



The recognition of credits in the CPIA: Guidelines



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The guidelines presented in this document are intended to provide the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (hereinafter CPIA) with a number of useful methodological and operational instructions on how to rigorously and transparently perform the credit recognition process for students enrolled in the second period-first level courses. These guidelines have been drawn up as part of the “Improving the recognition of competences and development of individual learning pathways by the CPIA in Italy” project, pursued by the OECD in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the European Commission’s DG REFORM, and have also benefitted from the direct involvement of the CPIA.

The current configuration of the CPIA is the result of a long reorganisational process that transformed what were the former Permanent Territorial Centres in schools, institutionalising adult education and integrating it fully into the Italian state education system. The CPIA system is now a network system, since it is institutionally a part of local area networks and some of the courses are delivered in other schools that are part of the same network. The courses offered by the CPIA are organized into three main pathways: i) literacy and Italian language courses, aimed at obtaining a knowledge of the Italian language not below level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference; ii) first level pathways aimed at achieving the qualification awarded at the end of the first cycle of education and at acquiring the basic competences part of compulsory education; iii) second level pathways, aimed at obtaining the upper-secondary education diploma in technical, professional and artistic education.

The organisational structure set out in Decree no. 263/2012 states that those enrolling in the CPIA can request an assessment of the competences they already have, so that they can be recognized as credits and therefore be able to follow a personalized pathway requiring fewer hours compared to the standard total length. While the ministerial guidelines contained in the Decree of 12 March 2015 established a number of elements that were required to implement the recognition of competences, it has been found that, in practice, the CPIA has often adopted varying solutions, which thus creates a highly non-uniform national picture.

These guidelines therefore intend to respond to the CPIA's need for further instructions on how to perform the various stages of the recognition of competences process and are coherent with the existing ministerial recommendations. Thanks to meetings of the Working Groups set up within the project, which involved approximately 50 CPIA teachers from all over Italy, it has been possible to consider the main difficulties encountered in recognising adult students' previously acquired competences and identify the best practices from among the ones already being used.

This method created an operational model based on strict quality criteria that can be adopted by any CPIA, regardless of its size and its experience in this area. They are recommendations that intend to tangibly help the process become optimal, with the goal of overall improvement of the system. We also intend them to be easy to access for teachers who may have varying levels of familiarity with such matters.

Section one of these Guidelines – “The national and European legislative landscape” – presents the Italian and European situation regarding the certification of competences, putting the CPIA in a broader scenario, aimed at enhancing adult experiences and facilitating their journey towards the labour market. Section two – “The recognition of competences process: from theory to practice” – describes in detail the typical pathway of an adult who enrolls in the CPIA and the three main stages of the recognition of competences process: identification, assessment and certification. Section three – “Coordinates for defining the playing field” – establishes the meaning of the key terms, to avoid any misunderstandings and ambiguities and defines the four principles that contribute to ensuring a high-quality recognition process.

1.

The national and European legislative landscape



Introduction

This section of the Guidelines aims to help the reader consider the importance of competence certification for the adult population in both a national and European context. In this perspective, the chapter starts with a summary of the national and European legislative framework, to then move to showing how the CPIA has been included in the Italian competence certification system and also highlighting the central role that current legislation lends to the CPIA in the context of lifelong learning. Although these elements may seem to be purely technical, they are essential in order to understand how the process for recognising competences works in the CPIA and place it in a broader context.

The European scene

Several initiatives have been fostered in Europe in recent years that aim to support adult reskilling pathways and the validation of different forms of learning. In particular, in 2012, the European Union fostered the recognition of competences in Europe via the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹. This Recommendation is proof of the member states' strong political commitment to developing national measures, by 2018, that would allow individuals to “a) have knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning [...]; b) obtain a full qualification, or also a part-qualification, based on validated non-formal and informal learning experiences”. The 2012 Recommendation also introduced the concept of recognition as a process involving four stages: identification, documentation, assessment and certification of competences.

More recently, with the adoption of the 2016 Recommendation “*Upskilling Pathways*”², the member states undertook to commence a series of actions that would reduce the number of adults with gaps in their basic competences –

a condition that limits their access to education and to better personal and professional opportunities. In particular, the Recommendation provides for a three-stage mechanism involving:

- An assessment of competences that aims to identify adults' existing competences and any requirements for improvement;
- A personalized learning and teaching provision, that would allow individuals to update their own competences and fill any gaps, fostering progress towards higher qualifications that are aligned with the labor market's needs;
- The opportunity to have prior skills, knowledge and competences validated and recognised, with the aim of gaining certification and, above all, access to the labour market.

In 2019, the European Council renewed its commitment to supporting implementation of the 2016 Recommendation with the conclusions of the Council 2019/C 189/04,³ wherein countries are invited to focus their efforts on helping beneficiaries to acquire at least the key competences.⁴

1 Available on the website: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:IT:PDF>

2 Available on the website: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN)

3 Available on the website: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019XG0605\(01\)&from=IT](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019XG0605(01)&from=IT)

4 Available on the website: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01))

Thanks to the numerous EU initiatives, many European countries have implemented or are about to implement the 2016 Recommendation. Some countries, such as Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and the Czech Republic, have incorporated it into their existing lifelong learning system or into current national competence and employment strategies. Other EU member states are instead implementing new initiatives, in line with the Recommendation on upskilling pathways. A recent Cedefop (European Center for the Development of Vocational Training) report⁵ emphasized the fact that progress has been hampered by a number of critical factors, some of which are relevant to the CPIA, such as the fact that the training of people who validate competences is not standardized and that the minimum requisites for carrying out this complex task have not been established in several countries.

The national legislative framework

The process of building the Italian competences certification system is divided into three main phases, “readable” through five fundamental legislative documents. The first step began in 2012 with the Law 92/2012 on labour market reform (the so-called “Fornero” law) and the relative decree of 2013. In January 2018, the National Qualifications Framework came into force, which defines a set of descriptors for Italy, identifying which type of knowledge, competences and elements of autonomy/responsibility can be attributed to each level. At the start of 2021, the inter-ministerial decree was added, which sets out the guidelines for operating the national competence certification system, filling a gap that had existed since 2013. The following table traces these stages, specifying the main contents of the documents cited and the ministries directly involved.

⁵ Available on the website: https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_synthesis.pdf

Table 1.1. The main legislations regarding the Italian competence certification system

LAW-REGULATION	CHANGES INTRODUCED	WHO IS INVOLVED
Law no. 92/2012 on Labor Market Reform (Law "Fornero") ⁶	Establishes the national competence certification and non-formal and informal learning validation system.	Ministry of Labor Ministry of Education
Legislative Decree no. 13/2013 on the certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁷	It sets out the national certification and validation system, establishing the national guidelines on non-formal and informal learning validation and on the certification of competences.	The National Technical Committee appointed to develop the system comprises the "entitling bodies": Ministry of Education for school and university system qualifications; Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano for regional qualifications (vocational training); Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, for the qualification or regulation of professions not organized into professional orders or boards; Ministry of Economic Development – Department of EU Policies (that guides the other national authorities) for the qualification of regulated professions.
Inter-ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 on the National Qualifications Framework ⁸	Establishes: (1) a reciprocal recognition mechanism between regional qualifications; (2) standard process, certification and system procedures for the identification/validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences.	Regions in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. Other authorities for shared or overlapping institutional areas.
Inter-ministerial Decree of 8 January 2018 on the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in response to the European Recommendations on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) ⁹	Establishes a set of descriptors for the 8 qualification levels, identifying the knowledge, skills and elements of autonomy/responsibility that can be attributed at each level, and structures the procedures for referencing each qualification to the NQF.	All "entitling bodies": Ministry of Education; Regions; Ministry of Labor and Social Policies; Ministry of Economic Development – Department of EU Policies.
Decree of 5 January 2021. Provisions for the adoption of guidelines for the interoperability of national public skills accreditation bodies ¹⁰	It makes the national certification of competences system operational, as set out in article 4, paragraph 58, of Law no. 92 of 28 June 2012 and the cited Legislative Decree no. 13 of 16 January 2013, becoming a part of the broader national process for an individual's right to lifelong learning.	Ministry of Labor, Education and University, Public Administration.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

6 Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2012/07/03/01260115/sg>

7 Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/15/13600043/sg>

8 Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/20/15A05469/sg>

9 Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/01/25/18A00411/sg>

10 Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2021/01/18/13/sg.pdf>

The CPIA in the competence certification system

Evaluating competences is an integral part of any learning pathway, so therefore also of the pathways offered by the CPIA. However, in the CPIA, assessment takes on a particularly important role and value: competences, that are a key factor in the course design, are evaluated and certified not just on completion of the pathways, as happens in other types of schools, but also at the start, providing students with the opportunity of having competences they possess recognized as credit hours. The initial assessment, the subject of these guidelines, is in turn closely connected to the definition of what is probably the CPIA's most characteristic tool – the Individual Learning Agreement.

More generally speaking the direct, fundamental relationship that links the CPIA to the general certification of competences system comes from the central role in lifelong learning that the 2015 guidelines awarded to the CPIA as governed by paragraphs 51-68 of article 4 of Law 92 from 2012: “The CPIA, as the education system’s Local Service Network charged with providing both educational activities for the adult population and research, experimentation and development activities on Adult Education, is the public reference for establishing local lifelong learning

networks, as set out in article 4, Law no. 92 of 28 June 2012. The local lifelong learning networks’ priority strategies and actions, as set out in detail in article 4, paragraph 55 of Law 92/2012, find a public reference in the CPIA that can effectively and efficiently contribute to their implementation (Decree 12 March 2015).¹¹

This very reference is repeated in the inter-ministerial guidelines from 5 January 2021: “The national certification of competences system, as set out in article 4, paragraph 58, of Law no. 92 of 28 June 2012, and the later Legislative Decree no. 13 of 16 January 2013, is a part of the broader national process for an individual’s right to lifelong learning established by the same article, paragraph 51. In this context, the recognition and certification of competences acquired by the person in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, the creation of local networks as set out in paragraph 55 of the cited Law, and the creation of a single information backbone thanks to the interoperability of existing central and territorial databases, form the determining factor for aiding and supporting a tangible increase in the number of people participating in education” (Decree 5 January 2021).

¹¹ Decree 12 March 2015: Guidelines for changing over to the new organizational and educational support system for Provincial Adult Education Centers. Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/06/08/15A04226/sg>

As the central hub of the lifelong learning system, the CPIA have a direct relationship with the other education systems and with the world of employment. This relationship exists via the certification of competences, as stated in the MIUR Memorandum no. 22381 of 31 October 2019: “The CPIA, intended as an administrative unit and a teaching unit – and bearing in mind the content of Legislative Decree no. 13 of 16 January 2013 – certify the acquisition of acquired competences, also to encourage the propensity to continue studying and combat academic loss, and to aid entry into the labor market. Certification is also aimed at reconstructing any competences acquired by the adult in the prospect of lifelong learning, to aid the connection between first level Adult Education pathways and those in level two, as well as the connection between Adult Education pathways and vocational education and training (MIUR Memorandum no. 22381 of 31 October 2019).¹²

¹² *DGSOV Note 22381 of 31 October 2019: Adult Education and lifelong learning – Assessment and certification in Adult Education pathways – temporary provisions for the academic year 2019/2020.* Available on the following website: https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/2159038/m_pi_AOODGOSV+Reg.Uff.+U.+0022381_3.pdf/da40fiac-2994-1a5d-f5fa-34308ab293b9?version=1.0&t=1573808061217

2.

The recognition of competences process: from theory to practice



Introduction

This section of the guidelines looks in detail at the process characteristics and describes how they are implemented by the CPIA. The importance of evaluating competences in the CPIA is highlighted by retracing the typical pathway of an adult in a Centre. While assessments are a part of all stages along the pathway – onboarding and orientation stage, learning stage and completion stage – we must remember that the focus of these guidelines is on the certification of competences already possessed by the student. The section continues with a presentation of the basic aspects of this process, known as “recognition of credits” and split into the three stages of identification, assessment and certification. Through this process, the teacher members of the Commission for Establishing the Individual Learning Agreement (known as “*Commissione*” in Italy) can reconstruct the students’ personal history and check the competences they already possess.

The assessment of competences in the CPIA

The certification of competences stage begins when an adult enters a CPIA to enrol in one of the learning pathways offered. The analysis, verification and – where possible – certification of previous competences is a part of the initial onboarding stage. Competences are also certified in other moments, for example on completion of the pathway, when the competences acquire during the course must be certified.¹³

The typical pathway of an adult entering a CPIA is split into various stages and sub-stages, the main ones being onboarding and orientation, the actual learning pathway and the completion stage. assessment is a part of each of these stages, albeit with different modes and purposes. To make the overall system architecture clear, and to move on to focusing on to the certification process included in these guidelines – the certification of competences already acquired – we must briefly retrace the various occasions when a CPIA student's competences come under assessment.

Onboarding and orientation stage

The onboarding and orientation stage is for the both the adult's and the CPIA's benefit, to get to know each other and decide together which pathway is best and which methods to use. During this stage, assessment may take on two different forms: the placement test required to find the appropriate level that the student should attend and the certification of competences that the student already possesses, which these guidelines are dedicated to. The nature and objectives of these two types of assessment are totally different, so it is vital that we make a preliminary differentiation.

The *placement test* is a diagnostic assessment usually given to all students enrolled in the CPIA, and allows the learning activities to be tailored to the level of expertise with certain competences. Here, language placement tests are common, needed to choose the most suitable level for the stage of development already achieved. The placement tests results are given as a level (A1, A2, B1 etc. for languages, other levels for other types of test). On the other hand, there are tests for certifying competences that are already possessed by the student, that are set if, and only if, the right conditions apply, if the adult believes they have the

¹³ The Italian language test to obtain a permit of stay is also structured as a certification of competence, although it only formally leads to a declaration, as official language certifications can only be obtained from one of the four Italian certifying bodies.

relevant competences and asks if they can be certified. This type of test is aimed at a narrower audience, and consequently the content is often different compared to the placement test. In the event that the adult passes the test, they will receive the certification for the competences they possess and the corresponding credit hours will be recognized.

Learning pathway

Once the onboarding stage is completed, the adult commences the pathway most suited to them. This pathway, like all learning pathways, contains several moments of assessment. These are the learning or *in itinere* assessments, that constantly accompany the learning-teaching process and may come in multiple forms, until “disappearing” completely into teaching, without there being any external manifestation of assessment – this is the case of continuous feedback that the teachers receive and provide during class interaction. Educational assessment can modulate teaching, even during the same lesson, or as part of broader teaching signs.

Assessments carried out during the pathway may in some cases lead to a review of the Individual Learning Agreement and a change in the pathway being followed, as in the case of two-year pathways, where, at the end of the first year, an intermediate assessment takes place for expected competences (paragraph 1.2 of the Circular no. 22381 of 31 October 2019).

Completion stage

The pathway ends with the completion stage that, depending on the various situations, may be a transition to another learning pathway, inside or outside the CPIA, or to a place of work. The typical assessment at this completion stage is the final or culmination one, that summarizes the pathway completed, describing the achievement or non-achievement of certain levels of competences and offering opinions and predictions on any further continuation in learning. We must emphasize that the principles and criteria established for certification of competences already possessed prior to the start of the course also apply to certification of competences acquired at the end of the course, – as for any other type of certification of competences, regardless of when they are performed.

The recognition of credits

The competence certification process during the initial onboarding and orientation stage is known as “recognition of credits”. This process is commenced on request from the interested party and is executed by the Commission to define the Individual Learning Agreement. During this process, the adult’s needs are analysed, their personal history is reconstructed, competences already possessed are verified, these competences are certified, and the Individual Learning Agreement is stipulated. From a conceptual and practical point of view, the credit recognition process is split into 3 stages: identification, assessment and certification.

Identification

Stage aimed at identifying and reconstructing the competences of adults acquired through formal¹⁴, non-formal¹⁵ and informal¹⁶ learning that can be traced to one or more competences expected on completion of the teaching period of the pathway requested by the adult at enrolment. During this stage, having received the enrolment application, the Commission helps the adult “with the analysis and documentation of their learning experience”, also using documentation devices involving their personal and professional history. On this matter, the Commission should prepare suitable documentation devices that are consistent with the transparency tools already adopted in Europe, such as the ones defined as a part of the Europass decision. In this context, the preparation of a personal booklet (a personal Adult Education dossier) for each adult is particularly important, as it also collects qualifications, certifications, diplomas, declarations and any other “useful evidence”. To this end, exploration tools are required, including the interview that is conducted using a biographical approach. During this stage, the Commission can identify a teacher – a member of the Commission – and task them with accompanying and supporting the adult through the identification and reconstruction of their competences acquired during formal, non-formal and informal learning and with the compiling of their personal dossier. Notwithstanding the general criteria set out in these guidelines, each Commission can identify organizational and operational modes that also take into account the relevant territorial context.

Decree 12 March 2015

¹⁴ “Formal learning means learning delivered as part of the education and training system, and in universities and art, music and choreutic higher education institutes, and concludes with an educational or vocational qualification, also achieved through apprenticeship as stated in the consolidated text in Legislative Decree no. 167 of 14 September 2011, or a recognized certificate” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 52).

¹⁵ “Non-formal learning is intended as learning that is the person’s intentional choice, that is delivered outside the systems named in paragraph 52, in every type of body that pursues educational and training goals, also voluntary bodies, national civil service and private social institutions and businesses” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 53).

¹⁶ “Informal learning means learning that, regardless of whether the choice was intentional, is acquired during each person’s normal everyday life and during interactions that take place, at work, in the family, or during free time” (Article 4 of Law 92/2012, paragraph 54).

The main aim of this initial stage of recognition of credits is reconstructing competences already possessed, describing them in a dedicated document that is usually a personal booklet and that records educational, training work and other types of experience in a standardized format, that can contribute to defining any competences that the individual potentially already has. In addition to this document, it is possible to fill out the CV Europass and/or another type of European transparency tool. The documents produced in this stage form a part of the personal dossier, a kind of portfolio that records the stages and outcomes of the pathway followed in the CPIA.

While these indications may be clear for those coming from an Italian context, they may not be so for those coming from different education systems, especially if non-European. The immigrant adult is often without any official documents or has documents that are difficult to certify, therefore the validation process must be based on a number of solutions and be flexible for each case and for each competence. Identifying “useful evidence” in these cases may be somewhat complicated.

Taking up the ministerial suggestion to also refer to the RiCreARE and SEPA projects developed by INVALSI in the years 2012-13 (see below the definition of the Evaluation phase taken from the 2015 Guidelines), we report a list of possible useful evidences,¹⁷ which CPIA can take it as a basis and then customise it according to their needs.

¹⁷ The list of useful evidence for the competences acquired in formal contexts is taken from the document “Procedures and Tools for the recognition of credits” of the RiCreARE project, (pages 39 and 40) available at: https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/rn/doc_ricreare/15012013/Mat-somm-procedura/Doc_Met_Ricreare.pdf, the other lists are the result of the authors’ re-elaborations.

2. The recognition of competences process: from theory to practice

Useful evidence for the evaluation of competences acquired in formal contexts

Qualifications; documentation certifying any interrupted courses (e.g., report cards); equivalent foreign qualifications¹⁸

Certifications / declarations of competences issued by the Vocational Training Centres

Foreign qualifications translated or accompanied by the declaration of value

Official certifications of knowledge of the Italian language: CELI, CILS, PLIDA or cert.IT

Official certificates of knowledge of foreign languages: Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF), Preliminary English Test (PET), Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE), etc.

Certificazioni ufficiali di informatica: ECDL, EIPASS

Useful evidence for the evaluation of competences acquired in non-formal contexts

Declaration of the employer with the duration of the work experience actually carried out and the position covered

Declaration relating to apprenticeship contracts

Declaration relating to internship / school-work alternation activities

Certificates of participation and / or attendance of courses attended at recognised third sector / non-profit associations

Declaration / attestation relating to in-company training

Useful evidence for the evaluation of competences acquired in informal contexts

Self-declaration of voluntary activity

Personal experiences (e.g., foreign language acquired in work experience abroad or in the family context)

Statements from employers and / or colleagues

¹⁸ For university qualifications, the relevant Italian body is CIMEA – the Academic Mobility and Equivalences Information Centre – that, in recent years in particular, has produced guidelines and documents on identifying useful evidence for people with little or no documentation, such as refugees. In addition, CIMEA has recently started up a project to foster the identification of formal competences through the training of special professional figures who work at many Italian universities and create personal dossiers according to standardized criteria and methods.

With regard to European transparency tools, there are other tools in addition to the Europass curriculum, some of which have been developed especially for immigrants with insufficient documentation. In particular, we can mention the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees,¹⁹ developed by the European Council, which takes into consideration the specific difficulties faced by this type of user and offers integrated language support for filling out the various fields, also suggesting possible correspondence to national and European qualifications and competences. Another possibility is to echo the European credit systems: the ECTS system²⁰ (*European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*) for academic competences and ECVET²¹ (*European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training*) for vocational competences.

¹⁹ Available on the website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>.

²⁰ Available on the website: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en

²¹ Available on the website: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/european-credit-system-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet>.

Table 2.1. Identification Stage – Summary Table

MAIN PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruction of competences already possessed whichever way they have been acquired
PARTIES INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission for the definition of the Individual Learning Agreement
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstructing the experiences declared by the individual • Identifying the competences corresponding to the experiences • Gathering “useful evidence” • Drafting the Transparency Document • Preparation of European transparency tools
MANAGEMENT TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Personal booklet
TRANSPARENCY TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency document modelled on the one set out in Legislative Decree 5 January 2021 • European transparency tools: CV EUROPASS, ECTS, ECVET, European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, etc.
USEFUL EVIDENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal competences: school diplomas, school reports, previous assessments, certificates of competences regarding the acquisition of professional qualifications, the European Computer Driving License (ECDL), official certificates of knowledge of the Italian language; CELI, CILS, PLIDA, base.IT, official certificates of knowledge of foreign languages: DELF, PET, DELE etc. • Non-formal competences: certificates from training courses attended in organizations that pursue educational and training purposes, also voluntary associations, from the national civil service, private social associations and businesses. • Informal competences: declarations by employers, supervisors and colleagues.

Assessment

Stage aimed at verifying possession of adult competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning, which can be traced to one or more of the competences expected on completion of the learning period on the pathway requested by the adult on enrolment. During this phase, the Commission proceeds – together with the adult – with verifying possession of competences already acquire – by the adult, for subsequent certification. For competences acquired through formal learning, “useful evidence” is what is issued in the systems named in paragraph 52, of article 4 of Law 92/2012. In the case of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, this stage requires specific assessment methods to be adopted and suitable findings and tests for proving that competences possessed are consistent with the ones provided for by INVALSI as part of the RICREARE and SAPA projects, in accordance with the content of article 10, paragraph 2 of the Regulations. In all cases, this stage must be carried out in such a way as to guarantee fairness, transparency, collegiality and objectivity.

Decree 12 March 2015

The second stage, assessment, is aimed at verifying that the adult possesses the competences that can be traced to those expected as the result of the learning period requested. Unlike the collection and registration of relevant information, conducted through identification, assessment must assign a value to the collected data and decide whether it is valid or not, to be able to certify it officially during the subsequent stage. This task may be difficult to complete,

especially if there is a lack of documentary support or full information provided by the applicant. It may be difficult to understand which competence, or part thereof, the collected information can be traced to and what can actually be certified. Also, at other times it may be necessary to consider the issue of obsolescent competences: the certificates tell us that the competence has been acquired, but the student fears they no longer have the competence as it was acquired a long time ago. This may be one of the cases where the templates suggested in these guidelines and the tangible examples selected for each subject area axis can be of use.

To perform the assessment in the best possible manner, the Commission can decide to act differently depending on the type of evidence collected and its “weight”. If the supporting evidence is considered to be sufficient, the Commission can decide to fully validate the corresponding competences, without the applicant having to take any tests. This solution is used more frequently with evidence of formal competences – for example if there are diplomas that clearly trace back to certain competences.

On the other hand, if there are doubts or evidence is lacking, incomplete or unclear, the most commonly-adopted solution is to have the applicant take some tests. In this latter case, the Commission selects the most suitable tests and has the applicant take them. This operation requires the availability of tests that have already been written and validated, built according to certain quality criteria. The CPIA should therefore adopt an assessment system, digitized if possible, that aids the Commission's choices and makes it possible for even an inexperienced teacher to administer them. Administering the test should be a standardized, simple task that all teachers can perform, even involving different subjects, levels and periods. Of course, the case of assessing the tests is different. If they cannot be corrected automatically, they must be corrected manually by expert teachers.

Analyzing the evidence and administering the tests is documented by the Commission in order to ensure fairness, transparency, collegiality and objectivity, as required by the guidelines. In the event of a positive outcome of these operations, the next certification stage is commenced, otherwise the process stops here.

The following table summarizes the purposes, activities and tools involved in the assessment stage, as in the identification stage.

Table 2.2. Assessment stage – Summary Table

MAIN PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of Evidence • Additions to information available with ad hoc test results.
PARTIES INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission for the definition of the Individual Learning Agreement
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Transparency document" analysis • Direct assessment (interview and possible tests) • Formulation of validation report • Activation of certification procedure
MANAGEMENT TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests (oral and written)
TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test portfolio: interview, written tests, laboratory tests • IT tools • Any other document support material

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Certification

Stage aimed at issuing a certificate of recognition of credits for personalization of the study pathway, standardized according to the criteria below; during this stage, the Commission certifies the individual's competences, identified and assessed in the previous stages, and recognizes them – using the modes and limitations that it has previously established – as credits that can be traced to one or more of the results expected at the end of the learning pathway requested by the adult on enrolment; consistently with the content of Legislative Decree 13/13, the certificate of recognition of credits for personalization of the pathway – a public document – must contain the following minimum elements: a) details of the public entitled body (MIUR) and the entitling body (CPIA); b) the adult's personal details c) the expected competences at the end of the learning period of the pathway requested by the adult on enrolment, recognized as credits; d) the verification methods for each competence recognized as credits; e) the Commission's signature, the CPIA principal's signature and, for an adult enrolled in one of the learning periods of level two pathways, also the signature of the school principal where the level two pathway is based; f) date and registration number.

Decree 12 March 2015

The third stage, certification, aims to issue a certificate of credit recognition. The Commission certifies the individual's competences and recognizes them as credits that can be traced to one or more expected competences, formalizing recognition in the Individual Learning Agreement.

There are two very important legislative restrictions to consider, that have been repeated by the Ministry for Education in the context of the project:

1. The certification process takes place “by competences” and not by fractions or parts of them. In other words, it is not possible to have a part of the competences, or different levels of competence. For this reason, threshold-criteria are required, based on which it can be clearly decided whether a person possesses a competence or not. For example, the minimum score or decision for a competence to be actually possessed must be decided, referring to the available evidence or the carrying out of tests.²²
2. The maximum percentage of hours that can be recognized as credits following the certification process amounts to 50% (Ministerial Memorandum no. 3 of 17 March 2016).²³

²² As stated in Memorandum no. 22381/19, the assessment of each competence being verified must be expressed by a mark out of ten, so that it can contribute to the overall final score for the relevant axis.

²³ Ministerial Memorandum DGOSV 3 of 17 March 2016. *Level two adult education pathways: Periodic and final assessment, intermediate assessment, admission to state exams and validity of the academic year – Temporary provisions for the academic year 2015-2016*. Available on the website: <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/percorsi-di-istruzione-degli-adulti-di-secondo-livello-17-marzo->

2. The recognition of competences process: from theory to practice

Competences are therefore certified within a precise space, on one side defined by the desire to optimize the adult's experiences and to personalize their learning path, and on the other side, by the legislative restrictions described above. Within this perimeter, a balance must be found between the various needs and creating a streamlined, efficient certification system.

Table 2.3. Certification stage – Summary table

MAIN PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Official certification of competences possessed• Definition of the Individual Learning Agreement• Personalization of the learning pathway
PARTIES INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commission for the definition of the Individual Learning Agreement
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing up of the credit recognition certificate for personalization of the pathway• Drawing up of the Individual Learning Agreement• Sharing of Individual Learning Agreement with the student
TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate template for recognition of credits for the personalization of the pathway• Individual Learning Agreement Template
RESTRICTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only full competences can be certified• (Hour) credits cannot be recognized about 50% of the total hours of the learning program

Source: Authors' elaboration.

3.

Coordinates for defining the playing field



Introduction

This section of the guidelines clarifies some basic assumptions, also involving terminology, and identifies the main criteria that should be followed to guarantee competence certification quality. Practical suggestions are also made about how to plan the process, how to deliver it and which resources to use. This section begins with a definition of competence (some definitions have already been discussed in the previous section) and its division into knowledge and skills, then moving on to the definition of Learning Unit. As you can imagine, there are several definitions of these two basic notions, which do not always have the same content, but which are often as valid as each other. From an operational point of view, however, we need to agree on which definition to adopt, as linguistic misunderstandings easily invalidate the entire process they are based on. This section also contains the definition of some general principles that contribute to guaranteeing the quality of the

credit recognition process and tangibly help to guide even those teachers with little experience in assessments. Most of the indications provided in this section apply to all the subject axes, and also be used in other levels and periods of the CPIA courses.

The key terms in the credit recognition process

Competence

It is not always easy to define what a competence is, and as the Commission's task is to assess whether an applicant possesses a competence, these difficulties may then translate into procedural errors unless the meaning is clarified beforehand. The 2015 ministerial guidelines implicitly adopt the definition of competence contained in the 2006 European Qualifications Framework,²⁴ which introduces the three-way division into *knowledge*, *skills* and *competences* and also defines competence as the critical integration of the first two:

- Knowledge: this indicates the result of assimilating information through learning. Knowledge is the set of facts, principles, theories and practice about a study or work sector; knowledge is described as theoretical and/or practical.
- Skills: skills are the capacity to apply knowledge and use *know-how* to complete tasks and solve problems; skills are described as cognitive (use of logic, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (that implies manual skill and the use of methods, materials and tools).
- Competences: this is the proven capacity to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological ability in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development; competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

In simple words, competence is something that we can attribute to someone by observing how they put it into practice. We see it by observing an activity that it wouldn't be possible to carry out without having said competence (for example, if I state that I know how to make great cakes, my statement isn't enough, but the best thing is for someone to watch me make one and then taste what I have made).

A revolution is implicit in the concept of competence and its use in an educational context. You can know how to do something, in fact, regardless of the training path you have followed. Competence is something that can be seen, assessed and certified, without knowing how and when it was acquired. This is the sense of certifying competences: certification is an independent moment, that is separate from what brought about the acquisition of said competence. In this sense, the certification of competences that CPIA can perform as part of onboarding is similar, for example, to language or IT certification: there are special certification sessions, during which certain competences can be observed, assessed and certified via the administration of *ad hoc* tests.

For each educational period that the CPIA offers, the Ministry for Education has identified a set of competences that are the learning goals of the same period. These competences are assessed at the end and, if the adult requests it, at the start, as illustrated in the previous section. For the period taken into consideration here – second period first level – there are 16 expected competences. On the other hand, there are 22 expected competences at the end of the first period. For courses offered directly by the CPIA (thus excluding level two courses), language competences must be added in relation to the Literacy and Italian Language pathways (AALI), that correspond to levels A1 and A2 of the CEFR. We must also take into account the European key competences, which are the basis of all target competences mentioned, and the (Italian) citizenship competences that were introduced with the new compulsory schooling obligations. Lastly, we must remember the citizenship education competences, introduced by the 2015 guidelines but then systematized for the CPIA, by note 535 of 11 January 2021.²⁵

²⁵ Note no. 535 of 11 January 2021: Transversal teaching of citizenship education in level one adult education pathways – operational instructions for the academic year 2020/2021. Available at the following website: <https://www.idaveneto.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AOODGOSV.REGISTRO-UFFICIALE.20210000535.pdf>

Competences of the first period-first level courses

The educational pathways in the first period-first level learning are aimed at obtaining the final school diploma for the first education cycle (lower secondary school) The 22 expected competences at the end of this learning period are divided into four cultural axes for this pathway: languages axis, historical-social axis, mathematical axis and scientific technological axis (Table 3.1). A rather wide range of knowledge and skills correspond to these competences, as listed in the 2015 ministerial guidelines for each cultural axis. There is no preset rule for associating them with each other: competences, knowledge and skills can be associated by the teachers depending on their teaching aims and the needs of the class-groups.

Table 3.1. The expected competences at the end of the first learning period-first level

Language Axis

1. To interact verbally in an effective and cooperative manner using an appropriate language register for the various communicative situations
2. To read, understand and interpret various types of written texts.
3. To produce various types of texts that are suitable for various contexts.
4. To recognize and describe artistic and cultural heritage assets, also for protection and conservation purposes.
5. To use information technology to search for and analyze data and information
6. To understand the cultural and communicative aspects of non-verbal language.
7. To use English for the main communicative purposes regarding aspects of one's own experiences and environment.
8. To understand and use a second European Union language in simple, direct exchanges of information about family or customary matters.

Historical-social axis

9. To think about the complexity of the present while using an understanding of historical, geographical and social facts from the past, also to be able to discuss differing opinions and cultures.
10. To analyze territorial systems near and distant in time and space, to assess the effects of human actions.
11. To read and interpret the transformation of the world of work.
12. To exercise active citizenship as an expression of the principles of lawfulness, solidarity and democratic participation.

Mathematical Axis

13. To operate with whole, rational numbers, with a mastery of formal writing and understanding.
14. To recognize and compare flat and dimensional geometric shapes, identifying invariants and relations.
15. To record, place in order and correlate data and portray them also evaluating the probability of an event.
16. To address problematic situations by transforming them in mathematical terms, developing the solution process correctly and checking that results are reliable.

Scientific-technological axis

17. To observe, analyze and describe phenomena belonging to a natural and artificial reality.
18. To analyze the network of relations between living beings, and between living beings and the environment, identifying interactions at various levels and in the specific environmental contexts of biological organization.
19. To consider how the various eco-systems can be altered by natural processes and by human actions and to adopt ecologically-responsible life habits.
20. To design and make simple product, including digital ones, using material, information and organizational resources, and commonly-used items, tools and machinery.
21. To understand the economic and ecological pros and cons linked to the various energy production methods and technological choices.
22. To recognize the properties and characteristics of various communication media in order to use them effectively and responsibly for study, socializing and work purposes.

Competence of the second period – first level courses

relating to compulsory education, as set out in Ministerial Decree 139/2007 (common general competences in the first two years of a technical or professional upper secondary school). The 16 competences connected with this learning period can also be grouped around four cultural axes (Table 3.2). As for the competences connected with the previous period, knowledge and skills listed in the 2015 guidelines can be placed in correspondence to the target competences depending on specific educational needs.

Table 3.2. Expected competences on completion of the second learning period first level

Language Axis

1. To master the vital tools of expression and discussion to manage verbal communicative interaction in various contexts.
 2. To read, understand and interpret various types of written texts.
 3. To produce various types of texts for different communicative purposes.
 4. To use the basic tools for a mindful use of artistic and literary heritage.
 5. To use the English language for the main communicative and operational purposes.
 6. To produce various types of text in English for different communicative purposes.
-

Historical-social Axis

7. To understand the changes and differences of historic times in a diachronic sense using a comparison of the various eras, and also synchronically through a comparison of geographic and cultural areas
 8. To place personal experience in a system of rules founded on mutual recognition of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, to protect individuals, the community and the environment.
 9. To recognize the essential characteristics of the socio-economic system in order to understand the productive fabric of one's own area.
-

Mathematical Axis

10. To use arithmetic and algebraic calculation techniques and processes, also portraying them in graphic format.
 11. To compare and analyze geometric shapes, identifying invariants and relations.
 12. To identify appropriate strategies for solving problems.
 13. To analyze and interpret them, also developing conclusions and lines of reasoning about them, also with the help of graphs, mindfully using calculation tools and the potential offered by specific digital applications.
-

Scientific-technological axis

14. To observe, describe and analyze phenomena belonging to natural and artificial reality and recognize concepts of system and complexity in their various forms.
 15. To qualitatively and quantitatively analyze energy transformation phenomena, starting from one's own experience.
 16. To be aware of the potential and limitations of technology in the cultural and social context in which they are applied.
-

Source: Decree 12 March 2015: Guidelines for changing over to the new organizational and educational support system for Provincial Adult Education Centers. Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/06/08/15A04226/sg>.

Competences of the literacy and Italian language courses

The literacy and Italian language pathways (AALI) are mainly aimed at foreign adults. They are divided into two pathways, at the end of which competency A1 and A2 level of Italian competency are expected. The table below, once again taken from the 2015 guidelines, describes the expected competences based on the indications provided in the guidelines for planning the literacy and Italian language pathways²⁶, drawn up by the Ministry on the basis of CEFR criteria (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Expected competences at the end of the literacy and Italian language pathways (AALI)

Level A1	Level A2
Understanding and using familiar, everyday expression and very common formulas to satisfy tangible needs. Introducing yourself to others, asking questions about personal information and answering similar questions (the place where you live, the people you know, the things that you own). Interacting simply so that your interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly and is willing to cooperate.	Understanding isolated sentences and commonly-used expressions about immediately-relevant contexts (e.g. basic information about a person and their family, purchases, local geography, work). Communicating during simple, routine activities that only require a simple, direct exchange of information about familiar, normal matters. Describing simple aspects of your own experience and own environment, and also elements that refer to your immediate needs in simple terms.

Source: Decree 12 March 2015: Guidelines for changing over to the new organizational and educational support system for Provincial Adult Education Centers. Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/06/08/15A04226/sg>

²⁶ Available on the website: https://www.indire.it/lucabas/kmw_file/Ida/LineeGuida_Alfabetizzazione_MIUR.pdf

Key and citizenship competences

Key competences are the ones that everybody needs for their personal development, social inclusion and employment. These competences – which are 8 in total – were outlined in the Council Recommendation of 18 December 2006 and were then reviewed by the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018. As explained in point 3 of the Recommendation,²⁷ these indications have formed the basis of planning for all subsequent European educational policies: “From the time it was adopted, the Recommendation has been an important reference document for the development of education, training and learning geared towards competences”. They are therefore also fundamental for the CPIA – for example, the first four correspond to the three of the four cultural axes into which the competences listed above are split:

1. functional literacy competence
2. multilingual competence
3. mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
4. digital competence
5. personal and social competence and the capacity of learning to learn

6. citizenship competence
7. entrepreneurial competence
8. competence in cultural awareness and expression.

Most of the key competences listed above are clearly present among those expected at the end of the teaching period of the CPIA. However, digital competence is missing, which, especially following the pandemic, we have learned to recognize as one of the most important of all. The centrality of digital competence has been sanctioned, in recent years, by the elaboration of DigComp, the European reference framework that describes the fundamental digital skills that all citizens should possess today.²⁸ By possibly also referring to this important European instrument, CPIA can decide to explicitly include digital competence also in the credit recognition process by including it, for example, in competence 16.

The key citizenship competences introduced in Italy by Ministerial Decree 22/08/2007 (Compulsory schooling obligations)²⁹ are the result to be achieved through the reciprocal integration and interdependence of the

²⁷ Available on the website: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)).

²⁸ DigComp, which reached version 2.2 on March 22, 2022, is divided into five areas of expertise (Information and Data Literacy, Communication and Collaboration, Digital Content Creation, Security, Problem Solving) and 8 levels of mastery. The document is available at the following website: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415>.

²⁹ Available on the website: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2007/dm139_07.shtml.

knowledge and competences contained in the cultural axes. These are eight highly transversal and interdisciplinary competences that can be traced to 3 development areas: of oneself (the first two), of communication with others (3, 4 and 5) and with the relationship with reality (6, 7 and 8):

1. Learning to learn
2. Planning
3. Communicating
4. Collaborating and participating
5. Acting autonomously and responsibly
6. Solving problems
7. Identifying connections and relationships
8. Acquiring and interpreting information.

Several analogies emerge from comparing the two classifications, such as the correspondence between key competence 5, which includes the wording “learning to learn”, and the first competence of this new list. They are, in fact, closely inter-related competences.

Civic education competences

Law n. 92 of 20 August 2019³⁰ introduced the teaching of citizenship education in all schools of all kinds and levels, and therefore also in the CPIA. Subsequently, Ministerial Decree no. 35 of 22 June 2020³¹ established the guidelines for teaching (for all schools), identifying the learning objectives and competences for each cultural axis. For the CPIA in particular, the ministerial note no. 535 of 11 January 2021 provided operational indications for revising the institute’s curriculum, for deciding on the total number of hours to dedicate to the subject, for updating the learning results and assessing Citizenship Education, which includes highly transversal and inter-disciplinary learning material. According to the note, the three main subjects that are the pillars of teaching citizenship education are: the constitution (national and international law, lawfulness and solidarity), sustainable development (environmental education, knowledge and safeguarding of assets and the land), and digital citizenship. These topics can be integrated into other competences already

³⁰ Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/08/21/19600105/sg>

³¹ Available on the website: <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/decreto-ministeriale-n-35-del-22-giugno-2020>

included, depending on the teaching needs and purposes established by the teaching Commission of each CPIA.

The ministerial note also provides indications on the transversal assessment of citizenship education, that must be integrated with routine periodic and final assessments: the assessment is expressed in marks out of ten, is also integrated into the assessment of conduct, contributes to forming the decision on admission to state exams on completion of first period, first level learning pathways and also to the issuing of certification of competences on completion of second period, first level learning pathways. Due to the particular nature of this subject, however, citizenship education is excluded from the credit recognition process.

Learning unit

The focus on competences is the basis of the close relationship that links the certification process to the learning unit.

A necessary and fundamental condition for recognizing credits and personalizing the pathway is planning for learning units, also to be delivered remotely, intended as the autonomously significant set of knowledge, skills and competences related to the educational levels and periods.

Without prejudice to the teaching, organizational, research, development and experimental autonomy of schools, as set out in the Presidential Decree 275/99, learning unit planning takes into consideration some general criteria.

In particular, to establish the correspondence between knowledge and skills – in relation to each competence – it is necessary: 1) to bear in mind all the competences, knowledge and skills for the reference period, indicating the ones required to achieve each learning outcome; 2) to establish the number of hours for each competence (a share of the total number of hours planned for each period); 3) to identify the competence or competences to be acquired through remote user methods – wholly or in part – with no more than 20% of the total number of hours of the reference period.

Decree 12 March 2015

The learning units (UdA) are introduced and defined by the legislation that marks the start of the Adult Education reform (article 5, par. 1, letter c, Presidential Decree 263/12³²) as follows: “Education pathways [...] are planned by learning units, intended as autonomously significant sets of knowledge, skills and competences linked to learning levels and periods as set out in article 4, that can also be delivered remotely, according to the modes established in the guidelines,

³² Presidential Decree no. 263 of 29 October 2012: Regulation containing general rules for realigning the organizational teaching arrangement of Adult Education Centers. Available on the website: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2013/02/25/47/sg/pdf>

article 11, paragraph 10. Said learning units are the necessary reference for credit recognition”. Therefore, thanks to the definition of the course hours required to complete each learning unit, the 2015 ministerial guidelines consider learning units (UdA) as a pre-requisite in the recognition process, according to which credits are defined as “credit hours” compared to the total hours involved. It is this very correspondence that allows pathways to be personalized and the learning segment that the adult does not have to follow, if they already possess the corresponding competences, to be identified.

The basic difference compared to a traditional teaching unit comes from the fact that the learning unit is focused on the result, while the teaching unit is focused on the teaching process. The learning unit also places the student at the centre of teaching, instead of the teacher’s activities, with the consequent personalization of planning according to the student’s learning pathway and the context.

In Europe, and especially in the European ECVET credits system³³, learning units are essential elements. A unit is one element of the qualification which comprises a consistent set of knowledge, skills and competences that can be assessed and validated using a number of associated ECVET points. Essentially, a qualification includes several units and is made up of the total number of units. One person, therefore, can acquire a qualification by accumulating the necessary units obtained in different countries and contexts (formal and, if appropriate, non-formal and informal). The ECVET credit system has been designed for vocational training, but its principles can be applied to any learning pathway and to all levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. These guidelines are a part of this framework and therefore contribute to the achievement of the broader objectives of promoting lifelong learning and growing employability, of opening up mobility and social inclusion for workers and students.

³³ Point 1 of Annex II of the Recommendation dated 18 June 2009 (2009/C 155/02), available on the following website: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ.C.2009.155.0011.0018.IT.PDF>

The four key principles for a correct recognition of credits

Do not lose sight of the CPIA users' characteristics

The beneficiaries of the courses offered by the CPIA are mostly adults, and as such, people with experience (as well as with competences), highly inclined towards items and activities that are significant to them, i.e. not abstract or removed from daily reality. CPIA teaching must guide the consequent assessment choices, aiding the creation of proof that is neither ordinary or abstract, with content being neither infantile or “infantilizing” (i.e. meaning that a person with competences that are the equivalent of a child’s in one sector is treated as a child in everything else too) and that also takes into consideration adult experiences and their current conditions (for example, avoiding culturally delicate topics, or ones which can conjure up painful memories). In the same way, consistently with the principles of intercultural, it is necessary to always

wonder whether the background information contained in the tests refers to non-universal but culturally determined notions, and are therefore inaccessible to those coming from other cultures. With regard, on the other hand, to the type of exercises set, reality tests and simulations, compared to other more academic exercises, are especially useful for verifying the competences of an adult population and should be preferred when possible.

Particular attention must be paid to the reference contexts in which the teaching takes place. Prison, for example, defines spaces, times and methods of interaction that are very different from those of schools. In this sense, the credit recognition process must take into account the limitations imposed by the local organisation, for example avoiding tests that require internet connection or the support of particular tools. For these same reasons, it is necessary to calibrate the methods of carrying out the tests also according to the time available to the agents or to other particular constraints.

Maximize use of useful evidence

The recognition process must be based on the principle of simplification, searching for tools and solutions that may help in conducting the assessment by simplifying matters and reducing cases where it is necessary to set tests for recognizing credits. In this sense, all “useful evidence” that documents competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts must be carefully evaluated, so as to exploit the possibilities of an initial validation of competences. A practical suggestion to make this a simpler, faster process is to proceed with recognizing recurring cases in the CPIA, integrating it with available documents and the guidelines and preparing an internal open list (that can be gradually integrated with new data) based on which referring the highest possible number of documentary proof as useful evidence.

Identify the students for whom tests must be set

Unlike entry tests, which are typically set for all those enrolling in the CPIA so that they can be arranged into class-groups, the test for credit recognition is only set for those who believe they possess one or more of the expected competences at the end of the pathway they are enrolled on. We must emphasise that the assessment criteria and the test examples devised as a part of this project together with CPIA teachers may be rather more complex than the ones currently used by most Centres. As mentioned, this choice is determined by the function played by the recognition tests, or rather offering the possibility of validation only to those students who already possess some of the competences expected as an outcome of the CPIA pathways, in order to reduce the total number of hours to be completed on the pathway they are enrolled on. In addition, as it is only possible to certify the possession of full competences and not parts thereof – a practice that is sometimes used by the CPIA – these tests must be more complex, to allow teachers to assess knowledge and skills that are a part of the competence in question.

Allocate credits consistently

To ensure homogeneity of credit allocation procedures in the various CPIA and thus guarantee greater transparency in the process, precise criteria are required, to be used to establish a minimum threshold for considering possession of the competence in question. This can be achieved by allocating a score, using marks out of ten, as also indicated by the legislation, and setting 6 as the minimum score. Also, it must be remembered that the most hours that can be recognized as credits amount to 50% of the total number of hours for the pathway attended and not for the single competence. This threshold is set so as not to overly reduce the number of hours and have a negative effect on the quality of teaching offered by the CPIA.

The background of the slide is a vibrant orange color. It features a complex, abstract pattern of thin, parallel lines that intersect to form a grid-like structure. The lines are not perfectly straight and vary in density, creating a sense of depth and movement. The pattern is most prominent on the left side and fades towards the right, where a white diagonal shape cuts across the bottom right corner.

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