**Study Group on Disability Rights**

**REPORT**

**COUNTRY VISIT – ITALY**

**Inclusive education of persons with disabilities**

**14-16 November 2018**

**MEMBERS: Sandro Mascia (Employers Group), Bo Jansson (Workers Group), Pietro Vittorio Barbieri (Diversity Europe Group)**

**SOC Secretariat: Valeria Atzori**

**Wednesday 14 November**

**Visit to the Di Donato primary school. Meeting with Silvia Stefanovichj (parents' association) and Valeria Ciai (school director**)

School website <https://www.romapaese.it/risorsa/scuola-elementare-di-donato/>

Parents' association website <http://www.genitorididonato.it/wp/>

The primary school, located in a disadvantaged area in Rome, next to the Termini railway station, is a model of inclusive education, not only for children with disabilities (+10%), but also for children of migrants (40% of all students). The school promotes diversity as a source of richness and the sense of belonging to a community.

The strength of the school is the parents' association, a bottom-up approach. Many of the activities offered are provided by volunteer parents.

One of them is the "danceability" project (<http://www.danceability.it/home.html>), a type of contemporary dance that uses body movement as a means to communicate and develop. The delegation attended a moving performance of a group of 5th grade children of different ethnic origins, including one child in a wheelchair.

The school is open every day until 10 pm thanks to different activities offered by the parents' association, including creative workshops, sport, dance, multicultural dinners, etc. The school playground is open to children in the neighbourhood and during summer holidays, and a range of activities is also offered.

The main problem for the school: lack of resources and lack of continuity and stability in teaching,

**Visit to the Centro di Audiofonologopedia (Hearing and Speech Therapy Centre)**

<http://www.audiofonologopedia.it/Audiofonologopedia.htm>

* The centre was set up in the 1970's, when the first laws on inclusive education were adopted, on the initiative of parents of deaf children.
* Its services are free and include teaching deaf children to speak, rehabilitation for deaf and autistic, and for children with Down's and other syndromes. They also organise training for curricular and support teachers.
* 160 children in the centre – there is a waiting list; scarcity of services on offer.
* Use of technologic devices helps, but the human factor remains fundamental.
* In Italy there is an oral approach to deafness – small children aged 0-6 years old can be taught to speak, which is why neonatal screening is so important.
* Sign language is taught as a support.

Remarks:

* Need for closer cooperation between schools, parents and therapists.
* Relationships with schools vary according to school directors/teachers.
* Problem of lack of stability/continuity in teaching.

**Working lunch in the "Associazione come un albero" centre**

<http://www.comeunalbero.org>

The centre is both a bistro and a museum, organised like a house, where each room is meant to allow visitors to reflect on the condition of being disabled. The bistro employs 12 people, of whom five have a mental disability.

**Meetings with representatives of the Italian Ministry of Education : Raffaele Ciambrone, responsible for inclusive education , Vincenzo Falabella, president of FISH (Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicap) and Salvatore Nocera, FISH**

Overview of the process that led to inclusive education in Italy:

* 1968 student movement: the whole of society, including families and people working in special schools, asked for an inclusive education system
* 1971 decree law: children with physical disability enter mainstream schools
* 1976 first blind child enters mainstream school
* Law 517/77: mainstream school open to all children with disabilities ,with support teachers provided but only for compulsory education
* 1992 law extending inclusion to private schools
* 2003 obligation for local authorities to provide assistance
* Law 107/2015: most recent law reforming the school system. Adoption of WHO ICF mechanism: ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) is the WHO framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels.

Current situation:

* Child receives a certification of disability
* Local health authority identifies needs
* School + Family+ Health services (GLH – Working Group on Handicap) establish an Individual Educational Plan (PEI) with clear objectives.

Data: +8 000 000 students

250 000 with a disability

300 000 with learning disorders

Law 2012: BES (specific educational needs, in the event of traumatic temporary events such divorce, moving, etc.) and DSA (specific learning disorders: dyslexia, dysgraphia, etc.)

Shared competences: state and local authorities (regions +municipalities)

New law in 2017: monitoring and evaluation of level of inclusiveness – 16 new indicators. Uneven application of the law

Creation of territorial support centres (CTS): interface between national administration and schools

Development of ICT for inclusive education

Setting up of autism helpdesks

There are a total of 154 000 support teachers; 30% do not have permanent contracts and change school every year.

**Working Dinner: Agricoltura Capodarco, restaurant and social agriculture centre**

<http://www.agricolturacapodarco.it>

The centre is a social cooperative, offering a restaurant and a project for social agriculture that employs persons with disabilities and migrants/refugees.

**Thursday 15 November**

**Visit to the ITAS Garibaldi school – meeting with Patrizia Marini (school director)**

<http://www.itasgaribaldi-roma.gov.it/garibaldiweb/chisiamo.asp>

The secondary school has a total of 800 pupils, of whom 107 with disability. Their model of inclusion is based on a system of tutoring: other students volunteer to be tutors for a disabled student on a shifting basis (peer-to-peer education). They also have workshops in sport, cooking and gardening.

**Visit to la Sapienza University / DISCO (Regional entity for the right to study) : Ivetta Ivaldi** [**and**](mailto:Ivetta.ivaldi@uniroma1.it) **Paolo Moroni**

<http://www.laziodisco.it>

Universities started to work on inclusion in the 1990's. In each faculty there is a referee for disability with coordination mechanisms at local and national level. Work has advanced considerably on DSA. Problems still persist in accessibility and for certain categories: becoming surgeons for blind people, deaf students taking part in Erasmus (problem with sign language). A counselling service has been set up, offering psychological support and help in making the transition to employment. A tutoring system is also in place. Thanks to all these measures, the success rate for students with a disability is quite high.

DISCO: for disabled people, the organisation offers scholarships, accommodation, transport, personal assistance, 24-hour assistance and psychological support.

**Roundtable meeting with representatives from:**

**Dpos:**

**FISH: Vincenzo Falabella, Paolo Grillo, Roberto Speziale and Gianfranco De Robertis**

**FAND (Federation of associations of people with a disability): Roberto Romeo, vice-president of FAND (Federation of National Association for Disability), Domenico Sabia, ANMIC consultant (National association of people with an injury or disability)**

**Trade unions:**

**CGIL (Maristella Mortellaro,and Manuela Pascarella)**

**CISL (Lena Gissi)**

**UIL (Mirella Novello, Noemi Ranieri, Francesca Severa and Mariolina Ciarnella)**

**Association of School Directors(ANP)** [**http://www.anp.it**](http://www.anp.it) **Federica Sleiter**

Main points raised:

* Negative effects of turnover of teachers and lack of curricular continuity
* Reduction in investments in schools and in hiring support teachers
* Schools are inclusive, but the same cannot be said for society and the labour market
* Diversity both in schools and the workplace has proven to be positive for everybody
* There are not enough specialised support teachers, because training is expensive and resources for lifelong training are scarce
* Laws are not always respected, for example on the maximum number of pupils per class in situations where there is a disabled student.

**Friday 16 November**

**Visit to the Liceo Montessori**

<http://www.scuolediroma.it/portfolio/liceo-statale-maria-montessori/>

Gennaro Viglione, school director

The school was founded by Maria Montessori and opened 1928. It now offers five different types of high school education, has +30 students with a disability and more than 100 with BES/DSA.

Montessori schools are not very widespread because of the costs, meaning that very few are public. In the school, curricular teachers receive specific training as support teachers. Support teachers are available for the whole class, as inclusion is a two-way process.

**Visit to the Centro per l'Autonomia (Centre for autonomy)**

<http://www.centroperlautonomia.it>

This centre offers assistance to persons with a high degree of disability within the Rome ASL (+450 per year, with a staff of 40 people). It is a private structure but has an agreement with the National Health Service in different areas: occupational therapy, accessibility, social services, psychological support and engineering and architectural consultancies.

During the visit, we made a tour of the building, which includes an area for stimulating communication, a technical aids showroom where people can select e.g. the wheelchair best suited to them by trying them out and an accessible house.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

* Education in Italy is by legislation highly inclusive. However, there are gaps in implementation, often because of a lack of resources;
* Labour market and society in general are less inclusive than the educational system;
* Resources for education and recruiting curricular and support teachers have to be increased. Currently they represent only 3.8% of GDP;
* Lack of curricular continuity and excessive turnover of teachers – contracts renewed every year –negatively affects students' learning and emotional wellbeing;
* Support teacher positions are seen by teachers with precarious contracts and without specialist qualifications as a means to getting a permanent contract: to avoid this, there should be a clear separation of the two careers paths and curricular teachers should receive specific training;
* Support teachers often work exclusively with the child with a disability: they should be working with the whole class;
* Lifelong learning opportunities should be provided to both support and curricular teachers;
* Universities are lagging behind with respect to compulsory education; more efforts are needed;
* Sharing of competences between state, region and municipality can be a problem and generate confusion when applying for support or implementing legislation;
* Peer-to-peer education and tutoring by students have been proven successful;
* Sport, dance and art can be a powerful means of inclusion;
* Processes and results have to be monitored.

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