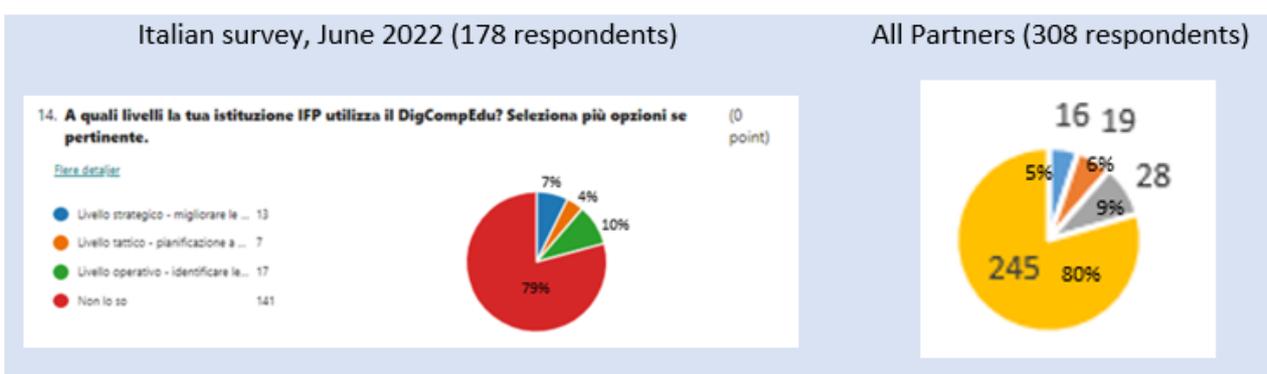
10. According to the answers to question 10, the DigCompEdu is really little known among VET operators, and the situation does not differ from the Italian level to all Partners’ countries level.



11. Since there is a very limited knowledge of the DigCompEdu as a tool, only a small percentage of respondents declare that they use it within their VET institution, no great difference is recorded between the Italian specific case and the general average from participating countries.



12. Due to a great lack of knowledge with respect to the DigCompEdu, the vast majority of respondents are not aware at which level this tool is used (if used).



The Italian survey results: gaps and focus areas

The first eye catching aspect is the fact that while the vast majority of respondents (87%) affirms their VET institution offers online education, at the same time they also affirm that they did not participate in online education for VET learners before COVID-19 (73%). It is safe to assume that the increased use of digital technologies was not accompanied by the actual readiness of VET operators, who had to adapt and learn on the moment, through practical situations, at least at the beginning of the pandemic.

When it comes to digital competences, the majority of Italian respondents (44%) assess their VET institution as “Integrator”, skillfully using digital tools for a range of purposes. Although the VET institution is considered to be more than a newcomer or explorer, still this evaluation leaves a lot of space for improvement.

Regarding the digital competences to be improved at the VET institution (question 7), all given options were covered by respondents, but very high rate has been recorded with regards to:

- Using digital technologies to address learners’ diverse learning needs by allowing individual learning following different levels, goals and speeds
- Ensuring accessibility to learning activities for learners with special needs
- Ensuring learners know how to manage risks and use digital technologies safely and responsibly.

COVID-19 pandemic has imposed VET operators to quickly adapt to new methods of teaching and training. Therefore, 46% of respondents stated they participated to digital training activities to improve their digital skills during the past 12 months. This number, however, does not reach half the percentage of respondents. 54% of VET operators responding to the survey stated they did not undergo any kind of training in order to keep up to the newest methods of digital teaching and training.

A great issue proven by the results of the survey is the very limited knowledge of the DigCompEdu: 74% of respondents affirm they do not know the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators. As a consequence, for many respondents it is not clear whether the DigCompEdu is used at their VET institution. 26% of the interviewed affirm to know the Framework, but only 14% declare the tool is used within their VET institution.

B. Desk research – secondary level

Introduction

In the following section of the report, findings of secondary research will be presented. The aim is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the entire Italian VET system.

As it is well known, ICT played a crucial role and proved to be indispensable for continuing to live and work during the lockdown period. For this reason, a general overview of the level of digitization of the Italian economy and society is initially provided, mainly considering the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) provided by the European Commission.

The second part consists of analyzing the gaps, needs and opportunities in the use of ICT within the whole VET system for the delivery of distance learning during COVID-19.

Finally, the findings of secondary research on the widespread of DigCompEdu and DigComp within the VET system are reported.

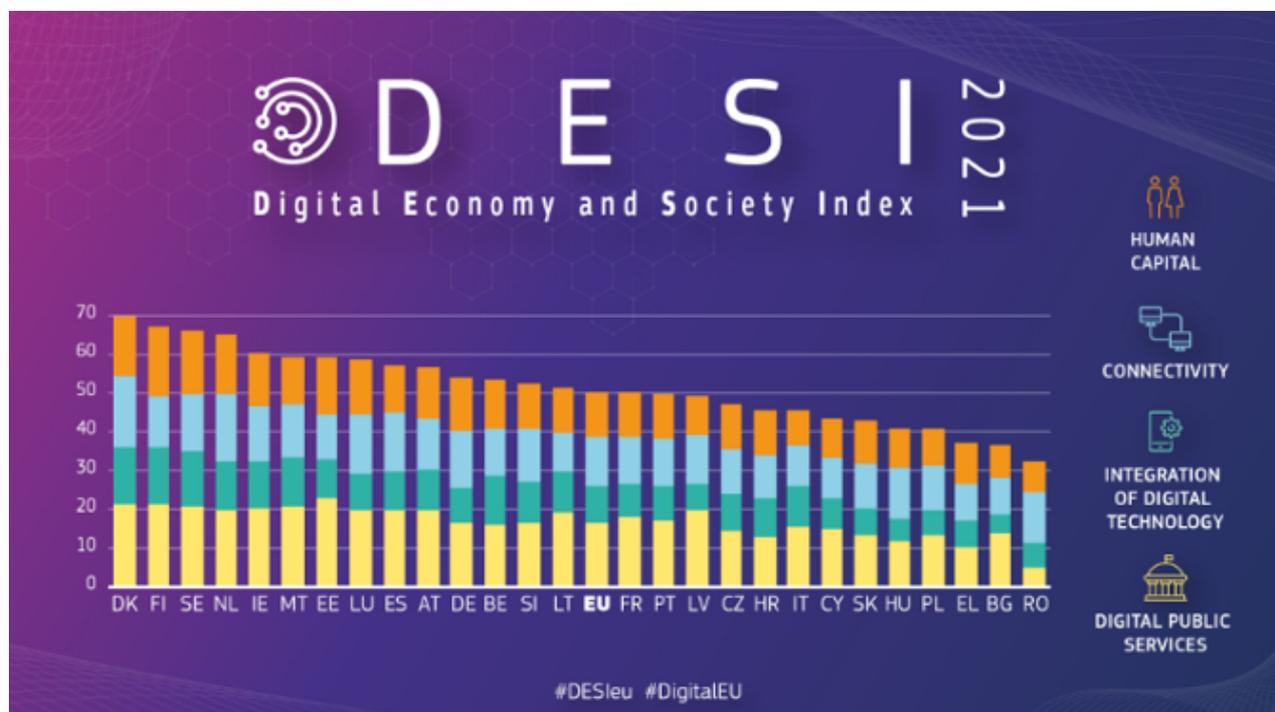
Digital Economy and Society Index: The Italian Overview

COVID-19 is often referred to as a “black swan”, an event of enormous disruptive proportions, bound to change paradigms. In fact, COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation by at least five years ahead.

Focusing on the Italian landscape, the results of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)[1] show a strong gap in terms of digital transformation in relation to other Member States with similar socio-economic characteristics.

[1] The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is an initiative of the European Commission to measure progress in the digitalisation process of European economy and society to facilitate the transition towards a single digital market for the Union. The DESI is built on four different indicators: human capital, connectivity, integration of digital technologies, and digital public services.

Exhibit 1: Digital Economy and Society Index 2021

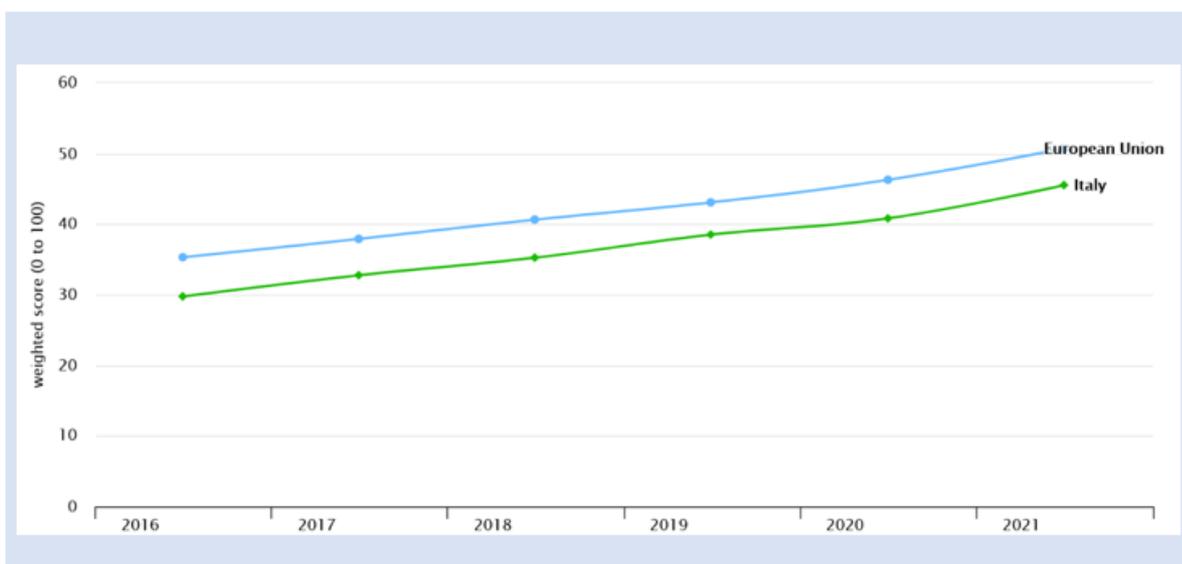


Source: European Commission, Digital Economy and Society Index, 2021.

As can be observed from the graph, in fact, among the 27 Member States, Italy ranks 20th for the overall level of digitization, strongly penalised with respect to the “Human Capital” and “Connectivity” dimensions.

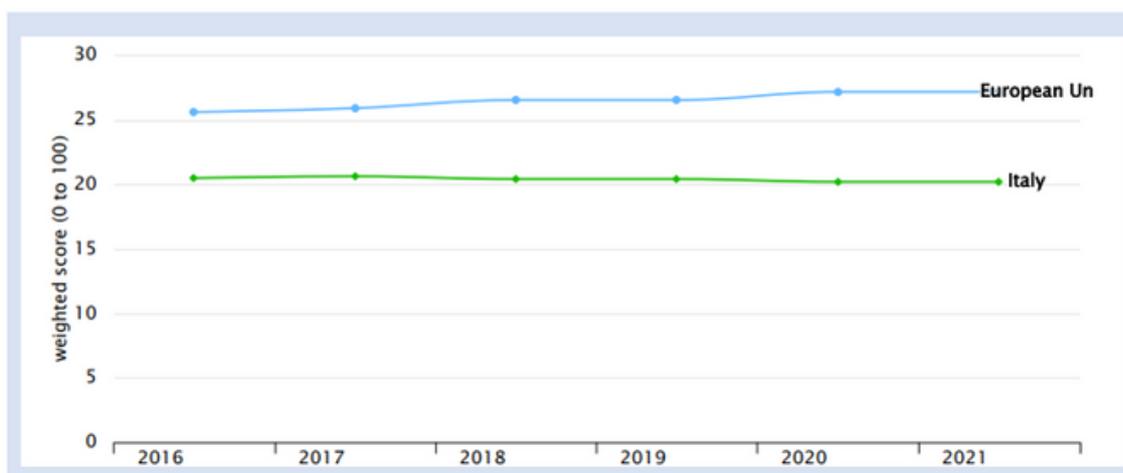
The following exhibits display in depth the performance of Italy on the DESI and its main components against the EU average.

Exhibit 2. DESI Aggregate Score, Italy and EU Comparison



Source: EU Commission, DESI 2021

Exhibit 3. Human Capital, by Internet Users Skills, Italy and EU Comparison



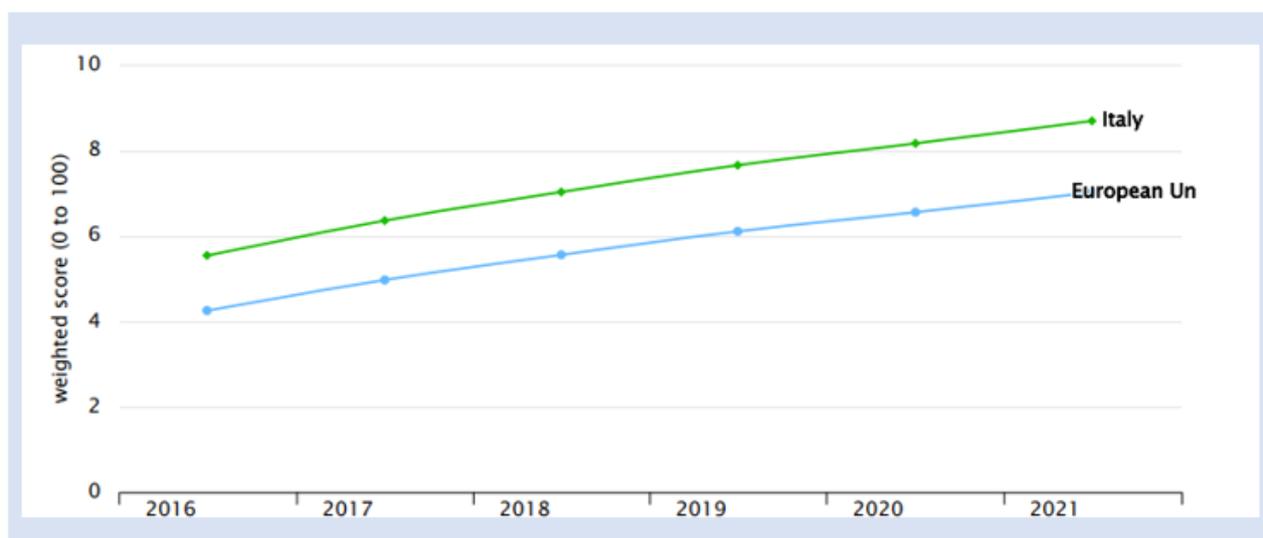
Source: EU Commission, DESI 2021

Exhibit 4: Connectivity, by Fixed broadband take-up, Italy and EU Comparison



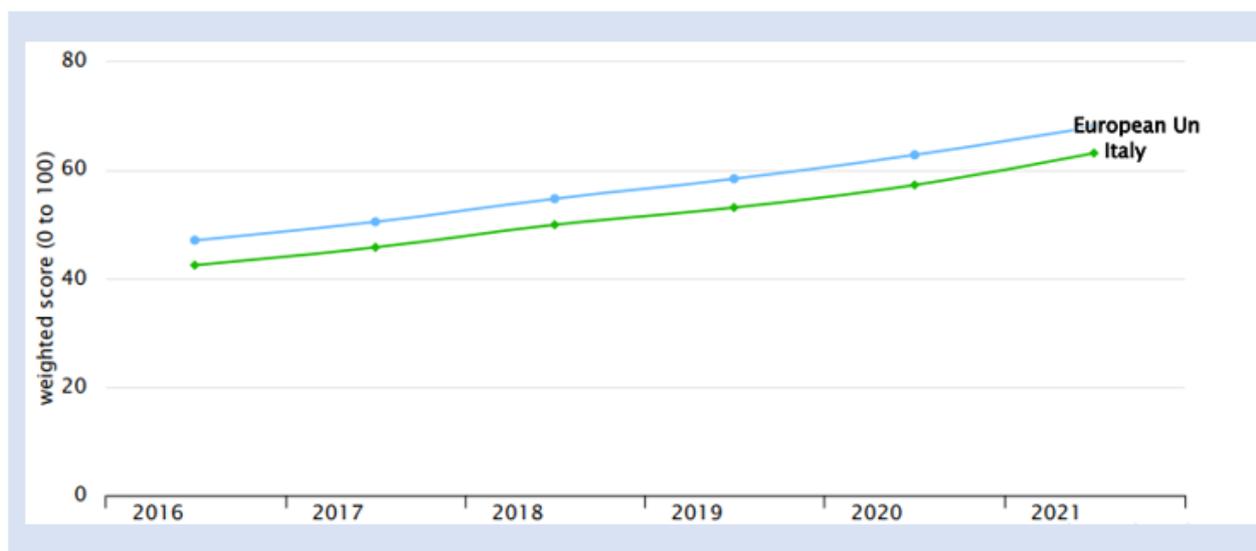
Source: Eu Commission, DESI 2021

Exhibit 5: Integration of Digital Technology, by Digital Intensity, Italy and EU Comparison



Source: European Commission, DESI 2021

Exhibit 6. Digital Public Service, by e-Government



Source: Eu Commission, DESI 2021

Gaps, needs and opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic for the VET ecosystem in Italy.

As already mentioned, digital transformation played an important role during COVID-19, helping society to continue to live, work and study from home.

The purpose of this report, specifically, is to understand the main difficulties, needs and opportunities of the VET system. In Italy, VET courses are organized at all levels of education and in formal and non-formal training, both in the public and private sector. Furthermore, the target groups may be different: young people who are about to enter the world of work or workers who wish to enhance their skills and knowledge[1].

In the following sections, an attempt will be made to analyze the VET response in the different contexts mentioned above.

[1] https://www.vwbl.eu/sites/vwbl/files/attachments/2021-08/vWBL_Guide_IT.pdf

With regard to formal and non-formal vocational training for adults, it is interesting to mention The Observatory Barometer 2020[1], a survey carried out by Cegos in 2020 involving 250 HR managers and 1780 employees from 4 countries (Italy, Germany, France and Spain). The aim of the survey was to understand what changes have been implemented by the vocational training ecosystem as a result of COVID-19 and whether these have been effective. Specifically, the research focused on four different thematic areas:

1. Technological evolution and impact on HR and employees;
2. COVID-19 effect;
3. Key competencies for the future;
4. Strategic competence development for the future.

The key findings of The Observatory Barometer 2020 reveal the impact of pandemic-related restrictive measures on corporate training:

- 86% of HR specialists confirmed that they had to adapt VET service provision
- 46% had a full shift towards digital and online training
- 29% had to develop new content and new training materials

The most common online and digital training solutions used by companies in Italy were virtual classroom and webinar (73%), e-learning modules (46%) and e-coaching (29%).

Reportedly, the pandemic had effects also on the perception and use of corporate training among employees: 77% of employees attended at least one online training session.

[1] Transformation, Skills & Learnings, The Cegos Observatory Barometer 2020.

The barometer also confirms how the shift towards digital and online training provision triggered by the pandemic is not a temporary solution, rather the onset of a long-term trend. Among HR professionals, 80% are of the opinion that digital and online training will continue to be available even after the end of restrictive measures.

However, Vocational Education and Training is not only provided at corporate level but it can take various forms. For example, there is also the Continuing Vocational Education and Training (cVET), to be distinguished from Initial Vocational Education and Training (iVET) provided by Secondary Schools.

COVID-19 had different impacts on iVET and cVET. However, much more information and data on the impact of COVID-19 on iVET than on cVET can be found in the literature; evidence that can be explained by the fact that iVET is mainly managed at ministerial level.

In the following paragraphs, therefore, we will mainly show studies conducted during COVID-19 to investigate how Italian secondary schools adapted their teaching and learning method to the restrictions caused by the pandemic. However, it is safe to assume that the main solutions found were also implemented by the Continuing Education and Training (cVET) providers.

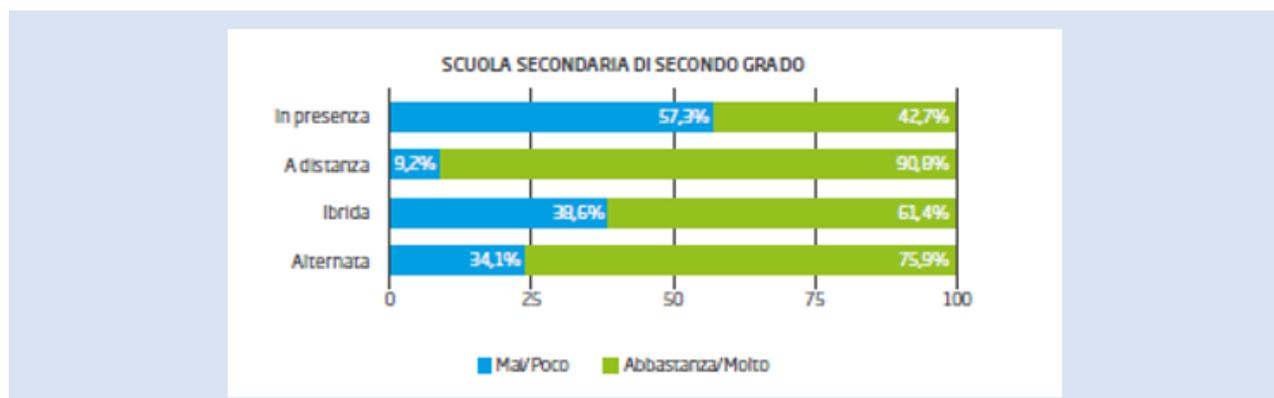
[2] https://www.vwbl.eu/sites/vwbl/files/attachments/2021-08/vWBL_Guide_IT.pdf

[3] Transformation, Skills & Learnings, The Cegos Observatory Barometer 2020.

As far as vocational training in schools is concerned, it is interesting to mention a survey conducted by INDIRE, in the period from March to June 2021, with the aim of analyzing what were the teaching and organizational practices implemented by Italian institutes during the 2020/2021 school year, the one following the advent of the pandemic. The results showed that, in secondary schools, the most widely used teaching method was distance learning (90.8%)[4].

[4] Impatto della Pandemia sulle Pratiche Didattiche e Organizzative delle Scuole Italiane nell'anno scolastico 2020/2021, INDIRE, 2021.

Exhibit 1: Teaching Methods implemented by Secondary Schools during the pandemic

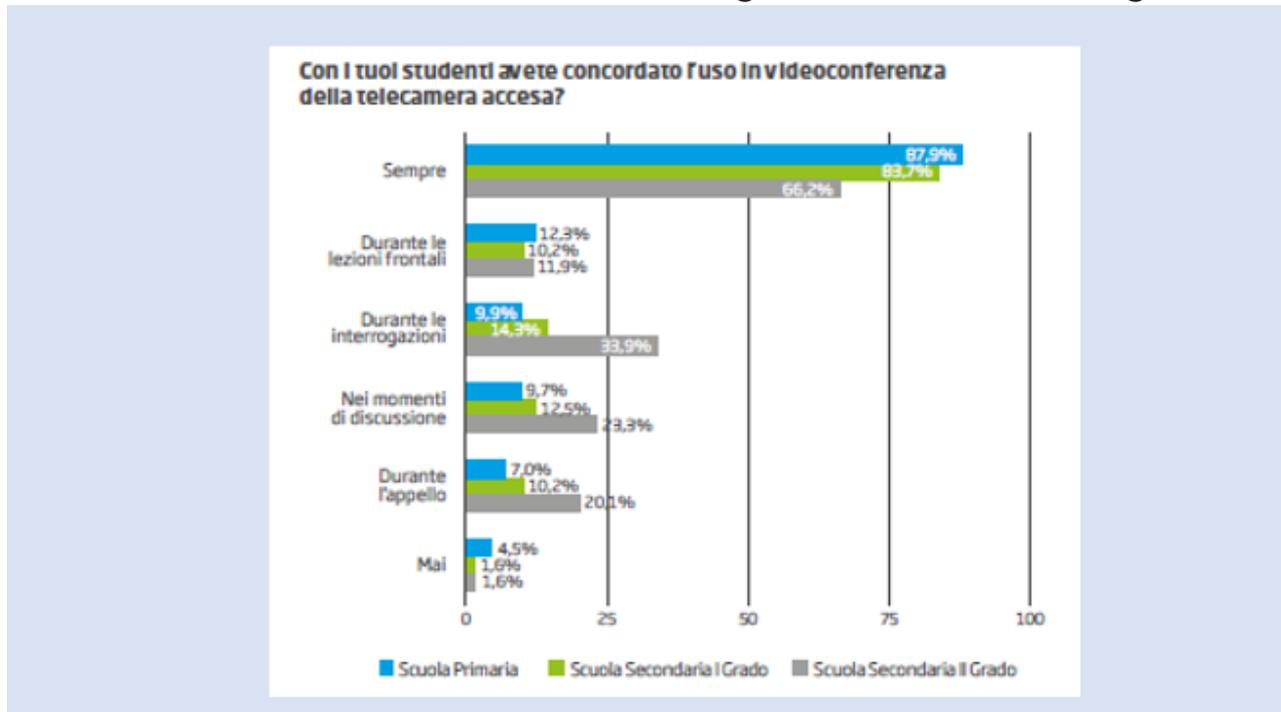


Source: Impatto della Pandemia sulle Pratiche Didattiche e Organizzative delle Scuole Italiane nell'anno scolastico 2020/2021, INDIRE, 2021.

One of the main critical points of the distance learning mode turned out to be the use of the camera, which is essential for ensuring eye contact and stimulating attention. The results showed that the percentage of switched-on cameras decreased dramatically between primary school (87.9%) and secondary school (66.2%)[5].

[5] idem

Exhibit 2: Use of the camera during distance learning



Source: Impatto della Pandemia sulle Pratiche Didattiche e Organizzative delle Scuole Italiane nell'anno scolastico 2020/2021, INDIRE, 2021.

This may be due to the fact that distance learning delivered to children between the ages of 5 and 10 is forcibly mediated by an adult; whereas it is more difficult to keep the attention level of older children under control during distance learning lessons. For this reason, it is important to adequately train teaching staff and trainers in order to ensure a higher quality of lessons and to stimulate the active participation of learners.

Widespread of DigCompEdu and DigComp within the Italian VET ecosystem.

Although both DigCompEdu and DigComp have been translated into Italian and several articles about them exist online, which can be used by teachers and trainers; after several rounds of research no official surveys were found on how widespread the knowledge and use of the two frameworks is within the Italian VET system.

What emerged is in line with the results of the primary research conducted at consortium level and clearly positions the RESET project as an innovative and relevant endeavor.

C. Partners' digital competences and needs

Digital learning experience during COVID and beyond

There is no doubt digital means and technologies have been essential in ensuring learning continuity during COVID-19 pandemic, at all level of education. The hypothetical lack of such instruments would have led to very serious deficiencies in education, even at VET level. Of course, this abrupt transition to online education and training highlighted some serious gaps with regards to digital competences of VET practitioners.

The primary level research has been useful to understand the issues related to digital competence gaps characterizing the Italian partner's own experience. As already mentioned above, the survey highlighted the fact that the increased use of digital technologies was not matching the actual readiness of VET operators, who had to adapt and learn on the moment, through practical situations, at least at the beginning of the pandemic. Even if some forms of distance learning were already used to some extent before the COVID-19 pandemic, VET operators had to completely reorganized their teaching methodologies, adapting them to the available digital means. This applies to both iVET and cVET.

However, considering the VET context, it must not be forgotten the fact that the educational activities are very often based on practical experiences, such as stages and laboratories. The transition of such activities toward a digital environment has been almost impossible, especially during the lockdown periods, or, in any case, very limited and restricted by severe regulations. VET institutions could move some activities (administrative, management, etc.) to a digital environment more easily than some other activities involving practical experiences with students (teaching, training, tutoring, etc.).

The respondents to the survey assessed their Italian VET institution as “integrator”, skillfully using digital tools for a range of purposes, a quite encouraging evaluation that leaves a lot of space for improvement. This assessment highlights how the VET institution is still working to understand which tools work best in which situations and on fitting digital technologies to pedagogic strategies and methods. In order to level up, the “integrator” needs more time for experimentation and reflection, complemented by collaborative encouragement and knowledge exchange to become “Expert”.

Regarding the digital competences to be improved at the VET institution (question 7 from the survey), all given options were covered by respondents, but very high rate has been recorded with regards to:

- Using digital technologies to address learners’ diverse learning needs by allowing individual learning following different levels, goals and speeds
- Ensuring accessibility to learning activities for learners with special needs
- Ensuring learners know how to manage risks and use digital technologies safely and responsibly

COVID-19 pandemic has imposed VET operators to quickly adapt to new methods of teaching and training. Therefore, 46% of respondents stated they participated to digital training activities to improve their digital skills during the past 12 months. This number, however, does not reach half the percentage of respondents. 54% of VET operators responding to the survey stated they did not undergo any kind of training in order to keep up to the newest methods of digital teaching and training. With the increasing use of digital technologies in education and training, the upskilling of VET practitioners is not only welcomed but is to be strongly pursued.

The use of DigComEdu Framework

With regards to the general knowledge of DigCompEdu, the survey has severely emphasised that the majority of VET practitioners (74%) are totally not aware of its existence. As a consequence, for many respondents it is not clear whether the DigCompEdu is used at their VET institution. 26% of the interviewed affirm to know the Framework, but only 14% declare the tool is used within their VET institution.

Perhaps, the data gathered from the survey gives a partial explanation to the desk research results, which did not turn out to be very rich in information regarding the widespread of DigCompEdu and DigComp within the Italian VET ecosystem. Even though there are different publications, also in national languages, the knowledge of the DigCompEdu is really limited.

Survey results and desk research results

There is a great homogeneity between the survey and the desk research results when it comes to the unprecedented increase in the use of digital technologies in education and training. At the same time, the strong gap in terms of digital transformation identified by the DESI on the Italian landscape, can be mirrored by the survey results, which shown the lack of readiness of VET operators with regards to the proper use of digital technologies in an educational environment.

Both the survey and the desk research results highlighted the urgent need to train teaching staff and trainers in order to ensure a higher quality of learning programs and to stimulate the active participation of learners. In addition, the survey results have pointed out the need to focus on the learners with special needs.

D. Summary

As emerged from the survey and the desk research results, the Italian VET ecosystem needs to enhance its competences in terms of digital technologies applied to educational strategies and methodologies.

The following are identified as focus areas of digital competences to be improved at VET institution level:

- Using digital technologies to address learners' diverse learning needs by allowing individual learning following different levels, goals and speeds
- Ensuring accessibility to learning activities for learners with special needs
- Ensuring learners know how to manage risks and use digital technologies safely and responsibly.

Furthermore, both the survey and the desk research highlighted a great gap of knowledge with regards to the DigCompEdu as a framework potentially able to give awareness on digital competences for educators.

COVID-19 pandemic certainly gave a boost to the proliferation of trainings aimed at enhance digital competences of educational professionals, including VET operators. At Italian nation level, it is possible to find many examples of digital training options, also for VET practitioners. The best known are promoted by:

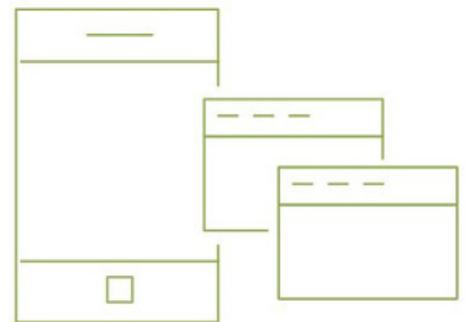
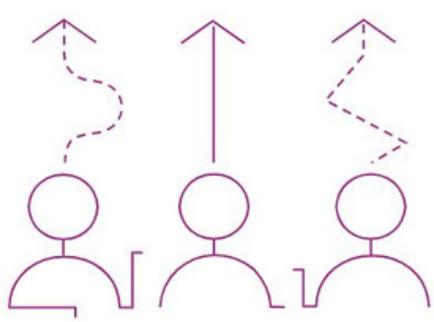
Indire. Indire is the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research and it has been the point of reference for educational research in Italy for almost 100 years. It provides for diverse training content dedicated to teachers and trainers from every level of education, aimed at improving their digital competences and providing for useful tools for distance learning.

Miur (Ministry of Education). The National Digital School Plan is a fundamental pillar of La Buona Scuola (Law 107/2015), an operational framework that reflects the government's position with respect to the most important innovation challenges of the public system: at the heart of this vision are the innovation of the school system and the opportunities of digital education.

At partner level, IAL FVG designed and implemented some internal training courses aimed at VET operators in order to improve their digital competences. For example, using the Skilla platform, IAL FVG has published the “Tips for an effective webinar” online course. Other examples of internal trainings are:

- Learning Object Design (13 videos, 11 hours) – With insights into storytelling, gamification and microlearning
- The blended learning process (4 videos, 3 hours)
- The design of the synchronous lesson (10 videos, 6 hours)
- Classroom management in presence and synchronous (4 videos, 3 hours)
- The Articulate software (5 videos, 3.30 hours)
- Making the speaker self-produce training videos (5 videos, 1.30 hr.)
- The Shotcut and Audacity software for video editing (6 videos, 4 hours)
- Copyright (3 videos, 2.30 hours)
- Mind maps in education (2 videos, 1 hour)

Despite the combined effort on multiple levels, the survey and desk research results indicate that this training offers do not cover the huge gap of digital competences within the VET ecosystem. There is a long way ahead, in order to fulfil all needs and provide for the right opportunities, and the RESET project is defined as an innovative and driving joint effort to enable the VET system to progress in terms of digital competences.



Partners



<https://project-reset.eu>

