



Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages III

SUB-PROJECT TWO:

LANGUAGES FOR ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES ON THE EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET

NATIONAL REPORT / ITALY

Linda Lombardo, Luiss Guido Carli University

1. Introduction: objectives of TNP3, sub-project two

TNP3 in the area of languages is a European project for higher education funded within the domain of the Socrates/Erasmus programme, and involves participants in over 40 European countries. Its main goal is to reach a clearer understanding of the language and language-related needs arising from European integration and globalisation, both within higher education itself and at the socio-economic and professional levels within the participating countries. It aims to reinforce the ties between university language programmes and the needs of the non-academic and research environments. To this end, it plans to create a permanent network to ensure ongoing dialogue between universities and non-university stakeholders. The advantage is twofold: an enhanced awareness on the part of all stakeholders of the importance of social and individual multilingualism for European integration and for living and working in the European Union, and of the linguistic implications of worldwide cooperation; the opportunity for universities to develop, implement and review their language policies in collaboration with the other stakeholders for the benefit of all.

During the first year of the project, the objective of sub-project two was to seek out relevant information about the requirements of the national, European and international labour markets in terms of language and intercultural competences, with specific regard to non-language graduates (or to language graduates working outside language-related industries and professions). The main information sources used in this report are the following: specialised reports and conferences; news reports in the press; the results of questionnaires available on line, from university placement offices, or reported in the press; websites of university job databases; interviews with job recruiters; analysis of company recruiting and career guidance literature.

The present report was compiled for the purposes of this research project and may contain information gaps or inaccuracies. The author welcomes any additions, comments or corrections, which should be addressed to lombardo@luiss.it.

1.1 A brief overview of the national economy and labour market

1.1.1 The principal sectors of the Italian labour market

According to the official publication of the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) ¹, the resident population of Italy in 2002 was 57,844,017 with a population growth rate close to zero. The economic structure of Italy is similar to most other European countries. The services sector is growing and accounts for two-thirds (68%) of GDP, industry for 30% and agriculture for the remaining 2%.² The strongest industrial sectors are mechanics, clothing and textiles, the former exporting 52 billion euros in machinery and accounting for approximately 70% of all mechanical exports (141 billion euros). ISTAT figures for 2001 show that GDP in millions of euros amounted to 1,216,694, while exports of good and services came to 343,975. The unemployment rate in the same year was 9.5%, with the following breakdown by geographical area: 4% in the North, 7.4% in the Centre, and 19.3% in the South. Although the proportion of people working remains much lower than the European average, the rate of unemployment continues to fall: from 1996 to 2002 youth unemployment decreased by approximately 7%, while in the same period the percentage of women in the workforce rose by 5%.³

The World Factbook for Italy⁴ gives the following statistics:

GDP - real growth rate: .5% (2003 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 2.3% (2003 est.)

Labour force: 23.6 million (2001 est.)

Labour force - by occupation : services 63% ; industry 32% ; agriculture 5% (2001)

Principal industries: tourism, machinery, iron and steel, chemicals, food processing, textiles, motor vehicles, clothing, footwear, ceramics

Exports – principal partners: Germany 13.7%; France 12.2%; US 9.8%; UK 6.9%; Spain 6.4% (2002)

Imports – principal partners: Germany 17.8%; France 11.3%; Netherlands 5.9%; US 4.9%; Spain 4.6%; Belgium 4.4% (2002)

The ISTAT breakdown of employment for industry and services enterprises by size category and economical activity sector was the following for the year 1999:

¹ *Italy in Figures*, ISTAT, 2002 (www.istat.it).

² Website of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union www.ueitalia2003.it/EN/Italia (accessed March 2004).

³ Ibid.

⁴ CIA – The World Factbook – Italy : <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/it.html> (accessed July 2004); for information in English, see also the Italian Embassy in Japan website: http://www.embitaly.jp/5_02_0.shtml (accessed July 2004).

Enterprises:

organisations carrying out economic activities at a professional level for the production of market goods or services

Employed persons:

subordinate employees (full time, part-time or under training and employment contracts) and independent workers

Manufacturing activities:

these include food industry, textile and clothing industry, leather industry, wood industry, print and publishing industry, rubber and plastics industry, manufacturing of electric machinery and electric and optic equipment, oil industry, chemical industry, non-metalliferous and metalliferous ore processing industry, mechanical industry and transportation industry

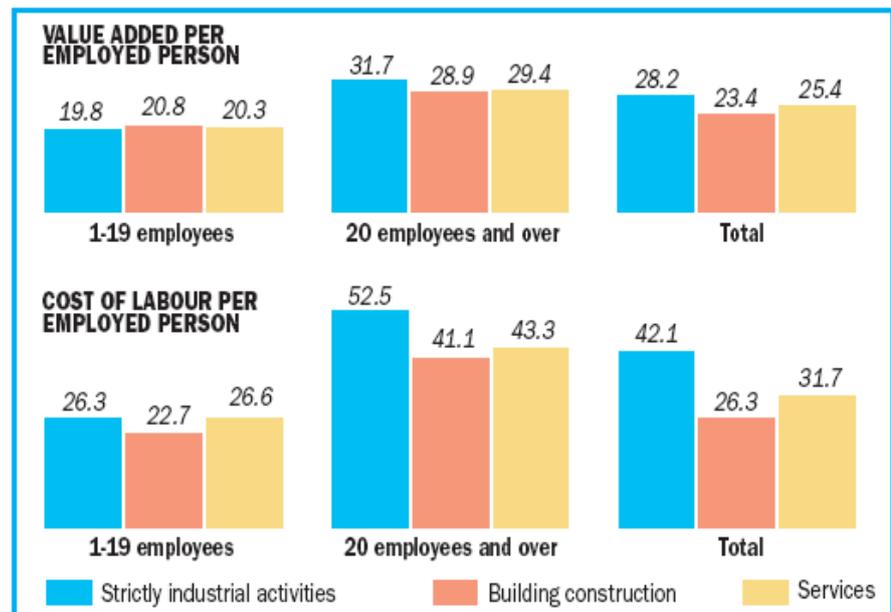
INDUSTRY AND SERVICES ENTERPRISES BY SIZE CLASS AND ECONOMICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR

1999

	Number of employed persons				Total
	1-19	20-49	50-249	250 and over	
Strictly industrial activities	533,656	27,403	10,244	1,464	572,767
Ore extraction	3,864	273	45	4	4,186
Manufacturing activities	528,054	26,975	10,090	1,412	566,531
Production and supply of electric power, water and gas	1,738	155	109	48	2,050
Building construction	494,253	4,891	988	88	500,220
Services	2,958,266	18,703	6,864	1,099	2,984,932
Wholesale and retail trade	1,337,178	7,218	1,815	255	1,346,466
Hotels and restaurants	248,451	1,896	523	72	250,942
Transport, storage and communications	162,305	2,588	1,199	263	166,355
Real estate, information technologies, research, professional activities	761,267	4,450	2,088	359	768,164
Education	12,908	334	70	—	13,312
Health and other social services	202,464	1,053	747	90	204,354
Other public, social and personal services	233,693	1,164	422	60	235,339
Total	3,986,175	50,997	18,096	2,651	4,057,919

MAIN ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF ENTERPRISES BY ACTIVITY SECTOR AND SIZE CLASS

Thousands of euro, 1999



Source: *Italy in figures*, ISTAT, 2002 (www.istat.it).

1.1.2 Types of companies in operation in Italy

There are 10% more smaller-sized companies in Italy than in Germany, almost 29% more than in France and 25% more than in England.⁵ A peculiarity of the Italian industrial system is its organisation into “industrial districts”, which are restricted to well-circumscribed areas and comprise a tightly woven fabric of numerous medium-sized and small companies, each specialised in a specific sector of the production chain. There are also some important large groups, both public and private, which have shaped the country’s economy. In the energy sector, ENI, with 30% of shares still held by the State, has the most dealings with other countries; in conjunction with the Russian company, Gazprom, it is in the process of building a gas pipeline intended to carry 16 billion cubic metres of gas from Russia to Turkey. Another important company in the energy sector, ENEL, is one of the biggest energy providers in Europe. Other companies with a sustained presence abroad are: Telecom Italia (the largest totally privatised company), FIAT (cars), Pirelli (tyres), Generali (insurance), Finmeccanica, Merloni (electric home appliances), Benetton (now a conglomerate), and, in the food sector, Barilla and Ferrero.

Companies controlled from abroad account for 7% of workers, 14% of turnover and 12% of value added. Of these multinationals, 32% operate in the manufacturing sector, 29% in commerce, and 29% in real estate, information technology, professional and research activities. Because most multinationals are large, it is suggested that they have greater difficulty penetrating market sectors characterized by companies of smaller dimensions, such as those of the highly fragmented Italian system of production.⁶

1.1.3 Italian companies operating abroad

The internationalisation of the production process started later in Italy than in other advanced economies, but today there is a growing international presence of SMEs (small and medium-sized companies). Along with the old EU countries, Central and Eastern Europe have become a preferred geographic location of new Italian-controlled companies abroad, absorbing more than 20% of such investment. Other favoured investment locations are the countries of the southern Mediterranean seaboard and China. In terms of sectors, in addition to the traditional sectors (personal products, furniture, etc.), the most active enterprises also include those offering the greatest economies of scale which would most benefit from research and technological innovation (the chemical, car, and household appliance industries). Among the government’s strategies and policies in support of the Italian economy’s internationalisation process are a concentration on research and training, an involvement in the development of infrastructures (e.g. the trans-European corridors of the Balkans and the maritime corridors of the Mediterranean) and the optimisation of services to businesses, particularly through ICE, the National Institution of Trade. This latter organisation provides information and training in international trade for Italians and for entrepreneurs or civil servants from developing countries and economies in transition; the training courses, which are organised for specific regions, are conducted in English or in the common language of the region (the examples given in the literature are French, Spanish, Portuguese).⁷ Another important contribution to internationalisation is

⁵ Website of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union www.ueitalia2003.it/EN/Italia (accessed March 2004).

⁶ ISTAT Rapporto Annuale 2003 (www.istat.it).

⁷ ICE – Italtrade – The Official Gateway to Italian Business and Trade: <http://www.italtrade.com> (accessed June 2004)

the framework agreement between the office of the Ministry of Productive Activities responsible for promoting exchanges, ICE and Crui (Conference of the Chancellors of Italian universities), which aims to bring about closer collaboration between the university and the business sector and to promote the Italian university system abroad.

1.1.4 Recent changes in the labour market as a result of increasing European integration and globalisation

According to a recent report prepared by the Confindustria (Confederation of Italian Industrialists)⁸ for a government-level meeting in London⁹, the Italian labour market is undergoing a profound transformation due to the internationalisation of the economy, involving significant technical change and industrial restructuring. The movement is toward greater flexibility and more investment in human capital and innovation. This study describes what it refers to as the “Italian approach” to labour market flexibility and competitiveness based on certain characteristic strengths of the Italian economy, among which are noted the following: widespread entrepreneurship, resulting in an exceptional ability to create new and viable business activities; a remarkable capacity for applying new techniques and introducing innovation in products and processes, despite a rather low level of research and investment in R & D; the significant role played in the labour market by social, family and local networks; a long tradition of social dialogue (“concertazione”), leading to important social pacts and agreements between employers’ and employees’ organisations and the government in its dual role of employer and policy-maker.

With regard to the role of social, family and local networks, some interesting statistics reported are the following: when looking for a job, Italians tend to rely on personal contacts and local networks, which account for 22% of all actions undertaken to find work, as opposed to enrolling at public employment services, which only account for about 12% (from ISTAT Labour Force Survey of 2003); local systems of small and medium sized firms, organised around clusters or chains in specific product sectors or niches, have shown a marked ability to create new jobs, provide high-level skills training and stimulate innovation and the application of new technologies.

One of the major weaknesses of the Italian economy noted in the Confindustria report is what it calls the inability of the public administration to manage complex processes. It points out that until 2003 public employment services had a monopoly on mediating between labour demand and supply, and operated on a rigid first-in first-out basis instead of attempting to match the characteristics sought by firms with those offered by job

⁸ Confindustria (www.confindustria.it) is the principal organization representing the manufacturing and services industry in Italy. It consists of the voluntary association of more than 113,000 companies of all sizes for a total of c.4,200,000 employees. This organisation represents the needs and proposals of the Italian economic system to the principal political and administrative institutions, including the Parliament, the Government, the trade union organisations and the other social forces. It conducts research and publishes important documents on the performance of the Italian economy and on new market tendencies. The Confindustria is involved in promoting internships for university students and applied research done in collaboration with university research departments. See also CNA Confederazione Nazionale dell’Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa - National Confederation of Artisans and Small and Medium Enterprise (www.cna.it): one of its goals is the protection of the ‘Made in Italy’ label by promoting investment in training, research and innovation, and by favouring networks between different companies and extending relations to national and international partners.

⁹ “The Active Society and Competitiveness: the Italian Approach”, CBI-Confindustria meeting in cooperation with the Italian and the UK government: London, May 6th 2004. For another report in English, see *The Economic Outlook: Italy, Europe and the World Economy*, Rome, January 2004, Confindustria Centro Studi.

seekers. In addition, according to an OECD report, in 1999 Italy had the lowest expenditure in the EU for public employment services, .04% of GDP as compared with .23% in Germany and .16% in France and the UK. Consequently, the matching of labour supply and demand has occurred outside public employment services, namely, through informal private and local channels (private agencies or individuals).

Weaknesses in the education and training systems are held to be at least partly responsible for the fact that Italy has the lowest number of secondary-school and college graduates and the highest student/teacher ratio when compared with other European countries like Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden, and with the US (from OECD data on education). Italy also shows a contribution of high-skilled labour to value-added growth of slightly more than 30%, which is below the EU average and far from that of other European countries, like Belgium, Ireland, France, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands.

There have been a series of labour market reforms aimed at de-regulating the labour market and providing more flexible forms of labour contracts, the most recent being the so-called "Biagi Law", passed in 2003, which introduced new types of flexible contracts (job on call, job sharing, staff leasing, etc.), new apprenticeship and training contracts, new contracts for continuous but independent collaborations, new part-time regulation, the modernisation of public employment services and the liberalisation of the supply-demand intermediation activity for private actors. The resulting improvement in employment rates has significantly affected the Southern regions and in particular the participation rate of female workers in the labour market. The latest figures show that from 1995 to 2003 employment increased by 10.1% and the rate of unemployment went down from 11.6% to 8.7%.

1.1.5 Toward the promotion of innovation and investment in human resources

The 2003 ISTAT Annual Report¹⁰ speaks of a country going through a period of economic stagnation with an inflation rate that is higher than the average of the other EU countries and with a lower retribution and productivity rate. The report stresses the need to accelerate specific structural reforms and policies geared toward making the economy more dynamic and more competitive. It notes that Italy (along with Portugal and Spain) spends .9% less of GDP on Research and Development than the European average of 2%, and that Italy's rate of growth in R&D spending is lower than that of the other countries: in the period between 1997 and 2001 the average annual rate of growth in R&D spending was 15% in Greece, 4% in Portugal and Spain, and only .5% in Italy. Moreover, Italian companies account for only 39% of national R&D spending, which makes Italy even further away from the Lisbon target for 2010 of 3% of GDP on R&D, two-thirds of which should come from companies. The report suggests that the low level of private investment in innovation (with regard to production processes, products, markets, organisation and management techniques, and labour skills) is due to the fragmentation of the Italian production system (limited company size, high degree of specialisation in both products and markets, and low incidence of collaboration). In fact, the principal source of innovation has been the use of information and communication technologies by Italian firms, which reaches the level of the other principal EU15 countries. The fact that the fragmented Italian economy holds less attraction for foreign investment is reflected in the finding that

¹⁰ ISTAT Rapporto Annuale 2003 (www.istat.it)

the productivity of multinationals operating in Italy is not higher than the sector average, even for high tech, which suggests that they are not significantly involved in the transfer of new competences and knowledge.

The report concludes that a system of rules and incentives is needed which can orient entrepreneurial energies toward new models of specialisation: greater collaboration in research activities; comprehensive technological innovation of processes and products, especially for the *made in Italy* sectors; cooperation in export activities; valorisation of social capital and of the resources of the Mezzogiorno; professional growth and qualification. With respect to the latter, the European trend toward higher female and youth participation rates, facilitated by the diffusion of new types of job contracts and the increasing educational level of the workforce, can constitute an important stimulus for ICT investments, the lack of which is largely responsible for the lower level of European productivity with respect to that of the US. It is hoped that life-long learning strategies will also enhance employment opportunities, especially for less-skilled and older workers.

The conclusion of the Confindustria report includes the following reminders/recommendations in its proposed agenda for future labour market reforms. A wide-ranging set of institutional reforms that fall within the scope of the Lisbon strategy for European competitiveness and growth needs to be completed, including: welfare reform (pensions, unemployment insurance, income-support programmes); education, training and research reforms (to bridge the gap between school and business, to promote life-long learning, higher education and university reform, reform of research institutions); public administration reform; industrial relations reform (collective bargaining system /model). The government's aim to link employment centres, public or private, in a database called SIL (Labour Information System), managed by the Ministry of Labour, would provide up-to-date information on job supply and demand.

1.1.6 Educational reform and languages¹¹

Before concluding this section of the report on the national economy and labour market, it would be useful to provide an update on the situation of languages in the context of the Italian reform of the educational system. Recent school reform introduces the teaching of at least one European language in primary school, with the addition of a second language of the European Community in secondary school. Progetto Lingue 2000 has been launched with the aim of re-defining language curricula and organising a syllabus with learning objectives in terms of competences that can be verified and certified. There has been some experimentation with using the European Language Portfolio. A Ministry protocol authorises recognition of a number of external language certifications (e.g. for English, Cambridge UCLES, Trinity College London, etc.). A new two-year postgraduate specialisation course (SIS – Scuola Interateneo di Specializzazione per l'Insegnamento nella Scuola Secondaria) has been instituted for those who wish to become teachers in the secondary school system, and the curriculum for future language teachers includes additional foreign language training, language pedagogy and practice teaching.

¹¹ For greater detail, see the publication online of the results of TNP2 2000-2003, specifically, the "Italian Report on Foreign Language Teaching in the Educational System with Special Reference to Higher Education" by A. Chiarloni, A. Battaglia, P. Chandler, M. Costa, G. Datta, and V. Pulcini: <http://www.fu.berlin.de/elc/tnp2/index.html>. Another site in English is www.eurydice.org, the Information Database on Education Systems in Europe.

Reform of the Italian university system¹², implemented by most of Italy's 77 university institutes beginning with the academic year 2001-2002, provides for a more articulated university system with the aim of offering students a greater choice of courses depending on their vocations and capacities and on the related job possibilities, and is meant to allow for new professional profiles to emerge, often requiring an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary preparation. This implies a closer connection than has been the case in the past in Italy between universities and the world of work. In fact, the "profession-oriented" branch of the new three-year first-level degree programme (*Laurea triennale*)¹³, for those planning to enter the job market immediately after the first degree, aspires to provide students with on-the-job training experience, and this entails some agreement between universities and companies about the skills needed and about how they should be developed. And the new two-year second-level degree programme (*Laurea specialistica*), focused on specialisation in a given area and on the development of critical and methodological abilities, must be able to form professionals able to assume positions of responsibility in the world of work.¹⁴

This greater orientation toward "the real world" can also be seen in the fact that in the new university system acquisition of computer skills and the knowledge of one or more European languages are compulsory in all courses of study, and a certain number of credits (*CFU – Crediti Formativi Universitari*) is allotted for language study, depending on programme requirements. For example, the official programmes of the Ministry for non-language majors refer to language competence as a "basic formative activity" ("*attività formativa di base*") although no European framework level is given. In the Ministerial classification of some second-level specialist degrees, for example, in Law and in the Sciences, one of the qualifying formative objectives is "fluency, spoken and written, in at least one language of the European Union other than Italian, also with reference to specialised lexis"; for other specialist degrees, for example, in Economics and in Political Science, graduates are required to achieve "fluency, spoken and written, in two languages of the European Union other than Italian, also with reference to specialised lexis". In 2000 the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI – Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane) signed agreements with a number of private institutions (e.g. Alliance Française, Cambridge UCLES, Goethe Institut) for the granting of language certification within the Campus One Project. While a number of universities award some language credits for appropriately certified language competence acquired outside the university, the overall tendency seems to be to require all students to pass some type of university language examination which includes specialised use of the language. The Italian Association of University Language Centres (AICLU – Associazione Italiana dei Centri Linguistici Universitari) has undertaken the development of a national system for certifying language competences at university (CERCLU), and is in the piloting stage of a test for certification of competence in English and Italian as a Foreign Language at B1 and B2 levels for non-language majors in various courses of study.

¹² See Ministry website: www.miur.it for details. The annual report of the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT 2002) shows that in the 1999/2000 academic year 25.3% of students enrolled at university the previous year abandoned their studies, and in the 2000/2001 academic year 85.3% of all university graduates were "fuori corsi", that is, failed to complete their studies in the prescribed amount of time (usually 4 years under the old system).

¹³ For certain fields of study the duration of courses has not been reduced and there is no three-year degree, e.g. Architecture, Dentistry, Pharmacology, Medicine, Veterinary Science.

¹⁴ See De Maio, Adriano, "University reform: what changes for the company", in *Personae*, issue on Knowledge Governance, 2003 – Anno 1, Eni Corporate University.

Despite the ambitious reforms which have been initiated, the overall situation of language learning in Italy has not yet improved significantly, due to Ministry budget shortages and a dearth of qualified language teachers in the schools, with the result that many students still arrive at university with a low level of competence in English and most often at a beginner level in other European languages. The non-language faculties are not able/willing to supply these students with the number of learning hours they would need to reach an acceptable level of competence, although the existence of more than 44 university language centres with self-access and e-learning possibilities makes the task less daunting.¹⁵ One consequence is that languages are sometimes viewed as an examination to pass at the university with most of the actual language learning done outside. Another is that some examinations are only written and tend to test recognition of grammatical structures and reading comprehension with no aural/oral component.¹⁶ Inevitably, the exit level of the various programmes and the number of credits assigned to it vary from one university/faculty/course of studies to another, even within the same class of studies. Further experimentation with the European portfolio, with the European framework competence levels and, beginning this year, with the use of the Diploma Supplement, should eventually bring the programmes into line and that, along with improved language learning opportunities in the schools and the growing number of students learning languages privately, will hopefully create in the area of languages the transparency and transferability that are a major goal of the reform.

There is some evidence that, in comparison with previous years, a knowledge of English is becoming more widespread among university graduates, as is that of Spanish, while French and German remain stable¹⁷. It is hypothesised that the general situation has improved and that the younger generation coming up has realised that the movement is from a local to an international market and are projecting themselves toward Europe. With the Italian educational reform requiring the study of two European languages in the schools (beginning at the elementary level) and the verification of a working knowledge of at least one European language at university, and promoting the use of communication technologies for the study of languages at all levels, it is hoped that Italian graduates will be able to compete successfully on the global job market in the near future.

Conclusion: implications for language needs

Based on the information on the state of the national economy and on recent labour market and educational reforms that has been presented here, an attempt will now be made to analyse the present and future implications with respect to language needs. The emphasis on innovation (also from abroad) and on human capital investment clearly involves improvements in education and training, including better knowledge of other languages and cultures.¹⁸ As in other countries, there is a recognised need in Italy for a

¹⁵ A survey of students graduating from university in 2002 by AlmaLaurea (see 7.1.2) showed that only 54.6% of students felt they had “at least a good knowledge” of written English and an even lower number - 46.7% - of spoken English at the end of their university careers; French was a distant second with 21.2% of those graduating who said they had a sufficient knowledge of the spoken and written language, followed by Spanish and German, 6% and 5% respectively

¹⁶ In a recent article in the Italian press (*Corriere della Sera*, 10-5-04), the Head of Personnel at Microsoft Italia is quoted as saying, “With few exceptions, English is studied too little at Italian universities.”

¹⁷ See the 2003 AlmaLaurea survey of students graduating from Italian universities in 2002 (www.almalaurea.it).

¹⁸ A speaker at a conference on tourism and the labour market held at the Luiss in April of 2004 who addressed the topic of ‘sustainable tourism’ – a concept encompassing not only respect for the natural

real competence in English as an international language which provides access to important sources of information and is an instrument of communication across content domains, cultures and language communities.¹⁹ Moreover, many of the new concepts in organisation and management techniques come to Italy from Anglo-Saxon sources, particularly the US. The internationalisation of the Italian university, its ability to attract prestigious professors and high-quality students from other countries (also at the doctoral level), depends to a large extent on offering a certain number of courses taught in English or in another European language. The prevailing tendency so far has been to rely on the use of English in putting together an international programme, also with an eye to attracting students from Central and Eastern Europe and from Asia. Depending on the professional field and area of operation, other European languages may also be considered essential or at least a definite plus (particularly French, Spanish or German), as well as more exotic languages like Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.

There seems also to be a growing awareness of the importance of teaching the Italian language, both to native-speaker students and to those from abroad. In fact, in Italian universities course evaluations have typically been based on a system of oral examinations, and, except for the final thesis, students were typically required to do little or no writing. That has begun to change under the new university reform, and some innovative programmes are beginning to introduce compulsory written tests and to offer modules on essay and thesis writing, as well as practical courses in how to do research. With regard to the teaching of Italian language and culture to non-Italians, this is a field which is opening up and has become an important concern of university language centres, as well as of language teaching departments in a number of universities which prepare future teachers in the field.²⁰ With the start-up of the Erasmus Mundus programme, there is also some awareness that perhaps exchange students from all over the world should be able to follow courses taught by top Italian professors in their fields of expertise without necessarily implying that these teachers should sacrifice the linguistic and cultural specificity of their communication.²¹

environment but also for the inhabitants of a place, their culture, ways and customs - emphasised the need for multicultural education of both operators and tourists.

¹⁹ According to the Head of the Office of Support to Enterprises at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking at a conference at the Luiss in Rome in April of 2004, the biggest problem in organising a workshop in the foreign country of interest to Italian small-medium enterprises (e.g. Russia, China, India), is the inability of the Italians to use English as a working language. For further information on the Italian government's support network for the internationalisation of the system of production: DGCE – Ufficio III sostegnoimprese@esteri.it.

²⁰ It is interesting to note an article in the Italian daily *il Giornale*, April 2004, which reports that the Minister for Italians Abroad has introduced the "Advanced Placement program", which allows students in 500 high schools in the US to study Italian and take the appropriate Italian language examination to obtain credit at university. The question arises as to whether or not this kind of agreement has been or will be made with European partners, especially in countries where there is a significant Italian community.

²¹ See Maria Sticchi Damiani's article in the *Proceedings of the European Conference on the Role of Languages in an Enlarged Europe*, held at Luiss Guido Carli, May 14, 2004 (forthcoming).

2. New linguistic demands in the private and public sectors resulting from European integration and globalisation: languages and skills/competences

In the next few years the integration of the European market will undoubtedly open up new professions requiring international competences. At the European level, a new directive has been discussed in the European Parliament about the recognition of professional qualifications (with the exception of engineers and tax consultants) throughout the European Union. In the Italian press and in conferences around the country professionals, particularly those responsible for personnel and recruitment, as well as the headhunters themselves, are recommending that students and recent graduates broaden their horizons through study periods and travels abroad, and a variety of work experiences (especially outside their own country) in order to develop an openness to different ways of doing things and flexibility in adapting to change. For those interested in international management, experts suggest studies which involve learning about the socio-political, economic, financial and legal systems of other countries, and consider the most competitive curriculum that which, in addition to a very good knowledge of English, shows the greatest diversity of experiences.²² Since not all students have the opportunity or the time to complete an internship during their university studies, many experts point out that, under the new system, students would do well to obtain their first degree in Italy and then go abroad for a specialisation degree (Master's).²³

Within the legal profession²⁴, articles in the national press speak of tomorrow's expert in the field as being knowledgeable about European legislation and foreign legal systems through the study of comparative law, as well as about the legislation related to globalisation processes, environmental problems, technology and information science.²⁵ When asked if he thought that in the competitive European market Italian lawyers risked playing a secondary role, the new president of the National Forensic Council (Consiglio Nazionale Forense) is quoted as saying; "Certainly there is dominance by law offices, especially the English ones, which are favoured by the language and legislation adopted." In addressing Italian law professionals, he refers to what he calls the "European challenge".²⁶ In anticipation of growing requests from law graduates in other European Union countries to practice law in Italy, which will necessitate a clear definition of professional qualifications across national boundaries, new expressions are being used, such as "European lawyer" and "continental consciousness of law".²⁷

Evidence that young people are mindful of the importance of these new formative opportunities is reflected in the growing numbers of Italian university students choosing to study abroad through the Erasmus programme (despite the limited mobility of teaching staff, probably due in large part to a perceived inability to teach in other European languages.) The most popular destinations for students are Spain (one third of all Italian Erasmus students) and France (a little more than half of those choosing Spain), followed by Germany, the UK, Portugal and Belgium.

²² See *Sole 24 Ore* of 21-6-06, p.20.

²³ See *Corriere della Sera* of 10-5-04, p.8E.

²⁴ Some professional legal associations at a national level are the following: Consiglio nazionale forense – National Forensic Council, which provides professional training in forensic skills; Unione delle Camere penali (Union of penal chambers), Aiga (Association of young lawyers).

²⁵ See *Il Messaggero* of 9-5-04, p.15.

²⁶ See *La Repubblica* of 23-5-04, p.7GE.

²⁷ See *ItaliaOggi* of 6-5-04, p.42.

The growing demand for English can be seen everywhere. Asfor (Associazione per la formazione alla direzione aziendale: (www.asfor.it) represents accredited Management-related postgraduate courses, which typically require a good knowledge of English for admission; for MBA programmes, the GMAT and the TOEFL are often required as evidence of competence in English. For the first time next year, the National Examination for admission to the Italian Order of Journalists will include the elaboration of a written text in English. It is interesting to note, however, that after one year of requiring only English in its written examination, the highly selective Examination for admission to the Italian Foreign Service has gone back to obliging candidates to write an essay in both English and French.

From another perspective, a new network (called “Corridoio 8”) has been launched to promote student and staff mobility and new research doctorates and collaboration between 40 Italian universities and their counterparts in selected countries of Eastern Europe which are among the newest members of the European Union. One of its first initiatives will be the realisation of an Intranet for the diffusion of Italian language and culture, which may also be extended to two German universities and possibility to universities in Libya and Saudi Arabia.²⁸ It remains to be seen whether the constitution of the new exchange programme Erasmus World 2004-2008, which aims to create and promote a specifically European offer in the area of higher education, including a new European Masters, will be exclusively dominated by English or whether it can also be a source of reaffirming the national languages as essential for understanding European cultures, institutions and systems.

3. In regard to non-language graduates, what formal or informal linguistic and intercultural qualifications- languages / skills and competences – are sought after on the national labour market?

3.1 Information from publications on job opportunities and company recruitment literature

There are a number of Italian publications²⁹ in circulation which purport to provide students and recent graduates and young professionals with useful information about the job market, including postgraduate programmes, training and up-dating courses, internship and job offers. Other featured information is related to new work contract typologies and to the preparation of a curriculum vitae and a letter of presentation in English. From the recruitment profiles of multinationals given in these publications and in a number of individual company recruitment brochures and booklets, a series of generic cognitive and social skills and competences³⁰ emerge which are sought by virtually all the companies and which can be summarised as follows:

²⁸ See *la Repubblica* of 6-5-04, p..

²⁹ *Job Advisor lavoro e formazione* (www.jobadvisor.it), produced in collaboration with ASPO (Association for Orientation), JEIA (Junior Enterprise Engineering and Architecture), and JESER (Junior Enterprise, Economics, University of Rome “La Sapienza”); *Ateneo & Azienda guida alle imprese che assumono neo laureati (University and Company – a guide to companies that hire recent graduates)* (www.ateneoeazienda.it), published by Cesop (Centro di Orientamento Professionale) Communication (www.cesop.it); *Career Book Lavoro*, advertised online but available only in bookshops; Radio broadcast “Radio 24”, connected with the Italian financial newspaper *Sole 24 Ore* (www.radio24.it).

³⁰ See the results of the TUNING project, in which academics were asked to rate the importance of a number of similar generic skills to success in their own fields of study: J. Gonzalez and R. Wagenaar (eds.), *Tuning*

- analytical ability
- problem solving skills
- propensity for group work
- ability to develop and maintain relationships based on mutual trust and interdependence
- personal and professional sense of ethics
- communicative ability
- respect for others
- openness and flexibility
- ability to integrate/adapt
- ability to be client-driven and results-oriented
- strong motivation
- willingness to assume responsibility
- leadership qualities
- organisational ability
- spirit of initiative / creativity / ability to produce innovative ideas and new courses of action
- sense of autonomy
- enthusiasm / curiosity / desire to learn and grow.

The multinational companies advertised all require a good to very good knowledge of English with, in some cases, a preference given for knowledge of additional other languages (French, German or generically “European”, or unspecified). Some generic information is also given in these publications on European Union posts or internships, which, not surprisingly, place strong emphasis on languages and the ability to work in a multicultural environment.

A number of International Organisations are featured, all requiring a very good knowledge of English (spoken and written) and knowledge of other languages of the organisation. These organisations generally require at least 2 languages - English and then French, but sometimes Spanish or any of the official languages. The Levels of reference used for evaluating linguistic competence are the following: Excellent/Fluent (perfect mastery, written and oral); Working Knowledge (capability of working independently, preparing all kinds of documents, participating in professional meetings and discussions); Limited Knowledge (ability to telephone, to understand work-related texts, follow meetings and discussions, intervening in the language). The ability to establish and maintain work relations with people of different nationalities and from different cultural backgrounds is also cited as a professional qualification.

The recruitment literature of individual companies reflects the same orientation. For example, a publication put out by a multinational investment banking business boasting 90,000 employees in 50 countries³¹, speaks of “the strong link between cultural diversity and exceptional performance”, and offers “diversity training for all managers” in “a culture of openness”. The networking groups within the bank at a given location are meant for “ethnic minorities, older workers, women, parents and gay people”. With regard to differences between countries the text states: “The recognition of individual differences

Educational Structures in Europe, Final Report, Pilot Project – Phase 1, University of Deusto, University of Groningen, 2003.

³¹ *Having it all. The 360° career*, JPMorgan European Graduate Opportunities, 2003.

means that we have to reflect the priorities, needs, culture and legislation affecting each region.”

3.2 Information from job recruiters and company representatives

This section reports for the most part on contacts made through the Placement Office of an Italian university³² located in Rome and specialising in the Social Sciences, namely, Economics and Business, Law and Political Science. The Job Placement Office³³ organises internships for students and offers an interactive network for graduating students, recent graduates and prospective employers to match up qualifications and interests with job and training possibilities. Although the majority of the approximately 200 employers in the databank are Rome-based companies (many of them multinationals), there are also law offices and representatives of the public administration (the Ministries, the Senate, the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, etc.).

Prospective employers are asked by the Placement Office to complete a form in which they also indicate the foreign languages needed for the job and the approximate level of competence required or preferred. The current trend is for the overwhelming majority of employers to ask potential candidates for a good knowledge of English (and only rarely French or German). This is also true for the law offices, which frequently deal with international regulations and contracts in English. Ministry-related jobs are among the few which may ask for knowledge of another foreign language in addition to English.

Students and graduates are encouraged by the Placement Office to put their curriculum vitae into the database, indicating a self-assessment of their foreign language competence along with any external certifications and a description of any study experience abroad, e.g. through the Erasmus programme. (Their marks on university language examinations are already available in their course transcripts.) Following an internship experience students are asked to write a report detailing their work activities. They virtually never mention any problems related to use of a foreign language, presumably because they were carefully pre-selected, also on the basis of any necessary foreign language qualification.

As in a number of other universities, ‘Job Days’ are conducted periodically during which recruiters present their companies to interested students and recent graduates, recounting their own professional experiences in the company and answering questions. During the spring and summer of 2004, brief interviews were carried out by the Language Institute with a small number of job recruiters, principally from multinational companies³⁴. The picture that emerges from these interviews is the following: A ‘good’ or ‘intermediate’ knowledge of English is required or preferred (depending on the company and the position being applied for), while the knowledge of another European language tends to be considered useful only in specific locations (i.e. when the job is based in the country of the language). Some emphasis is placed on oral skills – the ability to speak fluently on the telephone, in face-to-face conversation, at meetings – but the ability to read technical

³² Luiss (Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali) Guido Carli, supported by the Confindustria (the Confederation of Italian Industrialists).

³³ Interviews with the Director of Student Management and with the Head of the Placement Office .

³⁴ Recruiters interviewed were from the following companies: Banca Nazionale di Lavoro; Dexia Crediop (bank); Ernst & Young; Gruppo Danone; KPMG Bas (Business Advisory Services); KPMG spa (auditing); Merloni Elettrodomestici; Procter and Gamble; Telecom Italia Wireline.

material and to write (letters, emails, faxes) are also rated important. Experience abroad, e.g. through the Erasmus programme, is valued as evidence, not only of competence in a specific language, but more in general of the ability to relate to others, to organise, to take initiative and to assume responsibility, and as a sign of openmindedness (also to the possibility of being transferred).

In a recent Conference on young people and the job market³⁵, three young Italian professionals in the fields of business and law gave this advice to the students in the audience: make more space for languages - the goal of English plus one other language is important but not sufficient, the ultimate goal being a more extensive plurilingualism; go abroad – study and work experiences in at least two other countries will make it possible to compare, measure and open up one's own thinking and to become comfortable with uncertainty.

The following information about the diversity of language competences required in international legal work was obtained during a personal interview in May of 2004 with an American lawyer currently teaching advanced students of English in the university's law faculty who has been extensively involved in recruiting for an international law firm in Rome. By definition, international law firms need young professionals who can function in English, although French is also sometimes considered an asset. Obviously, as they advance in their careers this requirement grows. They will need a good to very good ability in all four skills in order to be able to do the following: manage telephone communication; read and analyse legal material to understand the law and how it applies to the case in question; participate in and conduct meetings, including giving oral presentations; explain Italian law (including the translation of points of law) to a non-Italian colleague or client; up-date clients on a case, both orally and in writing; negotiate/bargain, employing strategies and gambits for interrupting, clarifying, rejecting a position, etc.; draft all manner of legal documents, from memoranda and correspondence (also via email) to briefs and contracts.

Obviously, many of these skills are also relevant to the international business context: communicating with a client, meetings, presentations, etc. In particular, successful negotiation in an international context requires an awareness of the ways in which cultural background can affect negotiating styles and tactics, and the ability to deal with conflict, also by downtoning language and using persuasive strategies.

4. In regard to language graduates (bachelor and master) outside language-related industries and professions, what formal or informal linguistic and intercultural qualifications- languages / skills and competences – are known to enhance career prospects?

No specific information was found about this, although a recent survey of Italian university graduates conducted by the Consortium AlmaLaurea (see 7.1.2) reported that in some parts of the country language majors are more significantly employed in non-language sectors, for example, in companies.

³⁵ "I Giovani e il Lavoro Le sfide del lavoro fra competenze, innovazione e trasparenza" ("Young People and Work The challenges of work from competences and innovation to transparency"), held at Luiss Guido Carli on 22 June 2004.

5. Validation of learning, assessment, certification – what does the labour market recognise and value?

From the interviews, from company literature and the website, where a specific application form is provided the company sometimes includes a separate section on Foreign Languages; in this case English is listed, sometimes French or there is a blank for the insertion of one other language. Candidates are asked to indicate the level of their knowledge of the language with respect to the four skills or to oral and written skills, and the choices provided may be, e.g.: 'scholastic', 'adequate', 'good', 'very good'. During the interviews conducted with job recruiters, the most common technique mentioned for verifying applicants' self-declared language competence (principally, in English) was engaging them in conversation, for example, during the job interview (even by telephone, in one case, where the company recruits for its London-based office). Another common practice is assessing language competence during a group role play or simulation; one recruiter explained that this was a way to test language competence along with communication ability, social behaviour, organisational skills and stress management potential.

External certifications were not systematically valued (those mentioned were TOEFL, TOEIC and Cambridge First Certificate), while the marks on university language examinations were not used at all. (One recruiter commented that the company would like the university mark to reflect more reliably the student's real language ability.) A work or study period abroad was often considered the best external indicator of language competence. None of the recruiters interviewed had heard of the Common European Framework levels or the Portfolio, although they expressed interest in knowing more. All the companies involved offered some kind of language learning possibilities, from outsourcing to private schools to in-house training programmes, also in the form of e-learning; as for the foreign languages taught, in addition to English, mention was made of French, German and Spanish.

Conclusion: implications for language needs

Based on the information from a variety of sources presented in sections 2, 3 and 5, particularly from those directly involved in human resources and recruitment, an attempt will be made here to draw some conclusions about the present and future language and language-related needs of the national, European and international labour markets. First of all, there seems to be a growing awareness on the part of all stakeholders in Italy (students, universities, professionals, employers, government) of the vital importance of language and intercultural skills and experiences.³⁶ While a good knowledge of English is beginning to be taken for granted, the knowledge of other languages, cultures and systems is proving to be a reliable indicator of the key generic qualities, skills and abilities that are being sought on the national, European and international markets: flexibility, openness, communication skills, a sense of personal and professional ethics, organisational ability, propensity toward innovation, desire to learn and grow, etc. Language and intercultural competences are recognised as part, not only of communication and relational abilities, but also of analytical and critical skills and as a

³⁶ At a European Conference on "The Role of Languages in an Enlarged Europe", held at the Luiss Guido Carli on 14 May 2004, an expert in commercial law stressed that an openness and curiosity towards other ways of conceiving and being in the world are essential qualifications for future professionals operating on the European market. The Proceedings of the Conference are forthcoming.

stimulus to creative thinking. The level of competence needed in a given language may vary according to the job requirements and location, but, in general, in a proactive recruiting mentality, career prospects are enhanced by greater foreign language proficiency and diversity of cultural experiences.

On the job market, individuals are expected to be able to assess their own ability to function in other languages and cultural settings and to be able to communicate this ability accurately. There is a real need for the European Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference to promote transparency and reliability within a shared system for defining, assessing and communicating language and cultural development along a continuum. From the viewpoint of life-long learning in a world in rapid evolution, individuals may need to 'reinvent' themselves professionally several times and to add all sorts of new knowledge, including that of new languages, language-related skills and intercultural competences. Mobility, multilingualism and multiculturalism are/will be key factors in professional growth and personal development.

There are many important implications here for language teaching, particularly at the university level, where students are being prepared to participate as protagonists in a complex, increasingly interdependent and rapidly evolving world. Language teaching professionals need to be able to tap their students' and non-language colleagues' growing awareness of the interrelatedness of language and intercultural skills, on the one hand, and broader cognitive and social abilities on the other. They need to become more and more learner-focused in order to help their students to become better learners and more self-directed in their own learning processes. They need to be sure students can see the relationship between the language learning skills they are developing and the potential for learning new languages, of the connections between languages which have been mastered or partially learned and those which are only vaguely familiar or totally unknown. They need to engage students in activities of their own initiative, involving authentic communication with their peers both in face-to-face and in virtual environments. The next two sections of this report will concentrate on describing the kinds of bridges that have already been built between universities and the outside world in order to identify places where mutually beneficial exchange is occurring - particularly with regard to language, language-related and intercultural needs - and to suggest ways of creating connections that have not been but could be made.

6. Communication and co-operation between higher education institutions / public authorities and the world of work (private and public employers, the social partners, etc.) – aims and structures

There are a growing number of initiatives in Italy to coordinate collaboration between universities and the world of work. For example, the Campus One Project (www.campusone.it), run by the Fondazione Crui (the Conference of Italian University Rectors), involves 70 universities in consultation with representatives from the local economy in the evaluation of the employment potential of the new degree courses. Two thousand students (of engineering, computer science and business) and nearly 1,500 firms have been in contact through the Campus Azione Impresa Project (www.campus-aiaveneto.it), which establishes ties between four universities and the surrounding regions of Padua, Treviso and Venice for the organisation of internships and job placement. Another example is the Minerva Volcano Project sponsored by the Ministry of Education, University and Research with the collaboration of the Confindustria, which aims to

compare the employment needs of 500 companies in the South with the new degree programmes offered by universities as part of the university reform. 'Incubator' programmes have also been established in which the university and local associations support initiatives by students and professors to start up new businesses.

Many universities participate in 'job fairs' or 'job days', which constitute points of contact between students and company recruiters. More than ever before, university job placement services coordinate internships and create databanks online, bridging the gap between graduating students and prospective employers – companies and non-profit organisations, public administration, professional associations, etc., both local and national, and, in some cases, European institutions and Italian agencies abroad. Sometimes participation in the databank is free, other times there is a charge for employers. Additional services are offered too with computer software and/or tutors that 'match' supply and demand with varying degrees of personalisation. Studies can then be done to determine trends in employment related to area of study.

An important databank of graduates that is frequently cited in the national press is that of AlmaLaurea (www.almalaurea.it), a Consortium of 36 Italian universities which was started up in 1994 and has the support of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. AlmaLaurea serves as a point of contact for employers and graduates, and also aims to constitute a point of reference within the university for all those interested in the connection between university studies, the labour market and youth employment. It has grown phenomenally and boasts that it now accounts for 51% of all Italian graduates. Universities are encouraged to join and businesses to make use of it. There is a planned Europe-wide extension of the database and its consultation on-line. During the year 2003 the National Committee for the evaluation of the university system³⁷ prepared a minimum set of questions for the evaluation by graduates of their university experience, which will be administered by the AlmaLaurea Consortium in its next survey, relative to the year 2004.³⁸

The latest initiative by the Ministry is a plan to establish a national Registry of students and graduates of Italian universities, with the aim of monitoring both study and work careers: the former to identify the strong points and problem areas of university teaching, the latter to provide better orientation to enrolling students based on real job market possibilities. In addition, the use of the Diploma Supplement, mandatory in all Italian universities from the year 2005, will facilitate the recognition of academic titles by employers, as well as access to further studies in the context of a life-long learning process.³⁹

Asfor (Associazione per la formazione alla direzione aziendale) operates in the area of managerial training, both as organisers and users of educational services. Started in 1971 with the objective of developing the culture of management in Italy, it now has more than 60 members, including Business Schools, Corporate Universities and training/educational Institutions (www.asfor.it).

³⁷ *Università & Ricerca*, numero 104-105, 30 giugno 2004. See the Ministry site for all official information documents: www.miur.it.

³⁸ Questionnaires asking students to evaluate the quality of teaching and of university facilities have been widely used in the last few years; a national model has recently been adopted and will be administered by all 77 Italian universities beginning this year.

³⁹ *Università & Ricerca*, numero 102-103, 19 maggio 2004 (www.miur.it).

At the European level, Euroaction (www.euroaction.it) is advertised as an information campaign, specifically aimed at young people, to promote “working, studying and living in Italy and in Europe”. Now in its ninth year, it uses the mass media (the press, radio and television) to launch its message of mobility and give advice on choosing a study programme or looking for a first employment. It publicises the function of the SIL (Labour Information System) database linking public and private employment agencies managed by the Italian Ministry of Labour, along with the services offered by the newly established Centres for Employment managed by the provincial administrations.

7. Institutional, regional and national surveys and career services

7.1 Surveys among higher education graduates

It will be instructive here to review briefly some recent surveys of Italian university graduates: the first conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the second by a large university consortium (AlmaLaurea), and the third by a university offering degrees in the social sciences and supported by the Confindustria (Luiss Guido Carli). The same technique was used in all three surveys to elicit information, namely, that of the telephone interview (in the first two instances, the computer-assisted telephone interview).

7.1.1 National Institute of Statistics Surveys

The ISTAT Report of 2004 “University and work: statistics for orientation” is a survey meant to help students in their last year of secondary school decide which kind of university studies to undertake. Not surprisingly, the results of the latest survey show that a university degree is still the best guarantee of finding a job, however, with big differences between degree types. It is interesting to note that while 33% of all employed graduates report that they are doing a job which does not require a university degree, 50% of those graduated in the humanities, languages and political-social studies report that they are doing work which does not require a degree or at least not the degree they studied for. As far as languages are concerned, there is a question in the survey which asks very generically how often those employed need to read, write and speak in a foreign language: everyday, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, never or almost never. The response in 2001⁴⁰ (there was no access to the results of the latest study on this question), referring to working graduates in 1998, was the following: 52% reported using foreign languages on the job at least once a week to read and 35% to write or speak; for daily use of foreign languages the figures went down to 30% for reading and 18% for writing and speaking. In general, only 62 graduates out of 100 were satisfied with the extent to which they were able to use what they had studied on the job. Of those interviewed 35.8% said they would be willing to work anywhere in Italy or abroad, while 40.5% said they would be willing to transfer to other city but only in Italy, and 23.6% were not open to any kind of mobility.

⁴⁰ *Inserimento professionale dei laureati – Indagine 2001*, ISTAT, settore Istruzione – lavoro, “I laureati e il mercato del lavoro”.

7.1.2 AlmaLaurea Consortium Surveys

The AlmaLaurea (www.almalaurea.it) survey in 2003, including for the first time graduates 5 years down the line and involving more than 45,000 graduates (in 1998, 2000, 2002) from 24 universities, shows that finding a job has become slightly more difficult and less remunerative, while atypical kinds of 'temporary' contacts have become more common. Five years after graduation, 87% of degree-holders had a job, 75% of them a stable job. In 2003, 54.9% of graduates were working one year after graduation, 2% less than in the previous survey. An employment contraction of 2% was also registered for those who graduated 3 years ago in 2000. In the 2002 study, one year after graduation 40% of graduates had contracts that were atypical, compared with 44% in the 2003 survey, and the net earnings of the 2002 graduates were not over 1,000 euros monthly, which is 4.5% less than in the survey done the previous year. In this contracted job market, knowledge of foreign languages and computer skills are considered to be particularly important competitive factors. Some other relevant findings are the following. Comparatively speaking, graduates with degrees in engineering, architecture, economics and statistics, law and agrarian studies find employment more easily, while those with degrees in psychology, languages, biology and the humanities have more difficulty finding a regular job (though it is reported that in some parts of the country language majors are more significantly employed – for example, in companies).

Study abroad experiences during university involved 14% of all graduates⁴¹, with a slight advantage, particularly for those who studied abroad within the Erasmus programme: one year after graduation, 60% had found work, as opposed to 55% of graduates with no study experience abroad. Since this finding holds for graduates over time, after three or five years, there is a suggestion that the national labour market is not yet able to fully appreciate the added value of the Erasmus experience. It is emphasised in the report that an Erasmus experience favours the perception of the labour market as an international market and facilitates territorial mobility for work purposes: 21% of Erasmus graduates work in another region of Italy (compared to 12% of non-Erasmus graduates) and 5% work abroad (compared to .6% of those who had no Erasmus experience). With regard to foreign languages, the profile of Erasmus graduates reported shows that 72.3% said they had at least a good knowledge of English (compared with 43.6% of non-Erasmus graduates); the figures for French were 35.7% for Erasmus graduates (compared to 19% for non-Erasmus graduates), and for Spanish and German the percentage of Erasmus graduates was four times that of non-Erasmus graduates.

AlmaLaurea is collecting other data too. When students complete forms for graduation, they are asked to do a questionnaire on the knowledge they think they have acquired at university. In data elaborated in 2003, referring to graduating students from the previous year, 56,171 responses were available, accounting for about half of the Italian total. As reported in footnote 13, with regard to languages, 54.6% said they had "at least a good" knowledge of written English, and 46.7% of spoken English. French was a distant second with 21.2% of those graduating who said they had a sufficient knowledge of the spoken and written language, followed by Spanish and German, 6% and 5% respectively. Compared with previous years a knowledge of English is becoming more widespread as is that of Spanish, while French and German remain stable. The study hypothesises that the situation has improved and that the younger generation coming up has realised that the

⁴¹ More than half of these (56%) were language majors, though 22% were graduates in socio-political subjects, and another 14% in literature.

movement is from a local to an international market and are projecting themselves toward Europe.

7.1.3 A university survey

The Luiss university conducts surveys regularly to poll its graduates on their current job situation, also because its connection with the Confindustria related to its graduates' increased potential for finding work quickly is one of its strong selling points. Its selective admissions policy and a significant tuition fee, along with ample scholarship opportunities based on merit, tend to produce qualified and highly motivated graduates of Economics, Law and Political Science. In this sense, information about its graduates can be considered indicative of present and future trends in these areas of employment, particularly with respect to the private sector. The most relevant results of the 2003 survey of graduates in the year 2000 (681 interviewees) are presented synthetically as follows⁴²:

- 51% economics, 36.3% Jurisprudence, 12.8% Political Science;
- 16.9% had been on the Erasmus programme during their studies;
- 52.9% had had some job training or apprenticeship;
- 80% were working;
- 68% were working in the private sector, 10.6% in the public sector, 21.1% were self-employed;
- 47.8% were working in a company of 500 or more employees;
- 81% were satisfied on the average with their present job;
- 86% said their degree was necessary for the work they did;
- 88% said their university preparation was very useful to them;
- 72.4% said they used their foreign language competence;
- 18% had changed their province of residence;
- 87% said they would be willing to move for their career, 71.2% said also abroad.

It is interesting to note the high percentage of employed graduates who reported that they use a foreign language on their job. This is in keeping with the kinds of employers recruiting from this university, many of them multinational companies. The significant percentage of former Erasmus students is also in line with a greater willingness to work outside their own country.

7.2 Career advice

It is useful here to look briefly at the career advice that is provided to young people as an indication of existing and foreseeable job opportunities and of the kinds of needs that are felt in the present context and for the near future.

7.2.1 Career advice and services at the European level

Cedefop (Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and professional training (www.cedefop.eu.int). Established in 1975, this European agency helps policy-makers

⁴² *Indagine sull'inserimento professionale dei laureati Luiss – Sintesi*, seconda edizione, marzo 2004, Luiss University Press. An interview was also conducted with a researcher directly involved in carrying out the survey.

and practitioners of the European Commission, the Member States and social partner organisations across Europe to make informed choices by providing the latest information on the present state of and future trends in vocational education and professional training in the European Union. For purposes of transparency, Cedefop encourages the use of the European Curriculum Vitae Format (www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency/cv.asp), which includes a Languages section asking for a self-evaluation of the level of competence in each foreign language with respect to Reading skills, Writing skills, and Verbal skills, and a Social Skills and Competences section which includes “Living and working with other people in multicultural environments”. In every EU country plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, an information centre (known as a ‘national reference point’) will provide information on the vocational education and professional training system and can supply ‘certificate supplements’ in the language required which give a detailed description of the skills and competences gained during any vocational training.

Europass training is a Community instrument developed in 1998 which allows all the training followed abroad to be certified in a booklet, facilitating the recognition of the qualifications and the credits acquired and thus their spendability. Between November of 2000 and December of 2003, 5,600 students and young people looking for employment took advantage of Europass training. Isfol (www.isfol.it), the national point of contact for Europass procedures, has recently released statistics showing that more than half of those participating were women (62%), mostly between the ages of 14 and 19 (50%), had a secondary school diploma (79.4%) and were residents of Northern Italy (57%). The most frequent destinations were Great Britain (25.9%) and France (18.1%), and the most popular internships were those in information technology, research and vocational activities. Of the total, 16.2% were university students and 6.4% were postgraduate students. According to Isfol, 60% continued their studies afterwards and 21% found a job. Of the 105 organisations promoting this initiative, 44% are schools, 25% are training institutes, 11% are universities and local authorities, while 8.6% are companies.

Eures (European Employment Services) is a network that brings together the European Commission, the public employment services in Europe and other bodies such as trade unions⁴³, employers’ organisations and local and regional authorities. EURES aims to inform, advise and assist European citizens who want to work in another country, and to help employers recruit from abroad. Those looking to find a job in another European country can go to the European Union’s job mobility portal (www.europa.eu.int/eures). There is a database containing information about the living and working conditions in each country, labour markets, accommodation, education, cost of living, health, social legislation, taxation, training opportunities, comparability of qualifications, etc. There is a jobs database that lists selected vacancies available throughout Europe, accessible by employers and job seekers in up to 17 countries. There is also a CV search database which job seekers can use to make their CVs available to a wide range of employers. For small and medium-sized businesses looking for specific know-how, EURES offers a personal service to access the potential available in the European labour market. EURES has also helped big companies in their recruitment campaigns.

⁴³ See also Cgil, Cisl and Uil (Italian national trade unions), which recall the Memorandum of the European Union with regard to the right of workers to life-long vocational training, the recognition and certification of competences acquired to be recorded in the ‘libretto formativo’, and the obligation of the Regions to provide vocational training in the form of new apprenticeships and basic professional training, as well as for the vocational and cultural education of immigrants

Leonardo Project “Coreguide”⁴⁴ has the general objective of describing, analysing, and cataloguing, on the basis of a single mapping instrument, the principal models, approaches and experiences present at the European level with regard to training in the area of nonspecific/transversal competences/skills. Those competences which are not profession-specific are able to activate the maximum potential for transferability ensuring better performance in learning and working and, consequently, greater employability and mobility of individuals. The focus on competences defined as “key” or “strategic” is considered essential at a Community level, which is also emphasised in Cresson’s White Book, proposing new methodological pathways of analysis and definition of the contents of these competences in order to develop criteria for their European accreditation and recognition.

7.2.2 Career advice and services at the national level

Isfol (Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori) (www.isfol.it)⁴⁵ is a public research institute that operates in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Labour, the Regions, the Social Partners, other State Administrations, the European Union and International Organisms for the development of vocational education and professional training, and has been in operation since 1997. There is information on this site about the job placement reform, related to the decentralisation and transfer of several primary functions to Regions and Provinces and of the role of the new Public Employment Services (PES) in establishing and consolidating a new relationship with the economic system at the local level based on the supply of highly innovative services to businesses. Isfol is also concerned with problems related to professional qualifications and their recognition at the national and Community level.

Orientaonline, a databank for orientation on vocational education and professional training, contains detailed data and information according to a Map of Occupational Areas which tends to cover the entire production system of the country.

The consortium model like that of AlmaLaurea, already active in providing a jobs database for graduates from a number of Italian universities, is being extended to the area of internships. Just a few months ago a new project called Agorà began, which in 3 years’ time plans to create a platform to put online 20,000 internships available throughout Italy, and eventually abroad.

Another organisation for professional orientation is Cesop (Centro di Orientamento Professionale) Communication (see www.cesop.it) for a databank of graduates and companies) that since 1990 has dealt with relations between important national and international companies and the world of the university, both Italian and abroad. It mentions a Recent Graduates Survey, reporting on the expectations and objectives of recent graduates in Italy, which has just come out and will be available soon in specialised

⁴⁴ The contractor for the Leonardo Project “Coreguide” on the definition of maximally transferable transversal skills and competences, is DTI – Denmark. The partners are: ISFOL, VDAB – Belgium, BIBB – Germany, WJEC – Welsh Joint Education Committee, NCVQ (National Council for Vocational Qualifications) – Great Britain, INCANOP – Spain.

Contact: Gabriella di Francesco, stanfor.ce@isfol.it, ISFOL – Area Metodologie per la formazione- via G. Balivi, 6 –00161 Roma, tel.06/445901 – fax 06/44291871

⁴⁵ Publications ISFOL: Repertorio delle Professioni ON LINE; Isfol Report 2001 on federalism and labour policies in Italy and the creation of local centres for permanent training (also based on the White Book on the labour market in Italy distributed by the Ministry of Labour and of Social Policies).

bookshops. In 2003 Cesop also organized Job Meetings at universities in 9 Italian cities between students/graduates and company representatives focused on career opportunities, professional development and job training possibilities.

A publication advertised online but available only in bookshops is called *Career Book Lavoro*, which is described as a source of practical information for those looking for a first job or wanting to change jobs. The editors say they have talked to the experts about career possibilities for recent graduates, internships, work contracts, curricula and job interviews, work abroad, social security systems, master's and other educational programmes. They publish the profile, career paths and complete contact information for more than 140 companies looking for personnel and of the most important schools offering master's and other programmes. They advertise that they include in as far as possible forecasts for the future (for example, with regard to the reform of the Italian labour market) and cite the European Council's goal at Lisbon in 2000 of an employment rate of 70% for men and more than 60% for women.

8. Conclusion: implications for languages

While there are many new developments and opportunities for collaboration between government, universities and economic stakeholders, at least from what the author of this report was able to ascertain, there appears to be little specific information being generated about language competences and intercultural skills⁴⁶. The only consensus seems to be the very general one that English as an international language is becoming more and more important and that knowledge of at least a second European language will make university graduates more qualified in what has become a very competitive national and European job market, with some indication that study experience abroad and work experience enhance employment potential. There does not seem to be any significant data either on the opportunities for language majors to work in non-language fields. There is a clear need for those involved in language education and training at the university level to participate in the dialogue in order to promote the collection of more specific data about language requirements for the world of work and about the effectiveness, in terms of results, of what goes on in university language programmes, particularly for non-language majors. Those doing studies and surveys - government programmes for the internationalisation of industry and for bridging the gap between prospective employers and recent graduates, employers recruiting graduates or directly engaged in professional training, university placement services and databanks - would all benefit from input from the language experts, who would in turn have much to gain from such a collaboration. Some possible actions are the following: proposing the insertion of a few carefully thought-out language-related questions in existing surveys as part of the updating process; including more useful language-related questions in systematic consultations with students prior to graduation, either as part of exiting procedures or introducing them ex novo, questions about how students perceive their language skills and how they feel these skills are related to their future careers. At the European level, there could be forms of direct collaboration with those of the various programmes involved in study, training and employment across countries that are most relevant for universities and for the learning of language, language-related and intercultural skills and competences.

⁴⁶ Any relevant information not included here is warmly solicited and can be communicated directly to the author.

Annexes

A Examples of good practice

B Links and useful addresses