



## *COUNTRY ANALYSIS of KEY COMPETENCIES*

*Programma integra, Italy*



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### Young people and the desire to doing business: a look at Italy

In 2014, amongst Italians under 35, the propensity to entrepreneurship touches 83%; they are mainly young of Northern Italy to have a positive attitude towards self-employment.

Furthermore, 58% of young Italians see him/herself able to start his/her own business (global average: 51%; European average: 49%); the potential entrepreneurial focuses in the Regions of Northern and Central Italy.

### Entrepreneurship is an innate gift or it can be taught?

For the 64% of Italians, the entrepreneurship is taught (global average: 63%); the under 35 have the same opinion with 70% of positive responses (global average: 70%).

Perception about the factors that allow to successfully do business in Italy: for the Italian sample, the experience "on the field" is the determining factor. 33% of Italians, in fact, says that one of the most relevance factor for the training path is to carry out real entrepreneurial work experiences.

According to the 35% of Italians, chambers of commerce and non-profit organizations, through specific training programs, are the optimal contexts where entrepreneurship should be taught, as confirmed by the Italians under 35 (35%).

The formative factors that, in Italy, are considered essential in order to start your own businesses diverge, however, from the global and European opinion. In particular, at international level, the importance of basic business skills such as accounting, information technology and administration are put in first place (Italian average: 32%; European average: 45%; global average: 42%) while, in second place there is the leadership skill, where the European average is 36% and the global one is 37%: in Italy the gap is high, the leadership is not considered a crucial element of success and it ranks last with 22 %.

A particularly alarming data concerns the training provision in Italy: it's deemed insufficient by 64% of respondents compared with a European and global dissatisfaction of only 43%.

The 2014 Amway Global Report on Entrepreneurship, realized in collaboration with Gfk and the Technical University of Monaco (TUM), focused on the role of training in a entrepreneurial path, with particular attention to the opinion of young people on the self-employment.

The study has revealed a widespread common feeling in the Italian population towards self-employment. The 64% of the Italian population is convinced that entrepreneurship can be learned, this certainty touches the 70% among the under 35, among which, as the Amway Report points out, more than four in five (83%) declare to be willing to start a self-employment.

*Figure 1. In your opinion, can entrepreneurship be taught or are entrepreneurs on the contrary rather born than made?*



### Business skills wanted

- 42% Basic business skills, e.g. in financial controlling, marketing or computer applications
- 37% Leadership and management skills and rhetorical abilities, e.g. decision making, customer management, leading and motivating employees
- 37% Entrepreneurship in practice e. g. business plans, business competitions/business simulations, mini-company programs
- 31% Innovation e.g. teaching of creativity and solution approaches to problems
- 28% Entrepreneurial role models: mentoring programs and personal interaction with entrepreneurs
- 24% Learning from analyzing entrepreneurial success stories

### Satisfaction with entrepreneurial education

- 11% Yes, sufficient
- 32% Yes, but could be further improved
- 18% No, but there are efforts
- 25% No, insufficient
- 14% Don't know

## The business culture in Italy

A survey commissioned by Confindustria and conducted by GfK Eurisko on a sample of small and medium entrepreneurs and citizens operating in other sectors, showed that the business culture is considered essential for the majority of industrial leadership, although it's not very present in the citizens' imagination (only 38% knows what it is, and 43% of small and medium entrepreneurs). Almost all respondents, however, believe that in Italy an adequate business culture lacks.

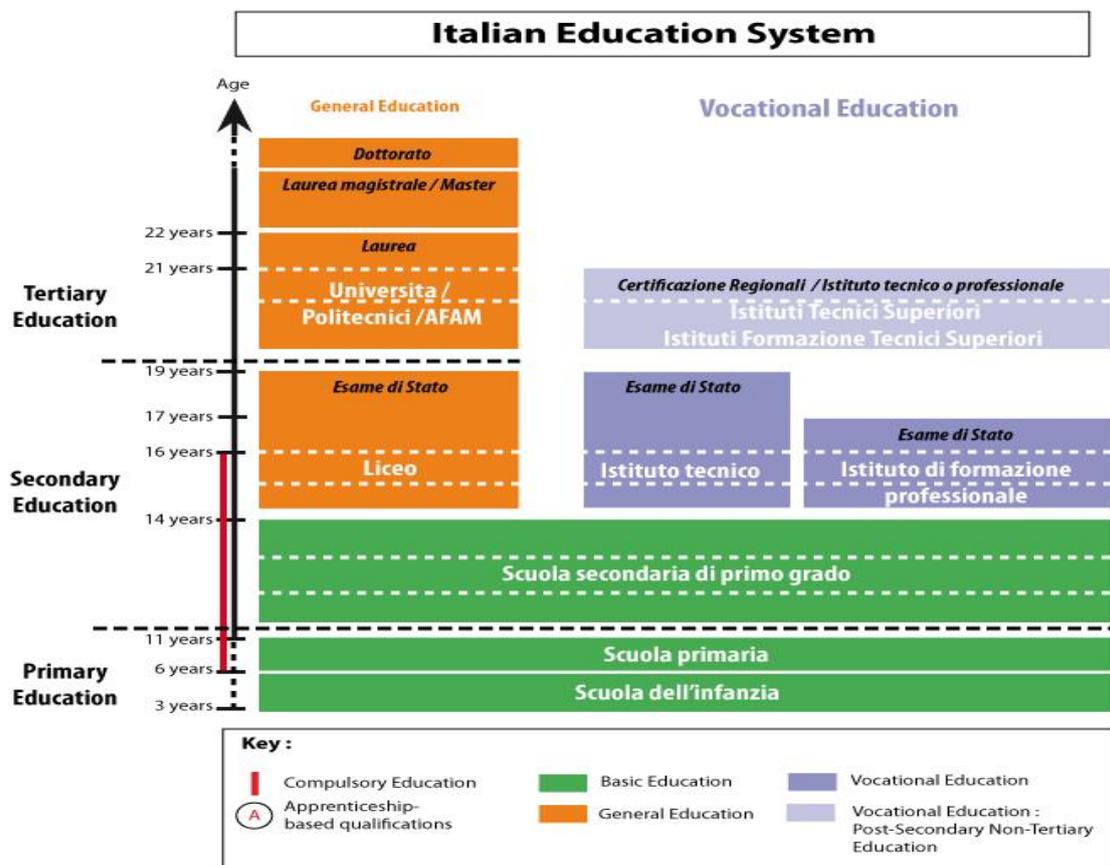
For the majority of entrepreneurs, "business culture" means creativity, innovation and responsibility, ability to integrate with awareness in the economic and social system, ability to take on objectives other than profit. For the majority of civil society, however, business culture has a particular relationship with honesty, transparency, responsibility. For the majority of citizens, the resources that develops this culture are people, research and innovation (for entrepreneurs), passion and motivation.

According to respondents, the Italian policy does not help, in fact hampers the business culture. This is due to the institutions inability of promoting reforms, a spread lawlessness in economic activity, the fear of change, inadequacy of infrastructures.

According to respondents, the business culture should be more present especially in government, politics and parties, economic system. And the university, in particular, should deal with the promotion of enterprise culture.

## Italian education system

Figure 2. The Italian educational system



The Law of 28 March 2003 n. 53, which outlines profiles and points characterizing a quality educational and training system, states that the educational and training system is "aimed at the educational, cultural and professional growing of young people through the knowing, the doing and the acting as well as the critical reflection on themselves" (Art. 2 letter. G).

According to the GEM Report on Italy 2012, the educational system is poorly oriented to entrepreneurship and the University is little close to the business system.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship is not included in the Italian vocational training curriculum established at national level. However, the legislation invites schools to promote a link with the labor market. Student participation is optional. There are many entrepreneurship programs focused on "local/regional" themes incurred by the private sector and the public institutions and extended to a small number of students. However, there are some programs in entrepreneurship nationally offered, including the opportunity for students to work on practice firms and in mini-companies<sup>1</sup>.

### **Some data from the GEM Report 2013 on Italy**

#### Government programs

Almost all the respondents believe that there isn't a wide range of assistance that can be obtained through the contact with a single institution and that there isn't an adequate number of programs in support of new enterprises. On the contrary, the enterprise incubators seem to deliver an effective service.

Slightly more than 10% of respondents believe that people who work in government agencies aren't competent and effective in supporting nascent entrepreneurship and this results in the fact that those who need help from government programs never finds what they need.

In conclusion, the government programs aiming to support new businesses are not considered effective.

#### Education system

Almost all the respondents believe that training in primary and secondary school does not encourage creativity, autonomy and initiative. The school also does not provide adequate tools for the analysis and the understanding of a market economy and does not allow to get tools to understand entrepreneurship.

Only 10% of respondents believe that the University provide adequate tools to activate a new business in terms of management training.

In general, 60% of respondents believe that the education system does not provide adequate preparation to activate a new business or make it grow.

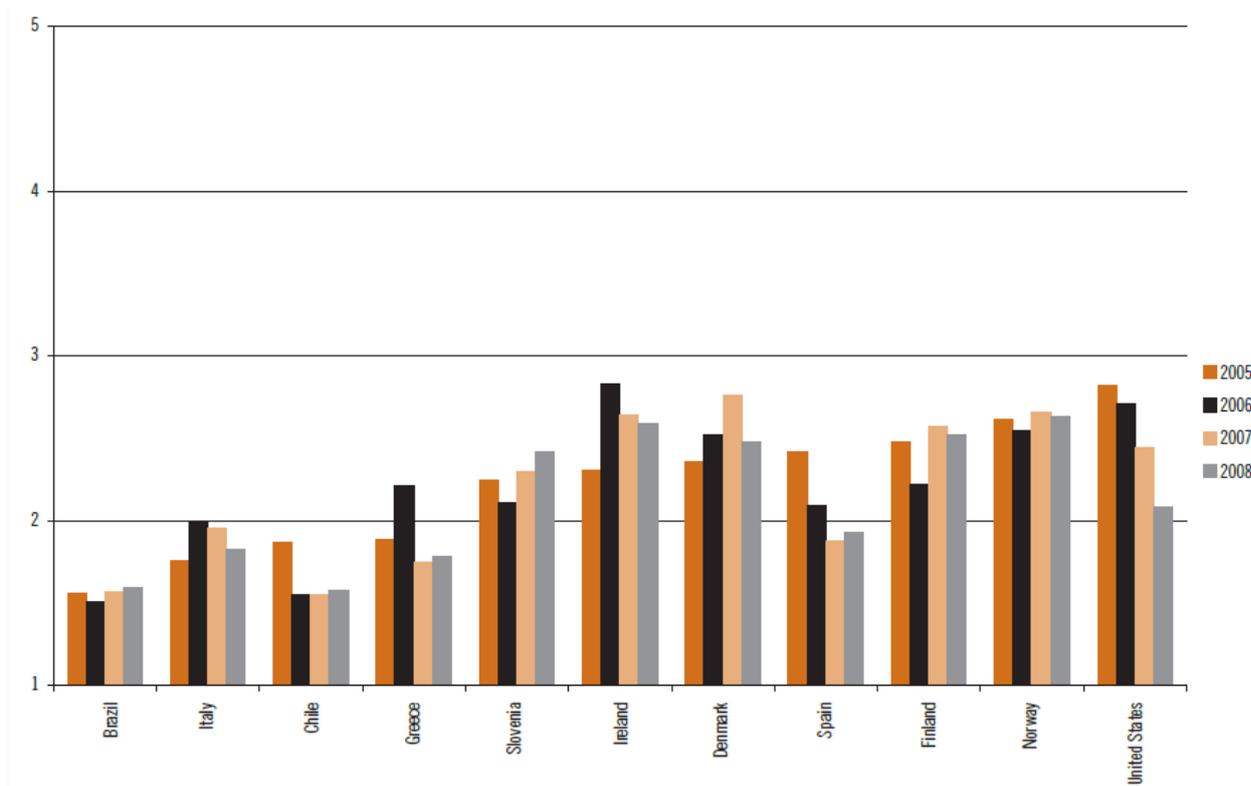
#### Skills and knowledge

In Italy, the problem of the low entrepreneurial activation also lies in the fact that few people have the ability to start and run a successful business, or a small business, as the majority of individuals haven't business experience, don't quickly respond to market opportunities and haven't the ability to raise and manage the resources needed for starting a new initiative.

<sup>1</sup> 'Best procedure project. Entrepreneurship in education and training', Final report of the expert group, November 2009. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/smes/vocational/entr\\_voca\\_it.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/smes/vocational/entr_voca_it.pdf)

As shown in the following figure on the state of In-School Entrepreneurship Education and Training in a sample of GEM Nations for the years 2005-2008<sup>2</sup>, As shown in the following figure on the state of In-School Entrepreneurship Education and Training in a sample of GEM Nations for the years 2005-2008<sup>3</sup>, the Italian school system does not particularly value skills and knowledge related to entrepreneurship and, moreover, the trend is decreasing.

Figure 3. State of In-School Entrepreneurship Education and Training



## About Female Leadership

### Some data from UNIONCAMERE<sup>4</sup>:

- In Italy, about 16% of the employed are entrepreneurs, the European average is 10%.
- 24% of businesses are started by women.
- Women's businesses increase three times more compared with the entirety of the businesses (data related to the period March 2012-March 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Alicia Coduras Martínez, Jonathan Levie, Donna J. Kelley, Rögnvaldur J. SÆmundsson and Thomas SchØtt, 'Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Special Report: A Global Perspective on Entrepreneurship Education and Training', 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Alicia Coduras Martínez, Jonathan Levie, Donna J. Kelley, Rögnvaldur J. SÆmundsson and Thomas SchØtt, 'Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Special Report: A Global Perspective on Entrepreneurship Education and Training', 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Unioncamere is the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Trade and Agriculture. It's the public body that institutionally unites and represents the Italian chamber system.

### Elements to be improved

- The presence of women in the so-called innovative start-ups falls to 10%, and it's concentrated in Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and Tuscany. The data reflects a partial gender segregation in the entrepreneurship field, in addition to the differences on the availability of opportunities between North and South.
- Women's businesses show also an increased financial fragility, the 72% of them, indeed, work with a registered capital of less than 10 thousand euro, compared with a total average of 67%.

### How women entrepreneurs see themselves?

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2012 Women Report produced by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the 37% of the total world entrepreneurship:

1. women see less future opportunities related to their entrepreneurial activity
2. women self-perceive themselves less capable than men as entrepreneurs
3. women tend to not have employees or less than men
4. the presence of women at the head of medium-large business activities is low (2% in Europe).
5. women internationalize less their business

### **Foreign entrepreneurship**

In Italy, individual companies with foreign citizens holders continue to grow. In 2014 were born 23 thousand foreign firms. Most of the foreign entrepreneurs come from: Morocco, China, Albania and Bangladesh. Trade, manufacturing and catering are the main the areas covered by foreign companies. These few data compiled and distributed by Unioncamere.

Finally, from the analysis conducted by Unioncamere emerges that immigrants' companies have a greater ability to deal with the crisis than the Italian companies. In 2014 the registrations of 'foreign' companies increased by 4,264 units compared to 2013, while terminations decreased to 1,533.

### Young foreign entrepreneurs

In 2012, youth foreign companies represented 25.7% of total foreign enterprises, a value that is much higher than the incidence calculated on the total youth businesses (which, that same year, stopped at 11.1%) . Foreign entrepreneurship is thus markedly youthful and, with its 122.927 under 35 production activities, provides an important contribution to the overall phenomenon of youth businesses in Italy.

Within foreign entrepreneurship, sectors with the highest concentration of youth businesses are construction (32.1% of foreign companies is under 35), trade, food services (around 25- 26% in both cases), forestry (29.8%), clothing industry (22.5%) and leather industry (22.2%), maintenance and installation of cars and equipments (26.8%), waste cycle (22.1%), logistic and courier services (30.1%).

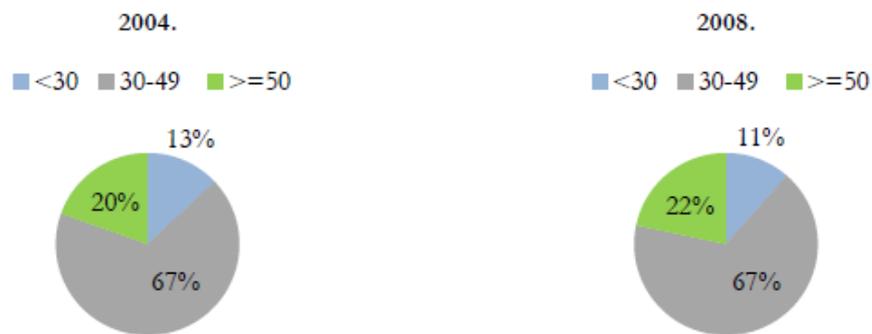
Many of these young foreign entrepreneurs went to Italy specifically to perform these activities, even as workmen or employees for Italian companies, and they have subsequently been able to exploit the skills acquired in a self-entrepreneurial way, recovering upward social mobility.

In other cases, such as in the courier or telecommunication services, or in trading, foreign entrepreneurship were born at service of the same migrant communities, thus creating market

circuits (such as phone centers, internet café, delivery services with the countries of origin, but also the numerous grocery stores and restaurants serving 'ethnic' food and crowding the neighborhoods with the highest concentration of migrants in our cities). Growth of the migrant youth entrepreneurship in agriculture is particularly appreciable (12.3%) and seems to mark the evolutionary step from simple laborer/worker to entrepreneur.

As shown in the following figures, immigrant entrepreneurs are young adult. 67% of total immigrants are aged between 30 and 49 years old making them the dominant group.

Figure 4. Non EU migrant entrepreneurs by age<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Haya Al Shawwa, 'Italy's new immigrant entrepreneurship: the paths of development of this new phenomenon', 2009-2012

## 2 ANALYSIS OF 10 KEY COMPETENCES

### 2.1 Leadership

#### 2.1.1 How much is leadership competence valued in society?

The leadership, as a means to reach a certain goal, is a fundamental requirement for entrepreneurship. In Italy, however, in a shortly meritocratic system, important soft skills such as leadership, often go into the background.

At the level of collective imaginary, a powerful man/woman is seen more as a "man/woman in command" that doesn't need special leadership qualities, but his/her authority is justified only by the position gained. The leadership is seen more as a emerging dimension, an innate gift of some types of personalities, and not as a skill, which certainly is based on personal characteristics, but that cannot be developed and increased.

#### 2.1.2 Is the leadership competence strongly embedded in society and culture?

Much is said about the leadership competence and the market proposes several offers (such as training courses, workshops, etc.) to develop your own leadership skills. Therefore, it is certainly valued by the market, but not so by the society and the culture. Enhancing leadership skills means having an organizational attitude that recognizes skills and assigns responsibility, and it is not exactly what we find in the Italian organizations.

The achievement of objectives, and the related responsibilities, are specific matter of leaders but they have a common value only if the system is able to recognize them (meritocracy): the impression is that in Italy there is no this kind of common sharing.

To what extent the training factors and to what extent the leadership skills affect?

This is one of the questions posed in the Amway Global Report on Entrepreneurship (made in collaboration with GfK and the Technical University of Monaco) which notes a deep gap between Italy and other European countries with regard to the importance given to leadership skills: in Italy it ranks last place of the rank on the entrepreneurship soft skills - leadership is important only for 22% of respondents - against a European average of 36%.

#### 2.1.3 Is leadership competence taught in primary/secondary level education?

#### 2.1.4 Is leadership competence taught in VET education?

The leadership competence is neither transmitted nor taught in the traditional education and training places. Like many other soft skills, Italian schools and vocational trainings don't teach skills which could be very useful in future working life, they hardly have structured means and an holistic approach. The only way in which the leadership is transmitted in these contexts is the presence of charismatic teachers or trainers who have qualities of motivators by their nature, and not because the school or the training system provide for such teaching.

The leadership competence is therefore hardly recognized and promoted before the university level, where it is present in some educational programs in Faculties related to economics and marketing.

This competence is sometimes provided in the training organized by private companies that shall solicit the human resources on interesting elements for the company project; therefore, it is a targeted training to achieve specific and circumstantial objectives of the company.

### **2.1.5 Is there a difference regarding leadership competence when assessed in terms of gender?**

In Italy there are few women at apical roles, both political and economic, both in the public and private sectors.

At the level of competence, gender diversity is more related to characteristics specifically female or male, which can affect the development of some dimensions rather than others, but that lead to the expression of a equally effective leadership.

Women's leadership is hampered by a stereotypical image of women which disqualifies their specificities. On one hand, the female leadership is not positively evaluated, ie skills or qualities that are associated with the stereotypical image of women are not considered useful or desirable for the leadership exercise. The stereotype about women excludes skills desirable to work, as assertiveness, ability to negotiate, willingness and command.

On the other hand, women's leadership is hampered by characteristics (partly culturally transmitted) that do not fit with the image of the "good leader", such as empathy. But, taking just as example the empathy, some studies reveal that the empathic leadership puts the recognition of the others' needs in the center. This means recognizing the specific needs of the others and the working groups thus activating the right motivational levers.

### **2.1.6 Is the development of leadership competence supported via other non-formal educational offerings**

*F.e. training programmes/peer-learning opportunities*

In Italy there are many training courses, workshops, conferences, etc. designed to develop the leadership skills. These are mainly provided by private associations, but even courses or specific modules within University courses and, above all, in Master's programmes are rising.

### **2.1.7 To what extent is the acquisition of leadership competence facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

In Italy, public employment services situation is quite complicated (currently they are affected by a reform that puts them at the center of the Guarantee Young mechanism), as they failed to carry out their functions, among others, having never activated systematic processes for detecting the skills of persons looking for job.

In addition, often just the technical and professional skills, that meet a specific request, are recognized, whereas the soft skills are not analyzed.

The situation is different with regard to the private employment agencies which create more complex selection processes that highlight even a range of soft skills.

### **2.1.8 Is leadership competence supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

Italy has been working through incubation spaces for years. Even in youth startups projects, a certain level of leadership skills is required, although in most cases it refers to technical matters of business, and not to soft skills.

The Italian business system is, for the most part, made up of small and medium-sized businesses with few employees and poorly defined organizational structures. Even in the most active companies, the training is often limited to the mandatory one or the technical professional update.

There are few forward-looking companies that invest in a development that looks more forward, both due to the lack of resources and the lack of knowledge of some organizational aspects that could also lead to a competitive advantage.

### **2.1.9 To what extent is leadership competence evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

In Italy there is an overall problem regarding the leadership that affects also young entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, however, there is a growing awareness of the importance related to this competence. In a context of economic crisis and increasingly precarious employment, new generations are slowly realizing that the ability to express soft skills thus making oneself adaptable to multiple contexts, in other words more employable, is a crucial added value in a labor market so changeable.

### **2.1.10 What is the preferred format of the development of leadership competence amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Training with external tutors or coaches at accredited institutions.

Training and, in general, the possibility to refer to experienced people who can transmit, in a formal or informal way, their knowledge.

Theoretical and practical training that makes the pupil capable of understanding at first-hand the dynamics that trigger in a work context.

## **2.2 Willingness to explore**

### **2.2.1 How much is the willingness to explore valued in society?**

### **2.2.2 Is the willingness to explore strongly embedded in society and culture?**

This competence is not valued in Italy. Currently, the only area where such competence is encouraged and valued, it regards the possibility to study or work abroad for a short period.

In Italy, the stability and the search for a long lasting employment that gives economic security are better valued than the willingness to explore.

There are far more flexible societies in which, for example, to change several times job, as a result of a personal choice, is normal: this kind of choice hardly happens in Italy.

An expenditure of 20.5 billion euro, 1.26% of the Italian GDP. It is the amount that businesses, public institutions, private institutions and non-profit and universities have invested in "intra-muros" research and development, ie making use of own staff and facilities, in 2012. Compared with the year before, spending had increased both in nominal terms (+ 3.5%) and in real terms (+ 1.9%), but this value is far from the one of the more advanced European countries. Furthermore, there is a decrease in spending for R&D both in 2013 and in 2014. This as further proof that in Italy the willingness to explore is not valued nor promoted by society and institutions.

**2.2.3 Is the willingness to explore taught in primary/secondary level education?**

**2.2.4 Is the willingness to explore taught in VET education?**

In the higher education system, as well as in the training one, this skill is taught. But this isn't made in a structured way and/or at the level of school/training programmes, for the most part it is linked to the ability or willingness of individual teachers/trainers.

**2.2.5 Is there a difference regarding the willingness to explore when assessed in terms of gender?**

Women have a great ability to explore and find new solutions, many times this is due to the difficulty to follow the traditional paths that still have a strong male predominance. Women often sacrifice themselves to adhere the dominant cultural model, that sees women a step behind men. And this is even worse if you are a "career woman": you may be considered as traitor of your social mandate. Therefore women have often to find alternative, innovative and creative pathways.

**2.2.6 Is the development of the willingness to explore supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

**2.2.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the willingness to explore facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

Not at all. There are no incentives from the system in this direction, such as there are none from the structures, beginning with the employment services. The personal cultural background is the main determinant to move this lever, the socio-economic opportunities the second one.

**2.2.8 Is the willingness to explore supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

There is an attempt to support this competence, for example through business incubators.

### **2.2.9 To what extent is the willingness to explore evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

It is evident, especially in economic crisis time in which the insecurity reigns and therefore there is the need to reinvent themselves, to find new ways of working: new sectors and/or new ways, methodologies, tools, etc.

This competence is seen as the push toward new possibilities, even given the current moment in which the winning choice is to offer something new and given the tendency to start your own business, even amongst young graduates who cannot find a work in their sector of competence and so they are forced to involve themselves in other sectors.

However, in young Italian entrepreneurs, even if only to not succumb to the increasing difficulties of the Italian system, there is a desire to explore to the extent of which exploring means to find a way to keep afloat (to take a specialization, to reduce costs, to diversify, to innovate, etc.). At any rate, this is completely based on their own resources.

### **2.2.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the willingness to explore amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Through direct experience.

## **2.3 Ability to plan**

### **2.3.1 How much is the ability to plan valued in society?**

### **2.3.2 Is the ability to plan strongly embedded in society and culture?**

In the Italian context, in order to start any kind of business, this competence is necessary in order to deal with all the bureaucratic paperwork and the complicated, and often confusing, administrative procedures and practices.

### **2.3.3 Is the ability to plan taught in primary/secondary level education?**

### **2.3.4 Is the ability to plan taught in VET education?**

Usually, class groups do not even know the planning and programming principles.

Concrete competences like this one are not in line with the mostly theoretical study that still characterizes the educational system, universities included, therefore the reference point for acquiring this kind of competence is related to the ability and the willingness of individual teachers/trainers.

Otherwise the acquisition of this competences is searched outside the system, such as through experiences of entrepreneurs, technical advice, personal previous experience.

### **2.3.5 Is there a difference regarding the ability to plan when assessed in terms of gender?**

This skill is more common amongst women than men, even if an unconscious level. In fact, in Italy, women are substantially responsible for all that concerns the organization of the house and the family unit, regardless of the fact they work as the male partner or not, so they face the need to combine different dimensions.

### **2.3.6 Is the development of the ability to plan supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.3.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the ability to plan facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.3.8 Is the ability to plan supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

The incubation spaces may help to acquire this competence or, at least, to acquire awareness of the need to plan. Surely, the research and development issue is inherent with this competence.

The tasks scheduling is a working method that may be more or less structured or more or less effective, but which is necessary in all contexts.

However, organizations usually operate under "emergency" and with poorly prepared people on management skills. The professionals work according to competence criteria related to their specific professional profile and not necessarily according to the organizational needs of the membership organization.

### **2.3.9 To what extent is the ability to plan evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.3.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the ability to plan**

Training, experience.

## **2.4 Ability to take decisions**

### **2.4.1 How much is the ability to take decisions valued in society?**

### **2.4.2 Is the ability to take decisions strongly embedded in society and culture?**

This competence is closely linked with the leadership. To better express the ability to take decisions, it is indeed necessary to have clarity with regard to tasks, responsibilities and mandates.

In Italy this competence clashes with the bureaucratic/administrative uncertainty of the Italian system.

Furthermore, The GEM Report 2012 detects a fear of failure, in percentage terms, particularly high in Italy (58%). This collides with the ability to take decisions, as this latter is hampered by the failure's ghost so widespread in Italy.

#### **2.4.3 Is the ability to take decisions taught in primary/secondary level education?**

#### **2.4.4 Is the ability to take decisions taught in VET education?**

No. The Italian education and training system does not support this competence. It is in fact still set in a perspective relegating the learner in a subordinate and passive position compared to the directives of teachers/trainers.

It pays little attention to the development of personal autonomy, hardly the learner is put in the position of having to make decisions.

#### **2.4.5 Is there a difference regarding the ability to take decisions when assessed in terms of gender?**

The ability to take decisions is an indispensable quality for those who runs a business, but often a fundamental aspect isn't take into account: the best choices, even in business, are those that bring benefits to the community, besides to the business.

Well, according to data and information collected, the ability to take decisions in the right way is proper of women managers, while in male colleagues it is less developed.

Women are more likely to consider the rights of other people and have the so-called "cooperative" approach in the decision making, based on the analysis of the interests of all groups involved.

Men, on the contrary, prefer to take decisions based solely on business rules and dynamics, ignoring the "human" component.

#### **2.4.6 Is the development of the ability to take decisions supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

#### **2.4.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the ability to take decisions facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

This competence is easily explored and therefore valued during the selection process.

#### **2.4.8 Is the ability to take decisions supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

Through incubation spaces and research & development, this competence can be developed. Within an organization, to have responsibilities itself implies a degree of decision making inherent to the role. In general, companies do not support actions to adequately promote or develop this competence, so many top management roles delegate the decision-making because they are not able to manage the possible consequence of a choice.

#### **2.4.9 To what extent is the ability to take decisions evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

There is the ability to take decisions, even if it is hampered by the bureaucratic "morass" and the political/administrative uncertainty of the Italian system.

#### **2.4.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the ability to take decisions amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Experience.

### **2.5 Ability to prioritize**

#### **2.5.1 How much is the ability to prioritize valued in society?**

In Italy, this competence remains a purely private element.

#### **2.5.2 Is the ability to prioritize strongly embedded in society and culture?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

#### **2.5.3 Is the ability to prioritize taught in primary/secondary level education?**

#### **2.5.4 Is the ability to prioritize taught in VET education?**

This competence is transmitted only partially, as well as informally and without success.

#### **2.5.5 Is there a difference regarding the ability to prioritize when assessed in terms of gender?**

Possible differences regard the historical necessity of women of having to fulfill different roles, often without help from society. This has led to a greater development of the ability to give priority to be able to manage all types of requests.

In still dominant cultural model, too often women sacrifice themselves and, if they are "career women", they are seen as traitors of their social mandate somehow not fulfilled nor respected.

### **2.5.6 Is the development of the ability to prioritize supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.5.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the ability to prioritize facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

Soft skills are considered second-order compared with the technical skills by the employment services, therefore, they do not promote their development.

### **2.5.8 Is the ability to prioritize supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

Generally speaking, soft skills are considered second-order compared with technical skills, by enterprise infrastructure therefore they do not promote their development.

Where there is decentralization of work, the ability to prioritize is certainly encouraged for management roles that need to be able to give priority to their employees. At lower levels there are no particular structured pathways. The need to get this competence emerges (more or less effectively) with the increasing complexity of the working environment.

### **2.5.9 To what extent is the ability to prioritize evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

It is quite widespread, even because it is necessary in order to start your own business despite all the difficulties characterizing Italy. Nevertheless, young entrepreneurs have to acquire this ability by using just their (positive or negative) own experience and resources.

### **2.5.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the ability to prioritize amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Training, experience, peer to peer.

## **2.6 Creativity**

### **2.6.1 How much is creativity valued in society?**

For most of the Italians, creativity is nothing but a more sophisticated version of the "getting by" art. And if it is considered in a broader historical perspective, it is considered as a mysterious gift for a select few that continues to be a free permanent blessing for the country.

Usually, it is trot out just when evaluating skills of certain kind of professional, such as photographers, film makers, graphic designers, musicians, advertising, etc.

For others, however, the ability to think creatively and come up with something new is not a gift but an achievement of the individual who decides to capitalize on its own large or small talent: studying, learning, experiencing, dedication and passion.

### 2.6.2 Is creativity strongly embedded in society and culture?

Creativity is one of the elements, for better or for worse, characterizing the Italian culture. Even more, it seems to be the only element on which the Italian system relies, even if it becomes useless if not supported by other skills.

There is a tendency to think that creativity is not a competence that can be developed, but a virtue that is acquired at birth that mostly serves just to artists, painters, musicians etc.

A research conducted by GfK Eurisko, commissioned by Confindustria and articulated on a sample of small and medium entrepreneurs and citizens working in others sectors, reports that there is some confusion in reference to the creativity and even the meaning of this term, in fact, for the majority of the respondents, creativity and innovation go in pairs, they are two sides of the same coin, or even synonyms.

### 2.6.3 Is creativity taught in primary/secondary level education?

According to Irene Tinaglia's researches, Italian researcher who has been working at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg around the creativity issue for years, in Italy, there is a large number of "creative" entrepreneurs, but the level of education is very low -only the 14% has a university education and the 45% has a junior high school education. The most worrying thing is that few talents are produced. Italian universities are closed realities, very provincials: there are few international students and a few foreign professors. This is very serious, above all in a globalized era, like ours, being so closed is an error since it inevitably brings a small-town mentality.

It's like if the Italians have not even realize that there is a worldwide competition to acquire the best talents.

The main goal of the educational system has been to provide basic skills, by focusing on analytical intelligence, for a long time, but new conceptions are changing this view, considering appropriate that the educational system values different types of intelligence since these all are important to the individual.

However, it is still prevalent the tendency to better assess those pupils whose thinking styles are congruent with school/teacher's point of view, values, etc. Often, pupils whose results arise from the convergent thinking (adherence to authority, conformism) are better evaluated compared with those who get equally good results, but using a creative thinking, which can be divergent.

Often teachers, having to combine individual creativity with the necessity to control the class group, opt for teaching choices that allow to get effective learning results, at the expense of the enhancement of the pupils' creative potential.

Pupils are, almost entirely, assessed according to the measurement of lower level competences, rather than in relation to soft skills that are more abstract, like the creativity.

#### **2.6.4 Is creativity taught in VET education?**

The same difficulties described in the previous section about the educational system are found also in the vocational training system, but in this area creativity is more encouraged, although indirectly, for example through project-works and the personalization that often characterized the training paths.

#### **2.6.5 Is there a difference regarding creativity when assessed in terms of gender?**

Yes, there are differences since, in general, men are still more free to express their creativity in different fields: architecture, cuisine, art, politics, etc. without having to face stereotypes and prejudices. For women, take a different path from that which has been traced for them by history and by discrimination and prejudices, it is harder.

#### **2.6.6 Is the development of creativity supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

Considering non-formal education as an organizational process that gives young people the opportunity to develop values, skills and competencies that are not developed in the formal framework, it can be argued that the only context where the creativity development is incentivized is the non-formal education.

#### **2.6.7 To what extent is the acquisition of creativity facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

In Italy, the public employment services situation is quite complicated, as they failed to carry out their functions (currently they are affected by a reform that puts them at the center of the mechanism of the Guarantee Young), among other things, having never activated systematic processes for detecting skills of persons who are looking for job.

Often, just the technical and professional skills, which meet a specific request, are recognized, whereas the soft skills are not analyzed.

The situation is different with regard to the private employment agencies which create more complex selection processes that highlight even a range of soft skills.

#### **2.6.8 Is creativity supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

This is one of those competences that are almost unanimously considered element of success, especially in particularly innovative contexts.

Precisely for this, enterprises should asked and promote more programs, facilities, investments fostering a widespread and high-quality basic education, as well as strategies and policies for innovation. And also specialized education, lifelong learning and growth of that special talent necessary to learn how to learn.

### **2.6.9 To what extent is creativity evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

Creativity is one of the features distinguishing Italian entrepreneurs in the world. It is very common among young Italian entrepreneurs, especially at a time of economic crisis in which many of the new activities include innovative and original ideas in order to capture new market spaces.

According to a survey of "Sole24Ore", the most important Italian business daily, more than two out of three entrepreneurs consider creativity (meant also like innovation) and responsibility as core values of the business culture.

This centrality of innovation in the entrepreneurs vision is a comforting fact, the reasons to innovate are clear and they deal with strategic issues such as globalization, competitiveness, development. It is also widespread the idea that the modern enterprise has a strong social engine role, not just strictly economic, and consequently it must develop a responsibility attitude towards the environment in which it operates.

According to the Infocamere Companies Registry, in the period October 2013 - March 2014, in Italy were born 700 innovative start-ups, and currently it counts 3,397 innovative start-ups and 28 incubators.

### **2.6.10 What is the preferred format of the development of creativity amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Field experience, non-formal training.

## **2.7 Taking initiative**

### **2.7.1 How much is the competence of taking initiative valued in society?**

### **2.7.2 Is the competence of taking initiative strongly embedded in society and culture?**

The Italian system does not consider this competence an essential one.

In taking an initiative, we take risks (business risks) and we do it because we will get an advantage. As the Italian system is not a merit system, and the supports are not fully accessible to all, italians are normally reluctant to take risks, not being clear whether there will be, and what will be, the return.

The institutions silence, which are completely unglued from the business system (especially small and medium enterprises), encourages people to stagnate in shallow and safe water rather than groped new adventures.

### **2.7.3 Is the competence of taking initiative taught in primary/secondary level education?**

### **2.7.4 Is the competence of taking initiative taught in VET education?**

Absolutely not. The ability of pupils to take initiative is neither promoted nor developed. They are accustomed to the fact that someone else does it for them.

**2.7.5 Is there a difference regarding the competence of taking initiative when assessed in terms of gender?**

In Italy, women have still a long way to do because there are still prejudices against women deemed "too enterprising".

**2.7.6 Is the development of the competence of taking initiative supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

**2.7.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the competence of taking initiative facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

**2.7.8 Is the competence of taking initiative supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

**2.7.9 To what extent is the competence of taking initiative evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

**2.7.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the competence of taking initiative amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Experience, peer comparison.

**2.8 Digital competences**

**2.8.1 How much are digital competences valued in society?**

In the framework of the European Digital Agenda, Italy has developed its National strategy, identifying priorities and intervention methods, as well as actions to be taken, with the aim of improving digital skills in Italy for all citizens, workers (public and private sector) and businesses.

The Italian Digital Agenda considers the acquisition of digital skills essential to ensure young people's access to the new labor market demands and to retrain, professionally, who is out from the labor market due to skill-shortage, providing them with updated more suitable tools to the changing needs of the context.

According to the EU Commission studies, in 2020, from 600.000 to 900.000 ICT specialists may be missing, of which one-tenth in Italy. It's certain that the country's development will depend on its ability to use the digital potential and to realize new services and new products.

According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) , Italy has an overall score of 0.36 and ranks 25th out of the 28 EU Member States. In the past year, Italy made progress in its businesses' Integration of Digital Technologies; however, Italian businesses are still largely non digital and could benefit from a wider use of eCommerce.

Italy needs to make progress on the demand side, where low levels of digital skills (Italy has one of the lowest percentage of regular Internet users in the EU (59%), and 31% of the Italian population has never used the Internet) and trust (42% of Internet users makes use of online banking and 35% shops online) seem to be holding back the development of its digital economy.

Italy falls into the cluster of low-performance countries, where it performs below average<sup>6</sup>.

	Italy		EU
	Rank	Score	Score
DESI 2015	25	0,36	0,47
DESI 2014	25	0,33	0,44

Some data on Italy<sup>7</sup>:

Indicator	National baseline	EU average
Population that has never used Internet	34,4%	20,5%
Population that regularly uses Internet	56%	71,7%
Disadvantaged groups' subjects that use Internet	42,1%	56,7%
Population that buy online	19,7%	47,3%
Families with broadband user	0%	2%

### 2.8.2 Are digital competences strongly embedded in society and culture?

According to what is stated in the previous paragraph (2.8.1), digital competences are not much embedded in the Italian society and culture, even if in recent years, considerable efforts have been made to accelerate the digitization process in the society, institutions and daily life.

### 2.8.3 Are digital competences taught in primary/secondary level education?

### 2.8.4 Are digital competences taught in VET education?

<sup>6</sup> 'Digital Economy and Society Index 2015. Country Profile. Italy'

<sup>7</sup> Surce: Digital agenda scoreboard

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to accelerate the digitization process in the Italian School and to innovate teaching practices through the introduction of ICT in classrooms. Nevertheless, recent analysis conducted by the OECD to assess the ministerial initiatives impact at national level revealed that they have not got the desired effect: many schools are still excluded from the computerized circuits and innovative teaching practices are still limited to isolated cases.

From the OECD Report, general reflections on the state of technology in the Italian schools, in addition to specific reflections related to the Italian Digital Agenda, emerge. As regards the first ones, it is stressed that Italy remains significantly under the European average in the technology use and that the resources deployed are still modest, between the second ones the fact that, precisely in relation to the lack of resources, a policy centered on LIM - a bit "the flagship" of the Italian Digital School - is unsustainable (it is said that it would take 15 years at current rhythms to arrive at the UK current level).

Digital competences are still seen as an aspect of informal communication and not as a learning and personal growth tool even useful for a future work.

#### **2.8.5 Is there a difference regarding digital competences when assessed in terms of gender?**

Professions related to the world of technology are often directed to male resources. In this sector there are still huge prejudices and discriminations against women.

Then, there is no gender difference in the digital skills learning, if not related to this type of obstacles.

#### **2.8.6 Is the development of digital competences supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

Sì, l'offerta formativa non formale in relazione all'aumento delle competenze digitali è piuttosto ampia.

#### **2.8.7 To what extent is the acquisition of digital competences facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

Employment services often promote computer science basic courses, but without going over. Not enough, then. There is a great number of digital illiterates who should be helped to acquire this kind of fundamental skills, for example, for a new job positioning.

#### **2.8.8 Are digital competences supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

Yes, enough, since nowadays a minimum knowledge of this type of skills is needed for almost any type of work.

### **2.8.9 To what extent are digital competences evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

Owning digital skills is now a sine qua non condition for working.

They provide a competitive advantage when they also include mechanisms to involve possible customers through various communication channels. For example, many commercial activities use social networks as constant contact tool with customers. This involves, not only technical expertise, but also the digital language understanding.

### **2.8.10 What is the preferred format of the development of digital competences amongst young entrepreneurs?**

Training courses, online courses.

## **2.9 Competitiveness**

### **2.9.1 How much is the competence of competitiveness valued in society?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.9.2 Is the competence of competitiveness strongly embedded in society and culture?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.9.3 Is the competence of competitiveness taught in primary/secondary level education?**

### **2.9.4 Is the competence of competitiveness taught in VET education?**

Little and what is taught or transmitted is, usually, only the negative aspect of this competence. Indeed, the competitiveness that is valued within the educational and training system is often of negative type, which impels to be better than the others in order to prevaricate them, rather than the striving for excellence to reach a useful level of understanding and knowledge, regardless of the outcome.

### **2.9.5 Is there a difference regarding the competence of competitiveness when assessed in terms of gender?**

Yes, there still are. Women, already affected by prejudices on career women pointing to career rather than to the home and family care, tend to not compete with men.

Often women are competing with each other, both to avoid the above-mentioned judgments and because there is still a tendency to prefer men (especially for apical roles). Therefore, there is more competitiveness among women, there are more chances to "win" and grab the few places to which a woman can aspire. Eg, even though they represent 46% of people employed,

women are underrepresented among managers with only one third of women in 2013 in the European Union.

Differences are related to the still strong common imaginary that considers the ambition of women something not important or, at any rate, limited in time.

Not surprisingly, as confirmed by Eurostat on 8 March 2015, women are still discriminated in terms of wages across Europe, they earn less and have worse and more precarious places. As for Italy, the country ranks the 22 place amongst the worst European countries for pay differential between men and women, with a worsening of 2.4 percentage points from 2008, when it was at 4.9%.

On the other side, it must be notices that women's businesses increasingly tend to adopt better structured legal forms, able to ensure greater competitiveness and greater capacity for innovation and internationalization.

### **2.9.6 Is the development of the competence of competitiveness supported via other non-formal educational offerings?**

These competence, being a transversal competence, which comes into play in different working situations, allowing the subject to transform knowledge into an efficient working behavior in a specific context, is developed almost exclusively through non-formal and informal learning. Moreover, the competence of competitiveness is also linked to personal attitudes and characteristics.

Finally, it should be also added all that set of scholastic and university cognitive resources and methodological experience that allow to develop and make stable the patrimony of the subject, although it is often declined with different languages.

### **2.9.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the competence of competitiveness facilitated by unemployment / other services?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

### **2.9.8 Is the competence of competitiveness supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?**

Having to demonstrate and highlight their "winning" elements, including human resources, actually the enterprise infrastructures encourage this aspect. But, even in this case as for the educational and training system, are the distorted mechanisms to be triggered: only the negative connotation is encouraged whereas the positive boost to improve.

### **2.9.9 To what extent is the competence of competitiveness evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?**

Especially in this economic crisis time, it is increasing.

### **2.9.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the competence of competitiveness amongst young entrepreneurs?**

No answers could be found in the data research.

## 2.10 Ability to think critically

### 2.10.1 How much is the ability to think critically valued in society?

### 2.10.2 Is the ability to think critically strongly embedded in society and culture?

This competence is not valued at all. Italian society tends to promote and follow the preponderant path and the single thought. The critique to the mainstream thinking is not well seen.

Critical thinking involves an open mind that includes all the nuances of a thought that cannot be bound to its opposite extremes. In this sense, critical thinking is not valued in the Italian society which, to the contract, enhances the conformist thinking useful to maintain the status quo and share a common collective thinking. For this reason, in Italy it's so difficult to make any kind of cultural change, even if they are already accepted by most of the rest of Europe.

### 2.10.3 Is the ability to think critically taught in primary/secondary level education?

### 2.10.4 Is the ability to think critically taught in VET education?

The ability to think critically is usually not considered important in the education and training system, indeed those who doubt the lessons unilaterally taught -without exchange and interaction with pupils- is seen as a nuisance by teachers and trainers. The transferring methods of knowledge and skills are still strongly linked to a top-down transmission, without the possibility to doubt what is taught.

Things slightly change at the University but, in general, critical thinking is still poorly promoted and encouraged.

Critical thinking, considered as divergent thinking, is not taught, on the contrary, it's discouraged.

### 2.10.5 Is there a difference regarding the ability to think critically when assessed in terms of gender?

Women deal with greater difficulties in expressing a critical thinking, as there are still strong prejudices and discrimination.

### 2.10.6 Is the development of the ability to think critically supported via other non-formal educational offerings?

In non-formal contexts, the critical thinking is not particularly encouraged.

### 2.10.7 To what extent is the acquisition of the ability to think critically facilitated by unemployment / other services?

### 2.10.8 Is the ability to think critically supported by adequate enterprise infrastructure?

In Italy, the only contest in which this competence can be acquired and developed is the informal context and, to a much lesser extent, in the universities.

### 2.10.9 To what extent is the ability to think critically evident amongst young entrepreneurs in the country?

Especially in this economic crisis time, it is increasing.

### 2.10.10 What is the preferred format of the development of the ability to think critically amongst young entrepreneurs?

Direct experience.

## 3 PRIORITIZATION OF COMPETENCIES

### 3.1 Methodology

After the desk research on 10 key competences, a standardized weighting and ranking table was used to sort the competences according to importance in Italy. While interpreting the results of the following table, attention should be paid to the fact that this ranking considered the quality, actuality and relevance of used sources on each topic. As a result, the best and highly relevant information was found on leadership, because this competence is often described in a manner that includes other competences as well.

**Disclaimer:** The outcome of this ranking will depend more on the ability to research and the proper evaluation of the researcher and might not go hand in hand with outcomes of the expert-interviews.

### 3.2 Results

Rank	Competence
1 <sup>st</sup>	Ability to prioritize
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ability to plan
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ability to take decisions
4 <sup>th</sup>	Willingness to explore
5 <sup>th</sup>	Leadership
6 <sup>th</sup>	Taking initiative
7 <sup>th</sup>	Creativity
8 <sup>th</sup>	Ability to think critically
9 <sup>th</sup>	Digital competences
10 <sup>th</sup>	Competitiveness

## 4 EXPERT STAKEHOLDER INPUT

### The respondents

11 Italian experts contributed to the development of this report, through the compilation of a questionnaire. The interviewees work in different fields related somehow to the migration field, namely: job orientation, legal advice, research, national and European project planning.

### Importance of each Key competence

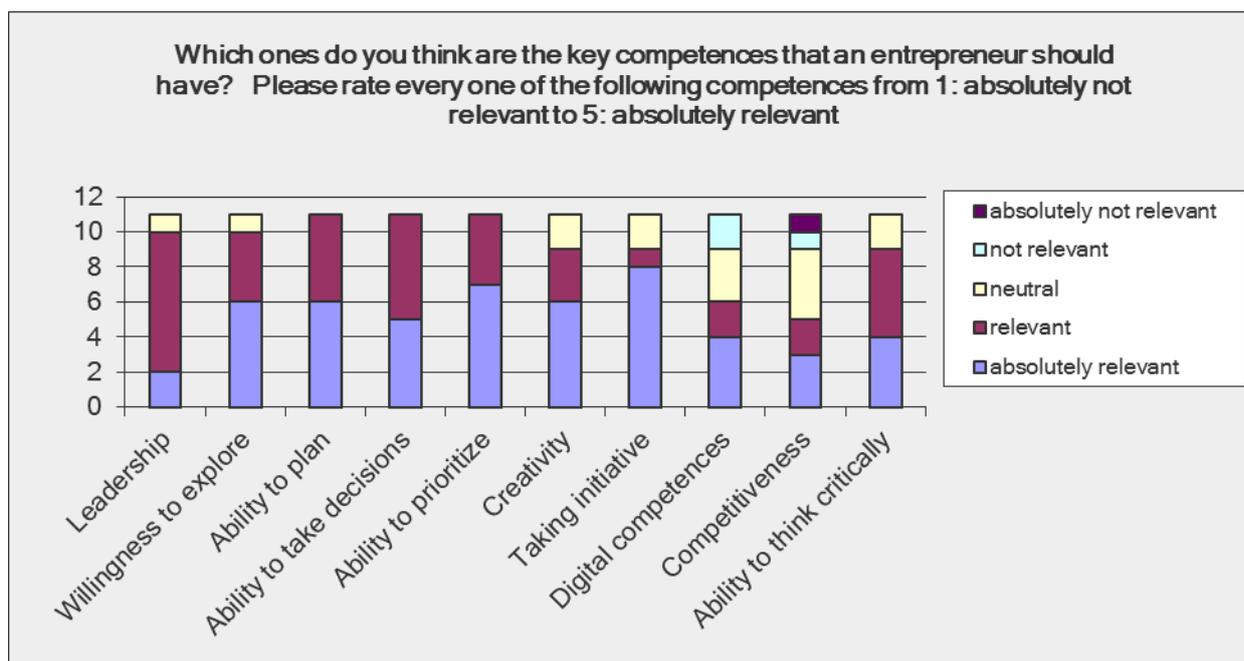
The importance of each key competence as evaluated by the Italian experts can be observed in the following graph. The interpretation uses 'absolutely relevant' and 'relevant' as a positive statement, while 'not relevant' and 'absolutely not relevant' are valued as a negative statement.

The graph shows that, according to Italian experts, the most important competences are:

- Ability to prioritize;
- Ability to plan;
- Ability to take decision;
- Willingness to explore;
- Leadership.

On the strength of the Italian experts' response, the least relevant competences are:

- Digital competences;
- Competitiveness.



### Lacking competences

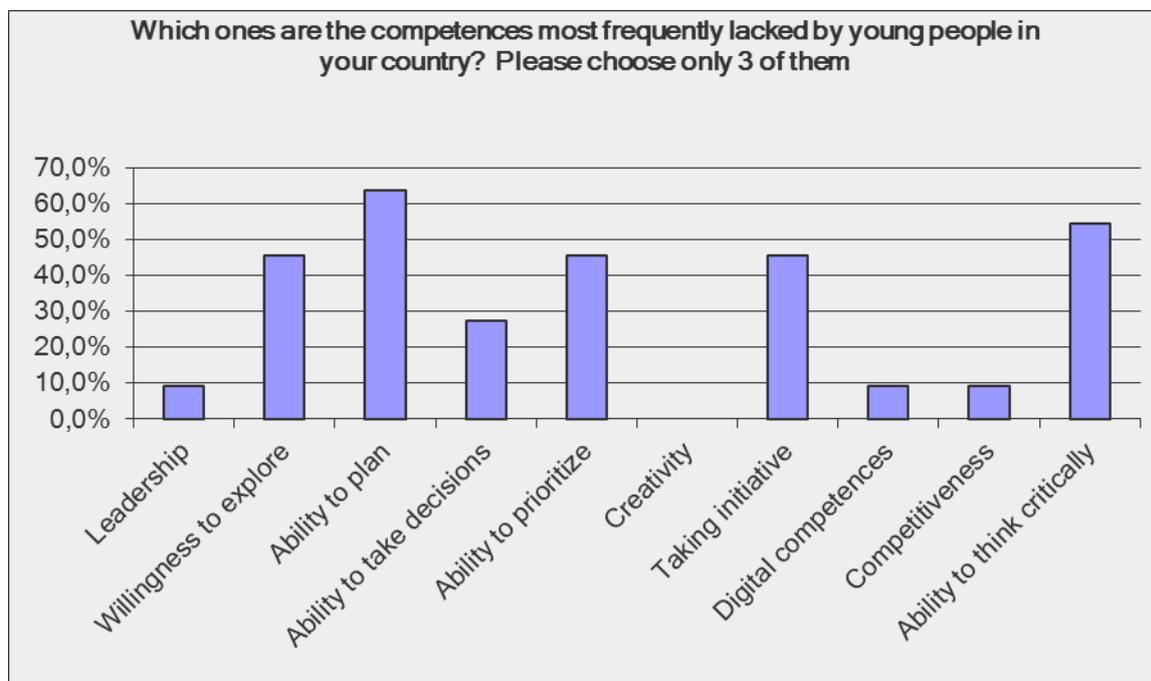
One of the objectives of the questionnaire is to find out which are the lacking competences among young people in Italy.

What comes out is that the lacking skills are the following:

- Ability to plan;
- Ability to think critically;
- Ability to prioritize;

- Willingness to explore;
- Taking initiative.

The detailed findings are shown in the following graph.



### Entrepreneurial skills and education system

It is generally agreed that the educational system in Italy provides an excellent theoretical preparation, but it commits few time to the practical preparation. Furthermore, in the last 10 years, the Italian educational system has been affected by continuous economic cuts. In particular, public institutions don't have access to adequate structures, very often there aren't informatic equipments and they don't even have a fast internet connection.

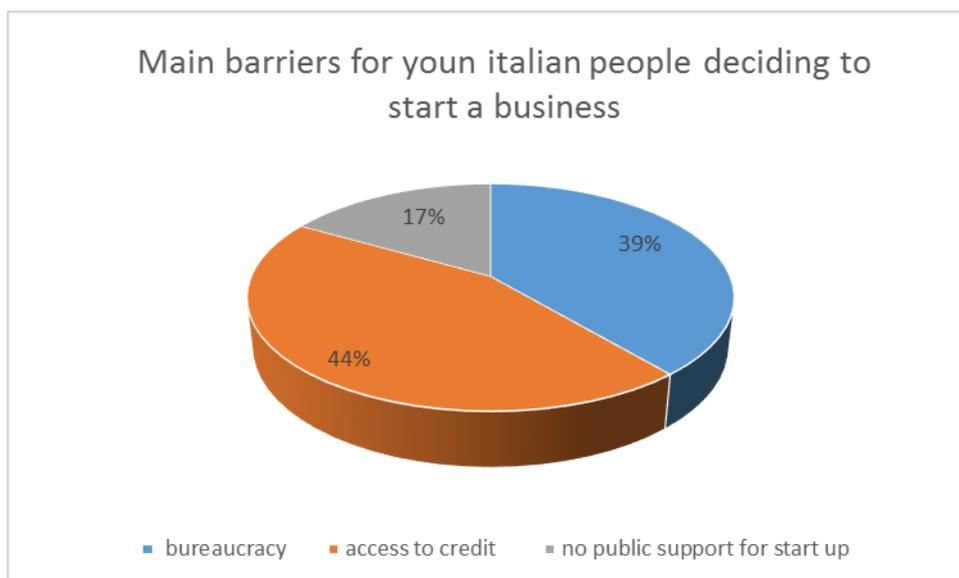
The main problems are concentrated within the Italian universities, despite the high level of teachers preparation, they don't allow students to realize their business idea.

### Lack of competences as a barrier

The lack of key skills acquisition is the main obstacle to the professional development of young Italian entrepreneurs. Furthermore, young italian people aren't educated to competitiveness nor accompanied in the development of their business ideas. Unfortunately, without the development of specific skills it's impossible to start a business able to survive at risks and difficulties of the 'market'. Finally, it is evident that in Italy the distance between the education system and the labor market affect the possibility to successfully initiate a start-up.

### Main barriers

There are other barriers for young entrepreneurs who decide to start a business, such as: bureaucracy, access to credit and the lack of public support for the beginning of start-ups.



Based on what the experts surveyed have reported, the additional barriers for young Italians who want to start a business are related to the widespread mentality that conceives the work exclusively as a 'fixed place'. Furthermore, there remains a lack of motivation in starting a business, in Italy there is a very rooted belief that 'to become an entrepreneur you need to be an entrepreneur's son'.

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