



# *The impact of Europass tools in the labour market*

*Survey*

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*ISFOL is a national research institute operating in the field of vocational training, employment and social policies, contributing to employment growth, development of competences, social inclusion and local development. Its activities are implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.*

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# Index

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. The survey</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Aims	9
1.2 Goals	9
1.3 Tools	9
1.4 Timing	10
1.5 Data processing	10
1.6 Methodological remarks	10
1.6.1 Survey's scope	10
1.6.2 Sample design	10
1.6.3 Data collection methodology	11
<b>2. Main results</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Level of acquaintance with the Europass portfolio	13
2.2 The Europass Curriculum Vitae	14
2.3 The Language Passport	17
2.4 The other Europass tools	17
2.5 Conclusions	19



# Introduction

More than a decade after the beginning of European cooperation within the sphere of education and training, learning mobility remains a key aspect of the European political agenda on which several policies and intervention strategies for the period 2014-2020 are focused. Keeping in mind the current crisis that is profoundly affecting the European economies and their welfare systems, transnational mobility represents a powerful driving force to boost economic recovery and promote competition and competitiveness. As a source of personal development, learning process in multiple contexts, and an effective tool to fight segregation and promote social inclusion, mobility has the potential of becoming a true stepping stone into the labour market.

In order to help citizens move easily across the European countries and take part in study and work experiences abroad, it is necessary to ensure the transparency and visibility of the qualifications, competences and skills acquired during their lives.

To pursue this goal, the following measures have been implemented:

- European cooperation policies in the fields of education and vocational training, to support the development of common European tools that can increase the transparency and visibility of knowledge;
- specific measures to support the development of the European single market, seen as a common space where not only goods and capital but also professionals and workers can move easily and efficiently.

This is the logic underlying the creation of the single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences, also known as Europass, established on December 15, 2004, pursuant to decision no. 2241/2004/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Europass is a portfolio of documents designed to support the geographical and professional mobility of European citizens through the enhancement of their experience and theoretical-practical knowledge and the promotion of the transparency of qualifications at every level. The aim is to make qualifications more readable and understandable for the employers and education and training centres operating across the EU.

Currently the Europass portfolio comprises five documents: the Europass Curriculum Vitae, the Language Passport, the Europass Mobility, the Diploma Supplement, and the Certificate Supplement.

The Europass Curriculum Vitae uses a standard format to systemise the way in which formal qualifications, work experience, individual competences and skills are presented.

The European Skills Passport is an electronic portfolio available through an on-line editor that allows citizens to upload their formal qualifications and certificates. Furthermore, it provides an insight into the different dimensions of educational and training backgrounds. All this is possible by using the standard solutions provided by the Passport, which are:

- Europass Language Passport, which records the language learning experiences that individuals have had during their lives;
- Europass Mobility, which provides transparency and visibility to the periods spent abroad for learning purposes;
- Europass Certificate Supplement, which records and describes education and vocational training qualifications/diplomas/certificates, providing information on the content of the education or training pathway followed, the level of the certificate, and the skills acquired;
- Europass Diploma Supplement, which is an official document that contains information on the holder's higher education qualification (academic and non-academic). It describes the nature, level, content, and results of the higher education pathway followed by its holder.

All documents included in the portfolio are available both in paper and electronic format, and their layout is the same for all Member States of the European Union, European Economic Space, and Candidate Countries. They can be downloaded from the European platform [www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu) or it is possible to create them on-line. In addition, in every European country, a National Europass Centre (NEC) has been established, and it is in charge of the promotion, dissemination, and management of this tool and the information system on which it is built (see Appendix).

Recently, the European institutions have been working on a review of the whole Europass initiative, with the aim of making the document portfolio more suited to the development of new information technologies and more in line with the strategies that have been implemented to enhance non-formal and informal education. As a matter of fact, during the candidate selection for a job, it is nowadays common to employ e-recruitment processes and candidacy procedures that are carried out almost exclusively through the web or by using e-portfolios.

This is the logic behind this study, which is aimed at researching the impact of the Europass portfolio documents on the labour market: how widely is the Europass portfolio known? Is it required by enterprises? Does its use represent an advantage in the recruitment process?

# Foreward

The **“Europass Italia” National Centre** carried out a national sample survey in order to assess the impact of Europass tools on Italy’s labour market.

The survey involved a sample of over 2,000 enterprises throughout the country, representing small, medium and large-sized enterprises across all productive sectors.

The survey was carried out using a Cawi methodology and it investigated the implementation of the Europass portfolio tools for transparency and recognition of skills and competences, which currently comprises 5 documents: the Europass Curriculum Vitae, the Language Passport, the Europass Mobility, the Diploma Supplement, and the Certificate Supplement.

The on-line questionnaire was made available to the heads of human resources departments as well as the training departments of the enterprises involved, in order to evaluate how much they knew and made use of each document included in the Europass portfolio. A particular focus was placed on the CV and its relevance in the staff recruitment process.

The survey was divided in two parts:

- The first part, where a brief overview of the sample design was provided with a particular focus on the methodology followed;
- the second part, where the main results were presented and analysed.





# 1. The survey

## 1.1 Aims

The survey aimed at assessing the actual impact of the Europass portfolio documents with regard to employability in the Italian labour market.

To achieve this goal, a national sample survey was administered to a sample of enterprises with more than 15 employees, in order to get indications about possible changes or remarks that might be useful during the review process of the Europass system currently under way at European level.

## 1.2 Goals

- Identify the main recruitment strategies used by enterprises.
- Specify the awareness level of enterprises about Europass portfolio tools and how they became aware of Europass.
- Identify which are the most relevant documents required in the labour market to enhance the skills and competences of citizens.
- Assess the efficacy and usefulness of the Europass tools for employability.
- Collect suggestions and feedback in order to improve Europass tools.

## 1.3 Tools

The survey was carried out using a Cawi methodology (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) on a sample of 2,025 enterprises with more than 15 employees.

The sample was stratified by:

- company size (number of employees: 15-49, 50-249, 250 or more);
- sector of economic activity;
- geographical area (North, Centre, South/Islands).

The enterprises were selected by using the ASIA archive (ISTAT database for the year 2010). Data have been gathered mostly through a closed-question questionnaire.

The software package used for filling in the questionnaire was developed using the open source software Limesurvey.

## 1.4 Timing

The questionnaire and the software package were first tested in a pilot survey involving 30 enterprises.

The pilot survey was launched on November 14, 2013, and it included 300 invitations.

Since the pilot project didn't highlight any major issue, the main survey was officially launched on November 20, 2013. In this case, invitations were first sent to a basic list comprising about 1,600 units, and after a few days to a supplementary one, comprising about 12,000 units. The on-line data collection process closed on Friday, December 20, 2013.

## 1.5 Data processing

The main descriptive analysis was carried out using frequency tables (absolute and relative).

Simple frequencies among the whole variables in the questionnaire (one-way frequency tables) and data collation with the main variables (two-way frequency table) were the focus element of the processing output.

In particular, data were crossed with three structural variables:

- geographical area (North, Centre, South/ Islands);
- sector of economic activity (manufacturing, trade, tourism and service industry);
- company size (15-49, 50-249, 250 or more employees).

The main results of the research are briefly summarised below, while the annex contains statistical tables (frequency tables and contingency).

## 1.6 Methodological remarks

### 1.6.1. Survey's scope

The survey focused on active private enterprises with more than 15 employees, excluding the companies operating in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector.

Reference database: Istat, ASIA, 2011.

A total of 101,250 enterprises took part in the survey.

### 1.6.2. Sample design

In order to conduct the survey, a random sample was identified and stratified according to geographical area, company size, and sector of economic activity (27 criteria), following these definitions:

- Geographical areas:
  - a) North (Piedmont, Valle d’Aosta, Lombardy, Liguria, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Venetia, Autonomous Province of Trento, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Emilia-Romagna);
  - b) Centre (Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio);
  - c) South and islands (Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily, Sardinia).
- Company size:
  - d) Number of average employees during the year: 15-50;
  - e) Number of average employees during the year: 50-250;
  - f) Number of average employees during the year: more than 250.
- Sector of economic activity:
  - g) Industry (mining and quarrying; manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply; construction);
  - h) Trade and services (wholesale and retail trade; transportation and storage services; hospitality and food services; education; healthcare and social assistance; arts, sports, and entertainment activities; activities of households as employers; services provided by extra-territorial organisations and bodies);
  - i) Corporate services (information and communications services; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; professional, scientific, and technical activities; rental services, travel agencies, business support services).

The enterprises in the sample were extracted using a random procedure; Isfol provided the surveyor with a list of 2,000 enterprises spread across the theoretical sample, in addition to 5 complete supplementary lists (comprising 10,000 additional enterprise names).

### **1.6.3. Data collection methodology**

The survey was conducted following a CAWI methodology. The enterprises involved were contacted via e-mail and they were invited to fill in the on-line questionnaire. The survey started on November 20, 2013, and ended on December 20, 2013.



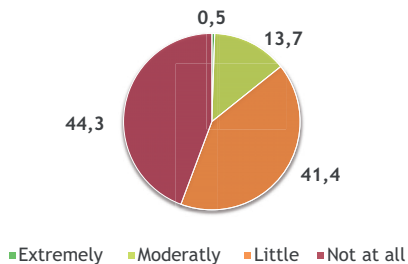
# 2. Main results

## 2.1 Level of acquaintance with the Europass portfolio

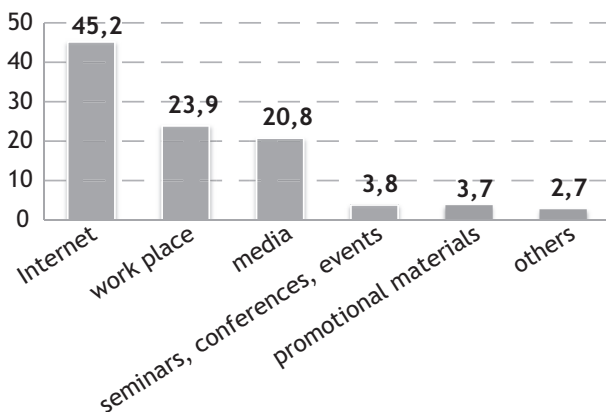
Enterprises know very little about the Europass portfolio; over 85% of them declared to know “nothing” or “just a little” about the actions promoted by the European Union in order to support the mobility of citizens and the certification of their skills and qualifications. In total, positive replies did not reach 15%.

The internet is the main source of information about Europass (45.2%), followed by the workplace (23.9%), and the media (20.8%). Other information sources did not reach substantial values.

**To what extent are you aware of the actions promoted by the European Union to support the mobility of European citizens as well as the certification/transparency of skills and qualifications?**



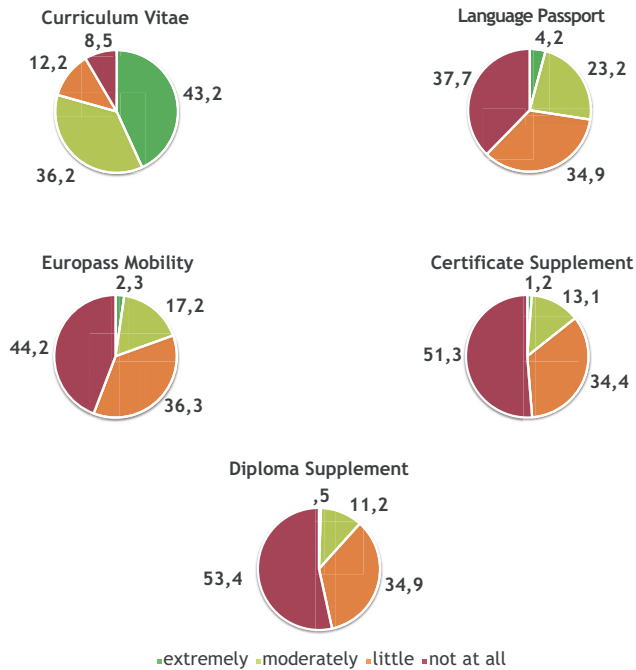
**How did you learn about Europass?**



Delving into the analysis of the Europass portfolio documents, it becomes clear that Italian enterprises are mostly familiar with the Europass Curriculum Vitae; about four out of five enterprises reported to be “highly” or “somewhat” familiar with such tool.

This percentage is drastically lower for the Language Passport (27.4%) and the Europass Mobility (19.5%), while it drops to even lower levels for the Certificate Supplement (14.3%) and the Diploma Supplement (11.7%).

### Which is your level of acquaintance with the 5 documents making up the Europass portfolio?



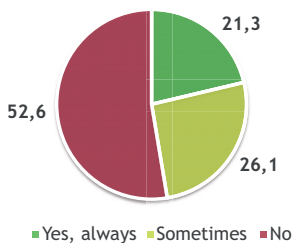
## 2.2 The Europass Curriculum Vitae

Only 21.3% of enterprises always require the Europass Curriculum Vitae during their staff recruitment process.

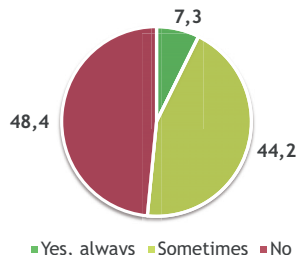
A further 26.1% stated that they occasionally require such a Curriculum, but it largely depends on the type of vacancy.

According to 48.8% of enterprises, the Europass Curriculum Vitae does not represent an advantage in the recruitment process, but according to more than half of them it does provide an advantage. In detail, 7.3% of enterprises stated that it “always” provides an advantage, while 44.2% said that it “sometimes” represents a preferential condition, on the basis of the professional profile sought.

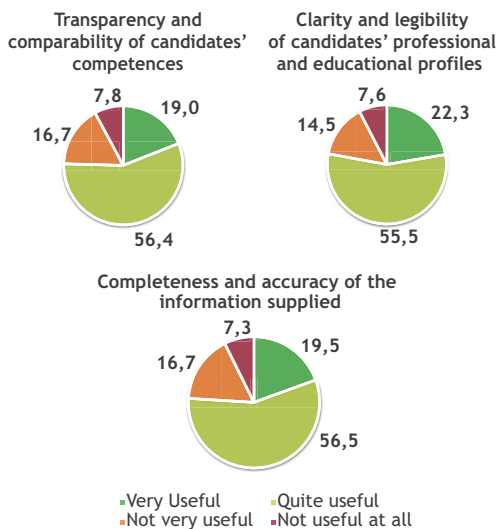
**Is the Europass Curriculum Vitae requested in the staff recruitment process of your company?**



**Is the Europass CV a preferential condition for hiring?**



**How useful is Europass in relation to the following elements?**

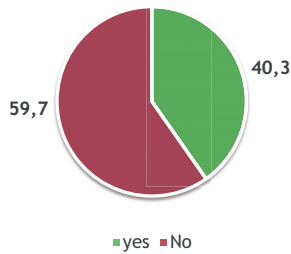


Opinions about the Europass CV are broadly positive; for nearly four out of five enterprises it is a useful tool.

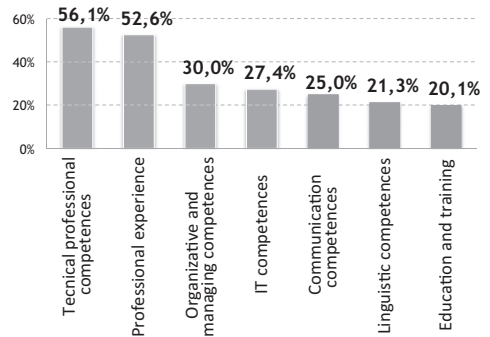
In particular, 75.4% of enterprises affirmed that it represents a useful tool to ensure the transparency and comparability of the skills and competences of candidates; while positive answers are also provided in the questions related to the “Clarity and legibility of candidates’ professional and educational profiles” (77.8%) and the “Completeness and accuracy of the information supplied” (76%).

An interesting outcome is that almost 60% of the enterprises involved do not think that the Europass CV should be improved. At the same time, more than half of them suggested that the sections related to “Technical professional competences” (56,1%) and “Professional experience” (52,6%) should be modified.

**Should the Europass Curriculum Vitae be improved?**



**Which sections of the Europass CV should be improved? Multiple choices**

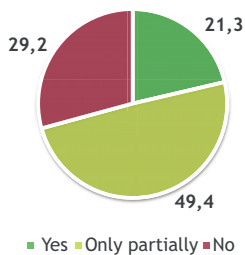


According to 21% of enterprises, the use of standard formats - such as the Europass Curriculum Vitae - leads to an excessive uniformity in the description of the profile of a candidate. Nearly half of the enterprises stated that this is only partially true (49.4%) and that it may also depend on specific CV sections, whereas 29.2% of them said that they don't think that this is true.

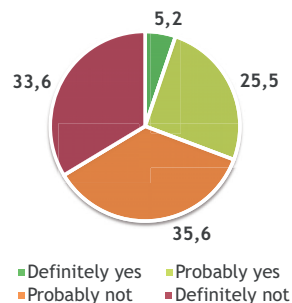
One enterprise out of three (30.7%) expressed an interest in the possible use of a free software for performing a quick comparison among the Europass Curricula Vitae of candidates.

Nevertheless, it's important to underline that a high share of enterprises (69.2%) seem uninterested in such software, maybe because they believe that the "human element" plays a crucial role in the comparison and selection of the Curricula Vitae of candidates.

**Do standard formats, such as the Europass CV, lead to an excessive uniformity in the description of the professional candidate' profile?**



**Would you be interested in using a free software allowing a quick comparison among the candidates' Europass CV?**



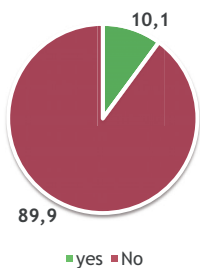


## 2.3 The Language Passport

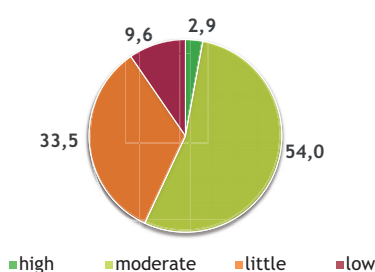
Only 10.1% of enterprises stated that the applications that they had received were accompanied by the Language Passport.

More than half of these enterprises stated that such tool had been useful to assess and understand the skills and competences of applicants.

Have enterprises received applications accompanied by the Europass Mobility?



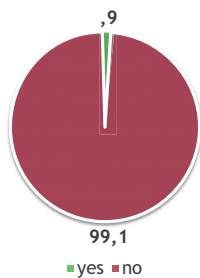
Has the Language Passport been useful to analyze and understand applicants' competence?

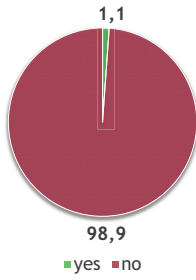
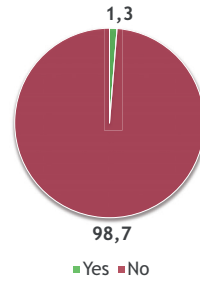


## 2.4 The other Europass tools

The relevance of the remaining three documents of the Europass portfolio is almost negligible. About 1% of enterprises declared that the applications they had received were accompanied by the Europass Mobility, the Certificate Supplement or the Diploma Supplement.

Have enterprises received applications accompanied by the Europass Mobility?



**Have enterprises received applications accompanied by the Certificate Supplement?****Have enterprises received applications accompanied by the Diploma Supplement?**

## 2.5 Conclusions

At the end of the questionnaire, enterprises were asked to express their opinion on the usefulness of the Europass tools. Slightly more than half of them (54%) described them as “quite useful”, while only a very small share (2.9%) deemed them very useful. The remaining 43.1% expressed a negative judgment: 9.6% of enterprises described these tools as “not useful at all”, while 33.5% defined them as “not very useful”.

The share of enterprises that deemed Europass tools “very useful”, despite being quite limited, seems to increase as the company size gets bigger. This judgement is shared by 2.6% of enterprises with under 50 employees, 3.6% of the enterprises with 49-249 employees, and 5% of the enterprises with more than 250 employees. The same pattern recurs among the enterprises that consider these tools “quite useful” (with percentages of 53.5%, 55.3% and 58.5% respectively).

To sum up, how useful are the Europass tools?

