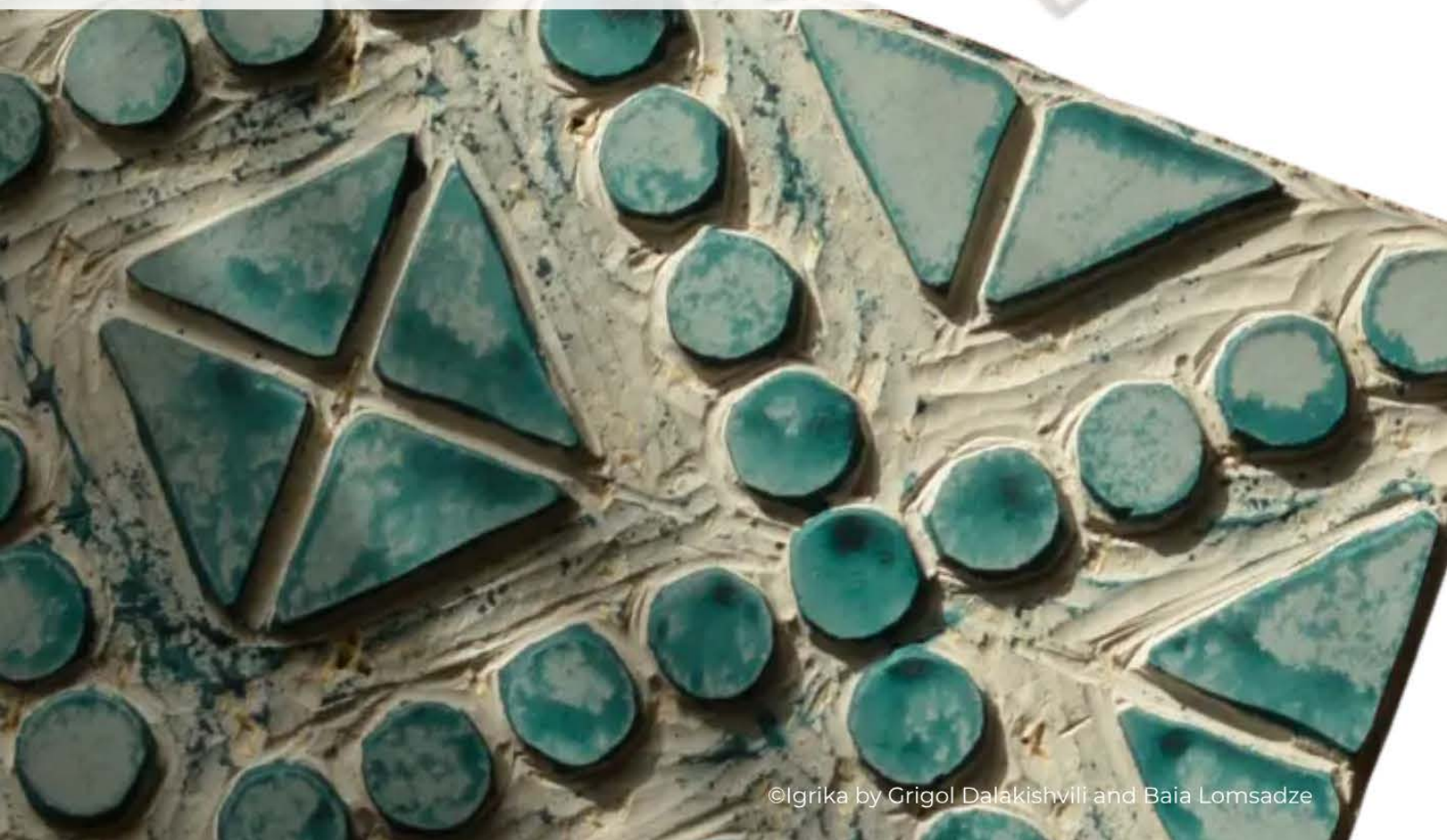




BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING SKILLS

BRICKS - Building Bridges, Building Skills: Enhancing Non-Formal Craft Education for Sustainable Cultural Transmission

NATIONAL REPORT, COUNTRY: ITALY



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Introduction

This document presents the national findings collected within the framework of the BRICKS - Building Bridges, Building Skills: Enhancing Adults' Non-formal Craft Education for Sustainable Cultural Transmission project. BRICKS is funded by the European Union under the ERASMUS+ 2024 programme (KA220-ADU – Cooperation Partnerships in Adult Education). Its aim is to strengthen the visibility, quality, and recognition of non-formal adult education within the craft and heritage craft sectors across Europe.

Non-formal craft education plays a crucial role in safeguarding traditional knowledge, supporting professional development, and ensuring the transmission of skills to future generations. Yet, this field remains insufficiently structured and often poorly understood within national education frameworks. Through coordinated research and multi-country analysis, BRICKS seeks to bridge this gap and lay the foundations for a more coherent and accessible non-formal learning ecosystem for craftspeople, educators, and organisations.

This national report forms part of a wider comparative study conducted in Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy. It outlines the key characteristics of non-formal craft education at national level, examines existing training and certification models, identifies challenges encountered by practitioners, and gathers insights directly from craft professionals through a dedicated survey.

The BRICKS Project and its European approach

Rationale & needs

The goal of this national report is to document the current state of non-formal adult education in the traditional and heritage craft sector within each partner country. It aims to provide a coherent overview of existing training pathways, legal and policy frameworks, validation mechanisms, challenges, and good practices, complemented by direct insights gathered from craft educators and learners.

The report contributes to the wider comparative study carried out in Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy, forming part of the evidence base for the mapping of non-formal education in the partner countries.

Objectives

- Study the existing non-formal adult education models and challenges in the crafts sector of partner countries.
- Support partner organisations, craft educators, and master craftspeople to expand opportunities, quality, and accessibility of adult non-formal education in heritage craft (HC) and traditional craft (TC).
- Increase the outreach of BRICKS and ensure spill-over effects at national and European levels.

Through this research, BRICKS has produced:

- A consolidated state of the art on non-formal adult craft education in the four partner countries;
- Improved understanding among partners and educators of existing models and potential areas for development;
- Increased awareness of the role and value of non-formal craft education at national and European level.

For the report, the terms *craftsmanship*, *handicraft*, *traditional craftsmanship* (including artistic crafts, fine and applied arts, folk art, and related domains) and *traditional knowledge* are used in line with the project's glossary.

Partners

The BRICKS project is built upon a consortium of partners that are deeply rooted in the craft and cultural heritage sector, bringing together complementary expertise in training, advocacy, cultural preservation, and innovation. The partnership between Belgium, Georgia, Poland, and Italy reflects both geographical diversity and a shared commitment to addressing the key challenges identified in the non-formal craft education path: skills transmission, lack of recognition, limited funding, and generational renewal.

The project is led by Mad'in Europe (MIE – Belgium), which plays a central coordinating and strategic role. Founded in Brussels in 2013, MIE has developed a strong positioning at the European level, focusing on enhancing the visibility and recognition of heritage professions, including traditional crafts, fine crafts, building crafts, and conservation-restoration. Its mission is to highlight the contribution of these professions to employment creation and sustainable development, positioning them as key assets in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. MIE also places strong

emphasis on the transmission of skills to new generations, advocating for the recognition of crafts as professions of excellence rather than marginal activities. This positioning directly responds to several challenges identified in the survey, particularly those related to lack of visibility, limited institutional recognition, and the need to reframe crafts within contemporary socio-economic debates.

The project benefits from the expertise of the Georgian Arts and Culture Center (GACC - Georgia), an organisation with more than 25 years of experience in the fields of cultural heritage, creative industries, and international cooperation. GACC operates within a context where traditional crafts are deeply embedded in cultural identity but are increasingly at risk due to economic pressures, migration, and limited institutional support. As an accredited NGO to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, a member of the European Crafts Alliance, and the official representative of Europa Nostra, GACC plays a key role in the preservation, promotion, and sustainable use of Georgian cultural heritage. Its activities include educational programmes, support for cultural entrepreneurship, and international networking, aiming to strengthen the economic viability and resilience of craft-based sectors. GACC's positioning reflects many of the structural issues highlighted in the BRICKS project, particularly the urgency of safeguarding endangered skills and creating sustainable pathways for new generations of artisans.

The National Museum in Gdańsk (Poland) contributes to connecting craft education with museum practice, heritage preservation, and public engagement. As one of the oldest museums in Poland and a national cultural institution under the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, it plays a central role in the collection, conservation, and dissemination of artistic and cultural knowledge. Its scope includes not only Polish and European art, but also ethnographic and intercultural heritage, making it a key actor in interpreting and transmitting material culture. Through its educational activities, exhibitions, and research, the museum contributes to the public understanding of crafts and heritage, reinforcing the link between non-formal education and broader cultural ecosystems. Its involvement in BRICKS ensures that the project integrates institutional knowledge and heritage-based perspectives, complementing more practice-oriented approaches.

Artex – Centre for Artistic and Traditional Craftsmanship in Tuscany (Italy) brings over 30 years of experience in supporting and developing the craft sector. Established on the initiative of Confartigianato and CAN – the two main Italian crafts associations, Artex operates as a key reference point for artistic and traditional crafts at regional and international levels, working closely with public institutions such as the Tuscany Region and the Municipality of Florence. Its activities focus on promoting craftsmanship, enhancing its competitiveness, and fostering innovation, particularly through the integration of digital technologies and sustainable practices. Artex's positioning is particularly significant in a context where craftsmanship is both economically relevant and culturally embedded, yet faces increasing challenges related to global competition and generational transition.

By combining training, business support, and policy engagement, Artex plays a crucial role in bridging traditional knowledge and contemporary market dynamics.

Across all partner countries, a common element clearly emerges: partners are not external observers of the sector, but active actors within it, working directly with artisans, learners, institutions, and communities. This ensures a practice-based and experience-driven perspective, allowing the project to address real challenges and develop operationally relevant solutions.

The strength of the consortium lies in this combination of local embeddedness and transnational vision. Each partner contributes specific expertise—ranging from European advocacy (Belgium), to heritage preservation and international cooperation (Georgia), institutional and cultural transmission (Poland), and innovation and sector development (Italy)—while the project framework enables comparison, exchange, and mutual learning.

Ultimately, the partners act as bridges between knowledge and practice, connecting heritage and innovation, local realities and European strategies, individual learning experiences and systemic development needs.

Through this collaborative approach and their direct experience in the field, the consortium contributes to repositioning non-formal craft education as a strategic domain, capable of supporting skills development, sustainability transitions, and the preservation of cultural heritage in contemporary Europe.

Methodology

The national findings presented in this report are based on a two-step research process conducted by all BRICKS partners using a shared methodological framework to ensure comparability across Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy.

1. Desk Research

Each partner conducted structured desk research using a common template developed within the consortium. The research examined:

- Legal and policy frameworks for non-formal adult education;
- Existing training pathways in traditional and heritage crafts;
- Validation and certification mechanisms;
- Roles of institutions and organisations active in non-formal craft education;
- Examples of good practices and the relationship between formal and non-formal learning.

Sources included national legislation, governmental and regional documents, sector reports, academic literature, and publicly available information from craft and heritage institutions.

2. Survey

A multi-country survey was jointly designed to gather direct insights from:

1. Organisations or individuals providing non-formal craft education, and
2. Learners participating in non-formal craft training.

The questionnaire was disseminated nationally by partners through professional networks, associations, training centres, and online platforms. All responses were collected centrally by Artex S.Cons.R.L. and shared with partners in accordance with GDPR and the project's data management plan. The survey explored training practices, motivations, barriers, skills needs, and expectations regarding certification.

COUNTRY STATE OF ART - ITALY

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

The Italian definition of non-formal education is set out in paragraph 53 of Article 4 of the Italian law No. 92/2012 on the Reform of the Labour Market (Fornero Law). Paragraphs 51 to 54 mention the lifelong learning: “In line with European Union guidelines, lifelong learning refers to any activity undertaken by individuals through formal, non-formal or informal channels at various stages of their lives, with a view to improving their knowledge, skills and competences for personal, civic, social and employment purposes”.¹

Formal learning refers to learning that takes place within the education and training system, as well as in universities and higher education institutions specialising in the arts, music and dance, and which leads to the award of an academic qualification, a vocational qualification or diploma – including those obtained through apprenticeships – or a recognised certification.

Non-formal learning refers to learning characterised by a person’s intentional choice, which takes place outside formal systems, within any organisation pursuing educational and training objectives, including voluntary organisations, national civil service and the private social sector, as well as within businesses.

Informal learning refers to learning which, regardless of any deliberate choice, takes place as individuals carry out activities in everyday life and in the interactions that occur within it, in the context of work, family and leisure.

The relevant policies on lifelong learning are determined at national level by agreement within the Unified Conference, on the proposal of the MIM: Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, after consulting the Ministry of Business and Made in Italy (MIMIT) and the social partners, starting with the identification and recognition of the cultural and professional heritage accumulated by citizens and workers throughout their personal and professional lives, to be documented through the full implementation of a single information backbone via the interoperability of existing central and regional databases.

Furthermore, the above mentioned law provides for the establishment of a national public system for the certification of competences, based on minimum service standards that are uniform across the whole country.

¹ [LEGGE 28 giugno 2012, n. 92 - Normattiva](#)

The certification of competences is defined as a public act aimed at ensuring the transparency and recognition of learning, in line with the guidelines set by the European Union. Certification leads to the award of a certificate, diploma or qualification that formally documents the assessment and validation carried out by a public body or an accredited or authorised entity.

In implementation of the aforementioned law, Legislative Decree No. 13/2013 was therefore issued, setting out the general rules governing the national skills certification system. The legislative decree brings the new National Skills Certification System into operation and aims to identify and develop professional skills acquired not only at work but also in leisure time, in order to promote geographical and professional mobility, facilitate the matching of supply and demand in the labour market, and increase the transparency of learning and the recognition of certifications at national and European level.²

Pursuant to the aforementioned decree, on 30 June 2015, an interministerial decree (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) established the National Framework of Regional Qualifications. It established:

1. a mechanism for the mutual recognition of regional qualifications,
2. standardised processes, certification and procedures for services identifying/validating non-formal and informal learning and certifying skills.

Finally, an interministerial decree (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) of 8 January 2018 established the National Qualifications Framework (QNF) as a tool for describing and classifying qualifications awarded within the National Certification System.³

We can say that non-formal education in Italy represents a flexible and dynamic approach to learning that complements traditional educational systems. Taking place in diverse contexts such as associations, workshops, and corporate environments, it allows individuals to engage in knowledge-building beyond formal institutions. Its methodology, rooted in “learning by doing,” encourages active participation through experiential activities, seminars, and collaborative workshops, making the learning process both practical and engaging. Participation is voluntary, reflecting the importance of personal motivation and individual choice in shaping one’s educational path.

Although non-formal education does not typically result in formal qualifications, it still offers valuable recognition through skill-based certifications. Overall, non-formal education in Italy stands out as an

²[https://nuoviprofessionali.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/decreto legislativo 13-2013 certificazione competenze-1.pdf](https://nuoviprofessionali.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/decreto_legislativo_13-2013_certificazione_competenze-1.pdf)

³ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/01/25/18A00411/sg>.

inclusive and responsive learning model, tailored to evolving personal and professional needs, and capable of equipping individuals with the skills required in a rapidly changing society.

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

The definition of training in the craft sector is set out at national level in Law No 443 of 8 August 1985, the so-called Framework Law on Crafts (currently under review).⁴

Article 8 of that law – entitled Craft Education – states:

“The craft education referred to in Article 117 of the Constitution is provided within the framework of vocational training and within the limits of the fundamental principles governing that field.

Craft enterprises, whether individual or associated, may be called upon by the region, through its own legislation, to contribute to functions relating to craft education, in implementation of policy guidelines and on the basis of specific, time-limited and renewable agreements, for the delivery of specific courses.

Regions may regulate the recognition of Botteghe Scuola (workshop-schools) for the period defined by regional agreements for the craft enterprises referred to in the preceding paragraph that so request ...

Regions are responsible, within the framework of vocational training, for the promotion and coordination of entrepreneurial training and professional development activities for craftspeople”.

Non-formal education in the craft sector in Italy is therefore organised primarily at regional level, whilst complying with the provisions of the aforementioned national law.

The Botteghe Scuola are a prime example of non-formal education in the craft sector and, whilst they may take on different forms across the various regions, they share certain common features: first and foremost, they are workshops and/or businesses that employ a Master Artisans – that is a craftsman capable of passing on their technical expertise.

Botteghe Scuola have been regulated in almost all Italian regions: Tuscany; Marche; Piedmont; Trentino; Valle d’Aosta; etc. Training courses in the Botteghe Scuola may be managed and organised in different ways – with or without the support of training agencies – and may or may not receive funding from the regions as part of the funds allocated to vocational training.

⁴ [LEGGE 8 agosto 1985, n. 443 - Normattiva](#)

Such funding may take various forms:

- vouchers and/or monthly work grants for students and a lump-sum reimbursement for host companies (for example, in Piedmont);
- a grant to master artisan for teaching activities, either in the form of an hourly rate – Aosta Valley Region – or a lump-sum grant for running the course, subject to the submission of a suitable training programme – Tuscany Region (currently under review).

In any case, this is free, accredited training for students, typically aged between 18 and 29; in some cases, however, the age range may be extended for professional retraining programmes.

Funding for courses at the Botteghe Scuola depends on regional budgets and is not always available: consequently, there is no guarantee of a constant supply of funded courses. However, courses may be run – in accordance with the characteristics of funded courses – by Master Artisans on a private basis, but in that case the students must bear the costs: this is referred to as recognised but unfunded training.

Finally, the Botteghe Scuola may organise and promote courses on an entirely private basis – without any obligation to comply with the requirements of funded courses – and in this case, we are outside the scope of recognised training. These latter courses are usually shorter and less demanding, and therefore less vocational. Course participants receive certificates of attendance only.

Apprenticeships can also be regarded – at least in the workplace component – as non-formal education: they are permanent employment contracts aimed at training and youth employment, governed by Legislative Decree No. 81 of 15 June 2015 and subsequent amendments (Articles 41–47). The type of apprenticeship we are interested in is the vocational apprenticeship, i.e. an employment contract for the attainment of a professional qualification for contractual purposes through cross-disciplinary and vocational training. Normally, the duration of the contract may not exceed three years, or five years for the craft trades. Young people aged between 18 and 29 (or 17 if they hold a professional qualification) may be hired under this type of apprenticeship in all sectors of activity, whether private or public. Apprenticeships fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.⁵

Finally, there are also internship programmes in workshops funded by private foundations and/or associations, as well as vocational training centres offering hands-on courses of various kinds: these range from one-year or multi-year courses leading to professional qualifications, to short and

⁵ [DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 15 giugno 2015, n. 81 - Normattiva](#)

summer courses designed to introduce students to the sector, which provide simple certificates of attendance.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

3.1. The Bottega Scuola project in Tuscany

The Bottega Scuola is a craft enterprise that acts as a fully-fledged training agency accredited by the Regional Vocational Training System, and whose training courses may be funded by public resources or recognised under Regional Law 32/2002.

The ‘Botteghe Scuola’, established under Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 ‘Provisions on craftsmanship and the simplification of administrative obligations for craft enterprises’, are enterprises in the artistic and traditional craft sector managed by a “Master Craftsperson”, whose qualification is governed by Article 22 of the same law and by Articles 9 and 10 of the Regulations implementing Law No. 53/2008 (approved by Decree of the President of the Regional Council No. 55/R/2009). To become a Training Workshop, a craft enterprise must therefore be run by a Master Craftsperson, whose professional status is officially recognised on the basis of experience and skills.

Paragraph 2 of Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 provides that the Bottega Scuola may carry out training activities within the specific sector of artistic and traditional craftsmanship of which it is an expression, in accordance with the procedures set out in Regional Law No. 32/2002, thereby passing on knowledge and skills.

The training courses run by the Bottega Scuola are aimed at anyone interested in training and/or specialisation in artistic and traditional techniques of excellence.

Paragraph 2 of Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 provides that the workshop-school may carry out training activities within the specific sector of artistic and traditional craftsmanship that it represents, in accordance with the procedures set out in Regional Law No. 32/2002, thereby passing on knowledge and skills.

The training courses run by the Bottega Scuola are aimed at anyone interested in training and/or specialisation in artistic and traditional techniques of excellence and may lead to the acquisition of a professional qualification or a skills certificate.

The “Bottega Scuola” training courses take place in the workplace, within the craft business, and are therefore defined as “work-based”. Work-based learning facilitates a smoother transition from the training system to the workplace.

The training model underpinning Bottega Scuola represents a radical departure from more traditional forms of teaching: within a Bottega Scuola, learning takes place through practice, working alongside the master artisan during the day-to-day execution of the work. Knowledge is therefore passed on through one-to-one training, is strongly focused on professional practice, and allows for a high degree of personalisation based on any skills the student may already possess.

Although the Bottega Scuola is a ‘non-formal’ learning environment – that is, one that takes place directly in the workplace – its training programmes have characteristics that are directly linked to the Regional Vocational Training System. The latter sets out the professional, training and certification standards to which training providers, including the Bottega Scuola, must adhere. The Bottega Scuola courses are in fact aligned with the Regional Register of Professional Roles - <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/repertorio-regionale-delle-figure-professionali> - referred to in Article 66 ter of the Implementing Regulations of Regional Law 32/2002 and may lead to the award of a professional qualification or a skills certificate.⁶

3.2. Tirocini a Bottega (Workshop Apprenticeships)

Now in its third year, this project is organised by Fondazione CR Firenze and OMA (Osservatorio dei Mestieri d’Arte) with the aim of promoting and funding six extracurricular apprenticeships, each lasting at least one year, to be carried out at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the artistic craft sector based in Florence and the Metropolitan City.

The call for applications is aimed at craft enterprises that stand out for the high quality of their products and materials, for non-standardised production processes, for the use of traditional techniques, but also for the introduction of innovative technologies, and which represent the products and activities historically characteristic of the region.

The call for applications funds up to two semesters of the internship and provides financial contributions to companies that decide, following the internship, to hire the intern.

Further information can be found at the link for the latest edition of the call for applications.⁷

3.3. Una Scuola un Lavoro. Percorsi di Eccellenza (A School, a Job. Pathways to Excellence)

Now in its fifteenth edition, the project is funded by the Cologni Foundation for the Arts and Crafts with the aim of introducing young talents to the world of high-end artistic craftsmanship and consists of two stages:

- A. Mini Master – a classroom-based training course offered free of charge to all selected participants. The Mini Master involves top-tier educational institutions and is structured around four teaching modules that reflect current themes in the world of artistic craftsmanship: History of Applied Arts, Digital Communication, Micro-enterprise Management, and Design and Personal Branding. It also offers the opportunity to visit leading artisan workshops in Milan, provides insights into intellectual property and relationship management, practical information on self-employment, and includes a course on health and safety in the workplace.

⁶ www.bottegascuola.it

⁷ www.osservatoriomestieridarte.it/2025/Bando_TirociniinBottega.pdf

- B. Training internship – a practical training programme aimed at young people who have successfully completed studies in the field of artistic craftsmanship. The project offers newly qualified, recent school leavers or recent graduates in this sector the chance to undertake a six-month extracurricular internship in a workshop, working side by side with a master artisan. These extracurricular placements aim to support young people’s career choices by providing direct insight into the world of work and helping them acquire greater professional skills. At the same time, they offer many master artisans the opportunity to train an apprentice who can learn the secrets of the trade and work alongside them.

Each year, the project offers 25 young people the chance to train in a workshop.

Further information can be found on the project website.⁸

3.4 - Scuola della Ceramica di Montelupo (Ceramic School in Montelupo Fiorentino)

The new School of Ceramics is an integral part of the Montelupo Fiorentino Experimental Ceramics Centre, one of the historically most important centres of craftsmanship in the field of ceramics, and was established in 2018, building on and innovating the educational experience of the school founded in 1983. The Ceramics School teaches the art of craftsmanship by combining knowledge of the most ancient traditions with research and technological innovation, working closely with the local production sector; the teaching staff, for example, come from the local production sector and beyond.

The school offers various types of courses depending on the objectives to be achieved:

- Hobby
- Intensive
- Introductory
- Qualifying
- Workshops

The duration of the courses ranges from 1 day to over 4 weeks: for example, the ‘qualifying’ course consists of 900 hours of tuition and leads to the qualification of ‘ceramic craftsperson’.⁹

3.5 - SCHOLA

Founded in 2020, SCHOLA is a Florence-based academy dedicated to craftsmanship education, created in collaboration with leading artisanal institutions such as Scuola del Cuoio and Stefano Bemer. It represents a strong example of non-formal learning by combining traditional craft techniques with contemporary design and an immersive, practice-based methodology.

SCHOLA offers intensive, full-time courses (typically 10–20 weeks or around 5 months) which costs generally depend on the programme. The courses are highly practical and include areas such as

⁸ <https://unascuolaunlavoro.it/>

⁹ <https://www.scuolaceramica.com/>

leather goods and accessories (bag making), bespoke shoemaking, shoe design, sustainable fashion, tailoring-related practices, ceramics, furniture design, and even culinary and other creative disciplines. Each programme covers the full creative process—from design and pattern making to construction and finishing—through continuous hands-on practice.

The courses are designed for adult learners (18+) with a strong motivation but no prior technical skills required, making SCHOLA accessible to beginners, career changers, and creative professionals seeking specialization. The academy attracts a highly international student body, drawn by the opportunity to engage directly with Italian craftsmanship and reinterpret it in a contemporary way.

A key strength of SCHOLA lies in its trainers: courses are taught by well skilled craftspeople - some of them are Master Artisans - and experienced professionals from the craft and design industries, often directly connected to renowned workshops and brands. This ensures the transmission of authentic, high-level skills while bridging education and real-world practice.

Sustainability is also embedded in the approach, with the use of local materials, deadstock, and recycling practices that promote responsible production.¹⁰

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

In Italy, the relationship between formal and non-formal education in the field of artistic craftsmanship is largely complementary: the transmission of craft skills can, in fact, take place both through institutionalised pathways and through practical, community-based and professional experiences.

Formal education comprises the pathways recognised by the national education system, which provide: theoretical and art-historical foundations; structured technical knowledge; design and entrepreneurial skills; recognised certifications and qualifications.

Formal education now also tends to incorporate digital skills, marketing and business management, responding to changes in the contemporary craft market.

Within the formal education system, a key role is currently played by vocational tertiary education provided by the ITS (Higher Technical Institutes) – now referred to as Higher Technology Institutes (ITS Academy) under Law No. 99 of 15 July 2022.¹¹

The Higher Technical Institutions System established by the new law lays the foundations for expanding vocational training for technicians with advanced technological and technical skills, with the aim of systematically contributing to measures for economic development and the

¹⁰ <https://www.schola.academy/>

¹¹ [LEGGE 15 luglio 2022, n. 99 - Normattiva](#)

competitiveness of the production system, gradually bridging the gap between labour supply and demand, which hampers the development of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, and to ensure, on a continuous basis, the supply of higher-level technicians at post-secondary level in relation to the technological areas considered strategic within the framework of industrial and technological development policies and ecological transition.

The programmes generally last 2 or 3 years following a school-leaving certificate and require at least 30–40% of the total course hours to be spent on work placements. Tutors are from the world of work: up to 50% of tutors come directly from the business and professional sectors. ITS are organised as participatory foundations that bring together schools, universities, training bodies and local businesses and they cover 10 Technological Areas strategic for Made in Italy and innovation. The sectors relating to the craft industry can be broadly divided into three main categories: 5. Housing and the built environment; 7. Fashion; 9. Technologies for artistic and cultural heritage and activities, and for tourism (sub-category 9.2 Cultural and artistic heritage).

Ministerial Decree 203/2023¹² sets out, in relation to the training programmes of each ITS Academy:

- a) the relevant technological areas;
- b) the relevant national professional figures, in relation to each technological area and any sub-areas into which it is divided at national level;
- c) the minimum standards for technological and technical-professional skills in relation to each professional role and any sub-profiles into which it is divided, classified in terms of macro-skills upon completion;
- d) the diplomas awarded upon completion of the training programmes.

IFTS programmes (*Istruzione Formazione Tecnica Superiore, Superior Technical Education and Training*) are courses organised by the Regions, entirely free of charge, funded by the European Social Fund, and designed and delivered by partnerships comprising independent upper secondary schools, accredited vocational training agencies, universities and businesses.

Upon passing a final assessment, students on an IFTS programme are awarded a nationally recognised higher technical specialisation certificate.

Each programme is structured in close collaboration with businesses in the relevant production sectors. For at least half of the total number of hours, students are supervised by expert tutors from the world of work.

Students take part in a work-study programme.

Structured over two semesters, IFTS courses have a total duration of 800 hours.

With a minimum of 15 students, they reinforce cultural and basic skills whilst developing specialist, technical and professional skills. Classroom and laboratory-based training is complemented by work

¹² <https://www.mim.gov.it/-/decreto-ministeriale-n-203-del-20-ottobre-2023>

placement periods to enable participants to apply the skills they have acquired in a business setting, familiarise themselves with working environments and understand the dynamics of workplace relationships.

These courses are aimed at young people and adults who wish to enter the labour market with the necessary qualifications or re-enter it by acquiring new skills.

To gain access to IFTS programmes, applicants must normally hold an upper secondary school leaving certificate. Access is also permitted to those who have not obtained an upper secondary school leaving certificate but have acquired skills relevant to the IFTS role through other training programmes or work experience.

Non-formal education, on the other hand, encompasses all organised activities that facilitate learning without being part of the official school system but which can be integrated with and/or linked to it, such as: apprenticeships in craft workshops; workshops and masterclasses; museums and documentation centres; etc.

Particularly important is the workshop model, where learning takes place through observation, daily practice and the direct master-apprentice relationship. This type of training allows for the acquisition of tacit knowledge and skills that are difficult to convey through theory alone.

In the Italian context, therefore, the two areas are generally not mutually exclusive, but interdependent:

- formal education provides theoretical and methodological tools, as well as qualifications;
- non-formal education enables the acquisition of practical skills, aesthetic sensibility and contextual knowledge.

Many young craftspeople follow a blended pathway: they attend a school or academy and subsequently undertake work placements, apprenticeships or work in workshops. Similarly, many master craftspeople collaborate with schools and educational institutions, helping to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and formal education.

Here are few examples of the interaction between the formal and non-formal systems:

The internship is a training and career-guidance experience included in the curriculum, designed to integrate academic study with the world of work, thereby promoting a balance between theory and practice, and between theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the workplace. The internship serves an educational and career-guidance purpose because the experience gained helps students gain a clearer understanding of the artistic field in which they wish to pursue their future career and enables them to establish links with the workplace, creating potential opportunities upon

completion of their studies. Through the internship, students earn a specific number of CFA credits, depending on the intern's study programme, in accordance with the procedures set out in each training project.

Many art academies and universities specialising in the fields of arts and crafts and fashion enter into agreements with workshops and craft businesses to facilitate these curricular placements, for which the school bears sole responsibility.

School-Work Training Programmes (FSL), formerly known as Transversal Skills Programmes (PCTO) and previously as School-Work Alternation, are designed, implemented, monitored and assessed under the responsibility of the educational institution, on the basis of specific agreements with businesses, or with their respective trade associations, or with chambers of commerce, industry, crafts and agriculture, or with public and private bodies, including those in the third sector, willing to host students for periods of work-based learning, which do not constitute an individual employment relationship (Legislative Decree No. 77 of 15 April 2005).

From the 2018/2019 academic year onwards, FSL projects must be implemented for a total duration of not less than:

- 210 hours in the second year and in the final three years of the course of study at vocational schools;
- 150 hours in the second two-year period and in the final year of the course of study at technical schools;
- 90 hours in the second two-year period and in the fifth year of grammar school.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Training in the arts and crafts sector in Italy is organised on a mixed system. It comprises courses at art schools and vocational colleges (specialising in 'Made in Italy'), post-diploma courses at ITS Academies, and a dense network of regional workshop-schools, academies and private foundations offering apprenticeships and highly specialised master's programmes.

This also entails different areas of responsibility: matters relating to the education system fall primarily within the remit of the national government, specifically the Ministry of Education and Merit, whilst matters relating to the training system, including work placements, fall within the remit of the Regions, with responsibilities extending as far down as the provincial level.

Some non-formal education initiatives are covered by inter-ministerial agreements involving the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy, and the Ministry of Culture (the latter with particular reference to training in the restoration sector).

The training system is divided into the following main streams:

1. Secondary Education (Upper Secondary Schools)

- **Artistic High Schools:** These provide a solid foundation in culture, design and art history. There are specialised streams linked to the applied arts, such as design, fine arts, architecture and the environment, or set design.
- **Vocational Institutes ('Made in Italy' stream):** Reorganised by the Ministry of Education and Merit, these institutes combine theoretical study with practical workshops. They aim to promote the techniques, forms and styles characteristic of local craft and manufacturing traditions.

2. Higher Education and Specialisation

- **ITS Academies (Higher Technological Institutes):** These offer highly technological and practical two-year post-diploma courses (e.g. Fashion System, New Technologies for Made in Italy), which train professionals working at the intersection of design and high-end manufacturing.
- **IFTS programmes:** Structured over two semesters, IFTS courses have a total duration of 800 hours and students are given a nationally recognised higher technical specialisation certificate.
- **Academies of Fine Arts and Regional Bodies:** Many academies (such as the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence) offer first- and second-level academic diploma courses focused on restoration, sculpture and decoration.

3. Practical Training and Workshop Schools

- **Workshop Schools (Regional Laws):** Regions such as: Toscana, Piemonte, Veneto, Marche, etc. have passed legislation to establish registers of 'Master Artisans' and officially recognise workshops as places of active training, where young people can learn directly on the job.
- **Foundations and Private Academies:** Many prestigious institutions support the arts and crafts through scholarships and training placements in workshops. For example, the Cologni Foundation for the Arts and Crafts organises the 'Una Scuola, un Lavoro' project, whilst Milan is home to the Accademia del Teatro alla Scala.

Apprenticeships can also be regarded – at least in the workplace component – as non-formal education: apprenticeships fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

As regards training in the field of restoration, there are two different professional roles in Italy that are authorised to work in this sector:

- **Cultural Heritage Restorer** – This is the qualification that authorises the holder to independently direct and manage restoration work on protected heritage assets. To obtain it, a five-year single-cycle course must be completed at a Higher Education School accredited by the Ministry of Culture, or at one of the two ministerial institutes (ICR and OPD). Only those

with this qualification may be registered on the National Register of Cultural Heritage Restorers and sign off on restoration projects for the Superintendency.

- **Cultural Heritage Restoration Technician** – This is an operational role working in the sector but under the supervision of a qualified restorer. They are trained through three-year programmes or vocational courses. They may carry out restoration work but cannot independently assume technical responsibility for interventions on protected heritage.

This distinction is not a bureaucratic detail but determines what can be done, on which heritage, and with what level of responsibility.

This entails a different structure for education and training in conservation and restoration:

1. **State Higher Education Institutions** (Admission via public call for applications and entrance exams)
 - a. **Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD), Florence:** One of the world's leading authorities in restoration which offers single-cycle master's degree programmes (LMR/02).
 - b. **Institute for Restoration (ICR), Rome:** A historic centre of excellence for scientific conservation.
 - c. **La Venaria Reale' Conservation and Restoration Centre, Turin:** Offers advanced specialisation courses and master's degrees in collaboration with the Polytechnic University of Turin and the University of Turin.
2. **Academies of Fine Arts and Private Institutes:**
 - a. **Academy of Fine Arts, Bologna / Brera Academy (Milan):** Both offer five-year single-cycle degree courses (DASLQ01) leading to qualification as conservators.
 - b. **Institute for Art and Restoration (Palazzo Spinelli), Florence:** A historic institution organising professional courses, master's degrees and advanced training programmes.
3. **Vocational training centres offer hands-on courses of various kinds:** these range from one-year or multi-year courses leading to professional qualifications, to short and summer courses designed to introduce students to the sector, which provide simple certificates of attendance. For example, **the CER (European Centre for Restoration)**, Florence, offers vocational training courses in the restoration of carved wooden objects, paintings and decorated surfaces. Builders' schools offer practical, highly specialised training in restoration, combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience on site. The programmes, which are often recognised at regional level, combine traditional conservation techniques with technological innovation to preserve our architectural and historical heritage.

6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

In Italy, there are various research, documentation and monitoring initiatives focusing on both non-formal learning in the craft sector and the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge in traditional trades and intangible cultural heritage. However, there is no single, systematic national observatory dedicated exclusively to this topic.

Among the monitoring/survey initiatives, the following may be mentioned:

1. The UNESCO framework on intangible cultural heritage

The reference framework is the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: from this perspective, traditional craftsmanship is considered one of the five major domains of intangible heritage, and the transmission of knowledge constitutes a central element of safeguarding.

Many Italian dossiers inscribed on UNESCO lists explicitly document non-formal learning methods based on: master-apprentice apprenticeship; family transmission; workshop-based learning; communities of practice; and oral and demonstrative teaching.

Among the most significant examples:

- The knowledge and skills of traditional Cremonese violin-making, where transmission takes place through specialised schools and, above all, through the direct master-apprentice relationship in workshops.
- Traditional bell-ringing, in which transmission continues mainly in an informal manner, within families and bell-ringers' associations.

2. Programmes and observatories in the craft sector

Organisations such as Confartigianato Imprese, CNA – National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Unioncamere regularly carry out studies on trades, generational renewal, vocational training and the preservation of traditional skills. Their focus is often on economic and employment issues and many surveys address the loss of know-how and the difficulty of passing on skills to young people. This constitutes a form of monitoring the dynamics of the transmission of craft knowledge.

3. Lists of Master Artisans and training workshops

It is necessary to consult the registers established by the individual Italian regions, as there is not yet a single national register. The procedures and access links vary depending on the region.

For instance, in Tuscany there is a dedicated platform in operation that lists and geolocates Master Artisans and their workshops: visit the Bottega Scuola Toscana portal <https://www.bottegascuola.it/>, or consult the list compiled by Unioncamere Toscana.¹³

4. Foundations and cultural organisations

Some private and cultural organisations carry out research and surveys on schools and training centres for artistic crafts operating throughout the country. However, it is not easy to monitor non-formal activities, as they are, by definition, unstructured.

5. University research and study centres

Several Italian universities conduct research into:

- intangible cultural heritage;
- informal education;
- traditional apprenticeships;
- the transmission of craft knowledge;
- communities of practice and tacit knowledge.

The most common lines of research analyse how skills that are difficult to formalise are transmitted through observation, imitation, participation and shared practice, which are particularly relevant in traditional trades.

Survey results in Italy

1. Methodological framework of the survey

The survey conducted in Italy on the *"Non-formal craft education for sustainable cultural transmission"* was created as part of the research phase - WP2 - of the BRICKS project, and serves as a further collection of data, in addition to the analysis of current legislative documents, with the aim of understanding the current situation of non-formal education in the craft sector in our country.

The survey and data collection activity, coordinated by ARTEX, collected responses from organizations, artisans, and educators, as well as students, learners, and participants, through a questionnaire distributed digitally and created using Google Forms. The data was collected in 2025, providing a recent and representative snapshot of the situation.

¹³ <https://www.unioncamere-toscana.it/i-nostri-servizi/crat/>



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The questionnaire was designed in synergy and collaboration with all project partners, ensuring a shared analytical framework while also allowing for adaptation to different national contexts. It includes both closed-ended questions (for quantitative analysis) and open-ended questions (to gather qualitative insights and testimonials) and has been translated into the languages of the partner countries and disseminated through targeted communication activities. The closed-ended questions include single and/or multiple answers, given the nature of the courses, which can be implemented for a wide variety of audiences, target groups, and stakeholders, even by the same provider.

This report includes references to individual questions with the wording "Q n.".

2.Scope and composition of the Italian sample

A total of 39 responses were collected: 34 from organizations, including master craftspeople and companies, and 5 from students. The unique questionnaire distributed via Google Forms included 27 questions addressed exclusively to organizations and 16 questions addressed to students.

This distribution highlights a characteristic feature of the Italian non-formal craft education landscape. On the one hand, there is a rich and highly fragmented network of supply-side actors, composed of numerous small and diverse teaching entities. On the other hand, learners—although actively present within workshops and training pathways—prove more difficult to reach through standardized survey tools, resulting in their more limited representation in the dataset.

3. Report on the responses of organizations and companies offering non-formal education courses for artistic crafts

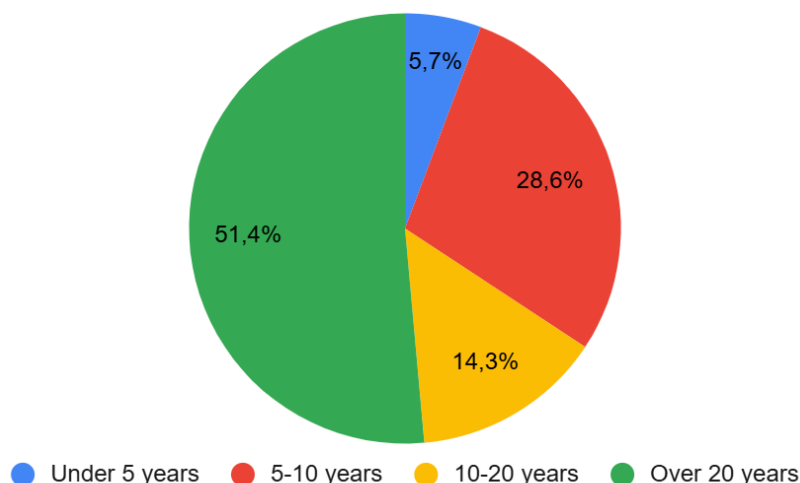
The organisations involved in the survey reflect the diversity of this ecosystem. They include Master Artisans recognised by Regional Governments in Italy (Tuscany, for instance), and traditional small and medium-sized craft enterprises (*botteghe artigiane*), cultural and non-profit associations, as well as schools without formal accreditation from the public sector, and hybrid institutions that combine educational activities with production processes and the transmission of cultural heritage.

3.1 Sample profile and sectors represented

Regarding the Italian sample that participated in the survey, the responses to questions addressed to organizations that provide non-formal education courses in the craft sector reveal a strong sense of historical continuity among the organizations. A significant portion of the interviewees have been active for more than 10 years (Q no. 5), 51.4% of those interviewed have been running their

businesses for over 20 years and have been involved in training activities for many years. **This longevity confirms that artisanal training in Italy is deeply rooted in long-term professional paths, often closely linked to the life paths of individual artisans.** Only 5% said they had been active for less than 5 years.

5. How long has your organization been transmitting craft skills ?

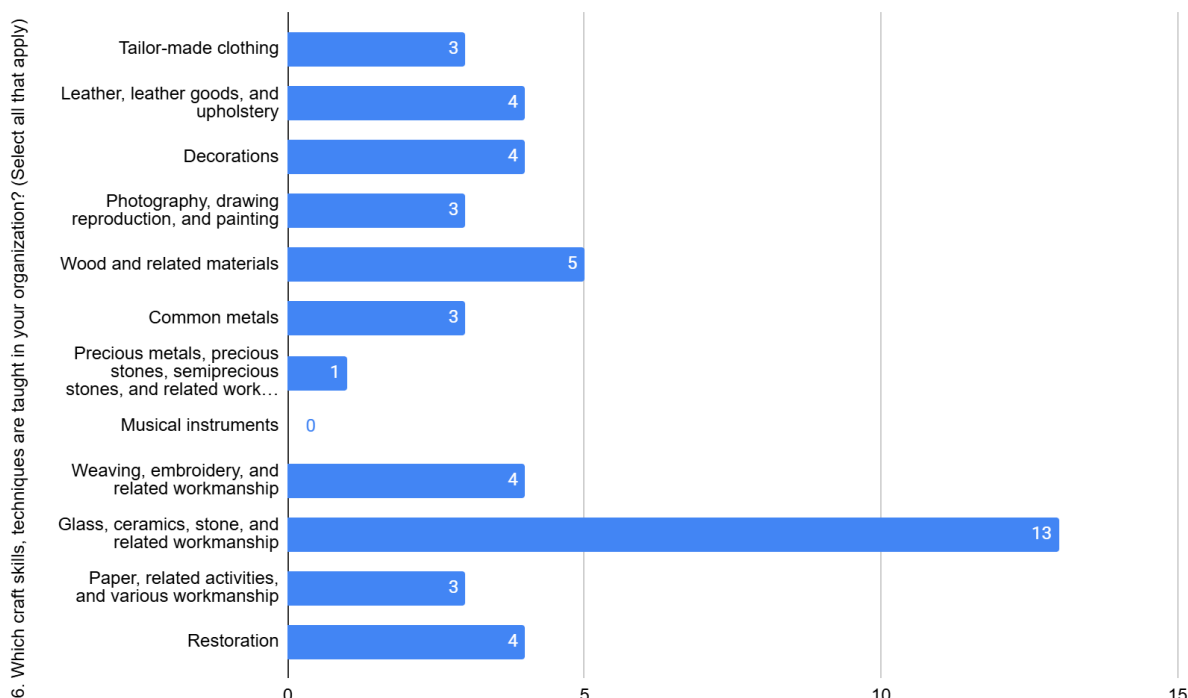


In this context, training activities are not conceived as temporary or project-based initiatives, but rather as a natural extension of professional identity and experience. Teaching becomes an integral part of the artisan's role, ensuring the transmission and continuity of skills, knowledge, and values across generations. As one craft educator notes:

"I learned this profession on the construction site, alongside masters, with a lot of passion. Teaching is a way to ensure continuity."

The Italian sample reflects a broad and diverse spectrum of craft sectors, with particularly strong representation in several key sectors. These activities include ceramics, which includes turning, modeling, decoration, and restoration, as well as leather goods, footwear, and tailoring. Woodworking also plays a central role, especially in furniture production, restoration, and inlay techniques. (D n.6)¹⁴

¹⁴For greater clarity of analysis and presentation, the categories represented have been summarized with the official list of artistic and traditional workmanship in Italy, following the macro-categories listed in Presidential Decree (D.P.R.) 25 May 2001, no. 288 "Regulation concerning the identification of the artistic and traditional workmanship sectors, as well as custom-made clothing", issued following and in direct implementation of



Further areas of expertise include: manual weaving, the surface decoration, such as gilding, fresco, and imitation techniques, as well as bookbinding, paper art, and printing. Bespoke tailoring, silkscreen printing and reproduction art painting, papier-mâché, and metalwork, ranging from jewelry creation to wrought iron artwork, are also represented in the sample of responding companies and organizations.

This wide distribution of specialisations confirms the polycentric nature of the Italian craft landscape, where excellence is not concentrated in a single sector or region but is instead dispersed across multiple territories, each with its own traditions and distinctive practices.

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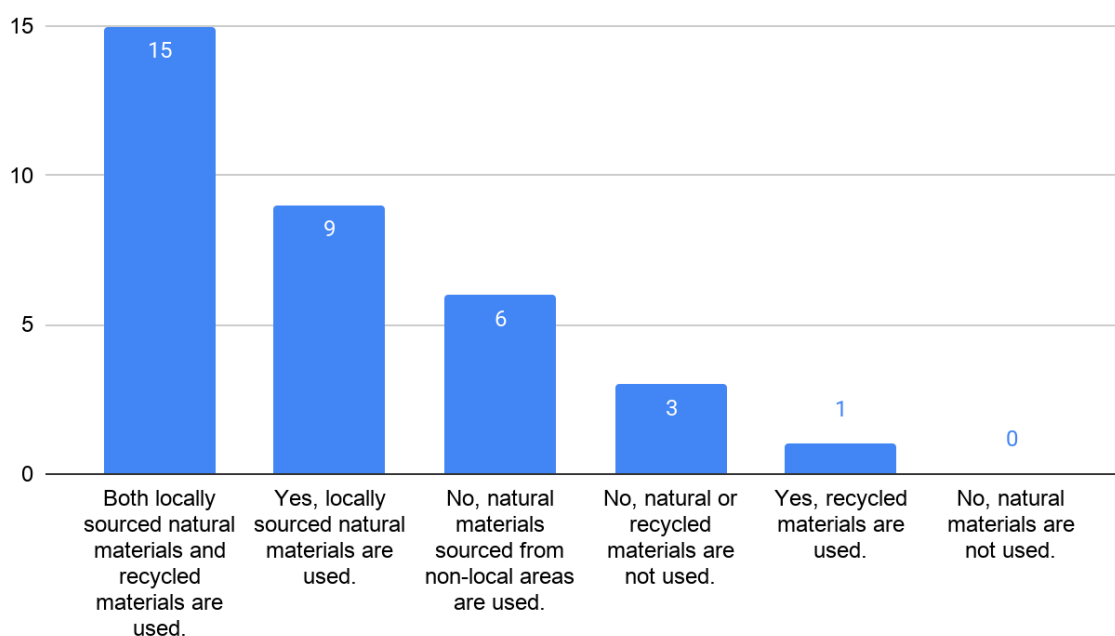
Interviewees listed a series of techniques and work processes on which they focus their teaching efforts (Q no. 7): from oil and tempera painting on panel, including design preparation and transfer, to advanced ceramic practices such as throwing, mold casting, colombino, multi-stage firing

Article 4, first paragraph, letter c), of the Framework Law for Crafts (Law 8 August 1985, no. 443). Therefore, the graph provided is the result of the analysis of the data present in D no. 6 and D no. 7.

decoration, and glaze design. Other responses highlight the complete cycles of material transformation, as in the case of textile production from broom fibers, where students are involved in every phase, from harvesting and processing to spinning, weaving on handlooms, and natural dyeing. Similarly, glass techniques (Tiffany stained glass, fusion, Venetian lampwork), woodworking (restoration, inlay, shellac polishing), crystal working, and sculptural modeling are presented as integrated systems of knowledge. **Overall, a concept of teaching emerges that prioritizes technical precision, knowledge of materials, and the transmission of entire artisanal processes, often rooted in traditional practices but supported by practical, experiential learning.**

3.2 Sustainability as a driving force behind crafts enterprises

A particularly strong trend emerging from the Italian organisations concerns the use of natural, locally sourced, and recycled materials. Many respondents emphasise their reliance on local clays, woods, leathers, and pigments, often rooted in longstanding territorial knowledge. Indeed, more than 45% of the interviewed declare using both locally sourced natural materials and recycled materials for their productions (Q n.8). At the same time, there is a notable engagement with practices of reuse, including the recovery of waste materials, dead stock fabrics, and recycled paper or clay.



8. Are locally sourced natural materials and/or recycled materials used during construction?

It's important to emphasize that sustainability isn't presented as an external or newly adopted goal. Rather, it's understood as an intrinsic dimension of traditional artisanal knowledge and practice. Careful selection of materials, meticulous process design, and an emphasis on durability are integral to the ethics of artisanal products. As one ceramic artisan explains:

“Craftsmanship means slowness, care, and respect for materials. Sustainability isn't a fad; it's always been our way of working.”

The responses highlight a strong and widespread integration of both locally sourced natural materials and recycled resources within Italian craft practices. **Many organisations rely on materials deeply rooted in their territories—such as local clays, woods, vegetable-tanned leather, and natural pigments—demonstrating a close connection between craft production and regional supply chains.** At the same time, traditional knowledge plays a key role, with the use of natural fibres, plant-based dyes, and low-impact processes reflecting long-established practices that inherently align with sustainable principles.

Alongside this, recycling and reuse emerge as central and often intentional components of both production and teaching. **Materials such as ceramic waste, reclaimed wood, dead stock textiles, recycled paper, and everyday discarded objects are actively reintegrated into creative processes, sometimes as a core pedagogical approach aimed at fostering design awareness and innovation.** While some respondents also use non-local or industrial materials when required by specific techniques, the overall picture is one of a balanced and pragmatic system, where sustainability is embedded in practice and closely tied to material knowledge, craftsmanship, and cultural continuity.

“We teach how to create unique objects precisely because they are made from recovered materials, giving great importance to the study and combination of materials.”

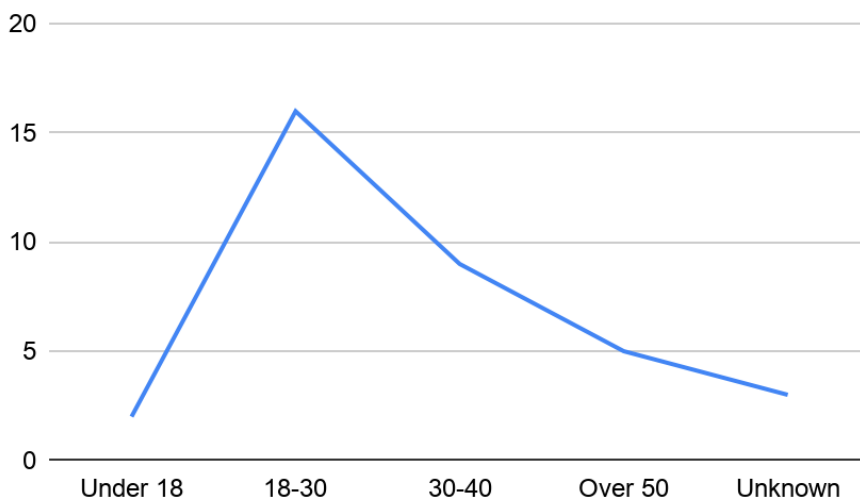
3.3 Composition of course participants: characteristics, motivations and preparation

The analysis continues by revealing a coherent picture of the profiles, access conditions, and learning contexts that characterize non-formal artisan training in Italy, highlighting the strong adult orientation of this training and the flexible nature of the courses offered.

From a demographic perspective (Q n. 10), organisations report a predominance of female participation (more than 65% of the respondents) or balanced gender distribution (around 25%), with only a few male-dominated cases linked to specific sectors such as metalwork (8,6%).

The average age of learners (Q n.11) tends to concentrate between 18–30 (45,7% of people interviewed) and 30–40 (25,7%), with some notable presence of older learners (over 50, around 14%) and very limited involvement of minors (around 5%). This confirms that **craft education**

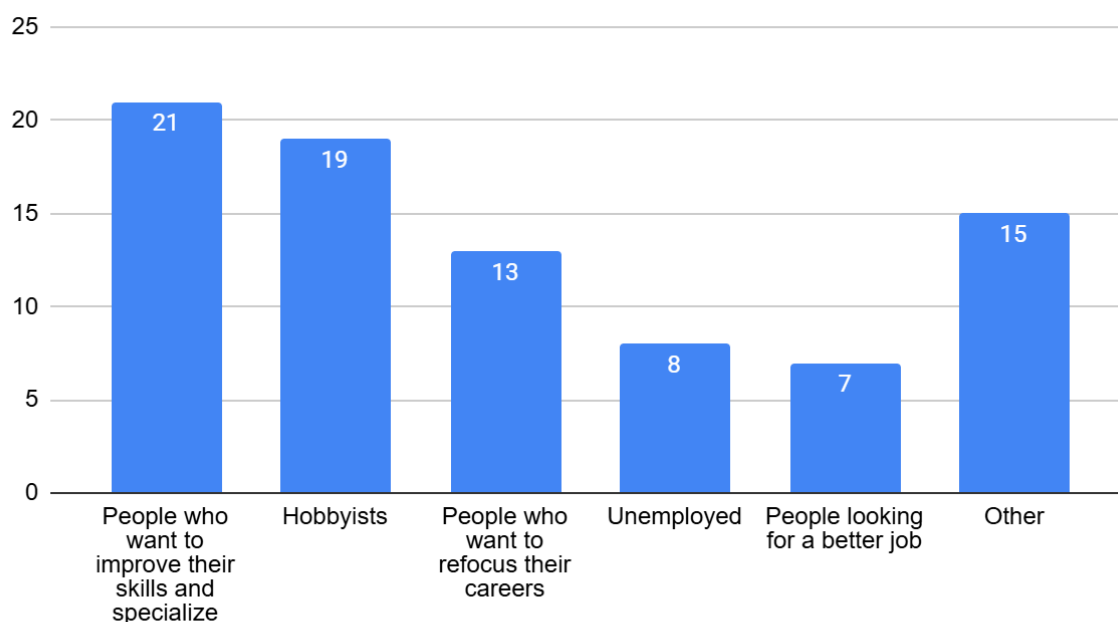
11. What is the average age of the students?



functions primarily as a post-initial learning pathway. It attracts individuals who are either already engaged in professional life or are seeking to redefine their trajectories, rather than young people entering directly from compulsory education. To be noted: there is also around an 8% of

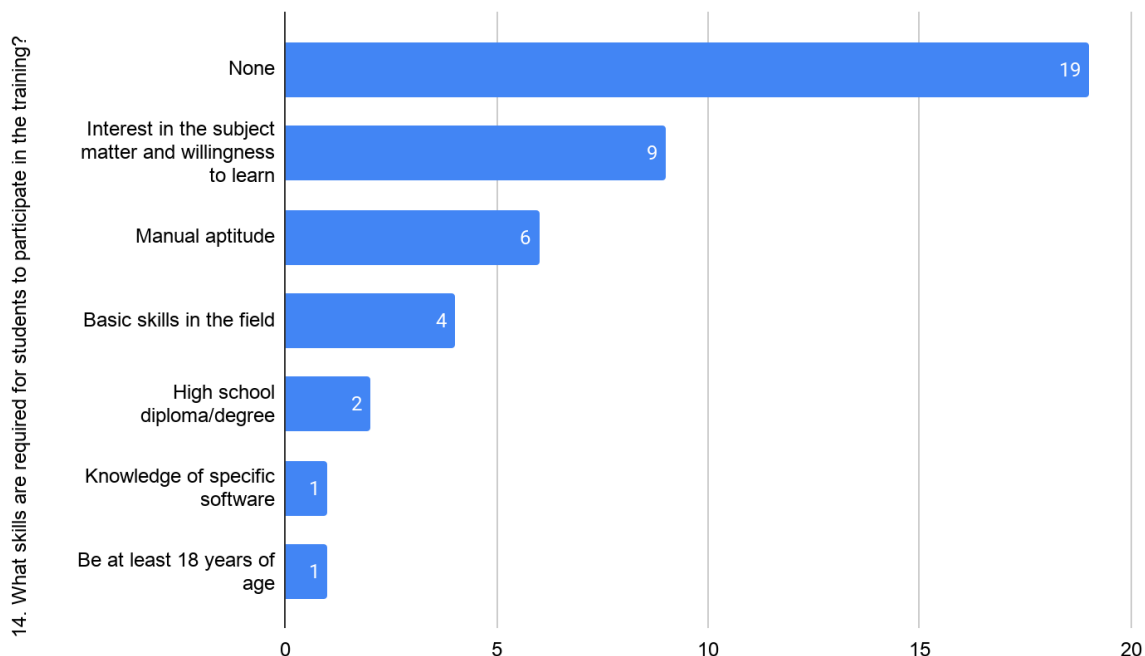
respondents who don't know the exact composition, in terms of age, of the learners to whom they provide their courses.

Looking at the learner profile, a clear pattern emerges: the majority of participants are individuals aiming to improve their skills, reorient their careers, or access new employment opportunities (Q no. 12). Alongside these groups, hobbyists and individuals interested in personal development also represent a significant share, and in some cases, more specific categories appear, such as unemployed individuals or participants in inclusive or social programmes. This diversity indicates that non-formal craft education serves multiple functions simultaneously: professional training, career transition, social inclusion, and personal enrichment.



12. What is the most common profile of the learners? (Select all that apply)

The circumstances in which students attend courses (D n. 13) further reinforce this interpretation. Participation is often linked to professional retraining, specialization (25%), or the integration of new skills into existing artistic craft skills (10.9%), through apprenticeships and training in school workshops or various laboratories. At the same time, a significant portion of students attend courses as a hobby or for personal growth (32.8%), suggesting that artisanal learning takes place in a hybrid space between professional training and experiential learning. The frequent alternation between study and practical work in real laboratory environments confirms the centrality of learning “*on the job*” and the continuity between education and production.



The requirements for accessing courses (Q n. 14) highlight the openness and accessibility of this system. **In most cases, no formal prerequisites are required; instead, emphasis is placed on motivation, manual aptitude, interest, and, occasionally, a basic educational background or prior exposure to the field.** This low entry threshold reflects a pedagogical model based on gradual immersion, where skills are developed through practice rather than pre-selection. At the same time, it underscores the importance of individual commitment and engagement as key conditions for successful learning.

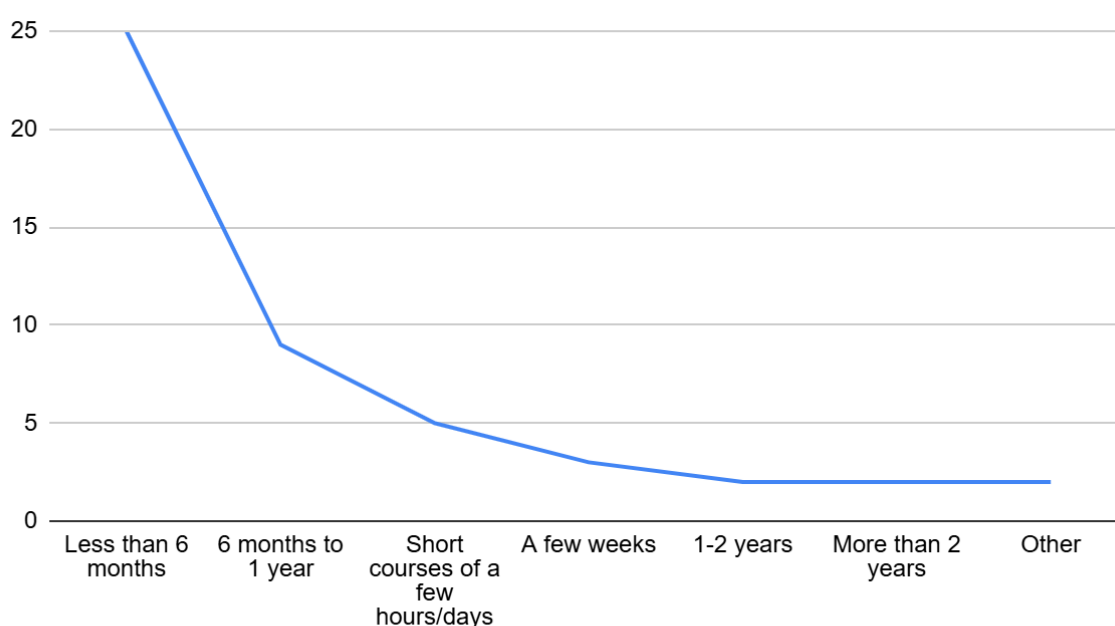
Overall, the results portray Italian non-formal craft education as an inclusive, flexible, and practice-oriented ecosystem. It is characterised by a strong adult-learning dimension, diverse learner motivations, and a close integration between training and real-world craft environments. This system not only supports professional development and career transitions but also responds to broader needs related to identity, creativity, and social participation.

3.4 Structural and pedagogical characteristics of non-formal education in Italy

The questionnaire continues with a series of questions aimed at investigating the structural and pedagogical characteristics of non-formal craft education in Italy, confirming a system that is strongly

practice-oriented, flexible, and rooted in professional experience, but which also displays notable diversity in the ways in which training is organized and delivered.

In terms of duration and modality (Q no. 15 and Q no. 16)—respondents could select multiple options—courses are predominantly short- or medium-term, often lasting less than six months (over 52% of cases), although longer and more structured courses also exist: from 6 months to 1 year (almost 19%), from 1 to 2 years (2%), and over 2 years (2%). In between, courses of a few hours/days (about 10%) and courses of a few weeks (about 6%) can be found.



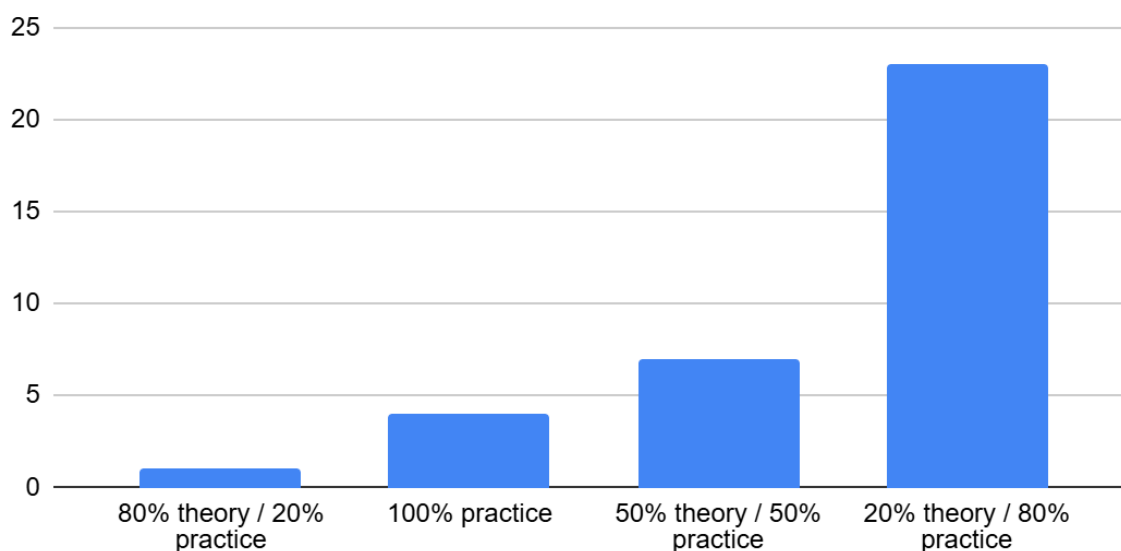
15. How long do the courses last? (Select all that apply)

These programmes tend to be modular and adaptable, reflecting the need to respond to adult learners who balance training with work and personal responsibilities.

This flexibility is coupled with a learning offer that often extends beyond technical skills, including components such as entrepreneurship, communication, marketing, and art history, as well as, in some cases, the integration of digital tools. This indicates a growing awareness of the need to situate craft skills within broader professional and cultural ecosystems.

The pedagogical structure (Q n. 16) strongly confirms the centrality of practice: most courses follow an 80% practical and 20% theoretical balance, and some are entirely hands-on. Learning takes place

primarily in workshops, where knowledge is transmitted through observation, repetition, experimentation, and the progressive correction of mistakes.



16. What is the breakdown between theoretical and practical courses?

In addition to the courses specifically dedicated to traditional artisan knowledge, the interviewees declared (D n.17) that do not offer additional ancillary courses (32%), a fact that suggests a training structure that is often essential or focused only on artisanal practice. Among those who offer additional activities, cultural paths linked to history, architecture and art history, chosen by the 28% of respondents, sign of a strong integration between craftsmanship and cultural heritage. The following are entrepreneurship courses with 16%, which highlight a growing interest in management skills useful for the sustainability of the shops. The list ends with the digital tools communication and marketing courses, both at 12%, indicating a still limited — but significant — presence of digital and promotional skills in the additional training courses offered.

3.5 The educator's training path

In this context the educator - whose profile is well described by the answers to question number 18 (*Please indicate the teachers' qualifications and experience and how they learned the profession.*) represents a key element in the transmission of traditional artisanal knowledge through non-formal education systems, embodying a model of knowledge transmission based on lived experience. The profiles described by the interviewees illustrate different educational backgrounds of the educators, but all share a strong focus on the practical component, often combining formal education through academic and theoretical-cultural training with long-term apprenticeships in artisanal businesses and

their own professional activity, to which the principle of continuous improvement and upskilling is often applied.

Some cases explicitly highlight this layered and cumulative learning trajectory.

“Diploma in ceramic restoration from the Palazzo Spinelli Institute for Art and Restoration in Florence. Opened a sole proprietorship in restoration in 1991. Continuing education courses, both theoretical and practical, both in person and online. Attended conferences.”

Other interviewees emphasize that the combination of formal education and learning through laboratories and workshops, where institutional training is complemented by learning within a living artisanal tradition, is rooted in a specific cultural and territorial context. In other cases, **The learning itself of trainers and educators is described as a long-term process that begins at a young age and develops through apprenticeship practice, work in their own workshop, and is also enriched through teaching experience.**

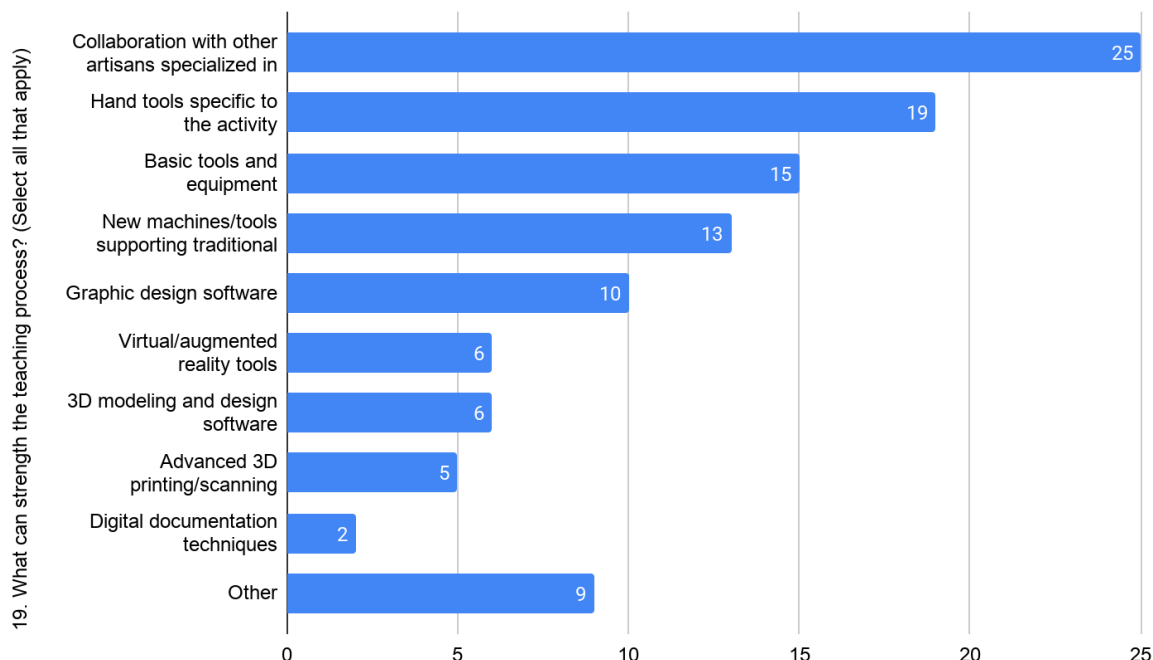
3.6 Conditions for improving teaching and internship activities

In support of the teaching path, to ensure an adequate transfer of artisan knowledge, the interviewees underline the importance of some fundamental conditions (D n.19) which are:

- the opportunity for collaboration and exchange with other artisans from different sectors
- access to adequate tools, utensils, spaces and equipment

Strengthening non-formal artisan education in Italy depends primarily on improving the material and organizational conditions that support its practice-based pedagogy. Respondents emphasize the need for well-equipped workshops, access to both traditional and digital tools, and adequate learning spaces (specified in responses marked "other"), all considered essential for effective hands-on training. At the same time, **there is a strong demand for greater collaboration between artisans and educators, as well as stronger links between the worlds of education and the professional world.** Underlying these needs is a persistent lack of funding and institutional support, which limits the ability to invest in infrastructure, innovation, and continuity.

When interviewees are asked about internships for students to be carried out at local companies or in other regions/countries (Q n.20), their answers reveal that, although internships and collaborations with companies are present in Italian non-formal craft education, they are not systematically integrated into the training paths.



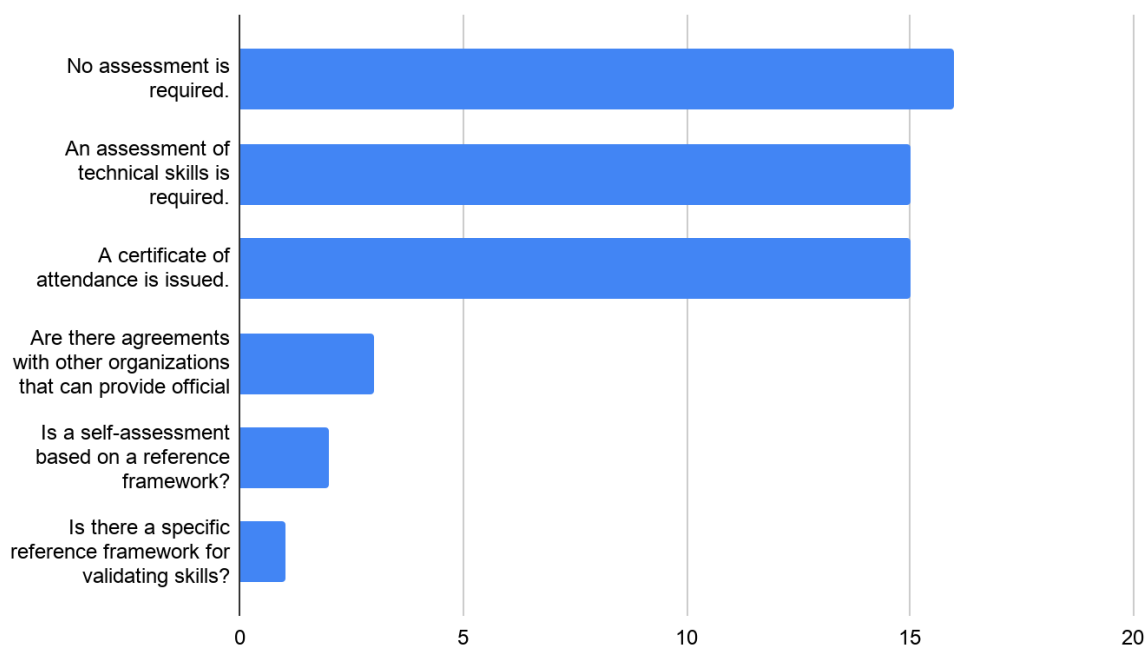
In some cases—for example, in training provided by Master Craftsmen—students benefit from direct experience in workshops or artisanal environments, where production and learning overlap and skills are consolidated through real-world work situations. However, many interviewees report that organizing internship opportunities at other institutions remains occasional, optional, or difficult to organize due to limited networks, lack of incentives, or structural constraints: 57.1% of respondents stated that the training offered does not include internships, approximately 28% does, and approximately 14% stated that internships are optional. Consequently, the connection between training and the labor market is often informal and fragmented, based on individual initiatives rather than structured programs. This highlights a key area for improvement: strengthening and structuring recognized work-based learning would facilitate the transition from education to the world of work and improve the overall effectiveness of the training system.

3.7 Certifications, qualifications and recognition of acquired skills

One of the most critical issues emerging from the Italian survey concerns the assessment and recognition of skills (Q n.21), revealing a structural gap between the richness of learning processes and the formal validation of outcomes. The data collected show that most organisations provide

certificates of attendance, and in several cases also conduct technical evaluations of learners' progress, either through practical tests, ongoing observation, or final feedback from the master artisan. However, these forms of assessment remain largely internal and non-standardised. Only a minority of organisations are connected to official qualification frameworks or are able to issue formally recognised certifications. As a consequence, **the validation of skills often depends on the reputation of the artisan or the training context, rather than on widely recognised credentials.** The majority of the interviewees also stated that an evaluation phase for the trainee is not included in the course they are providing.

21. Is an assessment of the acquired skills performed at the end of the training? Is a certificate issued?



This situation is widely perceived as a structural weakness by both educators and learners. On the one hand, educators stress the lack of institutional recognition for their role as knowledge transmitters, as reflected in the statement:

"I ask for recognition by public institutions of our right to pass on knowledge."

This highlights a deeper issue concerning the positioning of non-formal craft education within national education and training systems, where experiential and workshop-based learning remains under-recognised despite its complexity and cultural value. On the other hand, learners—especially

those undergoing career transitions—emphasise the practical importance of certification as a tool for professional mobility and legitimacy. As one learner states:

“A certificate can make the difference when you want to reorient your career.”

This heterogeneity reflects the broader nature of non-formal education, but it also creates uncertainty for learners, who may acquire substantial skills without obtaining credentials that are easily transferable or recognised in the labour market.

3.8 Course accessibility, costs, collaborations, systemic challenges and future developments

Regarding the costs of various courses (Q. 23), they vary greatly depending on the nature, purpose, and duration, ranging from relatively affordable short workshops (15–25 euros per hour) to intensive programs that can cost up to 8,000–10,000 euros. In most cases, these costs are borne directly by the participants (Q. 24). Only occasionally are training opportunities offered free of charge, typically with the support of regional authorities, foundations, or projects funded by the European Union. Publicly funded courses are particularly popular, as they provide access to people who would otherwise be excluded due to cost. As a result, financial barriers remain significant, especially for those in a career transition phase or without a stable income. At the same time, organizations face high operating costs for materials, tools, training time, and laboratory space, making the economic sustainability of training difficult. Added to this is the burden of hosting apprentices, often perceived as a cost rather than a resource, which discourages greater participation in training activities by companies and craft businesses.

From the answers provided by the interviewees, a fragmented but very indicative picture emerges regarding active collaborations between bodies and institutions, in support of the educational path (D n.25). Approximately 42% of respondents stated they had no collaborations, indicating a sector in which many operators operate in isolation, without structured support networks. Among those who did establish partnerships, local public bodies clearly predominate, involving them in approximately 30% of cases, confirming strong local roots and predominantly local institutional support. Artisan associations and small businesses represent another significant figure, with approximately 25% of collaborations, reflecting the community-based and short-supply chain nature of the artisan sector. The involvement of larger local businesses is much more marginal, appearing in only 6% of responses, while collaborations with national or international organizations, while present, remain limited (approximately 10%). Overall, the picture suggests a system training program that relies primarily on local and associative support, but which still shows significant room for development in terms of broader and more structured connections, in line with the requests that emerged in question number 19.

Financial constraints and lack of collaboration are closely linked to broader systemic challenges identified by interviewees (Q n.26), among which the following stand out:

- lack of funds,
- the limited institutional recognition,
- the difficulties in attracting younger generations.

Lack of funding emerges as the most pressing issue, as it impacts the ability to maintain laboratories, invest in equipment, and offer accessible training. This is closely linked to the lack of institutional recognition of informal certifications, which limits the value of training in the labor market and discourages both students and teachers.

Several interviewees also emphasized the difficulty of attracting new apprentices, especially younger generations, often linked to the perception of craftsmanship as an economically uncertain or socially undervalued activity.

As one of the interviewees points out,

"The sector is not attractive to young people",

while another points out that

"It's not easy to involve young people".

Bureaucratic complexity, regulatory obstacles, including references to a "tangle of regulations" and the burden of administrative procedures, as well as weak collaboration networks, further hinder the sector's development.

Many interviewees express concern about a loss progressive knowledge and generational discontinuity, indicating what is described as

"A generational gap... which has led to the loss of many skills".

Others highlight a lack of cultural awareness and education in crafts, noting that

"There is little culture surrounding artisanal activities and little understanding of their social value."

This aspect is often linked to the role of the education system: several responses call for greater connections between crafts and schools, as well as better assistance for young people.

"It is essential to introduce craftsmanship into the spaces frequented by young people and into contemporary social contexts.",

suggesting the need for new forms of engagement.

"Craftsmanship must be repositioned culturally and socially, freed from adjectives like 'traditional' or 'local.' It must be open to experimentation with new forms and made attractive to young people."

Despite this, there is strong interest and constant motivation among the participants.

In conclusion, the overall analysis of the 27 questions addressed to organizations and companies, artisans offering training courses, reveals a highly coherent but structurally fragile ecosystem, where **non-formal craft education is deeply rooted in practice, workshop-based learning, and solid individual expertise**. However, systemic support and integration are lacking. Training is flexible, experiential, and closely connected to real-world production contexts. It is mostly led by master craftsmen who embody both technical and cultural knowledge and effectively meet the needs of adults seeking retraining, specialization, or personal fulfillment. This pedagogical strength, however, contrasts with persistent structural weaknesses, including limited funding, lack of formal recognition of certifications, fragmented collaboration among artisans, and weak ties to institutional frameworks and the labor market. Consequently, the system relies heavily on individual initiative and passion, making it resilient but difficult to scale and limiting its ability to attract younger generations, despite strong underlying interest.

Overall, the Italian case demonstrates a high level of excellence and relevance, but also the urgent need to strengthen recognition, accessibility, and structural support to ensure its long-term sustainability.

4. Report on the responses of students who have attended non-formal education courses for artistic crafts

Although very few of the responses gathered in Italy - 5 questionnaires completed by learners/students attending non-formal crafts education training - the snapshot we can gain from the analysis of the answers are useful to reflect on, and gives us insight and nudge on how to address this topic.

4.1 Profiles of participants in non-formal education craft courses

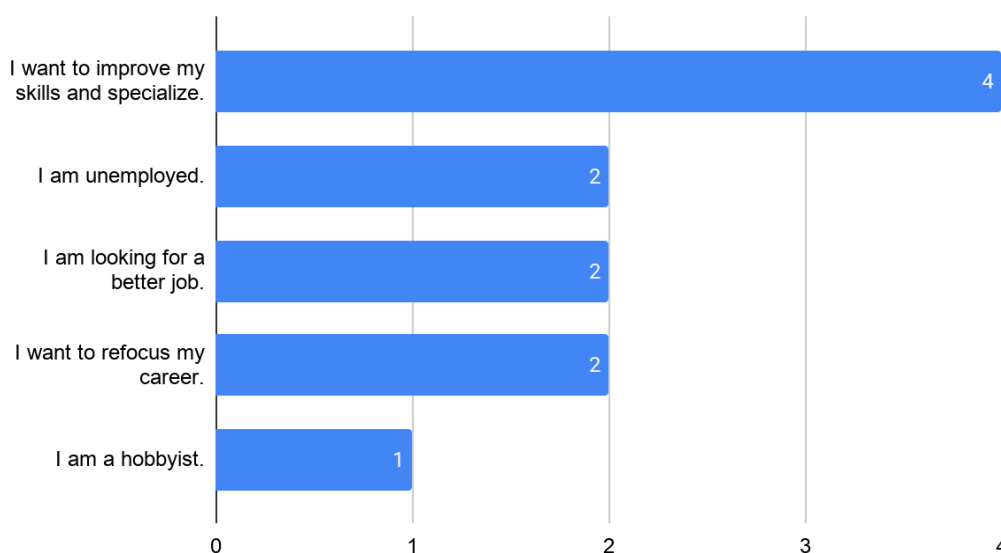
The profiles of the interviewees show a main component engaged in career transition, professional specialization, or retraining processes, further underscoring the role of artisanal training in Italy as a path to lifelong learning and career guidance.

From a quantitative perspective, the participants were 100% adults, four between the ages of 30 and 40 and one over 50, and 100% were women (Q n. 1, Q n. 2). This highlights that non-formal craft training in Italy—as emerges from the sample—is primarily addressed to adult learning spaces, led by women, and functions primarily as a reorientation program rather than as initial training. Up to four interviewees are currently attending—or have previously attended—a ceramics course, and one interviewee is currently taking a restoration training course (Q n. 4).

4.2 Motivations, course duration and costs

Regarding questions about the duration of courses (Q n.6), the circumstances in which these activities are attended (Q n.7), and the reasons that led them to undertake a non-formal education path in the craft field (Q n.8), students reported courses lasting mainly 6-12 months (4 out of 5 responses), with participation occurring in situations of career transition, professional development, or personal/hobby development. Only one respondent is following a course lasting more than 2 years.

8. Please indicate the reason why you are attending/have attended a course. (Select all that apply.)



In terms of more detailed, open-ended motivations (Q n.9), the patterns are extremely consistent: interviewees indicated improvement/specialization of skills and professional reorientation or the search for better working conditions.

One learner states clearly:

“I was unemployed... I enrolled hoping to find a new occupation”,

while another highlights a more developmental motivation:

“to increase my knowledge in a new field and develop my artistic abilities.”

These responses show that economic necessity and personal fulfilment are not separate drivers, but deeply intertwined.

The economic dimension (Q n.10, Q n.11) further reinforces the importance of access conditions: 4 respondents stated that courses were free, funded by public or regional programmes, while 1 learner answered that she paid independently. This indicates that public funding plays a decisive enabling role, without which participation—especially for those in transition—would likely decrease significantly. One learner explicitly notes the importance of this condition:

“it was incredible that the course I attended was free”,
emphasising how funding supports accessibility and opportunity.

4.3 Certifications and awards

Regarding assessment and certification (Q no. 12, Q no. 13), three participants stated they received a certificate of participation, and one reported that an assessment of technical skills was provided. Participants recognized certification as a legitimacy tool, confirming the importance of formal validation even within a non-formal system. However, variability remains evident, with at least one case in which no assessment or certification was provided, reflecting the broader organizational fragmentation found.

The outcomes are particularly significant (Q n. 15). **A majority of learners report tangible impact after training: about 60% started or improved a professional activity, 40% entered a related sector, and others used the skills for personal or creative projects.**

This demonstrates how non-formal craft education can lead not only to employability but also to knowledge transmission, closing the loop between learner and educator.

Finally, the open reflections highlight the transformative and relational dimension of the experience. Learners emphasise not only skills acquisition but also exposure, inspiration, and connection:

“It was a moment of great learning and creation of useful relationships”
and

“this course allowed me to enter a world that was unknown to me and to be fascinated by the processes and passion of artisans.”

These testimonies confirm that learning outcomes go beyond technical competence, contributing to identity reconstruction, motivation, and long-term engagement.

Overall, the learner analysis shows that Italian non-formal craft education is highly effective at generating meaningful outcomes, despite its structural limitations. It supports adult learners in transition, enables professional and personal transformation, and often leads to concrete employment or entrepreneurial paths. At the same time, its accessibility depends strongly on public funding, and its outcomes are not always fully supported by formal recognition systems. This reinforces the broader conclusion: the system works well at the micro level—individual trajectories and learning experiences—but requires stronger structural support to scale its impact and ensure long-term sustainability.

Survey results - general overview

The Italian survey conducted as part of the BRICKS project paints a complex yet highly significant picture of non-formal education in the artistic crafts sector. The report highlights how this field, despite being legally recognized as an integral part of lifelong learning, remains poorly structured, fragmented, and heavily dependent on the individual initiative of artisans, workshops, and local organizations. Italy boasts a rich ecosystem of experiences, traditions, and skills, yet lacks the systemic coordination that fully leverages its cultural, economic, and educational potential. The research highlights a sector experiencing constant tension between excellent know-how and structural fragility, between local roots and lack of institutional recognition, between the desire for transmission and the difficulty of engaging new generations.

The main trends that emerged show a sector characterized by short, intensive, and highly practical training courses, based on direct workshop work and experiential learning. Most trainers have been working for many years, confirming the centrality of intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Collaborations are predominantly local, with local public bodies and artisan associations, while connections with national or international networks are marginal. Sustainability emerges as a cross-cutting value, with widespread use of natural, recycled, or locally sourced materials. However, the fragmentation of the system, the inconsistency of regional funding, and the lack of clear and uniform certification pathways limit the sector's growth and visibility.

The students involved in the survey are adults, often undergoing career transitions or seeking more meaningful career paths. Their primary needs include affordable courses, the opportunity to learn concrete and immediately marketable skills, the need for guidance and support in the world of work, and the desire to obtain recognized certifications. Many emphasize the importance of free or subsidized courses, which often represent the only opportunity for accessing artisanal training. Practical experience in the workshop is perceived as transformative, capable of opening new professional and personal horizons.

Artisans, educators, and organizations express equally clear needs. They demand greater institutional recognition, financial and infrastructural support, stronger networks between schools, workshops, and institutions, and more effective educational guidance that restores dignity and visibility to the arts and crafts. Many highlight the difficulty of welcoming apprentices without adequate financial support, as training requires time, materials, and equipment. Others emphasize the need to overcome the sector's individualism and promote more structured forms of collaboration. There is also a strong demand for adequate space, especially in urban contexts where costs are high and workshops often cannot accommodate large groups.

The main obstacles identified include a lack of stable funding, the limited recognition of skills acquired in informal settings, the difficulty of engaging young people, tax pressure and bureaucracy, the generational gap, and the fragmentation of the education system. Despite this, positive expectations emerge: greater integration between schools and workshops, targeted funding for youth training, clearer certification systems, a cultural repositioning of craftsmanship as a contemporary language rather than a marginal activity, and greater openness to digital innovation and experimentation. Overall, the survey reveals a sector rich in potential but in need of more forward-thinking policies, stronger networks, and a new vision to make it attractive to new generations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

In light of the cross-analysis of data emerging from the research and survey, integrated with the proposals emerging from discussions with Italian stakeholders, collected on June 18, 2026, during the BRICKS project's final feedback event in Florence, we propose 10 priority actions aimed at strengthening the ecosystem supporting non-formal artisan education in Italy and improving the transmission of skills and know-how from generation to generation.

1. **Improve links and integration between formal and non formal education.** Develop stronger partnerships between vocational schools, technical schools, and artisan businesses: for example, by introducing mandatory, recognized internships; integrate educators who are also professionals—part of artistic artisan businesses—into schools; and develop collaborative projects between schools and businesses. Build a more coherent training system that connects higher technical education, apprenticeships, workshops, craft schools, laboratories, and non-formal learning pathways, avoiding fragmentation and overlap.
2. **Ensure continued funding for work-based training at the Botteghe Scuola,** in order to establish a stable system of non-formal workshop education under the guidance of master craftsmen. Ensure multi-year and structural funding, especially for training pathways that demonstrate a real impact on the local area.
3. **Strengthen the career guidance system,** including through the use of specially designed educational publications. Update career guidance platforms with content related to artisanal professions and real career opportunities, including potential careers in the artisan field.
4. **Enhance the image of artisanal professions.** Promote campaigns that highlight innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in modern craftsmanship.
5. **Harmonize the teaching of manual activities within the early-stage formal system.** Incorporating manual activities and programs aimed at discovering the cultural heritage of artistic craftsmanship into the school curriculum, starting in primary school, fosters the development of children's material knowledge and paves the way for guiding their future choices.
6. **Strengthen apprenticeship systems.** Expand dual training models that integrate vocational education and workplace learning, including on-the-job training. These models can improve the transition from school to employment opportunities, introducing young people, starting in school, to programs that can provide a concrete vision of the future.
7. **Ensure that the national qualifications system for non-formal education is fully operational and easy to manage,** with certification of skills acquired in various non-formal courses, seeking to standardize and simplify certification by aligning it with the National Qualifications

- Framework (NQF) and European systems (EQF). Transparent digital platforms and streamlined bureaucratic procedures will facilitate the recognition of acquired qualifications.
8. **Establish a micro-credential recognition system for non-formal artisanal training.** Recognized at the European Union level, based on the micro-credentials model and the professional qualifications framework, these certificates would contribute to the validation of non-formal education pathways in the artisanal field, valid throughout Europe, and capable of promoting exchange and mobility among professionals.
 9. **Develop an information system to collect and map non-formal artisan training opportunities at the national (and international) level.** A national digital platform (integrated at the European level) will provide information on courses, training workshops, laboratories, and non-formal education initiatives, with clear information on duration, costs, certifications issued, and the artisan sectors involved, also facilitating dialogue between students, artisans, and institutions.
 10. **Digital documentation of artisan know-how and skills.** Create multimedia digital archives (videos, tutorials, interactive manuals) to document artisan techniques and their practical transmission, involving master artisans in recording processes, methods, materials, and tools. The resources—accessible, up-to-date, and linked to practical training programs—support oral and manual transmission with the help of enabling technologies and innovative tools such as augmented reality or 3D simulations.

Glossary

Craftsmanship / Handicraft

Manual production of objects using specific skills, tools, and techniques, typically carried out in small workshops or by independent craftspeople. It may include contemporary or traditional practices.

Traditional Craftsmanship

A broad term encompassing traditional, artistic, and heritage-based practices, including fine arts, applied arts, folk art, and regionally specific craft techniques.

Heritage Craft (HC)

Craft activities and techniques that hold cultural, historical, or regional significance and contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

Traditional Craft (TC)

Craft practices rooted in long-standing techniques, materials, or regional identities. Often transmitted through intergenerational learning.

Non-formal Education (NFE)

According to the research of the BRICKS project, non-formal education in heritage crafts refers to “community-based, hands-on learning outside formal systems, where adults gain skills through mentorship and intergenerational exchange. It plays a key role in preserving craft traditions, promoting inclusion, and supporting regional development”.¹⁵

Certification

Any process that validates or recognises the skills, knowledge, or competences acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning.

Competence

A combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform specific craft tasks or professional activities.

Learning Outcomes

Statements describing what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to do after completing a learning activity or training process.

¹⁵ For more definitions, click [here](#).

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Bottega Scuola Maestro Artigiano. <http://www.bottegascuola.it>

Annex 1 - Italian questionnaire

Link to a prefilled version of the Google Form format of survey issued:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/nonformaleducationofcraftinItaly/prefill>