

TRAINING COURSE FOR OTS IN SICILY AND THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

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CEDIFOP's commercial diver training activities continue and it has just (June 2011) completed an OTS (Operatori Tecnico Subacqueo) course as provided by regulation PROF 2011 for commercial diving training in Sicily: a new Diver Medic course approved by IMCA has also started. After that 2 more projects are planned, the first is a course which will train divers who are already OTS certified and with a previous training in line with CEDIFOP standards, to the IDSA standard for Scuba and Surface Supply level 2. After that (July/August) the first course for TOP UP has been planned, already authorized by the Regional Education and Training Department of the Sicilian Government, in strict compliance with international standards, and as provided by the letter reference number 681/ CABINET of 16/march/2011. In this letter Mr Nino Emanuele, the Chief of Cabinet for the Education and Training Department, of the Sicilian Region specifies that, with the publication of PROF 2011 he becomes the "competent authority" in matters of Professional Training in all Sicilian territory as provided by the Italian legislation. This legislation states that OTS training for both at basic and specialized levels must adhere to the Directive 2006/36/CE, and observe the standards and training contents of I.D.S.A. and H.S.E.- committee Deliberation n. 350 dated 04/10/2010.

The Sicilian Region has authorized these standards as the only ones to be followed in the territory of the Sicilian Region, and that to issue professional certificates, training activities must be subordinate to control by the Work Department of the Province and must end with a Final Exam in the presence of an Examination Committee

CEDIFOP, working with the Sicilian Regional Government has been instrumental in achieving this level of control – a first in Italy where until now, legislation for Commercial Diving at a national level is missing. There are several dozen schools in Italy training commercial divers without the requirement to follow a

consistent national standard.

The European Union has general regulations for commercial diving activities. Commercial diving needs a regulation which is valid in all territories, as it is necessary for a commercial diver to work in all foreign countries; most Italian divers currently start their career in local area registered in a Master Book of Divers kept by the local Port Authority, but many of these divers go to work offshore.

We must consider that job opportunities for commercial divers occur worldwide so, there is a need to provide internationally recognised training courses. But not only is there a need for courses to be recognised internationally, they also need to be recognised nationally, and there are still a number of countries where this is not the case – Italy being one of them. The only diver recognised by law in Italy is one who is registered in the Master Book of a Port Authority. This authority is only concerned with harbour work, but there is a great deal of diving work outside harbour limits, where there are no regulations to protect divers or control diving activities.

Such regulations are vital for the safety of divers and the efficiency of diving work, many fatal accidents have occurred in diving operations as a result of inadequate training. A. Di Biagio emphasized the need for National regulations and training in his speech to the Chamber of Deputies, on 28 April 2011.

That is the reason why the Sicilian Region is adopting a series of initiatives to promote international standards in diver training, as an example to the rest of Italy and to other countries which do not have national regulations or standards.

