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Increased certification for non-regulated professions. Note of discussion also in Brussels

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The certification issued by accredited certification bodies, among the procedures identified by Law no. 4/2013 to qualify professionals not enrolled in registers or not members of professional orders, is the basis of profound changes in the labor market.

From the permanent job to the **new professions**. The picture of Italy today is a colorful image that runs on the web and portrays designers, wedding planners, e-reputation managers and digital copywriters, and says farewell to the old Polaroid picture capturing the signing of a permanent contract.

The combination of economic crisis and digital age has led to the emergence of three million **professionals not regulated** by registers or orders. In 2013, in order to regulate these kind of professions, was released the Law no. 4 "Dispositions for non-organized professions".

From the entry into force of the Law, masseurs, naturopaths and kinesiologists, and, again, graphic designers, advertisers, safety managers in the workplace, experts in taxation law, translators, up to apartment block administrators and real estate appraisers, wedding planners, e-reputation managers and digital copywriters, have three ways to show that their professionalism is qualified: self-assessment declaration, certification of the reference associations and certification of third party certification bodies accredited by Accredia, provided that it's issued in compliance with UNI (Italian Standardization Body) technical standards and their professional requirements. The accredited certification guarantees that the assessment of the requirements is performed following the principles of impartiality and independence by a third party body and not on the basis of a self-declaration.

"The legislation mandates these professionals to highlight, in every document and written report with the client, the reference to Law no. 4/2013, which is applicable for the protection of the client and his trust in the professional – explains Emanuele Riva, Director of the Certification and Inspection Department of Accredia. If this provision is not respected, the professional is subject to sanction in accordance with the **Consumer Code**, Legislative Decree no. 206/2005, as "responsible" for an unfair commercial practice against the consumer, with an administrative pecuniary sanction from 5 thousand to 500 thousand euros depending on the severity and duration of the violation. "

A way to better protect the consumer who will have more guarantees on the know-how, competence, quality and safety of services provided by professionals, but also brings benefits to the professional who will have his certification recognized on international markets, thanks to the Multilateral Agreements of EA (European co-operation for Accreditation), recognized by the European Commission as a European accreditation infrastructure.

To date there are 46 certification bodies accredited by Accredia and over 200 thousand accredited professionals.

The regulation of professionals, in general, remains a **voluntary decision** even if to access some roles the legislation can set as **mandatory** the possession of certifications issued by accredited conformity assessment bodies.

This is the case, for example, of the experts in taxation law who want to take on representation out-of-court, of the private security personnel, of the energy managers directing large energy plants. They are required continuous professional training, theoretical-practical verification of specialist knowledge, absence of disciplinary measures.

There are **175 professions** for which it is possible to request an accredited certification, as also shown by Accredia Data Banks, 125 refer to UNI certification standards.

“There is a greater awareness on accreditation – continues Emanuele Riva. Just think that before the Law in Italy there were 4 certification bodies, while today there are 46 certification bodies accredited for certification of professionals. The professional associations, in order to give value to their members, benefit from the opportunity offered by this Law, regulating with a UNI standard the competences required to perform a specific profession.”.

The attention for the certification of professionals and its recognition are now subjects of discussion by the EC too.

“The EC is looking for some criteria to include private professions in the **EU database for professions**, and accreditation seems to be the solution – explains Riva. To be clear, this means that those who want their private certification (e.g. Microsoft, TOEFL...) listed in the EC database (i.e. recognized thanks to the mutual recognition of competences in the European Union, for the mobility of people) will have to possess an accredited certification. Therefore, public certification and accredited certification are equated. The Italian Law no. 4 and the Legislative Decree no. 13 of 2013 “Definition of general rules and fundamental performance levels for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the minimum service standards of the national system for certification of competences” are reaching now a European level – concludes the Department’s Director. The discussion is only at its beginning, but the premises are very good and the consequences could be many, even at national level.”.