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Supporting Occupational Transitions in “The New Geography of Work”: Limits and Possible Developments of the Italian Labour Market Reform

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Abstract

Purpose. The aim of the paper is analysing the current Italian active labour market policies system, both on the side of the governance model, and of that of the strategies and interventions promoted in order to sustain transitions in the labour market.

Design/ methodology/ approach. The paper presents a theoretical analysis of the juridical and institutional framework of active labour market policies in the light of the transitional labour market theory.

Findings. The recent Italian labour market reforms, by focusing (partially and late) on the paradigm of *flexicurity*, seem to neglect central questions. If one should appreciate the attempt to reform and rationalize the employment services network and to create a foundation for the development of active labour market policies, the concrete institutional solutions arranged are to be questioned.

Research limitations/implications. The paper presents some theoretical considerations in order to suggest new research paths. Research findings show the need for empirical studies focused on analysing models and systems already established in different territories, resulting from a combination of factors like: institutional traditions; the legislative framework; decentralised collective bargaining, agreements,

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covenants, pacts and informal networks for the matching between labour and demand supply in specific sectors or contexts.

Originality/ value. The paper tries to shed light on dimensions which have been neglected till now, both on the side of the role and participation of different stakeholders, and on that of the measures and interventions to be prioritised in order to meet the new great transformation of work on-going.

Paper type. Issue paper.

Keywords: *Occupational transitions, New geography of work, Labour Market Reform, ALMP, Italy.*

1. Italian Labour Market Reform in the light of “Transitional Labour Market Theory”

Following the recent labour market reform (*Jobs Act*), several contributions have investigated the new regulatory asset from different points of view, but there is an assumption which has gained general consensus: the final shift towards a protection system inspired by the North-European *flexicurity* model. However, the central question concerning whether these recent changes meet the transformations occurring in the world of work and society is still open. Technological development has determined consequences varying among territories and occupational sectors, on the one side, by reducing low qualified manual jobs, and, on the other, supporting the rise of new professions in new fields. New organisational models are spreading, and the occupational scenarios are evolving, following the growing overlap between primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Occupational careers are more and more fragmented and characterised by frequent “transitions” between different statuses and positions. The globalisation and digitalisation of work seem to blur the importance of the spatial dimension, but on the contrary, the local dimension is more and more crucial when it comes to considering the existence of material and immaterial infrastructures and cooperative networks between strategic stakeholders and their impact on economic and occupational growth and innovation.

These transformations have important consequences in terms of career articulation and in terms of employability and the competencies required of people in order to face job-related risks. While the Italian debate is still stuck on the concept of *flexicurity*, the international literature at the end of

the last century proposed an innovative view on labour market transformation and how to deal with its consequences: «transitional labour market theory» (Caruso, Cuttone 2016), which suggests a new conception of the labour market as an open social system, and of work as a category which fits within different occupational statuses (Schmid, 2015).

The “transitional labour market” (TLM) concept reflects an evolution of active labour market policies through a strong emphasis on “active securities”, which means investing in people versus passive charity and protecting people’s investments versus protecting jobs. Secondly, TLM is characterised by a “life-course orientation” by giving importance to the “right of a career”, which contrasts with the neoliberal concept of *workfare* that defines work as an obligation in order to obtain transfers due to need. This leads to a third central point, which is that modern active labour market policies should empower individuals to change from one work situation to another according to changes in the economy, as well as according to their preferences or work capacities over the life course, which can be defined in terms of having “the right to transitions”. The institutional arrangement proposed to realise these objectives is to create “learning communities” at a local or regional level, in which all relevant actors (i.e. schools, training institutions, employers and social partners) are involved. This involvement should be organized in the form of covenants that make actors committed and responsible.

The transitional labour market theory seems to have strong connections with the social investment paradigm. It is exactly by taking inspiration from Schmid’s work on transitional labour markets, that Anton Hamerijck developed a taxonomy of social investment complementary functions (and related policies) such as: easing the “flow” of contemporary labour-market and life-course transitions; raising the quality of the “stock” of human capital and capabilities; and maintaining strong minimum-income universal safety nets like social protection and economic stabilization “buffers”. In Hamerijck’s vision, as in the transitional labour market theory, the previous mentioned functions are strongly interconnected and are seen as complementary to traditional welfare protections against “old risks” (Hamerijck, 2015).

These theoretical perspectives seem to be useful in order to give an answer to two main questions arising from the transformations we mentioned before: which are the “critical” situations in a life course in which transitional arrangements must be provided in order to protect people from old and new risks? At which institutional level (or “spatial dimension”) should policy interventions be planned in order to manage transitions into the labour market?

On the one side, nowadays “critical transitions” are not limited to linear mobility paths (i.e. from school to work, from job to job, from job to retirement), but are the result of the combination of biographical and external factors (at a *micro*, *meso* and *macro* level), which determines non-linear transitions and overlapping between market and non-market activities. In this view, there is not only the need to extend old protections to different employment and professional statuses, but also to create new protections more in line with the new configuration of professional careers. The French *Compte Personnel d’Activité* (Maggi-Germain, 2016) can be used as an example of new protection arrangements fit for facing the risks connected with frequent occupational transitions. On the other side (the appropriate “spatial dimension” for active labour market policy planning), as economic geography research shows (Moretti, 2013), work is no longer concentrated inside big factories isolated from the external market, but it is diffused in networks overcoming the contraposition between internal and external markets (Doeringer, Piore, 1970). The growing interconnection and interdependency between work and learning processes suggests looking at new categories, such as “learning regions” (Florida, 1995; Lazzeroni, 2010) intended as spatial dimensions where the production of knowledge is concentrated, and it is possible to identify stable relations among relevant actors (i.e. businesses, institutions, civil society).

All that considered, the added value of the transitional labour market perspective is to propose concrete solutions based on the principle of personalisation defined at a local level and emerging from bottom-up processes involving networks of all relevant actors (Gazier, Tuchsirer, 2015).

The recent Italian labour market reforms, by focusing (partially and late) on the paradigm of *flexicurity*, which has already shown its limits, seem to neglect these questions and seem to be far from the theoretical perspectives presented above, namely: if one should appreciate the attempt to reform and rationalize the employment services network – and to create, for the first time in our country, a foundation for the development of active labour market policies – the concrete institutional solutions arranged are to be questioned due to a few reasons. First, the whole system of active labour market policies has been re-centralised by creating a national agency (i.e. ANPAL) with relevant functions in terms of programming, monitoring and defining policies, but in the absence of a real reform of the constitutional competency framework, which still sees the competencies in the field of active labour market policies shared

between central level and the Regions. Secondly, greater attention has been put on reinforcing the conditionality of unemployment subsidies and on “work first” measures. On the contrary, the core of a modern active labour market policy, which is represented by investing in people’s competencies and capacities, has been left behind, as we will explain better later. Due to a strategy which is more aimed at simplifying and rationalising the employment services system than at investing in the future, it seems that the opportunity to face current transformations is being missed, and it seems that those who are more vulnerable will be asked to pay the price of a “zero cost” reform.

The article analyses, in the light of the theoretical framework presented above, the current Italian active labour market policies system, both on the side of the governance model, and of that of the strategies and interventions promoted in order to sustain transitions in the labour market. A special focus is put on the role of training policies. Some final considerations are then presented in the attempt to shed light on the dimensions which have been neglected till now, both on the side of the role and participation of different stakeholders, and on that of the measures and interventions to be prioritised in order to meet the new great transformation of work on-going.

2. A New Governance

Looking at the governance model, the Italian system after the *Jobs Act* can be defined as a neo-centralistic one (Caruso, Cuttone, 2016). It is, on a formal level, inspired by the “vertical subsidiarity” principle that concerns the respective jurisdictions of the central government and the Regions, since the local level is no longer involved in active labour market policies as it was before the reform of local administrations, which has gone in parallel to the labour market reform, and has determined the end of the local level competencies in the field of active labour market policies by leading them back to the central level and the Regions (Valente, 2016). Labour market services’ and active labour market policies’ planning and control functions have been re-centralised and assigned to the level which is responsible for setting strategic directions and minimum essential requirements and standards, while the Regions are entitled to define specific policies at a territorial level. Second, a national agency for active labour market policies has been created (ANPAL), which is responsible of coordinating activation measures, advising the labour Ministry, monitoring and defining interventions and determining precise operational aspects of

the active labour market policies (Alaimo, 2016; Garofalo, 2016; Spattini, 2016).

The horizontal subsidiarity principle is also observed if one looks at the creation of a “national network of labour market policies”, including all the main actors of the labour market: the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL); public and private employment services; bilateral training funds; Chambers of Commerce, Trade, Industry and Agriculture; the National Social Insurance Agency (INPS); the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL); and the National Institute for Public Policies Analysis (INAPP). Moreover, this seemed to happen without addressing with concrete measures the important issue of promoting networks of relevant stakeholders at a local level, as it was foreseen by the Fornero Reform of the labour market (2012), which created “*territorial* networks for lifelong learning” aimed at integrating educational, training and labour policies at a local level, a measure which has never been realised in facts. With this respect, the transitional labour market theory emphasizes the importance of negotiating strategies and interventions at a local level by means of territorial pacts and covenants involving local actors by giving them trust and responsibility (Schmid, 2015). In this light, decentralisation and strategic consultation are key words in order to build the conditions of the so called «interactive employability». With this expression Caruso (2007) identify a concept of employability which «emphasize the role of the public actor and of social partners and of the relative regulation and protection network», in spite of delegating the employability responsibility to the individual. Inter-institutional cooperation and covenants, in this view, act as enabling factors of the individual capabilities (Sen, 1992; 2000; Nussbaum, 2002).

These elements have traditionally received attention in the Italian labour market regulation model, especially from the second half of 1990s, when a general consensus was established around ideas such as the diversification of the labour market on a local basis and the involvement of social partners, local institutions and civil society, by the means of covenants in order to link employment policies and economic development. These perspectives seem to be neglected in the new model, and this can most likely be attributed to the controversial results of the traditional “decentralised” model. Conversely, the shift of functions from the local level to the Regions and the State has been realised without adequate evaluation of available resources and without modernising the whole employment services system. This means that the same attempt to give

more efficiency to the system is again under question (Valente, 2016). The creation of a national agency for active labour market policies is also controversial as some authors think the national agency will have a role that is mainly focused on the coordination of the services networks (Spattini, 2016), while others are worried what the nature of and crucial functions given to the agency will be and see the risk of an overload due to its “functional hypertrophy” (Alaimo, 2016). One should also remember that, following the results of a public consultation on December 4th, 2016, the competencies in the field of labour market policy remained formally shared between the central level and the Regions, meaning that the central level cannot overcome the function of setting a general frame and minimum standards for policies.

On a formal level, we have both the vertical and horizontal subsidiarity principles observed, but the question is which are the institutional arrangements foreseen to make this “multi-level governance” model work. The reform foresees a specific tool, which is represented by covenants between the State and each Region in order to negotiate objectives, define the respective roles, and adapt policies following the specificity of each Region. On a second level, covenants can also be concluded between Regions and the local level to assure a better adaptation to the local contexts. But, till now, these covenants have been characterised by a very general and formalistic approach, which doesn't seem to fit with the need to promote targeted solution in the different labour markets.

Looking at the actors involved in the policies implementation, the model is traditionally based on the integration between private and public providers (Olivelli, Tiraboschi, 2005), meaning the reform aims at promoting the cooperation between the private and public in this sector. Anyway, both on the institutional side and in the scientific debate, attention has been paid mainly to the relationship between “traditional” private and public intermediaries (in terms of contraposition or cooperation). Nowadays, due to the transformations on-going, a greater attention should be addressed to another segment of the Italian employment services sector, i.e. that of “special authorisation systems” (Art. 6 of the Legislative Decree n. 276/2003) that include a diversified set of actors (from schools and Universities, to labour consultants, to websites) who are authorised to intermediate labour demand and supply by having access to simplified procedures. It is exactly by this way that a new, big, fragmented set of social actors are allowed to participate in the system and can concur in structuring specific transitional labour markets (between school and work, in specific sectors, and also in the web, where

the platforms are becoming more important and able to steal emerging sectors of the labour market from the traditional intermediaries).

In the current labour market organisation, the role of social partners remains marginal. However, their contributions on all institutional levels are more and more important, both on the side of policy planning, and on that of the implementation of new negotiated solutions for managing occupational transitions at a local level. Without conveying any judgement concerning the bodies that are expressions of social partners, their functions and effectiveness in the field of active labour market policies (Varesi, 2011), it is necessary to point out that this marginalisation of social partners, and the silence of the reform concerning their involvement, is a counter-trend with respect to the interesting developments of decentralised bargaining, but also with respect to the Italian vocational training system, which has been traditionally identified as a hybrid model (public-led, but with a relevant role for social partners, especially in the field of continuing vocational training) (Casano, 2013; 2016).

In conclusion, concerning the governance model, the risk is to lose – due to the re-centralisation of the system – those positive conditions that are necessary for inter-institutional cooperation, and, at a local level, for public-private collaboration strategies which have marked the success of some territorial models.

The new organisational model should be supported by a technological infrastructure based on a unitary information system aimed at assuring coordination and adequate informative on the labour markets. Unfortunately, that seems to be the less-clear part of the reform intervention. The unitary informative system (Art. 13, Legislative Decree n. 150/2015) should result from the coordination of current informative systems of the interested public administrations, but should also present some new components. It will collect administrative information (such as fruition of unemployment benefits, hiring mandatory notification), and new sets of data concerning, for example, training experiences experimented by people in their career, which are supposed to be collected by the means of two new tools: the *vocational training informative system*, and the *individual electronic dossier for workers* (Author). The latter of which will collect all information concerning training experiences and will be automatically connected to the *vocational training informative system* participated by all training providers.

After two years, it is still not clear how and when this system will be implemented. In any case, this solution seems to be far from what is

needed in order to build a real *labour market intelligence system*. The reduction of informative gaps is a crucial aspect for governing labour market transitions, but is something different from a digital infrastructure correlating informative flows. What is needed, is to build *learning communities* at a local level, adopting the principle of *learning by monitoring* (Sabel, 1993) which states that all relevant actors in a specific context (i.e. schools, universities, companies, social partners, institutions) cooperate in the production of the most important collective good, which nowadays is *information*. This requires tools and strategies that are not adequately supported at the moment, and must go in parallel with all technological solutions aimed at integrating information at a national level, in order to properly advise central institutions.

Looking at the national informative infrastructure, several measures yet to be introduced by previous reforms are still outstanding and seem to be a precondition for a *unitary* informative system. Examples include: an efficient database on professions (related training, demand/supply, career perspectives) which should be connected with monitoring bodies involving social partners in order to efficiently map skills needs at a local/sectorial level; and the National repository of educational and training diplomas and professional qualifications, which has been introduced by the Legislative Decree n. 13/2013 (Art. 8), but is still incomplete.

3. Towards a *Workfare* Model

The second element characterising the reform of employment services and active labour market policies, is the shift towards a *workfare* logic by the means of reinforced conditionality schemes associated with unemployment benefits (Articles 21 and 22 of Legislative Decree n. 150/2015) (Olivieri, 2016). These changes have been interpreted as the embracement of an idea of social inclusion more as a matter of duty than as an individual right, thus leading to a lower freedom of choice for people involved (Fili, 2016).

The final aim of this reform is to increase occupational rates more than to sustain occupational transitions. That is why the application of strong protection measures is reserved to the unemployed ones, in order to prioritize the “traditional” transition from unemployment to work, without taking care of preventing measures or systemic interventions able to create the conditions for secure transitions in different situations and contexts. Another aspect that has been criticised is the generality of the dispositions concerning concrete measures and services of active labour

market policies to be provided by employment services. The vague list of services enumerated in Article 18 of the Decree (i.e. orientation, training, internships, entrepreneurial support, etc.) is also disconnected by other crucial measures and interventions introduced in the past years (i.e. “Fornero Reform” and its implementing decrees), representing the new frontier of active labour market policies – such as competences individuation, validation and certification – which are neglected in the context of the reform.

It has been argued that the measure that one could label as the “emblem” of the reform, that is the “job re-integration voucher” introduced by Article 23 of the Legislative Decree n. 150/2015 (Caruso, Cuttone, 2016), is characterised by a different logic. In this case, the critical aspects underlined above (*workfare* logic, low personalisation, generic measures), leave room for a “soft” conditionality approach (Caruso, Cuttone, 2016) more inspired by the principles of responsibility and freedom of choice. The presence of a tutor, the organisation of a personalised programme for a job search, the reimbursement of expenses granted to the service provider only following a positive outcome (employment), and the modulation of the voucher with respect to individual employability chances, seem to give this measure all the features of the best international practices. Unfortunately, the results of the first experimentation of the “job re-integration voucher” are not comforting. For instance, during the pilot phase in spring 2017 – due to “strategic” mistakes in the implementation process – only 3% of recipients of the measure decided to join the programme on a voluntary basis (Ichino, 2017). Another issue concerns how to grant adequate financial and professional resources once the measure is implemented at full speed, remembering a crucially relevant fact: all of the reform is supposed to be implemented at zero costs.

It is worth considering some interesting experiences of cooperation between the State and Regions in the management of industrial crises by means of the “collective job re-integration voucher” (Valente, 2017), because they represent a new approach to this tool which is more «relational, inter-organizational and negotiated» (Caruso, Cuttone, 2016). In these experiences, it seems to have been overcome the risk of considering the “job re-integration voucher” as an individual endowment, which risks being ineffective if demanded to the individual activation capacity, in the absence of appropriate institutional support (Tiraboschi, 2016).

Nevertheless, as we will explain better in the following section, the whole system is not interested in significant improvements on the side of mapping and anticipating skills needs or on that of articulating preventive strategies to avoid workers’ de-qualification and skills deprivation, both of which are crucial for promoting the sustainable development of companies, territories and better employment opportunities.

4. Is there Still Room for a Lifelong Learning Approach?

In the current system of active labour market policies, competencies development and recognition seem to play a minor role. All references to training policies are generic and not adequately connected with the perspectives of lifelong learning or social investment. This is true if one looks at examples like: the “right to lifelong learning”, that was formally recognised in 2012, but is still far from being supported by concrete measures; the absence of a coordinated and modern system for skills forecasting at a local and national level; the system for validating and certificating formal, non-formal and informal learning that is still not operative; and the unsuccessful implementation of the “territorial networks for lifelong learning” introduced by the Fornero Reform. Lifelong learning should be at the heart of a modern welfare system in order to help people in facing old and new risks in frequent occupational transitions. A recent report from The European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC, 2017) presenting the ten trends transforming education and training, clearly defines the following priorities in the field of training policies:

- 1) Because people change jobs – and even professions – much more often than a generation ago, investing in lifelong learning, including through more learning on the job, is the best promise to maximise future employability.
- 2) Digital is the new literacy. The lack of basic digital skills may lock individuals not only out of work, but also out of society. This implies the need for greater understanding of what digital (and media) literacy means, and prioritizing the access of the more vulnerable workers to these opportunities.
- 3) The growing individualisation of careers paths makes it necessary to provide personalised interventions, meaning re-centring the delivery of training on personal projects (and progress). Up till now, high costs were considered an insurmountable obstacle to this, but new digital technologies in the field of education and training provide for new solutions and are a catalyst for personalising learning.

One-size-fits-all is unlikely to work in this new environment, which is why targeted solutions must be built by looking at those crucial transitions that are more exposed to risks and by planning interventions at a local and sectorial level.

Against this backdrop, the recent reform addresses the continuing vocational training system only on the side of governance, here again, trying to re-centralize the whole system. Planning and control functions are assigned to the Ministry of Labour, together with the prerogative of determining the general frame for training policies and the basic standards for the accreditation of training providers, in order to access to public funds. Legislative Decree n. 150/2015 also introduces important changes in the regulation of bilateral training funds for continuing vocational training. These bilateral funds were created more than 15 years ago in order to improve the quality and efficiency of the unsatisfying public training system. The principle inspiring their creation was that of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity based also on the trust towards bilateral governance as a better solution for managing training investments and interventions, due to the privileged position of social partners in assessing and satisfying companies and workers' training needs. The original model was based on a sectorial logic – and a territorial articulation was also foreseen – which hasn't been realised in fact, except for a few positive experiences. A huge debate has been running in the past decade concerning the validity and the results of the bilateral system. The bilateral funds became the central infrastructure of the continuing vocational training system, in terms of resources collected and managed and in terms of companies and workers involved, but they have not been able, till now, to overcome historical problems such as: low participation rates; unequal access to training based on age, gender, region, or company size; and a lack of innovative training methodologies and contents with a great part of programs focused on mandatory safety-related training – each for a duration not exceeding 16 hours – developed in a traditional classroom environment. These results have fostered a sentiment of mistrust, which brought the central government to make several attempts to reduce bilateral funds' financial means and autonomy, and by putting into discussion the nature of private and autonomous organisations under the control of social partners.

Following the recent labour market reform, the bilateral training funds are now more exposed to central coordination and control, for example: they are formally included in the national network for active labour market policies and they will receive strategic orientation from the Ministry of

Labour concerning training policies; they will be under the surveillance of the national agency for employment policies (ANPAL); they are expected to contribute to the national informative system on continuing vocational training; and they are involved in the implementation of conditionality schemes associated to wage subsidy programs promoted in order to sustain employment retention during crisis, in view to combine wage subsidy with participation in training.

Nevertheless, no specific interventions have been planned to enforce the main function of these structures and, more in general, of a continuing vocational training system that is meant to train, on a continuous basis, people (especially the more exposed to unemployment risk), in order to help them in facing unexpected and recurrent transitions in the labour market (Author). This means moving from the logic of arranging “restoring” interventions in times of crisis, to that of articulating preventive strategies, and investing in people’s capability to face transitions by assuring the “right to a career”. It is not only a matter of promoting training interventions as an active labour market policy, the challenge is that of building tailored “*bridging mechanisms*” (Schmid, 2015) able to promote continuous personal development in a life course perspective.

5. Conclusion

In the “new geography of work” (Moretti, 2013), the configurations of the spatial dimension – which is relevant for analysing and regulating work – are to be determined by looking at real processes, which are different from one territory to another, because the on-going transformations are creating new winners and losers in the race to competitiveness, which is more and more dependent on the availability of material and immaterial infrastructures. In this view, the historical debate around centralisation and de-centralisation should be replaced by an accurate analysis (an interdisciplinary analysis, by definition) aimed at individuating the more appropriate dimension for understanding labour market dynamics and arranging successful interventions for the promotion of employability.

For what specifically concerns active labour market policies, this could be done by analysing models and systems already established in different territories, resulting from a combination of factors like: institutional traditions; the legislative framework (both at a national and at a regional level); and decentralised collective bargaining, agreements, covenants, pacts and informal networks for the matching between labour and demand supply in specific sectors or contexts. This would develop sort of

“map” of the labour market’s organisational and regulatory systems, which would be useful to individuate the more appropriate strategies and tools to promote occupation, inclusion and development.

In the Italian case, the reform foresees a specific tool for the coordination between different institutional levels and actors, which is represented by covenants between the State and each Region, in order to negotiate objectives, to define the respective roles, and to adapt active labour market policies, following the specificity of each Region. A second level of covenants can also be concluded between Regions and the local level to assure a better adaptation to the local contexts. But, till now, these covenants have been characterised by a very general and formalistic approach.

Another crucial issue is exploiting the potentiality of growing information flows, not only by building a digital infrastructure to collect information from administrative sources at a national level, but also by promoting stakeholders’ cooperation at a local and sectorial level in producing and sharing information about labour market demand and supply, new skills required, and careers and transitions features (and related risks and opportunities) at a meso/micro level (Cortese, 2012). Here, there seems to be a pivotal role for sociological research.

An essential condition for the functioning of active labour market policies, still outstanding, is to develop a sound system for mapping and anticipating skill needs (Allegretta, 2013). In our country, this issue seems to be relegated to innovative managerial strategies (in big companies), or to a formal requirement to be observed, in order to access public funding for training, but it is still not conceived as a policy advice tool (Allegretta, 2016) or as a strategic information source for planning and evaluating training and labour policies. Yet, recent research on the results and effectiveness of active labour market policies clearly demonstrates that these interventions cannot be successful without being coordinated with training and occupational needs at the local level (Teselli, 2016).

Transparency (i.e. identification, recognition and transferability) of competencies developed in every learning context is another strategic enabling factor for sustaining occupational transitions. In our country – following the Law n° 92/2012, establishing for the first time in Italy, a right to lifelong learning and competencies certification – an attempt has been made by means of the Legislative Decree n° 13/2013, but the system for validating and certifying competencies is far from being fully actionable. It is worth mentioning that while the public system is stuck in a complex and late implementation, and has been built upon professional

standards which risks getting old before being used, different certification systems are spreading in the private sector concerning the growing and differentiated world of professionals, in parallel with *online* international reputational and certification systems which are gaining more and more importance.

In conclusion, in a country where the national expenditure for active labour market policies is among the lowest in Europe, and where the lack of dedicated staff in the public employment services risks to paralyse the simplest of functions in some Regions, the most critical point of the recent reform remains the absence of dedicated resources to develop new and innovative strategies and interventions.

Recent research by Gazier and Tuschziner (2015) suggests the importance of promoting learning communities, as well as the importance of investing resources in training the *nodes* – i.e. professionals (inside companies, public and private employment services, schools, and all relevant actors in labour market governance) – involved in the occupational transition management, in order to create new “career advisors” equipped with at least three set of skills: knowledge of the local labour markets, advanced competencies in coaching differentiated targets, and advanced knowledge of the institutional framework including individual rights and existing supporting measures.

Time and lack of resources are the main obstacles in this endeavour, both of which can only be overcome thanks to cooperative strategies at a local level. In this view, the Author suggests finding and promoting what she calls “enabling third parties” (*tiers capacitants*) able to build the conditions for the production of shared goods (training, information) by approaching two different worlds: the world of the *haute couture* (big companies and private employment services holding the organisational and financial means to invest) and that of *pret-à-porter* (small companies, but also the public employment services, which are forced to adopt low costs and standardised solutions).

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