

In Italy, students with disabilities are not segregated

Italy/Ministry of Education: Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Inclusive Education in Italy is not only required by law and thus rights-based but is being implemented throughout the country, sustained by a firm national consensus for full inclusion. Fewer than 1% of all children with special needs are educated in segregated settings.

IN BRIEF

The Italian Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no. 104 of 1992 deals with diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, and addresses various services and support as well as the issue of social exclusion of persons with disabilities. In particular, the law provides that appropriate support must be provided in mainstream schools at all levels – e.g., specialized teachers, educational aids, and transportation and material assistance – with the collaboration of all public competent bodies and with the involvement of all those who have educational competences (teachers, assistants, families, etc.).

FACTS & FIGURES

- By 2010 the number of students with special needs educated in segregated settings was less than 1%.
- In 2010 approximately 189,563 students with special needs attended primary and secondary schools and 20,739 attended pre-primary education. University enrolment rose from 4,813 in 2001 to 15,884 in 2009.
- In 2009 there were almost 90,000 support teachers nationwide with an average satisfaction rating of 3.8 on a scale of 1 to 5.
- In 2003–2004, of 40,383 schools surveyed, 30.7% had accessible toilets, 29.7% had adequate doors, and 20.3% had lifts.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

Innovating education

Pioneering is the creation of a new professional figure for learning support and the combination of clinical diagnosis, dynamic profile and tailored education plan to determine the potential of the pupil.

Broad collaboration

The wide-ranging cross-sectorial cooperation of all stakeholders – teachers, social/health service workers, parents, and students – paved the way for new approaches to teaching and learning.

A qualitative benefit for all

Italy's practice of Inclusive Education has led to lowering the limits of class sizes, revamping the curriculum, and implementing a system of national evaluations of all schools.

CONTEXT

In 1971 the Italian Law 118 granted all children with disabilities – except for the most severe cases – the right to be educated in mainstream classes. By 1977, Italy closed all special schools and its Law 517 prescribed that all pupils with disabilities should be included. In the 1980s, Inclusive Education was implemented in pre-schools and in secondary schools. In 1991 a commission, including persons with disabilities, started to draft the Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no. 104 that was adopted by the Parliament in 1992. It was the first time that civil society, organizations of persons with disabilities, and families were fully involved in such a process.

QUOTE

Inclusive Education is elementary for the development of human personality. Italy has made enormous steps forward, but the many regulations in this regard deserve far more respect. — Salvatore Nocera, Vice President, Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicaps

KEY FEATURES

The Italian Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no. 104 of 1992 is a national legally-binding policy that prescribes that all children with disabilities are to be included in day nurseries, to attend schools (also private), universities, and any other education provider, and to fully participate in school life. Refusals are met with prosecutions and the removal of funding. Once a person is recognized as a pupil with special needs, a tailored educational plan is defined by health service operators, specialized teachers, and a psycho-pedagogical expert, in collaboration with the parents. The plan is reviewed regularly. Furthermore, all services are coordinated, flexible timetabling is allowed, and schools are equipped with technical devices and specialized teachers for learning support (one for every two children) who define methods with class teachers. Provincial working groups and a National Observatory were established.

OUTCOME, IMPACT, AND EFFECTIVENESS

- Italy is the European country with the highest inclusion of people with special needs in mainstream schools. There is consensus that both children with and without disabilities learn from each other.

- The overall assessment of school experience by persons with disabilities is very positive, with an average of 4 on a scale of 1 to 5.
- Concerns exist that Italy has still to overcome the micro exclusion that children with disabilities experience within inclusive settings. In 2015 the School Reform Law 107 intensified the quality of education support, and provided more resources and data.

TRANSFERABILITY, SCALABILITY, AND COST-EFFICIENCY

Italy's legislation on Inclusive Education for all at every level is serving as a model for various countries undertaking school reform. Internationally, Italy engaged in the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly its Article 24.

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POLICY

Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no. 104 of 5th February 1992 by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, Italy

SOURCES

Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Inclusion and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no. 104 of 5th February 1992: <http://bit.ly/1Wjg2EN>

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Italy's country profile:

<http://bit.ly/1Wjg5Ao>