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Directions to overcome growing challenges toward inclusive educational institutions

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of inclusion is addressed here in a radical way, in the first place emphasising that it concerns everyone. The ontological condition of all human beings is in fact characterised by a constitutive relationality whereby the conditions of possibility for the construction of the self are only partly in one's own endowment, but to a large extent they are beyond oneself, in others' hands. We speak in this sense of ontological vulnerability, to distinguish it from contingent vulnerabilities, but the term is appropriate when one does not attribute only a negative meaning to it. However, we have no other more appropriate word than the usual one of vulnerability, so let us use it in a deeper meaning. In short, we consider that the inter-relationship is original, even if one must then also analyse the specific situations of deprivation that affect some people more than others and therefore require specific reparative and regenerative interventions. To focus only on 'special' situations, however, as if they did not occur on the common human condition, would lead to proposals for inadequate interventions.

And indeed, a second qualifying aspect of these guidelines is that, in the consideration that human beings are constitutively relational, attention is drawn that existence always takes place in a socio-spatial-temporal life-world. It is not considered as a mere setting on which existences take place, but as content of them. Hence the importance for inclusion projects to be attentive to the interweaving of these three dimensions – non only social relations but also time and place setting - , considering the configurations of the so-called 'contexts' not at all as corollaries of action but in their semantic and performative relevance.

Thirdly, the aim of inclusion, which considers interdependence as original and nonetheless does not allow for any form of paternalism, is attentive to the urgency of a re-semanticisation of the concept, and the ideal, of autonomy, which we understand in its relational dimension. It is configured more as a meta-capacity to be promoted in capacitating relationships, than as a natural endowment that may be lacking and has to be made up for. The theme is relevant insofar as it is connected to the attention, which every institution must have, and educational institutions in the first place, so that each person can flourish in his/her own singular authenticity.

GUIDELINES AND OTHER TOOLS FOR MANAGING PROFESSIONAL CHOICE

Preliminarily, it seems appropriate to provide some general indications regarding some defining aspects concerning the tools that have been developed to provide assistance to professionals in making decisions of a technical nature in relation to the cases they are about to deal with. These tools, very different from each other, will be presented in a succinct manner, like a "glossary".

GUIDELINES

Recommendations of clinical behavior, elaborated through a process of systematic review of the literature and expert opinions, with the aim of helping operators and users in deciding the most appropriate modality of assistance in specific circumstances (Field & Lohr, 1992).

The reasons that motivated the introduction and elaboration of the guidelines are: the existence of multiple and different concrete behaviours, the belief that many of these are inappropriate, the awareness that many of these are expensive, the observation of the difficulty with scientific progress modifies daily operating practice, which on the contrary often follows outdated schemes.

The aims with which the guidelines are elaborated are: the reduction of the variability of the behaviours, the increase of the credibility and prestige of the operators, the reduction of the expenses and the optimal use of the resources, the favoring a more rapid passage of the new knowledge to the concrete experience, the improvement of the effectiveness and quality of services.

The requirements to be met in the guidelines production process are: elaboration by or together with qualified scientific organisations, development with methods which combine research results with concrete experience, being as complete and specific as possible, being produced on the basis of updated information and of shared scientific evidence, being widely disseminated.

The qualities required by the guidelines are: validity, reliability, applicability, clarity, multidisciplinary nature, documentability.

The characteristics required by the guidelines are: quality, reliability and independence.

Overall, therefore, the Guidelines are behavioral "RECOMMENDATIONS" (they are indicative, not mandatory), they are "SELF-PRODUCED" by the category of operators interested in that particular assistance sector (they are shared technical indications), they are "LIMITED" (over time and in the space).

Some indisputable advantages are recognized to the guidelines: the reduction of dispersion and variability of decisions, the conjugation of efficiency with the effectiveness of choices, the recovery and verification of outcomes, the implementation of attention to equity.

However, inevitable disadvantages are connected to them: undermining the autonomy of operators, caging acumen and research, putting the authority of general scientific data before reasoning on the concrete case.

PROTOCOL

Predefined sequence of precisely delineated behaviors to ensure reproducibility and standardization (e.g. in research).

The protocol imposes choices, it does not recommend them; determines the times and methods in a precise and detailed manner; it admits deviations only if these are foreseen and only in explicit cases. It cancels the autonomy of the operator.

STANDARD

Predefined threshold values (minimum and maximum) of a chosen indicator that defines the performance of a service.

The standard only defines the maximum and minimum limits of the performance of a service, but does not indicate the methods of execution of the same.

GOOD PRACTICE

A good practice can be defined as any activity, procedure or behavior concerning care pathways, based on quality and safety standards. These standards originate from evidence, literature and/or healthcare organizations. A good practice requires specific indicators to be monitored over time.

A constant of the definitions of good practice is the reference, direct or indirect, to the methodology of continuous quality improvement and, where possible, to scientific evidence.

The good practice is generally aimed at protecting the safety of the person who is the object of the service and is aimed at improving the quality of the same. It can be produced by users, operators or organizations. It identifies quality virtuous paths, but does not explicitly recommend them.

CONSENSUS CONFERENCE

Consensus conferences are one of the tools available to reach, through a formal process, an agreement between different figures with respect to particularly controversial and complex health issues, favoring the choice of guidelines that are as uniform as possible in practice, with a view to providing users the best quality of service in relation to the available resources.

Consensus conferences are a formal process through which an agreement is reached between the various stakeholders, on controversial issues concerning the choices to be made in

certain cases, aimed at improving quality and optimizing resources. They bind the subjects who took part in the process and can also be an indicative element for others, in the same situations.

POSITION PAPER

A position paper is a document that clearly and concisely sets out a position or point of view on a specific topic. Usually, it is also used in the field of assistance to present the ideas or proposals of an organization or a group on a certain topic.

It is a "scientific position" that is elaborated by a group of experts on a specific topic. It represents the opinion of the person who signed the document on this issue.

DISABILITY AND NEURODIVERSITY

THE NEW DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Introduction

With law 22 December 2021, n. 227, the "Delegation to the Government in matters of disability" was approved. This requires the Government to adopt, within twenty months from the date of entry into force of the law, one or more legislative decrees for the reorganization of the provisions in force on disability, in compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The legislative device is aimed at guaranteeing citizens with disabilities recognition of their condition, also through a congruent, transparent and easy assessment of the same that allows full respect for their civil and social rights, as well as effective and full access to the system of services, benefits, dedicated financial transfers and any other related facilitation.

Among the interventions is provided for in art. 2 paragraph 2 «the adoption of a definition of "disability" consistent with article 1, second paragraph, of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, also integrating the law of 5 February 1992, n. 104, and introducing provisions that provide for a basic assessment of disability distinct from a subsequent multidimensional assessment based on the bio-psychosocial approach (ICF)".

With this in mind, the following issues need to be addressed:

1) notion of person with disability in line with the CRPD and with the provisions of Law 104/92;
2) multidisciplinary and multiprofessional character of the assessment processes of disability.
3) criteria for ascertaining disability consistent with its definition and with the provisions of the CRPD and ICF.

1. Concept of person with disability according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), «persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others». In the Italian version, "long-term impairment", a term not easy to translate, was indicated with the term "lasting impairments" (Ministero del lavoro, della salute e delle politiche sociali, 2007; European Commission, 2016)

In the government delegation, in addition to the passage of the paradigm from a medical model to a social model of disability, the conceptual separation between subjects who can be defined as people with disabilities, who must not be treated in a discriminatory way, and people "without disabilities" is fundamental.

Through this asymmetric type of protection, the law requires the adoption of a particular approach, which consequently creates, in fact, a specific right, different from the "common" one (Persechino et al., 2013; Marra, 2011). As a preliminary point, it is therefore necessary to start from the "Preamble" of the CRPD, which in point recognizes "that disability is an evolving concept and that disability is the result of the interaction between people with impairments and behavioral and environmental barriers, which impede their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Avato, 2020).

The "definition" of disability referred to in the Delegated Law appears in art. 1, second paragraph, of the CRPD (purpose): "Persons with disabilities are those with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that continue over time (stabilized or progressive), which, by interacting with barriers of various kinds, can hinder the their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

The definition contained in law 104/92, although based on the medical model of disability (the term handicap itself appears in the first international classification; OMS, 1980), appears decidedly more explicit and articulated than that of the CRPD (Cingolani & Romanelli, 2008; Degener & Begg, 2017).

However, the generic nature of the CRPD definition of disability is easily understandable considering that it is a programmatic indication for each State adhering to the Convention, elaborated to allow an easier adaptation, in the particular terms and modalities of each Country, of its regulations to the social and anti-discrimination approach of the CRPD.

An adequate formulation to the definition of the CRPD, such as to allow a concrete applicability of the indications contained in the law 227/21, is therefore based on what is already foreseen by the law 104/92, in which some terms should be modified to make it more consistent with the radical change intervened with the CRPD.

The definition of disability present in the CRPD requires some adaptations with respect to the provisions of law 104/92: in particular, while in art. 1 of the CRPD, a person with a disability is considered a person with an impairment "which can" determine a restriction of participation, while Law 104/92 is aimed at protecting those who "because" of the impairment already have difficulties (Scorretti, 2018).

A second adaptation is necessary to include among persons with disabilities also those who have lost personal autonomy due to a condition that cannot be classified as "lasting". Think, for example, of subjects suffering from cancer and undergoing serious therapies that lead to a serious reduction in personal integrity and efficiency in everyday life.

Finally, it should be noted that the evolution of the disability model unavoidably requires the modification and evolution of language, also with a view to a desirable harmonization of the legislation of the individual countries of the European Union. In this sense, an attempt at modernization would be to combine the term "impairment" with "impairment", in the translation of the English term "impairment".

Based on these considerations and on the provisions of the Delegated Law as a whole, an update of the text of art. 3 of Law 104/92 (Eligible subjects) in the following terms:

· A person with a disability is someone who has an impairment of the integrated physical, mental, intellectual, sensory, stabilized or progressive function, or someone who suffers from a desease, even of short duration, which seriously affects the person's integrity and efficiency, leads to the loss of personal autonomy.

· The impairment, interacting with barriers of different nature, must hinder the person's full and effective social-relational-work participation by inducing inequality and/or direct or indirect discrimination.

· The person with disability has the right to the benefits established in his favor in relation to the nature and consistency of the impairment, to the overall individual and potential abilities and skills and to the effectiveness of the interventions, supports and benefits which he can access, on the basis of a project personalized which indicates the barriers and facilitators necessary to compensate for the limitations to socio-dynamic-relational activities and to encourage the person's participation in the various areas of life and in the various contexts of reference, including work and school.

· If it is ascertained that the impairment, single or multiple, has reduced personal autonomy, related to age, bringing to light the need for support or intensive support or a significant restriction of participation, on the basis of a multidimensional assessment of the bio functional conditions -psycho-social and also through further and different tools of the dedicated services, the situation takes on a serious connotation.

2. The assessment of disability

In the assessment of disability, adhering to the bio-psycho-social approach, several disciplinary skills (biological, medical, social, psychological) must contribute synergistically to a unitary approach through the use of multiple professional skills (medical, psychological, social).

3. Guiding criteria for the assessment of disability

The inspiring criteria of the medico-legal assessment must comply with the definition of disability and be consistent with the ICD (Ministero della Sanità, 2016) and ICF classifications (OMS, 2001).

In this regard, the centrality of the bio-psycho-social approach emerges, which uses the methodology and definitions of the ICF with regard to structures ("body structures are the anatomical parts of the body, such as organs, limbs and their components"); functions ("bodily functions are the physiological functions of bodily systems – including psychological functions"); activity "the performance of a task or action by an individual") and participation ("the involvement in a life situation").

The medico-legal judgement, while centered on the biological value of the impairment ("impairments are problems in the function or structure of the body, understood as a significant deviation or loss"), considers the social dimension and the relationality of the person, in a unitary vision of the context in which the individual lives and acts.

Participation restrictions are problems an individual may experience in involvement in various life situations.Situations recognized as serious determine a priority in the programs and interventions of public services.

Recommendations

The Constitution of the Italian Republic identifies the person as an individual inserted in a social context and establishes that (art 2) "The Republic recognizes and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, both as an individual and in the social formations where his personality takes place", imposing itself of (art 3) "…. remove the economic and social obstacles which, by effectively limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country" .

The protection of the person in the new millennium is based on a unified vision of the possible limits and potential of the subject's participation in the social context, a "basic" assessment moment for the subsequent declination in the various areas of protection. The prerogative of the assessment of disability, in synergistic harmony with all the disciplines and professional figures in charge of this, is the unitary vision of the person in the bio-psycho-social context.

The draft law dated 20.12.2021 has as its object and purpose (art 1) the "revision and reorganization of the provisions in force on disability": a reorganization that has as its central point the "person" with his "participatory activities " in the context of the living environment.

It is therefore appropriate to reorganize the assessment and evaluation processes, including those relating to the threshold levels, not from a sectorally limited perspective, but laying the foundations for shared and uniform processes in the various areas of protection. In this context, the reference to the methods envisaged by the ICF is essential, starting from the "domains" understood as practical and significant sets of anatomical structures, physiological functions, actions, tasks or related areas of life, to be then declined in the two main lists of "structures and bodily functions" and "activity and participation".

FROM ACCESSIBILITY TO INCLUSION

The concept of accessibility relates not only to the removal of architectural barriers understood as physical obstacles (Ryhl, 2016), but also to the ways in which language, sensory, and perceptual barriers can be overcome, with a view to providing full access to culture, education, and art. Accessibility is therefore about making an environment, space, and experience fully enjoyable for a wide audience, so that people with special needs are not made to feel that they are objects of special attention, but rather users endowed with maximum autonomy, thus fostering personal agency and empowerment (Di Giovanni 2018a). Accessibility is also linked to the concept of capability (Sen 1993), i.e., the expansion of real individual freedoms and opportunities to access different ways of being and doing that enable an individual to lead a good life and to make use of goods, services, and resources, especially in the context of culture and education.

Therefore, whereas in the past the issue of accessibility was mainly concerned with the elimination of sensory barriers in order to guarantee equal access to places, from a physical point of view, for persons with disabilities, today it refers, in line with the principles of Universal Design (UN 2006, Article 2; European Commission 2010, 6), to the empowerment of end users in terms of making a product, service or context as accessible as possible to all, i.e., including all persons who cannot access content in its original form, thus taking into account all possible linguistic, social and cultural limitations, and going beyond any age or technology divide. The focus has therefore shifted from barriers to people and their different abilities.

Recently, there has been a gradual move from traditional notions of accessibility towards more universal, creative, and participatory approaches. This transformation may also impact on the psychological wellbeing of people with (and without) disabilities; as shown in recent studies (Di Giovanni 2022; Di Giovanni & Raffi, 2022), inclusive practices may increase the wellbeing of participants. All this contributes to the empowerment of people with disabilities (Di Giovanni, 2018b) and activates a process of social and cultural improvement that ensures equal opportunities for all (Wallerstein, 1992).

GUIDELINES FOR AUTISM SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The Guidelines for Autism – Operational and Technical Recommendations for childhood Neuropsychiatry Services (*Linee Guida per l'Autismo - Raccomandazioni Tecniche Operative per i Servizi di Neuropsichiatria dell'età evolutiva*) were published in Italy in 2005 by the Italian Neuropsychiatry Society of childhood and adolescence (Società Italiana di Neuropsichiatria dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza - SINPIA) to support the inclusion of children and young people with autism spectrum disorder. The document reviews the existing international proposals of guidelines for autism and summarizes their recommendations. It also presents an excursus of national and international literature in which studies with a strong methodological background have been considered. Lastly, it presents the contribution of Italian professionals who are working in this area.

Later, in accordance with Law 134/2015[1] "Disposizioni sulla prevenzione, cura e riabilitazione delle persone con disturbi dello spettro autistico e assistenza alle famiglie" and the Inter-Ministerial Decree of 30 December 2016, the Italian Ministry of Health delegated the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) to draw up the Guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of ASD in adults (*Linee Guida sulla diagnosi e sul trattamento dei disturbi dello spettro autistico degli adulti*) (ISS, 2016) and the Guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of ASD in children and adolescents (*Linee Guida sulla diagnosi e sul trattamento dei disturbi dello spettro autistico dei bambini e degli adolescenti*) (ISS, 2016). Those Guidelines represent two guidance documents that are fundamental to define the necessary interventions aimed at guaranteeing the protection of the health, the improvement of the life conditions and the involvement in social life and working contexts of people with autism spectrum disorder.

These Guidelines are the result of knowledge evolution in physiopathology and therapy coming from scientific literature and national and international best practices. Such knowledge is constantly reviewed and updated in order to provide professionals and families with effective indications concerning the progress made by scientific studies and practices for them to adopt in education and rehabilitation.

The method of creation of the Guidelines was approved by the national, regional and local Associations and Scientific Societies representing the main clinic, habilitative and educational

[1] Gazzetta Ufficiale (18 agosto 2015), Legge n. 134/2015, Disposizioni in materia di diagnosi, cura e abilitazione delle persone con disturbi dello spettro autistico e di assistenza alle famiglie.

competences in the field of neurodevelopment. Specifically, the Italian Society of Special Pedagogy (SIPeS) joined the approval of the processes.

As highlighted by the associations and scientific societies in the letter sent to the Italian minister of Health, the Italian minister of Disability and the President of Istituto Superiore di Sanità on the 14th of **February** 2023, "in many contexts, the diagnosis are still tardive and there is a lack of appropriate therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions, the families are obliged to ask for private professionals' help and the transition to adulthood does not meet an adequate presence of public services. The good practices developed through regional and national funded projects must be put in a structured system, where employees can comply to the standards that are necessary to guarantee the continuity of the undertaking of people. Furthermore, new ways to facilitate access and support the transition to integrated life paths, like telemedicine, in order to guarantee the effective and fair collectability of of services in the national territory".

The progress in Autism Spectrum Disorders (Law 134/2015[2]) is the result of an extended scientific and legislative elaboration which was conducted firstly on an international level (SIGN; no. 98, 2007) and then on a national level (D'Alema, Nardocci 2008; Law 21/2011; Zappella, Bertelli, 2012). Such progress highlights the necessity to promote and create appropriate and efficacious intervention programs in public services (Micheli, 2004), that can combine the clinic, educational and rehabilitative practice with the sustainability of interventions and the optimisation of resources (Collini et al., 2016).

The intervention models, from the diagnosis to the *lifespan* treatment, guarantee a global care for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, a care that follows an integrated operational framework, multidisciplinary and multi-professional, spanning from the diagnosis and assessment phase to the design of individualised educational and rehabilitative programs. Such programs are created in the life environments of the child and the adolescent: the family and school context, initially, to be followed by the outpatient context and the specialised educational centres (Collini et al., 2016).

Going into further detail, socio-educational interventions that are based on the acquisition of new skills and aim at improving various aspects of the Quality of Life of the person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Schalock e Verdugo Alonso, 2002; Bertelli & Brown, 2006; Giaconi, 2015), like dysfunctional behaviours, linguistic skills or social and everyday life skills, are therefore designed in each phase of the life path (Chiarotti et al., 2017). The transition from adolescence to adulthood is given specific attention: the transition to adults' services are adequately prepared, not only throughout the partnership between professionals working in the two dimensions, but also through providing the adolescent with the proper indication concerning the interventions that he is going to

[2] Legge 18 agosto 2015 n. 134 "Disposizioni in materia di diagnosi, cura e abilitazione delle perso-ne con disturbi dello spettro autistico e di assistenza alle famiglie".

need, as well as where and who will operate them (Cottini, 2008; Cottini et al., 2010; Chiarotti et al., 2017).

Considering a state of the art concerning socio-educational-sanitary services in Marche[3], the existing legislation (Regional Law 25/2014[4]; Marche Regional Council Resolution 993/2017[5]) establishes the presence of an integrated network of services for childhood, that includes: a) paediatricians; b) Childhood multidisciplinary units (UMEE), operating in each hinterland and public and private rehabilitation outpatient centres with UMEE functions; public and private rehabilitation outpatient centres compliant to the Regional Law 20/2000; d) child neuropsychiatry structures belonging to healthcare companies; e) Autism Regional Centre for childhood; f) Towns' social services and Social territorial areas. Specifically, the Autism Regional Centre for childhood, with the "Autismo Età Evolutiva Regione Marche" Project[6] is located in the Child Neuropsychiatry Operational Unit of the Fano Hospital, Ospedali riuniti Marche Nord. The project comprehends clinic and functional diagnosis activities, undertaking and rehabilitation of people with autism, undertaking of their families, as well as periodical evolution assessments that includes an assessment with the child.

Concerning the integrated network of services for adulthood, it includes: a) general medicine doctors; b) Adulthood multidisciplinary unit (UMEA), operating in each hinterland and public and private rehabilitation healthcare centres with UMEA functions; c) public and private rehabilitation healthcare centres accredited by the Regional Law 20/2000; d) ASUR mental health departments; e) Autism Regional Centre for adulthood; f) residential and semi-residential centres; g) Towns' social services and Social territorial areas. The Marche regional Centre for adults with autism presents employees with a specialised and constantly updated formation. It is in contact with the centres of excellence, and it is involved in the researches carried out by the Centre for childhood and the universities of the region. It takes part in the diagnostic re-evaluation, the creation and activation of the individual life project collaborating with the UMEA centres of every hinterland. Alongside the local UMEA centres, it supports families activating groups of self and mutual aid groups, parent training, active engagement of families in the rehabilitative educational process. It collaborates in the creation of Regional Guidelines (applying the national guidelines) and the design and supervision of the residential and semi-residential centres' activities. It is aligned with the network of sanitary, sociosanitary and social services defined by the Regional Law and it spreads the knowledge of the features of the disorder and its treatment throughout the elements of the network. It ensures,

[3] See also the website https://angsa.it/2018/01/08/regione-marche-un-centro-di-riferimento-per-adulti/ and https://www.consiglio.marche.it/banche_dati_e_documentazione/leggi/dettaglio.php?arc=sto&idl=1853#art8

[4] Legge Regionale n.25 del 09/10/2014, Disposizioni in materia di disturbi dello spettro autistico.

[5] D.G.R. 993 del 04.09.2017 "Costituzione del Centro regionale Autismo Età Evolutiva ed Età Adulta" http://www.norme.marche.it/Delibere/2017/DGR0993_17

[6] DGR n. 1891 del 29.10.2002 "Progetto "L'autismo nella Regione Marche - verso un progetto di vita".

collaborating with UMEA centres, the caregiving continuity in the transition towards adulthood and for the rest of the life cycle[7].

[7] Other useful reference:

Article 27 paragraph 3 Const.: «Punishments may not consist of treatment contrary to humanity and must aim at the re-education of the condemned person».

- CU relativa all'accordo del 22/11/2012 "linee di indirizzo per la promozione ed il miglioramento della qualità e dell' appropriatezza degli interventi assistenziali nel settore dei Disturbi Pervasivi dello sviluppo (DPS) con particolare riferimento allo spettro autistico".
- Art. 4 della Legge regionale 9 ottobre 2014, n. 25 "Disposizioni in materia di disturbi dello spettro autistico".
- L.R. 21/2016 e s.m.i. "Autorizzazione e accreditamento istituzionale delle strutture e dei servizi sanitari socio-sanitari e sociali pubblici e privati e disciplina degli accordi contrattuali delle struttu-re e dei servizi sanitari, socio-sanitari e sociali pubblici e privati "
- DPCM 12 gennaio 2017 "Definizione e aggiornamento dei livelli essenziali di assistenza di cui all'art. 1 co. 7 del decreto legislativo 30 dicembre 1992 n. 502".

BOX 1: GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE GUIDELINES SUPPORTING SERVICES FOR AUTISM

Supporting the Guidelines for people, children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder, a collaboration with the most significant local organisations in the regional territory has been activated in the context of the Vitality project. The collaboration involved organisations that operate in residential and semi-residential day-care centres with a socio-educational undertaking of children, adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), involving a wide age range. Specifically, Omphalos Autismo & Famiglie Voluntary Organisation[1], Anffas Macerata[2] and the Capodarco Community of Fermo[3] contributed throughout the sharing of their own experience in order to highlight the existing issues in each service and the most efficient strategies that can be applied in multiple situations, beyond the specific singular experiences, to create inclusive and supporting environments for people with ASD. As stated by Andrea Canevaro, the concept of *good practice* does not refer to the best practice that can be occasionally applied, but rather to the set of sustainable and replicable experiences and strategies that can systematically guarantee the quality of the intervention. The methods and intervention approaches that can be replicated in multiple situations without being limited to specific singular experiences, are hereafter identified.

The main issues emerging when working with people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, both children/adolescents and adults, can vary depending on the individual's developmental phase and the intervention context. However, some of these issues can be found in multiple situations, such as:

- **Coordination between the subjects that are involved**. One of the main challenges consists in coordinating the multiple subjects involved in the support, education and care for people with ASD, such as parents, relatives, teachers, therapists and healthcare professionals. Interventions to support people with autism requires precision and coherence; therefore, guaranteeing a collective work aligned to shared guidelines is fundamental. Specifically, there is a need to involve families on a deeper level, by sharing the same objectives and building a relationship of trust.
- **Acceptance of the diagnosis**. Specifically concerning the case of children (even though this aspect can keep affecting the adolescence and adulthood of people with disability), family can struggle with coming to terms with the autism diagnosis, presenting a resistance that could negatively affect their intervention and support. It is fundamental to help families accept the diagnosis, since they represent the most important "ally" in the intervention process.

- **Emotional aspects and wellbeing**. Balancing the emotional state of young adults with autism can guarantee their wellbeing. Doing such thing represents an important challenge for all the subjects involved. For instance, some people with very low functioning could need regular rest periods to maintain an optimal level of functioning. Finding the ideal moment to let them rest can favour accessibility and increase the quality of their everyday life.
  Rigidity and repetitive behaviour. It is known that people with ASD can display behavioural rigidity, as well as stereotypic and obsessive behaviours. Such characteristics can represent an obstacle to the adjustment to new situations and environments, or the participation to group activities. Therefore, such aspects must be taken into consideration without renouncing on training them for unpredictable situations.
- **Absence of early intervention**. In the case of adults with autism, issues connected to a lack of early intervention during their childhood often occur. The current operational modalities and approaches might have been absent in the past, determining the manifestation of problematic behaviours that require a complex management during adulthood.
- **Communication problems**. Some people with ASD can struggle communicating verbally or understanding verbal language. This issue brings up the essential necessity to find alternative communication channels or non-verbal communication techniques that can be suggested by them. That being the case, observation plays a key role in the identification of the best communication modalities.

Among the practices and the suggestions that the organisations we interviewed have adopted to improve the communication and engagement of the families, we highlight:

- The active involvement of families in the therapy and formation paths. It is essential to teach them how to support and work with the child. This approach aims at guaranteeing harmony and continuity between the therapy path and the family context.
- Favouring moments of discussion. This means giving the families a safe space to express their worries, struggles and feelings. Listening carefully and showing empathy can make them feel supported and less isolated.
- Working to build a shared path. There is an urgent need to collaborate with families to build a support path that can foster the wellbeing of the person with disability and the family itself. Focusing on the potentialities and the abilities of the child, trying to communicate with his language can facilitate a reciprocal understanding.
- Guaranteeing a constant presence. Being present and constant in supporting the families, especially in residential situations, is fundamental. This means creating a tight bond with the families and sharing information on the activities and the progress of the person to foster trust and transparency.
- Structuring education in the natural context. Teaching practical and functional skills that will be useful for the person's everyday life is crucial as well, as well as adapting the trainings to the specific needs of the person (such as dealing with the feeling of frustration or developing autonomy).

Concerning the evaluation of Quality of Life of people with ASD, only one out of the three organisations that were interviewed mentioned the use of specific tools or methods to subjectively evaluate Quality of Life. However, all of the reflections they produced focus on the direct observation of the person, his/her happiness and engagement, as well as on the progress in the therapeutic context. Specifically, concerning the evaluation of QoL, the following themes emerged

- **Respect and acceptance**. It is fundamental to accept people with disability for who they are and respect their way of communicating and interacting with the world. Carefully observing their modes of communication, even the non-verbal one, and learning to communicate through their own system to facilitate reciprocal understanding.
- **Structured routine**. Creating a clear and well structured routine can help people with disability reduce their stress and achieve a better Quality of Life. Knowing what to expect during the day can provide them with a sense of safety and predictability.
- **Spatial orientation**. Favouring spatial orientation can be particularly important for some people with disability. Using visual signals or other methods to help them orient themselves in new or complex spaces can be certainly helpful.
- **Small communities**. Creating small residential communities with a limited number of guests, not exclusively designed for autism, could improve the quality of life of adults with disability. These communities can provide them with a familiar environment and continuous support, even when the parents will not be able to take care of their children anymore.
- **Formation**. Promoting formation for all of the educational subjects involved in the support of people with disability is fundamental to guarantee extended high-quality interventions. Formation on autism, including biographies of people with autism and their successful experiences, can help develop a deeper understanding of individual needs.
- **Happiness indicators**. Identifying happiness indicators for each person is an important step to build a repertoire of skills and improve the quality of life. Understanding when a person is happy, relaxed and engaged can guide interventions and foster self-determination.
- **Self-determination**. Promoting self-determination skills is a crucial aspect to improve the quality of life of people with disability. Offering opportunities to discover one's own talents and experiment new roles and responsibilities can help developing a sense of self confidence and independence.

It is important to underline that these practices and suggestions derive from the experiences and approaches of the organisations we interviewed and could not be relevant in all contexts. Indeed, each situation requires a personalised approach that could be adapted to the individual needs of the people involved.

One last aspect that was investigated is related to gender. There is no solid scientific evidence on gender differences in behavioural complexity or in the presence of specific symptoms associated with ASD. However, the professionals we interviewed observed how, in some cases, comorbidities or more relevant psychiatric facets would emerge in women, such as behavioural disorder, opposition, attention and hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) or mood disorders.

We would like to highlight how such considerations are based on limited experiences and little data from scientific literature. It is necessary to conduct further studies to better understand the possible gender differences in people with ASD. On a national level, a higher number of males in day-care and residential centres has been registered, as Istat data confirm (2020). However, when considering elderly people, the case is quite the opposite. The number of women significantly surpasses the number of men (Istat, 2020).

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[1] Omphalos autismo & famiglie is a voluntary organisation aimed at supporting families with people with ASD. The Organisation offers many services, such as didactic and sport activities assistance, job placement in public and private companies, legal assistance, co-participation in the use of already existing services throughout volunteering with the direct involvement of families. Currently, it consists of three operational headquarters: "be-Blu!" in Acquaviva Picena (AP), "Batti 5!" in Fano (PU) and "BluInfinito" in Recanati (MC).

[2] Anffas Onlus Macerata is an association that offers rehabilitation services for people with psychic, physical and sensory disabilities. It currently offers: a Day-care service that daily involves more than 50 guests in educational and rehabilitation activities; two socio-educational-rehabilitation communities where 15 guests live; one outpatient Centre that offers more than 14.000 rehabilitation services (physiatry, speech therapy, psychology, neurology) for childhood.

[3] The Capodarco Community of Fermo is the first site of the Capodarco Community Association that is currently composed of 14 headquarters in Italy, 4 communities abroad and 4 associated communities. It offers residential, semi-residential, outpatient and home care services for people with disabilities. It also offers services of habilitative autonomy, job placement (throughout workshops and other projects) and semi-residential welcome for people with severe neuropsychic disabilities.

REFLECTION ON THE NORMATIVE AND PEDAGOGICAL EVOLUTION OF SCHOOL INCLUSION

The history of school inclusion in Italy is a long and significant journey that has seen the birth and evolution of numerous laws and regulations aimed at guaranteeing the right to education for all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities or special education needs. These laws have played a key role in promoting inclusive education and fostering the integration of students with disabilities in regular schools. The path that led to school inclusion in Italy is, even today, a singularity when compared to the educational systems of other countries, In accordance with its Constitution, since the birth of the Republic, Italy has chosen to operate based on principles of equality, equity and equal opportunity.Article 34, in fact, outlines one of the cardinal principles of school inclusion, namely that schools are open to all; this policy choice places, in an unusual way and from the very beginning, our school system within the approach to inclusive education that is present internationally.

However, at that historical stage, separation and discrimination of students is still seen, as it is characterized by the presence of both differential classes organized within ordinary schools and special schools for students with disabilities. Thus, "specialized" places for the medical treatment of the impairments reported by the population, especially as a result of the war that had just ended, but also institutes and boarding schools for orphans, disabled and invalids were born. This approach is strongly linked to a medical-specialist vision, quite far from what will be revolutionized in Italy starting in 2009 with Law 108/09, where a new vision of a person with disabilities is ratified; the latter consists in not being treated in a discriminatory way with respect to other individuals who are not in this condition. This vision was brought by the new cultural orientations approved by the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and with the subsequent official introduction of the ICF in the school world with Decree-Law (DL) 66/17. But let us proceed in order.

As early as the 1960s, a phase of mass educational participation had begun with Law 1859/62 concerning the Italian middle school, with Law 444/68 establishing the state kindergarten, and with Law 820/71 establishing full-time education. However, at this stage the Italian school found itself unprepared to accommodate learners with disabilities. In 1971, when the government approved Decree-Law No. 118, which, in Article 28, Paragraph 1, provided for the fulfillment of the compulsory education of students with disabilities in the common classes of public schools, there was the first significant breakthrough, which came to fruition with the concluding report of the Falcucci Commission. This report, concerning the scholastic problems of handicapped students, was followed by the issuance of Ministerial Circular No. 227/75, which constituted the Office of Studies for the Scholastic Integration of Students with Disabilities, at the Ministry of Public Education and provided for this new experimentation in some schools, initiating also training and refresher courses for teachers. Following this experimentation, in 1976, Law 360 was passed, which saw the inclusion of blind students.

Finally in 1977, thanks to Law 517, Italy started a phase of school integration for all students with disabilities, with any level of severity, and differential classes were abolished, while special

schools survived, albeit marginally. This document still represents one of the fundamental texts for understanding the "Italian way to school inclusion."

In 1987 there was an important ruling by the Constitutional Court, No. 215, which ruled in favor of a student with disabilities who had been refused enrollment by a high school, reaffirming the "full and unconditional" right to study in all common schools of all levels, to reiterate the concept that ability and merit cannot be evaluated according to standardized parameters, but that these must be evaluated according to the actual abilities of each student.

With the "Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Integration and Rights of Handicapped Persons" No. 104 of 1992, a new pedagogical and legal path of school integration is set in motion, gathering and integrating previous legislative interventions, thus becoming the normative point of reference for school and social integration of people with disabilities. The Presidential Decree of Feb. 24, in stating, "Address and coordination relating to the tasks of local health units in the field of students with disabilities," identified the subjects and competencies of Local Authorities, Local Health Authorities and School Institutions in the definition of the Functional Diagnosis (which describes the strengths and weaknesses of the learner), the Dynamic Functional Profile (drawn up by teachers, family and social and health workers who follow the student) and the PEI (Individualized Educational Plan). The PEI, starting from the situation indicated in the Functional Diagnosis and the Dynamic Functional Profile, indicates the learning and socialization goals to be achieved year by year by the student, the teaching strategies appropriate to his or her disability, and the human, material, and financial resources needed to achieve these goals; it represents the concluding and operational document in which "integrated and mutually balanced interventions are described, prepared for the person with disabilities, in a given period of time, for the purpose of the realization of the right to education and instruction," as supplemented and amended later by DPCM no. 185/06. For the integration of students with disabilities in religiousl schools, on the other hand, one had to wait until the 2000s, with the enactment of Law No. 62 of 2000 on school parity, which affirmed the obligation of religious schools to accept the enrollment of learnes with disabilities, under penalty of losing the requirements for parity recognition.

In 1999, the Presidential Decree No. 275 "Regulations on School Autonomy," opened an interesting scenario on the issue of personalization of the learning process, a theme very dear to scholars of Special Pedagogy. Law No. 53 of March 28, 2003, the so-called Moratti Reform, initiated a process of crumbling the homogenization and uniformity of learning processes, issuing the first National Directions which, already from the term it is possible to understand, overcomes the idea of a prescriptive teaching program (effectively abolishing the Didactic Units) and invites teachers to draft Learning Units, teaching activities stemming from the singularity of students.,. Thus, the necessity arised to intervene with the drafting of a Personalized Study Plan, for each student, so that times and paths can respond to principles of uniqueness and personalization of the education of future citizens.

Unfortunately, due to both cultural and union barriers, the ambitious project of dismantling the rigid architecture of marked disciplinarianism in favor of an anthropological humanization of knowledge construction partly failed. We say in part because, this very reform, supported fervently with the issuance of the "New Directions" promoted by Minister Fioroni in 2007, sensitized the pedagogical community and educational institutions to promote the centrality of the person in formal and non-formal educational actions.

This is why, in 2006, a further shift is activated, from schools that integrated pupils to inclusive schools, thanks to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Law 108/09, which represents an important milestone for the protection and promotion of human rights. It is the first treaty of the new century that emphasizes the principles of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination for people with disabilities. This treaty recognizes people with disabilities as individuals capable of claiming their rights and making autonomous decisions in their own lives. The Convention establishes the obligations of the parties to promote, protect, and guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities and defines disability as the presence of varius barriers which prevent the full participation in society.

Thus, in 2010, Law 170, "New Regulations on Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) in Schools," was enacted, guaranteeing dispensatory and/or compensatory measures for all SLD studentswith dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthographia and dyscalculia, in mild, moderate or severe form.

The detection of SLD is provided by teams of specialized clinical centers; as a result, although the diagnostic procedure is defined at the national level, it is applied differently at the regional level. This law emphasizes the importance of shared action among teachers, families, and professionals to ensure an education tailored to the needs of every student, including those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Two years later, the Ministerial Directive of December 27, 2012, also recognized other categories of students with Special Educational Needs (BES), which may include many realities. There are a variety of reasons why a child or young person needs tailor-made teaching that includes the application of highly specific or alternative methods to the usual ones: cultural, environmental, affective-relational disadvantages. The manifestation of these disadvantages may be transient in nature or may persist for prolonged periods. In some cases, teachers go with the elaboration of the PEI (Individualized Education Plan), while in others cases they stay with the basic PDP (Personalized Education Plan) adapting the methodologies to the specific cases. Regardless of the type of document, these plans should enhance the strengths of the learners with fragility.

For BES students who are not certified under Law No. 104/1992, there is no support teacher figure, but it is up to the curricular teachers to provide for the implementation of personalized or individualized teaching plans.

The debate that was created in Italy as a result of these laws related to the issue of school inclusion saw a collective effort to overcome barriers and create an educational environment that welcomes and values diversity. Following in the wake of what was promoted by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow and their Index for Inclusion (2000), which provides a participatory approach to assessing and improving school inclusion, the latter was implemented in Italy with a consultation that saw the involvement of both the institutional level-national government and the grassroots of the educational system, such as schools, local communities, and regional authorities. This first attempt at confrontation led in 2015 to a new school reform the so-called "Buona Scuola" (literally, “Good School”). In Italy, Law No. 107 represents a first step toward this goal, as it was formulated through a national consultation involving various interested stakeholders. Among the various school changes, this law also brings changes onto school inclusion through subsequent implementing decrees, the most important of which is Legislative Decree No. 66 of 2017, "Standards for the promotion of school inclusion of students with disabilities." It is precisely within this legislative decree that we finally find the application of the concept and of the relational view of disability, seen as the result of the interaction between individual characteristics and contextual aspects,

observing each individual from a holistic perspective, according to the bio-psycho-social paradigm: from the Functional Diagnosis and the Dynamic Functional Profile we move on to the Functioning Profile drawn up according to the parameters of the ICF; emphasis is also given within the PEI to the Personal Life Project.

The DL of Dec. 29, 2020, No. 182 is intended to clarify the criteria for the composition and action of operational working groups for inclusion (GLO) and, in particular, to standardize at the national level the way Individualized Educational Plans (PEI) are drafted. The Guidelines for the drafting of PEI, an identification sheet related to the so-called "functioning debt", the persistent critical aspects of the student's functioning that require further intervention strategies for their resolution, a table for the identification of resources for educational support.

Law No. 107, however, was supposed to be followed by a series of implementing decrees, but these did not see the light of day, leaving this set of innovations as mere stated principles. One of them concerned the training of support teachers, who were to be certified through a three-year Initial Training and Apprenticeship (FIT) pathway with the acquisition of 84 CFU, but this pathway actually remained on paper, as Law No. 145 of 2018 also abolished the FIT, establishing that the teaching qualification was to be achieved exclusively through periodic competitions. The 24 CFU preparatory FIT (PF24) qualification thus became the only initial training pathway for secondary school teachers. This gap regarding the training of support teachers finds in the Decree-Law No. 36 of 2022 the proposal to achieve 60 CFUs for the attainment of the said qualification.

Conclusion. This excursus through laws and decrees leads to a reflection about the inclusive process in which Italian schools find themselves. Certainly, inclusion is an evolving process that requires the collaboration of all stakeholders, including governments, schools, teachers, families and communities, to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop his or her full potential within the school context. But true inclusion, as emphasized in the legislative evolution, is not integration (allowing the person with disabilities to be part of society), it is quite different: it is full participation in social and professional life through a predisposed and welcoming society, without any discrimination. Over the years this has ledteachers in particular to rethink their role as teachers as well as their training, because as soon as the possibility was assured for all students to attend the common school, the focus shifted to how to ensure true participation, offering quality educational pathways that respected the educational needs and peculiarities of all students with Special Educational Needs and without. A number of studies (Ianes, Demo and Zambotti, 2014) showed how the presence of students with disabilities in classrooms resulted in improvement for all students by encouraging the use of a pluralization of teaching methods by teachers (Ianes et al. 2020).

The Finance Act for 2021 – which provides, in Article 1, paragraph 961, an increase in the fund allocated for the mandatory training of teaching staff involved in classes with students with disabilities, aimed at guaranteeing the principle of co-ownership in their care, as part of a more general review of the processes of inclusion of students with disabilitie – leads us to make another consideration about the "educational delegation" that still unfortunately persists in the eternal dichotomy between curricular teacher and support teacher (Santi, Ruzzante, 2016). A formal integration approach has often been adopted rather than a true inclusive approach. Paradoxical delegation still persists in Italian schools, leading to estrangement instead of bringing those involved closer together. This is in contrast with the need for inclusive delegation that promotes

rapprochement and inclusion of everyone involved (Canevaro, 2006). Probably as long as this dualism between the "specialized support" teacher and the curricular, so-called "common" teacher persists, full inclusion cannot take place from the perspective of educational co-responsibility, not only with regard to learners with disabilities, but also with regard to all students in the school community.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES FOR MINORS AND EDUCATING COMMUNITIES

Le Marche Region *focus*

Communities for minors and "educating" communities perform a task on several fronts: integrating or replacing compromised family functions, welcoming the minor in an educational context that aids the realisation of a growth project, realities that have to come to terms with important social changes, with emergencies, such as that of unaccompanied foreign minors, which over time have taken on structural aspects, operating on the basis of a fundamental right that is to protect and preserve the subject of minor age. In this regard, Law No. 474 of 7 April 2017, setting forth "Provisions on measures for the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors", provides that the placement of unaccompanied minors in a community can only be ordered if, following the carrying out of family investigations, no suitable family members are identified to take care of the unaccompanied minor and provided that it has not been possible, in the minor's overriding interest, to resort to hetero-familial fostering. Therefore, there are **situations of fragility and socio-educational and cultural disadvantages** that make it indispensable, in order to guarantee a serene growth of the minor, to activate protection paths offered by a different family or by a family-type community. Moreover, the community context assumes a central role in the challenge against inequalities, given the need to put in place an educational and protective intervention that can provide adequate responses to each specific need, valuing differences, in order to guarantee all these children and young people substantial equality of rights and forms of protection compared to their peers. In order to carry out an effective activity, however, it is necessary to know, document and interpret data and phenomena; knowing is the first indispensable step towards the right solution to problems. In fact, only knowledge makes it possible to understand, choose and be able to evaluate the correspondence of the measures and interventions already implemented and those still to be implemented for the concrete needs and can try to offer each child, girl and boy a family or community context that is truly functional to their serene development.

The fundamental normative reference in the context under consideration, at the international level, is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, New York Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and ratified by Italy with law no. 176 of 27 May 1991, according to which "States Parties shall ensure that children are not separated from their parents against their will unless the competent authorities decide, subject to judicial review and in accordance with the laws of procedure, that they should be separated from their parents. 176 of 27 May 1991, under which "States Parties shall ensure that the child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will unless the competent

authorities decide, subject to judicial review and in accordance with applicable procedural laws, that such separation is necessary in the best interests of the child" (art. 9). Of similar tenor are the statements expressed in Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as well as in Article 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). At the level of domestic legislation, the centrality of the child's interest in living in his or her own family is enshrined in Law No. 184 of 4 May 1983 on the adoption and foster care of minors, as amended by Law No. 149 of 28 March 2001, which recognises the "right of every person under the age of 18 to grow up and be brought up within his or her own family", as well as, in line with the new title of the law, amended in 2001, the "right of the child to a family". Law No 184 of 1983, after specifying that 'the destitute conditions of the parents or the parent exercising parental responsibility cannot be an obstacle to the exercise of the child's right to his or her own family', outlines a framework of safeguards and measures aimed at ensuring that the definitive removal of the child from his or her family is ordered only in the face of ascertained and insuperable difficulties of the original nucleus in ensuring a favourable environment for the child's growth, given the ascertained uselessness of other forms of support to the family or the latter's refusal. Among these forms of temporary support to the child and the family of origin is the reception of minors in family-type communities, when the right to live, grow and be educated within one's own family is not possible or is an inadequate condition (AUTORITA' GARANTE PER L'INFANZIA E L'ADOLESCENZA, La tutela dei minorenni in comunità: quarta raccolta dati sperimentale elaborato con le Procure della Repubblica presso i Tribunali per i Minorenni, 2019-2020; Osservatorio Regionale Politiche Sociali Marche, anno 2022, Banca dati).

This does not always justify removal, but it is therefore necessary for the Services to 'support, with appropriate interventions, family units at risk, in order to prevent abandonment and to allow the child to be brought up within its own family'. The legislation explains what are the modalities of intervention to protect the minor, in the case where he/she is 'temporarily deprived of a suitable family environment'. In such a situation, the legislator identifies fostering with a family or a single person as the first possible solution. Finally, if it is not possible to find a family/person able to take care of the child, it is "allowed to place the child in a family-type community". Before law no. 149/2001, it was possible for minors over the age of six to be placed in a public or private care institution. With respect to the latter, the reform law provided for their closure by 31 December 2006. After that date, placement in a family-type community can only be ordered as a secondary option to foster care.

The rationale of this choice lies in the fact that, on the basis of the child's right to grow up in his or her own family, fostering or rather placing the child in a family-type community can guarantee the child a space of growth and development more similar to that of a family reality than that which he or she could have in an institution. In fact, it is important to emphasise that the legislator has stressed that the family communities where placement is envisaged must be 'characterised by organisation and interpersonal relations similar to those of a family'.

Guidelines for the reception of minors in residential facilities

It is important to emphasise how difficult it is to monitor the different residential facilities for minors because there is a lack of uniformity in Italy in terms of the denomination and classification of these facilities. Each regional context constitutes a unique reality, based on its own classification, thus making it complex, if not impossible, to compare data and information. A methodological tool that is certainly useful for the protection of minors placed in residential facilities is represented by the Guidelines for reception in residential services, approved in the Unified Conference on 24 December 2021. This document is produced periodically following an institutional round table made up of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Juvenile and Community Justice, the Guarantor Authority for Childhood and Adolescence, and the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. It is a text drafted with the aim of creating harmony on the Italian territory, including political aspects and technical elements, trying to overcome the fragmentary nature of the different regional territories and reporting on the data collected in the monitoring of removals from the family of origin and reception in family foster care and residential services for minors, national and international adoptions, data, trends, reflections on reception and protection at the time of covid - 19 and how work has been remodelled in reception and services for girls and boys in residential communities, how to recognise their right to participation in protection pathways.

This is to ensure the full implementation of all those fundamental rights of the child, which must be protected throughout the national territory. These indications must be looked at in a broader perspective, which must include the Guidelines for family foster care already approved in the Unified Conference on 25 October 2012 and the National Guidelines for Intervention with Children and Families in Vulnerable Situations of 2017.

Guidelines. The residential fostering pathway.

Every residential foster care pathway for children removed from their families responds to the right of the child's best interest. This is why it is essential to maintain the unity, consistency and congruity of actions and phases, from the beginning to the end of the residential care pathway, respecting the continuity of the person's history between promotion, protection and guardianship. This is achieved through five phases

- organisation, construction and management of pathways phase;
- decision-making phase
- planning phase;
- accompaniment, monitoring and verification phase;
- project conclusion phase.

With regard to the phase of the organisation, construction and management of the residential care pathways, it is essential to define the different actors involved, institutional and non-institutional, who contribute to creating the network of subjects that revolve around the

insertion of the minor in a community context, it is important to establish the "institutional network of co-responsibility" at the different territorial levels, not forgetting to foresee the modalities of collaboration between them. On the basis of this, a regional act is needed to define roles with respect to responsibilities, establish priorities for action, foresee the ways in which the Region itself, the Municipality, the health services, the Juvenile Court and Public Prosecutor's Office, the educational institutions, the residential services and the other subjects involved, must take part in the organisation, construction and management of the different phases concerning the residential reception of minors in the various residential facilities. The residential services must consider themselves as part of the system for the promotion and protection of childhood and adolescence of the territory in which they are located and, on the basis of this, be involved in the planning and implementation processes of those services and interventions intended for the minor and his/her family. A fundamental element, highlighted by the Guidelines, is the multidisciplinary team. In fact, cooperation and coordination must not only be implemented at an institutional level, but above all must concern the organisational level closest to the minor. The integrated and multidisciplinary team is implemented through the collaboration of different professionals, belonging to different institutions such as social, health and educational services.

Furthermore, it is important that the operators of the residential facility are also involved within the team, in order to create a more complete collaboration and cooperation. With respect to the decision phase, the national guidelines envisage the creation of a system in which the "options between different forms of protection and guardianship must be verified in relation to the best possible outcome of the choice, the appropriate planning in relation to the appropriateness of the intervention and the set of resources that can be made available". The specific choice to place the child in a residential context must be the result of an assessment that covers both the child's condition and the analysis of his/her family context, without neglecting the parental and social network. At this point, the more residential communities available, the greater the possibility of finding the right match, and to this end, it is important to monitor the work of the different residential realities, in order to understand their work, assess their results and then have the necessary information when deciding on the placement of a child: the profile of the children received, the relational climate of the service, the educational models used, etc. are essential aspects for the most adequate assessment possible. With regard to residential care for early childhood (0-5 years), it is necessary as a priority to place them with a family, otherwise in residential facilities with resident operators. With respect to residential care in emergency conditions (art. 403 of the Italian Civil Code), it is reiterated that this must be of a residual nature, implemented only in situations that require protection and immediate protection of the child in a state of proven prejudice and abandonment. The Regions must also establish standards for emergency residential care, which concern structural and management aspects, the number of minors accommodated and the minors/educators ratio. The body managing the facility assumes responsibility towards the

sending service, guaranteeing the correct implementation of the provisions of the sector regulations, participating in the integrated and multidisciplinary team.

As regards the planning phase, this mainly concerns the framework project and the individualised educational project (PEI). With respect to the first project, the guidelines explain that "every protection and tutelage intervention is carried out according to a Framework Project that defines the overall framework in which residential care is inserted, the motivations that led to the implementation of the measure, but also the interventions prior to removal carried out in favour of the child and his family". It is therefore made up of all the social, health and educational interventions, which, in coordination with each other, aim to promote the child's wellbeing, removing the situation of prejudice in which he or she finds himself or herself. As far as the individualised educational project is concerned, this is an integral part of the framework project. The IEP is in fact constructed in relation to the framework project, and makes explicit "the existential fragilities of the child in care, the relational and social aspects, the protection dimensions to be taken care of, the educational and remedial factors on which to intervene". Further is the phase of accompaniment, support and verification, a delicate moment in which it is important to protect the child. In fact, entry into a care structure must presuppose a set of actions aimed at supporting the child in this transition. This is because "removal is a further trauma that the child undergoes, for which an overall protective action must be addressed, to be reinforced in emergency situations or following a decree of the Juvenile Court". There are various actions that can be put in place in this perspective, from individual interviews to those with couples or groups, together with interventions carried out at the child's home or in other aggregation contexts.

The guidelines for reception in residential services for minors emphasise that the first period of reception must be monitored by the operators, since in these first days the foundations are created for what will be the minor's help project. A central aspect of the work that must be done with the minor placed in the structure is the relational approach. In fact, coming from experiences of prejudice, where dysfunctional as well as abusive and traumatising behaviour is often present, the minor needs to establish positive relationships based on trust and acceptance. It is therefore important that a pathway be set up for the re-elaboration of the child's experiences, which must be accompanied by the weaving of secure bonds. Moreover, it is important to remember how the work of caring for the child is closely connected to the centrality of a family project, since the family constitutes the environment on which to act so that the child can return to the nucleus and thus have his/her right to grow up in his/her family recognised. This aspect is taken up in the guidelines and explained specifically. In fact, the family dimension refers to a context that:

- supports the minor in the process of building his identity
- favours the creation of affective, trusting and belonging relationships
- allows the minor to feel part of a context that is recognised as home, giving him/her the ability to "inhabit" the residential service

- provides for the care of time inside the structure but also outside it, without neglecting the minor's need to weave a relational network on the territory.

The conclusion of the residential care project, as the last phase of the process, constitutes a fundamental moment in the minor's life path. By this point, a final decision will have been made, such as: family reunification, fostering, adoption, initiation into autonomy or placement in another residential service. This phase is very delicate and must therefore be carefully planned, since the minor in the community has created strong relational bonds that cannot be suddenly broken. For this reason, a transition is necessary to allow the minor to experience the change with tranquillity and to be listened to. As far as **the pathway back to the family is concerned,** it must be prepared with the right timing and monitored even after the child's return home, because as the parents will have changed, so too will the child have grown. For this reason, the operators of the residential facility must try to build a relational bridge. Also for **the transition from the residential facility to the foster family**, it is necessary to envisage a gradual process that leads the child to an awareness of the change he/she will experience. This process shall involve the minor as much as possible and make him/her the protagonist, enabling him/her to express his/her experiences, wishes and fears. **With respect to the transition to adoption**, this must be given greater attention by the operators since it may involve greater instability for the minor since it envisages the definitive separation from family and biological ties. Here too, listening to the child and supporting the new nucleus is fundamental to the success of the match. The guidelines instruct the Regions to provide for the organisational methods and tools necessary to support this type of pathway.

Requirements of residential services for minors

"Residential Services are configured as places of living, that is, places that belong to those who frequent them on an ongoing basis and places that produce meaningful and meaningful interactions for the people who inhabit them". This is the principle that serves as the background to the general and specific requirements that must be provided for by regional regulations.

For the general requirements, they must establish that the reception facility has

- the characteristics of a civil dwelling, in which it is possible to identify welcoming environments, suitable for the different age groups of guests;

- a strategic location, which presents a network of services and opportunities enabling the children accommodated to feel included in a local community;

- an adequate relationship between the educational figures present and the children, so as to ensure quality relational, affective and educational ties.

With respect to the specific requirements, on the other hand, we see how the guidelines list them under different categories, such as:

- **Documentary requirements**: the presence of a Service Project, which constitutes the internal guideline, which must be consistent with national and regional guidelines, and establishes the objectives, methods, personnel employed, supervision and evaluation of the intervention. It

identifies the age group and the target group, in order to make the intervention more effective by means of an appropriate definition of the placements, so as to favour the creation of a balance within the structure. In addition to this, the facility must have a Service Charter, in which all the commitments and activities carried out by the residential service can be found.

- **Structural and equipment requirements**: the Regions must provide indications with respect to the ratio between common and private spaces, the ratio between the number of toilets and beds, the presence of open spaces attached to or close to the residential service, the presence of play areas, spaces for protected meetings, workshops, autonomy start-up accommodation. Furthermore, the regulations on architectural barriers must be respected in order to guarantee the inclusion of minors with disabilities;

- **Organisational and management requirements**: the regional administrations establish the elements to support the team of operators, such as the methodology for constructing and managing the IEP, the contents of each minor's file, the tools used by the operators (e.g. logbook, minutes of meetings). In addition, they require residential facilities to identify a reference operator for each case, to provide for the training and updating of operators, who must be constantly supervised. These organisational aspects are decided by the regional administrations and then declined on the basis of the specific types of residential facilities;

- **Care and personnel requirements**: the Region defines and regulates the necessary professional skills and the related professional qualifications required (the preferred qualification is L-19). It establishes how staff must be organised, specifying that a manager/coordinator must be identified and a multi-professional team set up. It also regulates the presence and type of other professional figures, in support of the educators, such as socio-assistance, technical and auxiliary professionals for home services (cleaning, cooking, transport). Regional regulations establish staff requirements on the basis of the number of children accommodated, with the aim of ensuring dynamic quality relations. The presence and rotation of operators is established on a daily basis, based on the Service Project and individualised educational projects.

Classification of residential services for minors

In order to be able to implement a classification of the different types of residential services for minors, it is necessary to make use of the Interregional Nomenclator of Social Interventions and Services, as it is a tool that, on a national level, constitutes a coherent, comparable and exhaustive information base.

- family community for minors
- socio-educational community
- high autonomy accommodation
- reception service for child and parent
- rapid reception facility for minors
- multi-user community
- educational and psychological community

The Marche region- types of residential facilities for minors

With the regulation of 1 February 2018, the Marche Region defines the residential facilities for minors for which authorisation or accreditation may be requested in the regional territory. They are listed in Annex A of this regulation. Specifically, this regulation identifies the following facilities:

- **Family Community for Minors (CFM)**: pertains to the social area, dealing with the protection of the subjects accommodated in the residential regime, it is an educational structure, characterised by the continuous presence of a small group of minors and two or more adults who assume the parental role. The adults, who belong to the same family, may have natural children who live within the community structure, thus participating together with the guests in the group's family life. It can accommodate minors of any age;

- **Community Accommodation for Children/Gen (CABG)**: pertaining to the social area, it is characterised by a welfare level of protection through residential reception, of a temporary nature, of pregnant women or persons with minor children, lacking valid family reference points to provide support to the nucleus;

- **Ready Accommodation Community for Minors (CPAM)**: we find it within the social area, with an assistance level of protection for subjects placed with a residential regime of a community character. It is characterised by the temporary hosting of a group of minors, supervised by a group of educators who take on the role of reference educator in rotation. It can accommodate children, pre-adolescents and adolescents;

- **Socio-Educational Community for Minors (CEM)**: falls within the social area, with a level of care dedicated to the protection of subjects placed in residential measures, it is a community-type educational facility, which differs in that it continuously hosts a small group of minors with a group of educators, who in turn take on the role of reference adult. It can accommodate children, pre-adolescents and adolescents;

- **Community for Autonomy (CAM)**: within the social area, with an assistance level based on reception, we find this residential facility. Its objective is to offer housing solutions and educational referral;

- **Integrated Sociopsico-Educational Community for Minors (CPEM)**: pertaining to the social-health area, with an assistance level of protection and a residential regime, it is a structure that mainly performs a restorative function, recovering and supporting the relational abilities and skills of minors who find themselves in situations of great distress. It can accommodate pre-adolescents as well as adolescents, who present psycho-pathological disorders that are not so serious as to require mainly medical intervention.

Regional Council Decree No. 940 of 2020 sets out the specific requirements that the various facilities must provide. In detail, the different cards present, in addition to a description, the characteristics, the receptive capacity, the timeframe of insertion, the access modalities, the structural, plant, technological and organisational requirements that characterise each type of community.

Some data. Analysis of the regional observatory of social policies

As regards the different communities, in the Marche Region, based on the list of facilities as at 31/12/2018, it is possible to identify:

- Family Homes (CF): 5;
- Family Communities for Minors (CFM): 8;
- Educational Communities for Minors (CEM): 51;
- Gestating and Mothers' Accommodation Communities with minors (CAGM): 21;
- Accommodation Communities for Adolescents (CAAD): 1.

Therefore, there are no Rapid Reception Communities, Autonomy Communities and Integrated Socio-psycho-educational Communities for minors.

RIGHT TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES: THE PROMOTION AND INCLUSION OF PRISONERS

The creation of cohesive and inclusive communities is possible through the removal of all obstacles 'of an economic and social nature' that limit «the equality of citizens» and «impede the full development of the person» (Art. 3 paragraph 2 Const.).

The social condition in which persons deprived of their liberty find themselves determines a situation of fragility because, on the one hand, it does not allow for the full and free exercise of their rights; on the other hand, it makes it difficult to implement the re-educative purpose of punishment, the objective of restoring to a free life persons who have been in prison, often for long periods[8].

The right to education is one of the fundamental rights and represents one of the privileged instruments to ensure both the principle of equality (Article 3 Const.) and the re-education of prisoners (Art. 27 paragraph 3 Const.). In affirming that «the school is open to all» (Art. 34 Const.) the Constitutional Law realises the equality of Article 3, paragraph 1, «without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions», extending the right to study also to those who are in a condition of deprivation of personal freedom. Moreover, the Constitution is also committed to guaranteeing the substantive dimension of equality through the removal of inequalities and the guarantee of the «full development of the person in respect of equal social dignity» (Art. 3 paragraph 2 Const.).

Substantial equality must also be ensured for persons in detention; the Constitutional Court has stated that «a person in a state of detention, although deprived of most of his liberty, always retains a residue of it, which is all the more precious because it constitutes the last sphere in which his individual personality can expand» (Judgment n. 349/1993). This fundamental value is recalled in Article 1 Law of enforcement (Law n. 354/1975), which prescribes that «prison treatment must conform to humanity and must ensure respect for the dignity of the person. It is characterised by absolute impartiality ... and conforms to models that favour autonomy, responsibility, socialisation and integration». Also, in the second paragraph, it's specified that «the treatment tends, also through contacts with the external environment, towards social reintegration and is implemented according to a criterion of individualisation in relation to the specific conditions of the persons concerned».

Through the re-educative purpose of punishment, the legal system also intends to guarantee prisoners the development of their personalities and the enhancement of their dignity (Maratea,

[8] Article 27 paragraph 3 Const.: «Punishments may not consist of treatment contrary to humanity and must aim at the re-education of the condemned person».

2023); and education is an important part of this guarantee. Indeed, Article 15 Law of enforcement (law n. 354/1975) qualifies education as the first of the functional tools for re-education. Thus, it is more and more urgent to consider the right to education as a permanent and inalienable right of the person, capable of supporting a process of knowledge and awareness that accompanies the subject throughout his life (Giostra et al., 2016). The educational experience, in a pedagogical perspective, for prisoners, must be able to "refine the subjective capacity to give meaning and value to the world, to stimulate awareness of one's own specific and ineradicable contribution in the construction of reality and to develop the capacity to negotiate with others the interpretations and meanings attributed to the world" (Decembrotto, 2018). Education in prison has emancipatory value: in addition to learning content, an aspect that must remain central, the experience of education for prisoners is «an opportunity for human advancement, for experimenting with interaction with others ... with the opportunity for confrontation with other modes of thinking» (Bezzi, 2021). Key aspects of prisoner recovery.

The education in prison, even if it takes place in a particular context, must be entrusted to an external educational agency, without customising the programmes too much (to adapt them to the prisoners' needs) and without being excessively conditioned by the path inside the prison and the offence committed; it must be an educational experience as similar as possible to the one outside the prison, even considering that it's mostly addressed to adults and above all rooted in a context that has particular and very strict rules (timetables, access limits, peculiar disciplinary rules) that don't make interaction easy.

In the Law of enforcement, several regulations are reserved for education (Tomba, 2019); our focus is on university education: Article 19, paragraph 6 of Law n. 354/1975[9] states that «attendance and completion of university studies shall be facilitated ... also through conventions and memoranda of understanding with university institutions»; the next paragraph favours access to the publications contained in the library, with full freedom of choice of readings. Article 44 of the implementing rules (Presidential Decree n. 230 of 30 June 2000[10]) provides that prisoners enrolled in university courses or who meet the requirements for enrolment in such courses «shall be facilitated for the completion of their studies» also by being assigned, «where possible, in rooms and wards suitable for the performance of their studies, making, in addition, common rooms available for them». In addition, detained university students «may be allowed to keep books, publications and all necessary teaching aids in their room and other study rooms». Therefore, the use of expressions such as "are facilitated", "are favoured", "may be authorised", "where possible", tells us that this is not a real right, but a mere opportunity left to the discretionary power of the prison administration; a tool that's certainly important for the prisoner's rehabilitation, but which

[9] Law n. 354 of 26 July 1975 (and subsequent amendments) - Law of Enforcement

[10] Presidential Decree n. 230 of 30 June 2000 (Rules for the Implementation of the Law of Enforcement)

isn't a subjective right and consequently doesn't constitute a sure omission on the part of the institutions concerned whenever its exercise isn't guaranteed.

Despite this, Italian universities and the Ministry of Justice (in particular the DAP - Department of Correctional Administration) have made important steps towards the recognition of a real right to university studies for prisoners. The CRUI (Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities) established within it in 2018 the National Conference of Rectors' Delegates for Penitentiary University Poles (CNUPP) with the task of coordinating university education activities in prison. There are two objectives of the CNUPP: to promote, reflect and guide the national university system and the individual universities with regard to guaranteeing the right to study for prisoners; to play its role as the CRUI's representative in discussions with the Ministry of Justice and any other competent institution, in order to define the conditions that make the right to study available to all those deprived of their liberty and in a homogeneous manner.

With regard to the first objective, the CNUPP supports and accompanies the possible start-up of new experiences; it draws up guidelines on the conditions that - in each university - can best favour the studies of this particular category, support the commitment of teachers and officials in the organisation of teaching activities and administrative practices and, last but not least, encourage the meeting between the prison universe and the university community as a whole. With regard to the second objective, the CNUPP is committed to guaranteeing study opportunities in a widespread manner, even in geographical areas where they are currently absent or poorly structured, so that the right to study can be enjoyed regardless of the prison institution in which those who are interested are imprisoned.

An important goal achieved by the CNUPP was the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Correctional Administration (DAP) aimed at building good practices to improve the exercise of the right to university studies of prisoners, the shared development of initiatives and projects for both staff and persons in prison, as well as the possibility of enriching the university course of “free” students with visits, meetings, workshops within the penitentiary institutes, for a direct and participatory knowledge of the prison world and for the training of some fundamental professional figures for the prison (educators, social workers, psychologists, lawyers).

The protocol also deals with an important element for university studies: the possibility of allowing the controlled use of digital connections by students in prison for administrative and study purposes.

Guidelines on university study paths for prisoners

In order to improve cooperation between university and prison institutions, shared guidelines have been adopted under the protocol, which define the principles, the qualifying aspects

of the commitments that universities and penal institutions must undertake to guarantee the right to university studies of those deprived of their liberty (Prina, 2018).

The key points of the guidelines signed in October 2021 are summarised below[11].

Commitments of the Universities

In order to best guarantee the exercise of the right to study of prisoners, the individual universities that are members of the CNUPP undertake:

- to the identification of University educational and administrative managers in charge of liaising with the Management of Correctional Institutions and with detained students;
- the definition of special taxation rules to favour the enrolment of students in detention or in external penal enforcement;
- guaranteeing the smooth running of any admission tests for courses with programmed numbering;
- carrying out the administrative formalities required to manage the careers of detained students;
- the organisation of teaching, tutoring and study support activities for all the subjects envisaged in the individual study plans, also by means of distance learning tools;
- the necessary supply of books and teaching materials and access to library loans;
- the conduct of profit and degree tests.

Exchange of information and protection of privacy

Between the Correctional Administration staff and the University managers (in particular the Rectors' Delegates and their collaborators), any appropriate exchange of information on individual student detainees necessary for the facilitation of study paths is taken care of. In particular:

1. the information that will be communicated by the prison staff, will be those strictly necessary to the planning of the university courses, such as the legal status, the length of stay, the opportunities of access to alternative measures;
2. the university managers will be able to provide, upon request, information on the progress of the study courses useful to assess the prisoners' treatment paths, with particular reference to the preparation of programmes defining opportunities for social reintegration.

Conditions favouring the study and tutoring activities

If the logistic/structural and prison management situation allows it, if there are several inmates enrolled at the University, one or more dedicated "sections" must be set up, in which student inmates who are in a similar condition as regards the prison regime to which they are subjected may be placed.

[11] The full text of the guidelines can be read at https://www.crui.it/documenti-cnupp.html.

In these sections, environmental comfort (colours, furniture, materials, equipment, acoustic and lighting comfort) must be ensured, also with the cooperation of the detainees themselves and within the limits of the available resources; the community of student detainees must be able to live the daily cycle (meals, sleep, study, social moments, air hours) in a manner that favours teaching, studying and learning activities.

All detained students must be guaranteed the most suitable accommodation, i.e. "in rooms or wards suitable for study" and, where possible, in individual sleeping rooms or together with other persons for study activities.

In addition, the access and presence in suitable spaces of lecturers, tutors and other staff (including administrative staff) who carry out university teaching support functions and look after the course of study of those enrolled must be guaranteed.

Prison staff are required to transmit communications from university managers to inmates in an appropriate and timely manner, if they cannot be provided by lecturers or tutors in direct contact.

The sections and spaces dedicated to teaching and study activities (lecture room, library) must be provided with the appropriate furniture and equipment, including devices and digital connection systems, within the limits of the available resources or even through resources made available by the University or other public and/or private subjects.

Students must be guaranteed access to library resources, as well as the availability of other "necessary teaching tools" such as handouts or other materials also on media other than paper (videos, CD-ROMs, USB pens), in accordance with the rules in force. The possibility of detaining PCs for study purposes in the overnight rooms must be assessed with reference to the rules in force in relation to the prison regimen to which the student prisoner is subject.

For student detainees - within the limits and according to the modalities established according to the prison regimen to which they are subjected - contacts, exchange of communications, meetings (direct or through video-conferencing systems) are allowed with university teaching managers, teachers and tutors appropriately and nominally indicated by the Universities, specifically authorised to contact individual detainees.

Prisoner students will be allowed to purchase or receive study texts from the University, as well as to store books and teaching materials on paper or - where the prisoner is authorised - on computer, necessary for the performance of their studies, subject to all the checks carried out by the Correctional Administration on the integrity and conformity of the same with what has been declared by the University officers.

The performance of profit and degree tests must be ensured, when not possible through face-to-face meetings, by means of the video-conference system or through the use of connection platforms validated by the Correctional Administration (Skype/ Microsoft Teams or through the digital connection model currently being tested).

Development of Internet connections and forms of distance learning

The Correctional Administration undertakes to monitor the implementation of Internet connections (using the Skype, Microsoft Teams or other connection schemes currently being tested), in order to facilitate contacts between detained students and teachers, tutors or authorised administrative staff, providing, especially where there are greater difficulties due to frequent travel, for the digital delivery of lectures, tests, test and thesis preparation meetings, orientation interviews, and the completion of administrative procedures.

Progressively, efforts will be made to enable detained students to access, in a controlled and secure manner, the IT resources offered by the various universities, particularly as regards information on study courses and teaching programmes, access to their student "career", the use of distance learning and the various forms of on-line teaching, and access to bibliographic resources useful for study and theses.

Promoting and enhancing the role of universities on different projects

The Correctional Administration and University contact persons will promote opportunities for meetings between the staff of the two Administrations, in order to improve collaboration and adequately support the university paths of prisoners.

In addition, the Universities undertake to guarantee, at the request of the prison authorities, training opportunities and programmes for prison administration staff and for those who, also at a territorial level, collaborate in various ways (volunteers, social and health care staff, teachers of other school orders and grades).

The Correctional Administration offers its collaboration in the pursuit of the Universities' educational, research and "third mission" goals, agreeing on useful initiatives and/or guaranteeing its support for the following purposes:

- the organisation of didactic activities involving students of different courses in co-presence with prison inmates, of opportunities for students and university professors to get acquainted with the prison reality, of internships and apprenticeships, in particular for the training of professional figures related to the prison;

- the carrying out of surveys and scientific research relating to prisons;

- of "third mission" and public engagement activities aimed at raising public awareness of issues concerning penal enforcement.

THE GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE THE RIGHT TO STUDY OF ADOPTED PUPILS

The guidelines to promote the right to study of adopted pupils were drafted in December 2014 (by the Department for the Educational System of Education and Training Directorate General for Students, Integration, and Participation - Office III) and were updated in **March 2023** (MIUR, 2023a) by the Joint Committee established by D.D. n.2624 of Dec. 18.12.21 provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry and the CAI (Commission for Intercountry Adoption), with the collaboration of the Guarantor Authority for Children and Adolescents. These guidelines were transmitted to schools by Ministerial Note No. 1589 of April 11, 2023 (Miur, 2023b), to become a tool for the promotion and dissemination of a culture of adoption, acceptance, dialogue, and exchange between schools and families and also the well-being of adopted pupils and students.

The reality of adoption is widely spread in today's society[12] and although the adoptive condition does not correspond to a group of uniform situations, there are risk and vulnerability factors connected to this reality that need to be known to design and implement paths of school reception but also of management of grade transitions that jointly take into account organizational, educational and relational aspects to promote and ensure the well-being of pupils and students adopted in Italy and abroad and their families. These critical areas may relate to learning difficulties, psycho-emotional difficulties, problems related to schooling in the countries of origin, situations of children with special needs, issues related to presumed age, problems related to adopted children in preadolescence and adolescence, difficulties related to learning Italian as L2, and problems related to different cultural aspects that are intertwined with the new context of life and must be accommodated in the appreciation of diversity.

The guidelines suggest **good practices** related to the optimal management of various steps that arise in the relationship between children, families, and the school.

These include those related to the administrative-bureaucratic sphere such as the time of school enrollment and the time of submitting the documentation required by the regulations. In these cases, for example, difficulties may arise due to incomplete documentation held by families. A common difficulty is the absence of the tax identification number required for online registration

[12] For quantitative data on international adoptions, the reference is the CAI https://www.commissioneadozioni.it , while for the national adoptions is the Ministry of Justice https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_5_8.page#:~:text=Per%20i%20minori%20dichiarati%20adottabili,legge%204%20maggio%201983%2C%20n

for the first classes, which can be remedied by creating a temporary tax identification number. Or in the case of temporary foster care or pre-adoptive foster care, the documentation situation may just not allow access to the online enrollment procedure which can be remedied by direct enrollment at the chosen educational institution. In addition, since it is not possible in many cases to predict when children will arrive in families, enrollments can be submitted even after the closing period of online procedures, always interacting directly with the chosen school. Interesting to point out that the new Guidelines also mention the Integrated System 0-6 (Legislative Decree 65, 2017) thus including in the reflection the whole complex system that also includes nurseries and preschools.

Particular attention should be paid to the timing of insertion and the choice of the entry class also recalling the Guidelines for the Reception and Integration of Foreign Pupils (2014) and the Guidelines for the Right to Study of Pupils Outside the Family of Origin (2017). These aspects are specifically addressed in **Annex 1** (Commissione per le adozioni Internazionali, 2023) dedicated to Suggestions for good classroom integration.

Good practices are also dedicated to the communicative-relational sphere, where particular importance is again given to the crucial moment of the first reception in a network logic in which not only families and the school institution but also Territorial Services, Authorized Bodies, and other subjects such as Family Associations play a leading role. The specific **Annexes 2** and **3** (Commissione per le adozioni Internazionali, 2023) provide, respectively, the model of a Form for collecting information to supplement enrollment (with information also on the adopting family) and of Narrative Focuses that can be conducted with families for a closer understanding of the pupils (e.g., on play preferences, food, habitual or reportable behaviors, etc.) and a model form to collect *Suggestions for Further Information* (currently calibrated on the Primary School) that also allow, among other things, to set up an initial assessment of the pupil's or student's attitude regarding the new experience, acquaintance with peers, interaction preferences.

Of particular importance is also the role of the referral teacher, whom each school can hopefully identify and who should be properly trained as detailed in **Annex 4** (Commissione per le adozioni Internazionali, 2023). In fact, in addition to the online training on international adoptions already made available by CAI through its portal (https://www.commissioneadozioni.it/formazione-cai-idi/formazionecai_idi_2022/),

USRs can activate additional training paths in synergy with territorial social-health services, universities, and other actors involved in adoption. These paths may follow themes suggested in the document or others more specific and should be oriented to encourage discussion and sharing through active methodologies geared, for example, to small group planning and case discussions. The referring teacher thus becomes a point of reference both for the initial reception with families and in the phase following the first insertion where he or she may make use of specific tools (such as the aforementioned Annex 3). Where necessary, even for adopted pupils, a Personalized Didactic Plan (PDP) can be drawn up at any time of the year.

Another aspect to consider in international adoptions is the possibility of identifying a tutor buddy, for example for children placed in the last years of elementary school or in later classes, who can facilitate the transition from language 1 to language 2. More specifically, a language facilitator could be identified, i.e., an Italian teacher even from another section who could act as a contact person for a broader teaching and educational path.

The good practices also contemplate insights into a third aspect, namely, the issue of continuity of the school path and continuity with local resources.

It is important to maintain an accurate exchange of information between teachers of the different school grades and to work to facilitate children's acquaintance with the future school through visits and meetings before attendance begins. Special care must be taken in school-family relations by organizing meetings *in itinere* in addition to the initial ones. It is important to be able to count on the identification in the class council of a contact teacher for the boy and his family and also to activate ad hoc interventions to manage learning difficulties. Special attention should be given to promoting a welcoming and inclusive classroom climate in which differences are valued. Last but not least, care must be given to the orientation pathway, as also recalled by the aforementioned Guidelines for the right to study of pupils outside their families of origin (2017) with particular attention to CPIAs and vocational training pathways.

Given the multidimensionality of the adoptive condition, the network of coordination that can be built between different actors in the territory through protocols of understanding between Ambito Territoriale, ASL, Local Authorities, Authorized Bodies, and Family Associations is also of particular importance.

To promote greater clarity concerning the complexity of the path of adopted children in schools, it is also important to define promptly the actors and roles that can contribute to this path, and the Guidelines define the scope of action of these actors including the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Regional school office, the School Headmasters, the referring teacher, teachers, and families.

ASYLUM AND PROTECTION FOR REFUGEES

In Italy there is no systematic evaluation of integration policies, except for the interventions funded through the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Instead, studies exist on the evolution of integration outcomes and are considered to be indirect assessments of Italy's integration policies. At the national level, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies oversees the monitoring and evaluation of migrants' socio-economic inclusion. It publishes annual reports on migrants (Minister of Labour and Social Policies, 2017) and their access to protection and pension schemes. In addition, in collaboration with the National Council of Economy and Labor, the Labor Ministry developed a set of indicators on migrant integration to monitor and evaluate trends at the national, regional and local levels (The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2017).

The most important non-governmental source of information on inclusion outcomes is the Statistical Yearbook, annually published by CARITAS-IDOS (IDOS Study and Research Center, 2016). In addition, the international Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) points out that over the past years, integration policies slightly changed in Italy (https://www.mipex.eu/italy). The country's approach to integration is classified by MIPEX as focused on temporary Integration, similar to France, the Netherlands and Germany. However, Italy has more developed policies than Austria, Denmark and Switzerland. It scores 58 out of 100 points in MIPEX 2020, while the average score is 49.

Asylum laws in Italy largely result from the transposition of the EU directives on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and their recast versions. Hence, asylum is not framed into a standalone legislative framework in Italy but is regulated by several pieces of legislation targeting different aspects (such as qualifications, status determination procedures and reception and integration services for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection)[13]. In terms of the reception and integration of asylum seekers, there are two parallel systems. The first is the SAI system (formerly SPRAR/SIPROIMI), managed by municipalities and NGOs, and the second comprises of the Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS), coordinated by prefectures (the local branches of the ministry of interior). Created in 2001 through Law no. 189 of 30 July 2002, the SAI system is based on the voluntary participation of local institutions in a network of reception and integration projects. Initially conceived as a temporary solution to deal with the increased numbers of migrant arrivals in 2011, the Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS) became essential additional support for the main reception system as the number of new arrivals continued to rise. In 2018 and

[13] https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/04/21/17G00062/sg

2019 the two controversial so-called Salvini Decrees abolished humanitarian protection as a category of protection and introduced new conditions for accessing the reception system. Tasks changed: CAS was to take charge only of asylum seekers who would be required to remain in CAS reception centers for the duration of their asylum procedure as well as during any appeal procedure[14].

International protection is a set of fundamental rights recognized by Italy for refugees and holders of subsidiary protection. Refugees are people who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted in their country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, belonging to a certain social group and who cannot receive protection from their country of origin. Holders of subsidiary protection are people who, although not refugees, actually run the risk of suffering serious harm in their country of origin (death sentence, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, danger of death due to an armed conflict). International protection first of all guarantees the right not to be repatriated and to reside in Italy.

This frame of international protection allows for the safeguard of individuals subject to direct and personal persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinions or for belonging to ethnic minorities. Anyone who manifests well-founded and proven reasons for fearing persecution in the event of returning home can therefore apply to obtain refugee status. This type of protection is aimed at defending human rights and fundamental freedoms, as reported in article 1 of the Geneva Convention (1951) The main principle on which it is based is expressed in article 33, i.e. that of not -refoulement. There are currently 144 contracting states of the aforementioned convention, including Italy, which undertake not to refuse or expel the foreigner to a country where his safety cannot be guaranteed without having first examined his request for international protection. Upon the occurrence of one or more of the above discrimination conditions, it is necessary to demonstrate a well-founded and proven reason to fear one's own return to one's homeland for the aforementioned reasons. Not all foreign immigrants, however, can receive approval for their application in Italy. This form of international protection cannot be granted in the absence of the requirements established by law and, more generally, whenever there are concrete reasons to consider the foreigner as a threat or real danger to public safety.

The procedure for requesting and obtaining refugee status in Italy requires sending a specific application. The foreigner who intends to apply for international protection can do so, if s/he prefers, also orally using her/his own mother tongue and availing a linguistic mediator either at the Border Police upon arrival , or at the Immigration Office of the Police. Within 30 days of the

[14] The law 173/2020 reformed the asylum reception system in Italy, rehabilitating the system of reception and integration managed by municipalities and reinstating asylum seekers and other protection holders among its beneficiaries.

submission of the application, the Territorial Commission must arrange for the hearing of the applicant and the final decision must be adopted within the following 3 days.

The refugee is recognized all the rights and duties of Italian citizens, with the exception of those for which Italian citizenship is required such as, for example, the right to vote or participate in public competitions. The unity of the family nucleus is protected by law, therefore the family members of the beneficiaries of protection treatment can enjoy a residence permit for family reasons aimed at reunification with their loved ones or, if in turn they are entitled to international protection, they can enjoy the same benefits reserved for family members with refugee status.

Humanitarian corridors

Humanitarian Corridors have their origin in the sinking of a boat carrying refugees and migrants off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa on October 2013. More than 300 people died. The wreck shocked the country, mostly because it happened close to shore. Established as a pilot project through the cooperation between institutions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of the Interior, civil society organizations, the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches and 'Tavola Valdese' of the Waldensian Evangelical Church. Hence, humanitarian corridors are the result of a high-profile humanitarian collaboration between the institutions and the Catholic and Protestant world united for a program to guarantee regular entries of vulnerable refugees through legislative instruments, already made available by the European Union, thus avoiding risk-laden "journeys of hope".

The first Humanitarian Corridor was implemented from Lebanon to Italy in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding called "Opening of Humanitarian Corridors", signed on December 15th 2015. The first MoU allowed the safe and legal entry in Italy of 1.011 Syrians refugees from Lebanon**.** While looking at the complexity of European regulations, H.C envisaged an additional legal access channel for especially vulnerable asylum-seekers. So far, the beneficiaries have come from Lebanon, Syria, with more to follow from Morocco and Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. As in the case of the UNHCR program, this initiative provides a safe pathway for refugees, in line with governmental security standards; the potential beneficiaries are pre-selected by the NGOs, then vetted by the Ministry of the Interior and finally granted a humanitarian limited territorial validity visa. The initiative has no cost to the State: the beneficiaries have the opportunity to apply for asylum, being supported at the socio-legal level as well as for an initial period of reception, accompaniment and integration. Reception in Italy is entrusted at the expense of the FCEI, involved in hosting both directly and by relying on a growing network of bodies in solidarity: lay and religious associations, individual families, organizations and projects, first and foremost the Waldensian Diaconiate. other partners include the Synodal Commission for Diakonia (CSD), the House of Cultures-MH in Scicli, the Diaconal Centre LA NOCE in Palermo, the Network of Solidarity Municipalities (RECOSOL), Oxfam Italy. Once in Italy, beneficiaries are accompanied and supported in a process of legal-inclusion, focusing on work, school and health in order to achieve a gradual autonomy. The widespread

partnership system generates solidarity at an ecumenical level, promotes social participation and reinvigorates the local communities involved in the project. Between 2016 and 2017, 1.011 people have been welcomed in 80 different cities spread out in 18 Italian regions thanks to the involvement of volunteer organizations and local/grassroot associations who foster the integration of beneficiaries, according to the "widespread reception" model. On 2017, the extension for further 1.000 beneficiaries in the years 2018-2019 has been approved.

A third "Opening of Humanitarian Corridors" Protocol – signed on January 12th 2017 by the Italian Episcopal Conference (through Italian Caritas and Migrantes Foundation) and the Community of Sant'Egidio assured the legal and safe entry in Italy for 500 Eritrean, South-Sudane and Somali refugees from Ethiopia. Afterwards two different Humanitarian Corridors Protocols have been signed for refugees from Lebanon to France and Belgium, for a total of 650 visas for humanitarian reasons. On March 30, 2023 A group of 58 Syrian refugees, including 24 minors, arrived in Italy from Lebanon, along with 15 asylum seekers from Iraq, Somalia and Congo from Greece.

Additional task forces

The Italian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organization formed in 1990 in Italy, at the initiative of the United Nations, with the objective of defending the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. CIR works to encourage access to the protection of people fleeing from war and persecution and to help build decent reception and integration conditions in respect for human rights. CIR is a non-profit, endowed with a structure of legal practitioners, social, cultural mediators, doctors and psychologists. CIR operates at national and European level as well as in North Africa, in a coordinated manner with other civil society organizations. CIR does not have a specific state funding but operates on the basis of projects approved and financed by the UN, the European Union, the Italian Government, regions, municipalities and private foundations. Projects aim to promote access to the Protection, The Welcome, Integration, the enjoyment of rights, social and psychological support, and the voluntary return.

Centro Astalli (JRS Italy) is the Italian section of the Jesuit Refugee Service – JRS.

For 40 years it has been engaged in activities and services aiming at helping out as well as defending the rights of those arriving in Italy fleeing wars and violence, often including torture. Centro Astalli is also committed to making people aware of who the refugees are, their stories and backgrounds. The support to refugees and the sharing of their experiences are the core commitments at Centro Astalli, from first reception to the advocacy to change unfair policies at a local, national or international level. Centro Astalli provides a variety of services among which: daily meals, Italian language lessons, sheltering, medical services, and legal support. Every day about 500 volunteers (lawyers, doctors, students, teachers, and others) are involved in Centro Astalli's actions and projects.

Educational Paths

Refugees in Italy have the same rights to education as all Italians. The Italian law states that all children and adolescents, irrespective of their status, have the right to education and the obligation to go to school until the age of 16. The lack of residence registration or of previous educational experiences cannot prevent a child from enrolling in school. People older than 16 with a valid permit of stay have the right to go to public schools for adults, under the same conditions as Italian citizens. Adult learning classes may take place either at public schools -evening classes- or at Provincial Centers for Adults Education (Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti/CPIA). Only a few universities currently permit asylum seekers to complete the enrollment (for example, the Universities of Palermo and Messina). It is more common for asylum seekers to be allowed to enroll "under condition": the enrollment will be finalized when one is recognized as a refugee in Italy. An asylum seeker- in most universities- may attend classes and do exams while waiting for the reply on asylum application. In order to graduate or obtain the degree one must be granted a form of protection (refugee status, subsidiary protection or special protection). Nevertheless, the right to access university may present some practical obstacles including: the required language skills, the absence of schooling papers or the necessary financial resources. For refugees, Italian law provides for the possibility of recognizing qualifications even in the absence of certification from the State in which the qualification was obtained, where the person concerned proves that s/he cannot acquire this certification. The CIMEA is the official body charged for information and consulting services relating to the procedures for the recognition of education qualifications in Italy (https://www.cimea.it/pagina-cimea-for-refugees). Depending on the individual condition and on the university, there are different procedures:

- Statement of Comparability (Attestato di comparabilità), issued free of charge by CIMEA
- Statement of Validity (Dichiarazione di Valore), issued by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) through a specific request service for refugees and holders of subsidiary protection.
- EQPR: the Council of Europe (COE) has developed an evaluation procedure for cases in which the documentation is incomplete or even absent (Council of Europe, 2017).

To help refugees and subsidiary protection holders, the majority of Italian universities have procedures that may exempt from having to pay tuition fees. In addition, there are two scholarship programs accessible to refugees and subsidiary protection holders:

- CRUI Scholarships Every year since 2016, the Ministry of the Interior and the Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities (CRUI) have made 100 scholarships available to refugee and to subsidiary protection holders.
- DSU Scholarships The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) finances grants for the Right to University Study (DSU) every year, through a specific fund called the "Single Fund for Student Welfare and the Right to Study".

These scholarships are accessible to all students (Italian and foreign citizens), on the basis of economic needs and certain merit requirements. For refugees and subsidiary protection holders there are some simplifications related to certification of income sources. The grants are managed by the Regions, in ways that may vary from one region to another. Calls are posted at regional level or single universities.

Unitelma Sapienza University has extended to Ukrainian students the access to the programme "*Non fermarti, con UnitelmaSapienza vai a 1.000*!", which grants the possibility to enroll to university courses and post-graduate degrees free of charge, including the prospect to enroll in Italian language classes and to be supported by Ukrainian cultural mediators.

Other services and good practices

Some universities offer orientation and peer-support assistance to refugees through the program: University for Refugees - Education without Boundaries, which facilitates access to University from anywhere across the world by providing counseling on University's degree, masters and vocational training.

University Corridors for Refugees, is a project that supports students with refugee status to further their academic education in Italy (https://universitycorridors.unhcr.it). The project University Corridors for Refugees UNICORE 5.0 is promoted by Italian universities with the support of UNHCR, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Caritas Italiana, Diaconia Valdese, Centro Astalli and other partnerships. The project was created in 2019 and has helped 20 students with refugee status from Ethiopia to reach Italy to attend a degree program. It aims to increase opportunities for refugees currently residing in Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The project UNICORE 2023 offers refugee students the opportunity to enroll in one of the thirty-three Italian universities which participates in the project.

The Mediterranean Project is a project promoted by the Luiss Guido Carli University of Rome - in partnership with UNHCR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior - which has made available 23 scholarships for refugee students - 10 from Jordan, 10 from Morocco and 3 from Malta – who wish to pursue a degree in Italy after completing their high school studies[10].

The project *Pagella in tasca- Channels for Study for Refugees Minors* promoted by INTERSOS, with the participation of UNHCR and other partners, is aimed at creating a legal and safe channel of entry for 35 unaccompanied refugee children in Niger, so that they can have the opportunity to come to Italy to study (Intersos, 2021).

Along with education the other main concern for refugees is to find a job to design a new future. Indeed, for refugees in Italy accessing the job market or having their skills recognized appropriately has proven to be very difficult. To address these issues, UNHCR in Italy has been working on refugee inclusion in the job market since 2016 through a series of initiatives such as

Wecome-Working for Refugees Integration, reaching out for stakeholders at the level of: private sector, national institutions, local authorities, foundations, business and labor organizations, cities, the third sector and many other networks in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (https://globalcompactrefugees.org/).

In June 2022 UNHCR in Italy launched an innovative partnership with Assolavoro, the national Association of employment agencies. Assolavoro signed a landmark agreement with three trade unions to promote the inclusion of refugees in the workforce. The measures will include language courses, vocational training, skills assessment, private accommodation support, child-care contributions, psychological care, and support for education.

According to Italian legislation, regions are the key actors in the planning of inclusion policies, given their legislative and regulatory competence in the fields of social policies, education, labor market, vocational training, health and housing. Within the policy framework set by regional governments, municipalities hold the main responsibilities in terms of defining concrete social measures and policy implementation. The central responsibility of local authorities and public services, such as educational institutions and healthcare services, is also reflected within the framework of the National Integration Plan for Persons Entitled to International Protection. Representatives of the most relevant migrant organizations and NGOs are consulted during the drafting of policies and can participate in the technical meetings of the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee, the inter-ministerial body in charge of drafting migration policies. Nevertheless, the participation of non-governmental stakeholders in migration decision-making ultimately depends on the government's predisposition. In terms of refugees, 17 NGOs that are active in refugee reception matters take part in the Asylum Round Table along with the UNHCR, permanent member with no right to vote. In the past, representatives of these civil society organizations were also invited to take on a consultative role in the national asylum round table (Tavolo Nazionale Asilo), but recent governances have first reduced and, later on, altogether abandoned this practice. Most regional governments created consultative bodies to call inclusion stakeholders together, and local authorities also carried out public consultations. However, the responsible participation of civil society organizations and experts varies significantly across regions. Furthermore, public consultations rarely involve the Immigration Territorial Councils, i.e. the consultative bodies operating at the provincial level under the mandate of the interior ministry.

GUIDELINES FOR AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH AT SCHOOL - THE ITALIAN CASE

Designing an intercultural approach in heterogeneous contexts requires setting up educational, training and social services in favour of inclusion and democratic participation (Deardoff, 2009; 2011; 2020). The pedagogical gaze is focused on promoting the value of each subject's originality, taking into account their cultural and value backgrounds. This requires the activation of integration and interaction processes in which the logic of educational and training interventions are attentive to enhancing the "integrity" of the Self, which is expressed through "the possibility of recomposing one's own history, language, belonging, in a dynamic process of change, which allows each person to develop starting from what he/she is, without, on the one hand, being a 'hostage' of one's own cultural origins and, on the other, having to deny references of one's own identity or differences in order to be accepted and welcomed" (Catarci, 2015, p. 46).

The first document guiding educational institutions in the intercultural field is "The Italian way for intercultural schools and the integration of foreign pupils" (MIUR, 2007). It defines the characteristics of the Italian school's intercultural integration model, describing the principles and lines of action that refer to a "welcoming, integrative and intercultural school organisational mode/type". A dual educational perspective emerges, addressed to all pupils, emphasising that inclusion is to be pursued through "the construction of respectful forms of social integration", within a common learning context for Italians and foreigners.

The indications focus on the need to acquire skills within a context in which integration does not neglect identities in relation to collective environments.

Over time, school is increasingly described as a place of learning and a space of interdependence and, in 2011, indicators describing integration in the school context are specified (Bettinelli, Favaro, & Luatti, 2011):

1. *scholastic integration*, with reference to the quality of scholastic results - as a threshold levelfor the possibility of continuing one's studies with equal opportunities for all;
2. *competence in Italian L2* (second language) - functional in responding to a wide range of needs, from interpersonal communication to study;
3. *peer relations in the classroom*, - i.e. the opportunity to participate in moments of interaction with peers and in collective activities;
4. *relations in extracurricular* time - with the chance for inclusion and participation in play, aggregation and sports activities, of consciously "inhabiting" one's own territory;

5. *the relationship with the language and cultural references of origin* - with reference to links with one's own language (including the possible possibility of a multilingualism context), as well as with one's own origins and history;

6. *motivation, self-esteem, confidence in one's own possibilities* - above all to plan one's own future.

The complex and heterogeneous society requires dialogue between subjects and citizens, identities and differences, belonging and participation. The school is, without doubt, a place where processes of intercultural dialogue construction can take place, also in relation to the changes it intercepts. Suffice it to think that in Italian schools (a.s. 2019/2020 and 2021/2022) the presence of pupils with non-Italian citizenship represents a total of 10.3%, i.e., (ISMU, 2021; 2022) with a large "patchwork" of identities. It is worth noting that the percentage of second-generation pupils (children born in Italy by parents of foreign origin) out of the total number of students of migrant origin in 2020/2021 is 66.7%, more than one point higher than the 65.4% in 2019/2020 (MIUR, 2021).

These data are relevant to understand the heterogeneity, with different distributions at regional and provincial level and with very diverse presences within urban centres, individual city areas (centre-periphery) and inland areas.

The school plays a role of responsibility and opportunity for all the minors it accompanies in the processes of learning and identity construction (Fiorucci & Catarci, 2019; Ongini, 2019). Not only is it a place of challenge for peer integration, but it can become an active context in the perspective of participation and inclusion also for families. It is essential to develop pedagogical and didactic guidelines capable of supporting foreign students and promoting citizenship (Silva, Deluigi, & Zaninelli, 2022).

In this regard, the "Guidelines for the welcoming and integration of foreign students" (MIUR, 2014) declare that: "foreign minors, like Italian ones, are first of all people and, as such, holders of rights and duties regardless of their national origin".

Intercultural education gives rise to the specificity of training courses aimed at foreign students, in the context of educational activities for all. "School is the central place for the constitution and sharing of common rules, as it can act by activating a practice of daily life that refers to respect for democratic forms of coexistence and, above all, can transmit the essential knowledge to promote active citizenship. In fact, intercultural education rejects both the logic of assimilation and that of coexistence between closed ethnic communities and is oriented towards promoting dialogue, mutual recognition and enrichment of people in respect of different identities and belongings and the plurality of often multidimensional experiences of each" (MIUR, 2014, p. 4).

To underline the importance of practices, encourage their development and monitor their effectiveness, the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Students and for Interculture has published the document "Diversi da chi? Recommendations for the integration of foreign students and for interculture" (2015).

The recommendations, referring to the Guidelines (2014), describe useful proposals for structuring training courses, in consideration of increasingly heterogeneous contexts, in which to guarantee everyone the right to study:

1. *Reaffirm the right to immediate integration of newly arrived pupils*. Everyone's right/duty to go to school cannot be compromised by the difficulties of immediate integration of foreign pupils who arrive after the school year has begun. It is necessary to consolidate the network between schools, Prefectures and local services to intervene promptly.
2. *Raise awareness of the importance of kindergarten*. The school facilitates the processes of inclusion in spaces and experiences that are attentive to language learning (even for parents). It is therefore important to guarantee and support access to services, in synergy between public and private.
3. *Prevent school delays and dropouts*. The scholastic integration of pupils with a migrant background foresees the determination of the class on the basis of the age criterion. Cases of "school delay" can be generated right away which, added to subsequent failures, demotivate students in continuing their studies. It is therefore necessary "to provide for personalized teaching plans aimed at realigning with the common learning objectives".
4. *Accompany transitions*, *adapt the program and evaluation*. This point refers to the difficulties encountered by foreign students (and not only) in the transition between the different levels of school (in particular towards upper secondary school). It is important to provide personalized plans and a final evaluation that detects the "actual progress recorded starting from the initial situations".
5. *Organize an effective guidance to continue the course of study*. This perspective is essential to contrast a "training channeling" that too often characterizes the choices of foreign children towards VET paths, reducing their training choices. "It is also important to develop and promote methods of direct involvement of students, both Italian and with a migrant background, through peer education experiences, using, for example, second-generation students as tutors for newly arrived students, to support them in laboratories, learning of Italian, in guidance".
6. *Support the learning of Italian L2, the language of schooling*. L2 learning is a focal point for the inclusion of young people (and their families). The document proposes "permanent linguistic laboratories, animated by teachers specialized in teaching Italian as second language, capable of coordinating the work of linguistic simplification of the contents of the various disciplines and of facilitating the learning of the specific languages of the disciplines". Such a transversal training system supports language as a channel of learning and communication.

7. *Valuing linguistic diversity*. This aspect promotes the acquisition of more communication codes, without neglecting one's mother tongues. So far, the most followed approach is the compensatory one which, noting the linguistic deficiencies (of the L2), does not recognize the previous skills; a change of trajectory is needed, towards the recognition of the value of plurilingualism.

8. *Prevent school segregation*. In areas with a high incidence of foreign students, the risk is that some schools become ghettos. Greater awareness and cooperation in social contexts is essential to "guarantee good quality teaching/learning in all schools, investing more resources in the most difficult situations, so that the right to a quality school applies everywhere and for everyone".

9. *Involving families in the educational project*. "Schools must become principals of sociality and a places of exchange. The dialogue between the school and the families of foreign origin must also be closer in the key moments of the children's schooling: access, assessment and guidance. Constant attention must be given to daily and routine interactions, which must be as inclusive and facilitated as possible: through multilingual messages, formal or informal tools of linguistic-cultural mediation and above all through attitudes of closeness". The school is an important presence for the social environment, as one of the cultural and inclusive agents.

10. *Promote intercultural education in schools*. The aim is enhancing an education based on dialogue, exchange and experience in multicultural contexts. Interactions with differences, the deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudices are developed in the school. Italian and foreign students meet "the other", even in conflict and its mediation. The school is a place where an open identity can be formed, experimenting with democracy and initiating the construction of significant bonds (between peers, with teachers, with families…).

In 2022, the National Observatory for the integration of foreign students and for intercultural education of the Ministry of Education, drafted the document "Intercultural Orientations. Ideas and proposals for the integration of pupils from migrant backgrounds". The document describes intercultural guidiline, methods and indications, in consideration of the changes of the Italian school in the last ten years. The proposal is in continuity with the previous address documents and a point of reference are the law 92/2019, "Introduction of the school teaching of civic education" and the subsequent "Guidelines for the teaching of civic education" (legislative decree of 22 June 2020).

The the principles stated concern:

1. *The right/duty to education of all minors*, who reside permanently or temporarily, whatever their nationality and place of birth and at any time of the year the integration occurs.

2. *The need to adopt common and shared measures*, attentions and protocols for *welcoming and inclusion* in all schools.

3. *The intentional support of integration processes* which require targeted attention and which deserve effective and quality responses, timely, systematic, long-lasting and constant interventions over time.

4. *The importance to develop intercultural dimension in curricula* (MIUR, 2022, pp. 16-18).

A further indication concerns, as already mentioned, the promotion of the plurilingualism approach at school. From the "Common European Framework" (Council of Europe, 2002), in which the notion of plurilingualism essentially refers to foreign languages (Beacco & Coste, 2017), we move on to the "Guide for the elaboration of educational linguistic policies in Europe" (Beacco and Byram, 2007) and, subsequently, to the "Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education" (Beacco et al., 2016). In the last document the Council of Europe promotes a reformulation of the language teaching in which the emphasis is on the other languages forming part of the learner's linguistic repertoire, repositioning the student at the center of the educational act (Cognigni, 2021).

The plurilingual and intercultural perspective of teaching focuses on linguistic-communicative skills and on promoting awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity as a key element for mutual recognition. The inclusion and active participation of all students is conveyed by the need not to remove references, tongues and languages, with a strong impact on family dynamics (of belonging and dialogue with the school) as, "wanting to erase a part of them through the non-recognition of their mother tongue can only lead to doubts about their own identity" (Moro, 2010, p. 85) and to the disinterest of the family in building educational alliances.

The trajectories of the intercultural school are increasingly complex, they require skills and need educational paths and teaching and sustainable practices.

Between learning objectives and promoting integration, teachers and educators are called to a task that cannot be accomplished alone. The fatigue that every single day of school brings with it must be nourished by questions (Granata, 2016; Pescarmona, 2021) that generate creative solutions and which invite professionals and adults not to give up and to invest in the construction of inclusive processes.

It is therefore essential to activate socio-educational service networks, create alliances with the social fabric and with families, experiment with new projects based on the protagonism and participation of local resources to be promoted, supported and maintained over time (Cadei, Deluigi, & Pourtois, 2016).

"Our" door can only open thanks to intercultural processes that require reflections and practices. If then, we wanted to unhinge that door with dialogue, deconstructing the walls that separate us from the "different", then, taking up Bauman's words, we must remember that "the cultural revolution is a long-term enterprise" (2016).

SOCIAL STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICES AND DISCRIMINATIONS

The presence of stereotypes is the mind's attempt to simplify the complexity of the world and it concerns people and social groups as well (Lippman, 1992). Indeed, each social group is labelled with a series of characteristics, behaviours and attributes that are used to define and evaluate people. This evaluation (i.e., social attitudes; Rosenberg et al., 1960) can be positive or negative and, according to the Model of Stereotype Content (Friske, 2015), depends on the dimensions of competence (for example, capability or assertiveness) and warmth (e.g., friendliness or trustworthiness). Thus, people belonging to a specific social group tend to be judged not for their individual characteristics but for their membership, as prejudice toward their group anticipates personal evaluation. Prejudice can be endorsed in an explicit or implicit way (Wilson et al., 2000). Explicit prejudice refers to deliberate and conscious answers, which are measured with self-report questionnaires or interviews, whereas the implicit prejudice corresponds to automatic association between a group and positive or negative attributes, and it is measured by means of implicit association test or the observation of non-verbal behaviours. Prejudice toward social groups can lead people to behave in a discriminative way (Dover et al., 2020) or, if they belonged to a stigmatized group, to develop the internalized stigma, i.e., applying the negative group attributions on the self (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Discrimination and, especially, stigma internalization compromise physical health (see Dover et al., 2020), psychological well-being (e.g., Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), cognitive functioning (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Schmader et al., 2008) in people belonged to stigmatized group and increase social disparities (e.g., Lang & Spitzer, 2020) in the community.

Research about stereotype reduction. According to classical social psychology theories, attitude development is a slow process depending on direct or vicarious experiences and received information that occurred over a lifetime. For this reason, social attitudes are strongly memory-based and this makes changing attitudes a long and complex process (Palmonari et al., 2002). However, several researchers tested this possibility. For example, according to Allport (1954), being in contact with a person belonging to an out-group reduces the intensity of prejudice and the anxiety between the groups. Although this is possible only if the contact is with a person of the same status in a context of cooperation (vs. competition) it seems to be a possible solution. Differently, other kinds of intervention are oriented to provide more information about the out-group with the aim to reach a cognitive reorganization (Heijnders & Van Der Meij, 2006). For example, Brewer and Miller (1984) said that intergroup contact can be useful to recognize a person not as part of a group (i.e., the out-group) but as an individual person (decategorization model). Instead, Gaertner (1989)

suggests that the intergroup contact leads to overpass the dichotomy between in-group and out-group and to build an over category that includes in a new identity also the previous different groups. Recently, the Annual Review of Psychology published a meta-analysis of 418 studies that tested strategies for prejudice reduction (Paluck et al., 2021). A first one is the adoption of anti-bias, multicultural, and moral education programs that have the aim of socialization of prejudice, cognitive and moral development, and learning. Other studies tested the "diversity training", interventions aimed to integrate different programs to facilitate groups' interaction, reduce prejudice and discrimination, improving skills, knowledge and motivation to interact with a person of another group. Then, Cognitive and emotional training based on the idea that people can be trained to manage their attitude: the first type of intervention consists in a training on implicit association; the second type is a training in emotion regulation; the third type is the adoption of perspective taking, a technique used to understand others' point of view by putting yourself in another person's shoes. The interventions, known as "Value consistency and self-worth", have the aim to develop a positive image of the self and the others. Some examples are reminding individuals' egalitarian principles, people of moral exemplars or provoking introspection about ones' attitudes. Another strategy is taking advantage of the influence of important identities, peers, or ingroup members: peer interaction, discussion and dialogue with significant people can be useful for changing attitudes. Interventions based on categorization have the aim to expand the limits of in-group toward out-group, whereas entertainment is used as an instrument to change negative stereotypes by films and lyrics. Finally, based on Allport's contact hypothesis, some interventions tested face-to-face contact, especially in the middle schools, high schools, or college setting, or the extended contact or imagined contact. Overall, these interventions have a meaningful but modest shift in prejudice reduction.

Specific social groups

Immigrant-related stereotypes. Prejudice and discrimination toward immigrants, particularly those who are racial minorities or ethnically, culturally, or religiously different from members of receiving societies, are quite evident (Esses, 2021). Immigrants can experience discrimination in different everyday contexts with consequences on cognitive and academic performance (Appel et al., 2015), socio-economic status (e.g., Ayón (2015), sense of community (e.g., trust toward non-immigrant, Wilkes & Wu, 2019) and physical and mental health (Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). Experiences of discrimination have been occurring since childhood: Children show preference for their ethnic group (vs. other ethnic group) very early (e.g., Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2019) and adolescents reported acting or suffering for ethnic bullying in several cases (e.g., 6.2% and 8,8% in Italy; MIUR, 2022). At school, also teachers endorse negative attitudes toward their immigrant student, by, for example, underestimating their academic competences (e.g., Tobisch & Dresel, 2017; Jussim et al., 2009). ***Education Institution.*** Among the six points "Agenda for Action", UNICEF (2020) underlines the importance to involve local leaders, religious groups or non-governmental

organizations to contrast racism. The importance of proximal context to develop negative stereotypes is also reported by Hazelbaker et al. (2022). In particular, referring to school context, the authors underlined the effectiveness of intergroup contact (Frankenberg et al., 2019), the importance of explicit discussions about racial discrimination and anti-bias education (Derman-Sparks et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2007), the centrality of peer norms (Nesdale, 2004) in reducing negative attitudes and promoting both individual and collective anti-racist behaviours. Another successful experimentation was described by Weiss and colleagues (2023): They showed that the promotion of a diversity education program, i.e., exposing children to charismatic out-groups through a TV series with class discussions about the episodes, lead to a reduction of negative stereotypes.

Gender-related stereotypes. Gender is a social construct that refers to the qualities, attitudes, roles, and responsibilities that are associated with men or women in a given cultural context (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). For example, girls are defined as calm and delicate whereas boys are considered strong and dynamic or, similarly, girls are considered less ambitious and aggressive than boys are. The structuring of gender roles occurs through the influence of parents (Endendijk et al., 2014; Tomasetto et al., 2015), teachers (Carlana, 2019; Gunderson et al., 2012; Heyder et al., 2020) peer group (Witt, 2000), mass media (Ward & Grower, 2020) and also school. Indeed, in addition to curriculum content (explicit curriculum) there are contents that are not explicit to learners (hidden curriculum), but they are present and capable of conveying gender role models (Martin, 1976; Stromquistet al., 1998): e.g., textbooks (see Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009; Biemmi, 2010; Scierri, 2017). Women representation can have an impact on girls' academic performance, especially on STEM subjects (e.g., maths, Tomasetto, 2019) with consequences on carries choices and the possibility to realize their full potential (Ellemers, 2018). Furthermore, gender-related stereotypes do not concern only gender roles but also gender identity. In these last years, the number of studies on gender identity and (also) sexual orientation is increased and results showed that people from LGBTQ community experience discrimination (e.g., European Commission, 2022), as early as from adolescence (MIUR, 2022; Toomey & Russell, 2016). ***Education Institution***. The report "Deepening the debate on those still left behind" by Unesco (2022) underlines that, despite the reduction of gender disparities, there are still some important inequalities. For example, in some geographical areas there is a gender gap in education access and completion; despite girls outperforming boys at school overall, girls are less likely to obtain better results in mathematics in primary school and higher education; teaching professions are strongly associated with women. "Reforming gender equality in education cannot be done by governments alone and requires all actors' attention" (Unesco, 2022, p.60), thus there is an increasing attention toward politicians, parents, communities, businesses and faith leaders for their role in reducing gender inequalities. In line with these considerations, the European Commission (2020) has recently published a document to promote gender equality. Among the recommendations, there is gender equality education from kindergarten (to prevent gender violence) and girls' involvement in sports contexts. Regarding the

contrast of gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination, the Council of Europe Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) recommends educational institution to (Magić & Selun, 2018): monitoring sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristic discrimination at school; including this kind of discrimination among educational institutions' anti-violence or anti-bullying policies; using school curricula to promote a constructive debate about the topic, by also encouraging teachers' training; offering support to students who experience discrimination; informing about diversity; collaborating with civil society, i.e., experts about the topic; evaluating the effectiveness of the adopted interventions. The importance of these indications has also some empirical evidence (for an example, see Day et al., 2019).

Disability-related stereotypes. Disability is a wide and complex definition that includes different kind of diseases. People with disability can experience discrimination in different context of their daily life with consequences on wellbeing (Barg et al., 2010) and a possible internalization of stigma (Pérez-Garín et al., 2017). In addition, negative experiences occur very early in the individual life: At school, children negatively evaluate peer with disabilities (Nota et al., 2018; Ostrosky et al., 2015) with consequent episodes of bullying (Rose et al., 2018) and cyberbullying (Eldridge et al., 2021). This lead to experience social isolation, academic performance, problematic behaviors in their current daylife (Aluede et al., 2008; de Boer et al., 2012) and to develop long-term consequences (e.g., depression, anxiety, loneliness, and other mental health problems; Aluede et al., 2008; Lund et al., 2009). In addition, studies show that attitudes toward disabilities change with the type of disabilities. For example, De Boer et al. (2012) and Di Maggio et al. (2022) found that children endorse more negative attitudes toward children with behavioural problems than towards children with intellectual or physical disability. Similarly, Avramidis et al. (2002) or De Boer et al. (2011) showed that teachers associate more negative stereotypes to students with intellectual disabilities than those with physical or sensory disability. ***Education Institution***. According to the Unicef report "Reducing stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities" (2020), schools have the role to support changes in attitudes and behaviours through polities, curricula, teaching and facilities and to support students, families and communities in this process. Sports and other educational activities (e.g. theatre) have a central role too: cooperative learning and peer tutoring involving children with and without disabilities can reduce stigmatizing attitudes. In addition, storytelling and sharing of personal testimonies are considered powerful tools to reduce internalized stigma and empower children to advocate for themselves.

Weight-related stereotypes. People with obesity or excess weight are commonly define as lazy, low competent and lack of willpower (Himmelstein & Tomiyama, 2015; Puhl & Heuer, 2009; Latner & Schwartz, 2005). The presence of these attributions increase the risk of prejudice and episodes of discrimination that affect people with obesity's health, well-being, cognitive functioning (Pont et al., 2017; Puhl et al., 2020; Guardabassi & Tomasetto, 2018; 2020). Negative stereotypes about body weight are present from as early as babies are 34 months old (e.g., Ruffman et al. 2016),

and, during scholastic years, children associate with increasingly strength negative attributes to image, dolls and also people with excess weight (Harriger et al. 2019; Kornilaki, 2014; Hutchison & Müller, 2018; Rex-Lear et al., 2019). Indeed, weight-based discrimination are very common at school (Vartanian et al., 2014; Pont et al., 2017) as well as in sportive setting (Puhl et al., 2011; Thiel et al., 2020). Children and adolescents with excess weight or obesity are excluded by peer (De la Haye et al., 2017), they are evaluated as less popular (Latner & Stunkard, 2003), they are teased (Puhl et al., 2013), and they are victims of cyberbullying (Janssen et al., 2004; Van Geel et al., 2014). ***Educational Institution***. Differently from other kind of stereotypes, people with obesity are blamed for their excess weight because body weight is considered entirely under volitional control (Brewis, 2014; Khan et al., 2018). However, scientific evidence demonstrated that body weight is more than a personal choice and individual responsibility and it is necessary to promote a correct representation of this specific disease. For this reason, a multi-disciplinary group, composed by experts from ten scientific organizations, published the document "Joint international consensus statement for ending stigma of obesity" addressed to healthcare professionals, academic institution, media, authorities and government (Rubino et al., 2020) to provide the correct information and avoid weight stigma and its negative consequences, which include also weight gain.

Age-related stereotype. The rise in the average age of the population makes older people a new social group that, similarly to others, are labelled with specific stereotypes and are targets of prejudices and discrimination (Chang et al., 2020). This phenomenon takes the name of ageism (Butler, 1969) and it has concerning consequences (World Health Organization, 2021): ageism can affect older people's health (Chang et al., 2020), cognitive performance (Lamont et al., 2015), wellbeing (McHugh, 2003). Children already endorse negative attitudes towards the older population: they define them as ugly and sick (Weinberger, 1979), less active, weak, and slow (Lynott & Merola, 2007), low competent but also high-warm (Flamion et al., 2020). ***Education Institution***. According Burnes et al. (2019), education, intergenerational activities or their combination lead to ageism reduction, especially among females, adolescents and young adults. Consistently with this consideration, the World Health Organization (2021) published a report with some suggestions for practice. The first one indicates the importance of policies and laws to reduce ageism towards each age group. The second is the implementation of education interventions (from primary school to university), as they could lead to developing empathy, dispel misunderstanding, and offer counter-stereotypical examples to reduce ageism. The third and last strategy is the intergenerational contact interventions, which represent the most effective interventions to reduce ageism.

BOX 2 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN TEXTBOOKS. A VADEMECUM FOR EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING PROFESSIONALS

The need to balance male and female representation in textbooks was introduced in 1999 by the Italian Publishers Association (AIE) with the self-regulatory code of the project "Equal Opportunities in Textbooks" (Polite)[1]. The text is addressed to Italian publishers with the aim to design and produce gender-sensitive textbooks and teaching materials. Gender equality education is considered one of the main factor in children development.

The following vademecum is the result of a collaboration between ELi Publishing Group and a group of researchers from the University of Macerata. The work began in 2021 with the aim to identify functional useful tools and equality-conscious strategies for balancing gender representations in textbooks.

The vademecum indicates some expedients that (1) authors and illustrators can adopt in the realization of their products and (2) teaching staff could take into consideration for a choice of "balanced" textbooks, capable of representing reality in its social and cultural complexity: different ethnicities, disabilities, new forms of being a family, different gender opportunities, etc.

Vademecum for equality in Textbooks

According to the Polite Self-regulatory Code, Equal Opportunities in Textbooks, approved in Italy on May 11th 1999, publishers have the duty to:

1. Realize more qualified textbooks addressed to focus on gender identity development and equal opportunities culture, as they represent decisive aspects of people undergoing education;
2. Verify textbook adequacy to promote gender identity and the development of an equal opportunities culture, by considering textbook recipients (e.g. ages, different sensitivities) as well as the specific topic and cultural/scientific setting of each work;
3. Plan textbooks that promote not only knowledge, but also the awareness that this knowledge is the result of man as well as woman involvement in scientific and expressive research;
4. Promote in authors a cultural sensitivity and attention in the direction of gender identity and equal opportunities culture; deliver to authors a copy of the POLITE Code and add it and its related documents in the contract.

According to the findings of the Unimc-Eli working group a balanced representation of women and men must be introduced in textbook; a balance is required in the frequency with which genders are represented, in the degree and importance of their roles and activities, and in their representations both as individuals and in collective contexts.

It is important that sexes appear in a wide variety of situations in professional, public and private spheres, offering a view of the changes taking place in families and workplaces, being as close as possible to real life in the division of labour and caring tasks. It is also necessary to overcome all representations linked to old and new stereotypes relating to alleged and innate characteristics of girls and boys, as much in the sphere of affectivity as in those of relational roles.

Finally, it is desirable that textbooks offer readings that are increasingly in line with the current development of the society in the direction of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity.

Directions for authors

Language[2]

Use of masculine and feminine

- Insert and alternate the feminine with the masculine
- Avoid using the masculine plural as including the feminine as well
- Choose expressions that refer to collectivities, e.g., 'il genere umano' or 'la gente' instead of 'gli uomini', 'la classe' instead of "gli alunni"
- Choose expressions referring indiscriminately to the masculine and feminine, e.g. 'docente/insegnante' instead of 'maestro' or 'professore', 'adolescenti' instead of 'I ragazzi'
- Declining professions and institutional positions in both male and female terms
- Use in a balanced manner and with attention to the female gender, qualifications, behaviours, characteristics and interests attributed to the characters or proposed in the texts (e.g. determined, courageous, sensitive, ambitious, rebellious, etc., typically used

Non-stigmatising language

- Using the terms evaluated as most appropriate by the scientific community or stakeholders and proposing debates on open issues (e.g. person with disabilities, with special needs, differently abled, diversified)

Respect the indications also in the creation of titles, from which book indexes are derived

Representativeness

Gender

- Balancing the presence of male and female protagonists in stories and narrations
- Formulating dialogues by male and female characters with attention to equal turns and length of speech

Differences

- Considering families in a broader sense (e.g. envisaging adoption and fostering, recomposed families, single-parent families, etc.).
- Representing society in a way that adheres to reality, as varied and composite in terms of genders, disabilities, cultures, traditions, customs, religions, etc.

Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes

- Include the emotional dimension in male figures
- Representing men and women with interchangeable roles and reciprocity of relationships with a focus on situations of mutual collaboration
- Treating female figures with equal attention to that given to male figures

Other types of stereotypes

- Dealing with the subject of disability as an opportunity to be in the world with one's difference, with one's weaknesses and strengths
- Including the theme of human differences as an element of learning
- In general, represent and recognise every possible type of difference, avoiding stereotypical attitudes and expressions

Guidelines for illustrators

Representativeness

Gender

- Representing male and female characters in equal numbers
- Reproducing the same image with male and female characters (e.g., teacher)

Differences

- Including people of different ages, ethnicities, religious affiliations, abilities, intelligences, family types and represent society in many different ways
- Representing a variety of characters under different roles, actions, contexts, gender, work and professional activities perspective
- Considering families in a broad sense with interchangeable roles, reciprocity of relationships, situations of mutual collaboration
- Valuing human bodies in all shapes (e.g., tall as well as short) and characteristics (e.g., young as well as old)
- Include situations of disagreement and conflict as everyday events, that represent opportunities for mutual learning and negotiation

Stereotypes

Gender

- Choose a wide range of colours, clothing, accessories to represent gender identities
- Representing human beings in different phases and situations of the lifetime with interchangeable roles and reciprocity of relationships with, especially focusing situations of mutual collaboration
- Representing man and woman in indoor and outdoor spaces

Other types of stereotypes

- Representing people with both physical and mental disabilities and portraying them as active, dynamic people, with both strengths and weaknesses, embedded in a relational and social contexts
- Representing differences as an enrichment and opportunity of learning instead of including the subject of differences as an element of learning
- Represent and recognise every possible type of differences, avoiding stereotypical attitudes and expressions

University of Macerata, 25 August 2022

[1] Polite: https://www.aie.it/Portals/38/Allegati/CodicePolite.pdf
[2] The directions are specifically tailored on the Italian language

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this contribution, we would like to focus on language. Language does not merely describe the world, as was thought until the last century. Language has performative value because it acts on reality itself (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and on the mental schemata of human beings (Vygotsky, 1934). From this perspective, words profoundly affect the way people represent the world and talk about it. For these reasons they must be used competently and responsibly. It is not sufficient to plan and design inclusion projects and environments, if we exclude the use of an inclusive language. Language is considered as the expression of social and cultural world. This means that also the language, i.e. expressions or adopted terms, can potentially affect social and cultural dimension. For this reason, the presence of an inclusive language could represent a natural and important tool to make stronger the efficacy of inclusion projects. Based on the glossary created by CBM (2022) and referring to APA Bias-Free Language (https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language), the next page clarify some definitions about inclusion and the appropriate and respectful way to talk and write about specific social group present in our society.

WORDS FOR INCLUSION

DIVERSITY	Diversity is the wide variety of shared and diverse personal and group characteristics among human beings. Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ and encompasses the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.
EQUALITY	Equality means ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to get the most out of his or her life and talents.
EQUITY	Equity means recognizing that each person lives in different situations and allocating resources and opportunities for everyone to achieve an equal result.
INCLUSION	Inclusion is the attitudes, tendency or policy that has the objective of "including" all people in social participation and contribution, by benefiting from this process. Inclusion aims to ensure that all individuals or social groups, especially those in marginalized and vulnerable situations, have the same possibilities and opportunities for personal fulfilment.
RESILIENCE	Resilience defines the people's ability to cope with stressful or traumatic events and to reorganize their lives in a positive way despite difficulties. Resilience enables adaptation to adversity.
TOLERANCE	Tolerance is the capacity, the disposition to tolerate, and the action to tolerate something that is or could be unpleasant, harmful, and ill tempered.

USING THE PROPER LANGUAGE: DISABILITY

TERMS/EXPRESSIONS USED	TERMS/EXPRESSIONS TO BE USED
ABLE, NORMAL, AND ABLE-BODY	**Person without disability – Person not disable** Defining the concept of normality is difficult and there are no opposing groups of "normal" and "not normal." Each of us can contribute to the development of a culture of equal opportunity. Let's start by avoiding terms such as able-bodied that belittle automatically those who are not as "not normal or abnormal," "not very gifted," "unskilled or unfit." Let us remember that each one might experience in the course of their lives a condition of disability even if temporarily.
DISABLED	**Person with disability** This expression puts the person in the first place and, only as its characteristic, the disability (person first language). **Disabled person** By using the identity-first language, the disability becomes the focus, by allowing individuals to claim the disability and choose their identity rather than permitting others to name it or to select terms with negative implications.
BLIND	**Blind person** (complete loss of vision) **Person with partial vision, person with low vision, person with low vision** (not completely blind) Expressions like “not sighted” are rejected because they seem to sweetened definition that does not change the substance.
DEAF	**Deaf person** (complete loss of hearing) **Person with partial hearing loss** or **Partially deaf** (not completely deaf).
DEAF AND DUMB	**Person with disability - Disabled person** The definition is considered humiliating and offensive. Deafness and mutism represent two separate and distinct conditions.
DEFECT, DAMAGE, DEFECTIVE	**Person with disability - Disabled person** “Defect”, “damage” or “defective” imply that the person is incomplete, damaged, have an inferior value.
INVALID	**Person with certification of disability** The word "invalid" means non-valid and labels people inevitably as not suitable.

CRIPPLE, CRIPPLED, LAME, DEFORMED	**Person with a motor or physical disability** "Cripple", "crippled", "lame", "deformed" are considered denigrator names.
DIFFERENTLY ABLED, SPECIAL	**Person with disability - Disabled person** Expressions such as "differently abled" or "special," even if well meaning, can be received as condescending, compassionate or offensive. People with disabilities claim their right to be ordinary people, not superheroes!
SUFFER FROM/IS AFFECTED BY	**Person with disability** A general rule is to avoid terms that "connote pity" because they induce to stigmatize people with disabilities, by emphasizing a negative connotation. The indication is to avoid identifying people with disabilities as victims or lacking will and decision-making abilities or always forced to undergo imposed choices. Such definitions, over time, have contributed to fuel social stigma about people with disabilities, generating feelings of pity and commiseration.
SICK	Expressions such as "sick" or "the sick" risk reducing the person to his or her suffering or pathology (as happens with the use of other adjectives nouns: disturbed, retarded, handicapped, etc.). If we consider the concept of health as the relationship between the person and the context in which he or she lives, disability cannot be defined as a problem of a minority, but a condition that affects all people, because all people can have a health condition that, in an unfavorable context, can lead to a disability.
FORCED IN A WHEELCHAIR OR PRAM	**Person in a wheelchair or wheelchair** **Person using a wheelchair or wheelchair** The wheelchair is not a limitation, but rather increases the mobility and independence of the person who uses it. The wheelchair is an integral part of the person who uses it, and in this view, it is always best to request permission to touch it.
MAD, INSANE, DERANGED, INSANE, RETARDED/ MENTALLY HANDICAPPED	**Person with intellectual disability** We take into consideration that there are people who may feel offended from these words. About the terms crazy, deranged, insane are generic and approximate, but they tend to lead back to a potentially dangerous situation. Furthermore, identifying the person with a disability, in this case intellectual, is considered always offensive.

MONGOLOID	**Person with intellectual disability or indicate the specific disability** Unfortunately, this expression is used mistakenly to refer to people with intellectual disabilities, particularly with Down syndrome, but it has a connotation strongly derogatory.
HANDICAP/HANDICAPPED	The expression has a wrong and negative meaning and belittles the person whom it refers to. In addition, handicap is not a synonymous with disability but is a disadvantage caused by a certain context/situation. For a person with a disability, the handicap may be a not inclusive environment, for example, a staircase without a ramp for a person with a mobility disability.
DEFICIT	**Person with disability** The term deficit is often confused or used in place of handicap, but the former refers to the person, the latter to the context. For a person with a disability, the deficit can be represented by the situation biological situation that results from a malady, a trauma or that has been present since birth. However, the expression "person with a deficit" should not be used because it refers only to the health condition of an individual, whereas "person with a disability" connotes the relationship between the medical aspect and the bio-psycho-social environment and the context in which the individual lives.

USING THE PROPER LANGUAGE: SOCIOCULTURAL ISSUE

GENDER	To use a gender bias free language it is suggested to pay attention to differentiate gender from sex; favorite discussion of humans in general (e.g. people, humanity); use specific nouns “males” and “females”; refer to a generic person by avoiding the use of he or she and preferring they; avoid to specify gender when it is not necessary; using generic terminology instead of gendered terminology (e.g., parenting vs. mothering; postal worker vs. mailman); avoid use adjective in a gendered context (e.g., cautious men and timid women); parallel description of participants (e.g., boys and girls); avoid to use expression like “opposite sex” and “opposite gender” which implies a sexual binary.
RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY	Racial and ethnic categories need to be used as clear and specific as possible and, whenever possible, use the racial and/or ethnic terms that are preferred by the group. Specifically, it can be adequate to use African American or Black people, Asian or Asian American people, European American or White people, Indigenous people or

	Native Americans, participants were from Central America. When racial-ethnic comparisons are necessary is important to use specific categories and to compare a dominant racial group with a non-dominant racial group, could be important use a modifier like "racial," "ethnic," or "racial-ethnic".
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Sexual orientation can be define under the umbrella term "sexual and gender minorities", "sexual orientation and gender diversity", "LGBTQ", "LGBTQ+", "LGBTQIA", and "LGBTQIA+". The identity-first terms is suggested to describe people's sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian person). In addition, to use a bias free language for sexual orientation can be important: avoiding the use of "homosexual" without specifying the gender of participants; using a multitude of descriptive self-identification labels (lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and many others); differentiating sexual orientation from sexual behaviour; describing sexual behaviour in a specific way or avoid the assumption of heterosexual orientation; considering the marital status as not a reliable indicator of cohabitation, sexual activity, or sexual orientation.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS	To avoid stereotypical terms is suggested to use the person-first language (e.g., individuals who are undocumented), to avoid the use of nouns to define people (e.g., the homeless) and promote a description of the specific situation (e.g., people experiencing homelessness) or condition (e.g., neighborhood characteristics). Additionally, the indication is to avoid a deficit-based language (e.g., high-school dropout) and to promote a more sensitive approach (e.g., "people who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent) or a strengths-based perspective (e.g., people who have completed 10th grade).
AGE	Different terms are used to refer to individuals of different ages. To facilitate a bias-free language for age, it is recommended to use "older adults" or "older people" or indicate the specific age. The person first can be used to refer to older people with health problem (for example "person with dementia").

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