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REPORT ON INFLUENCE OF EU ON LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ITALY



2021



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report has been prepared within the framework of the EUROPE and DISABILITY Project performed within the scope of the “Turkey - EU Civil Society Dialogue” program carried out by the Directorate for EU Affairs within the framework of the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Financial Assistance since 2008. The Civil Society Dialogue Grant Program between Turkey and the EU (CSD-VI) has a budget of 4,750,000 Euros, aims to increase the interaction and dialogue between Turkish and EU civil societies at local, regional and national levels, and focuses on the importance and benefits of Turkey's EU membership. It is a program that supports awareness raising initiatives in both communities. The Civil Society Dialogue Project is coordinated by Directorate for EU Affairs.

The Europe and Disability Project is funded by EU. The project aims to increase the awareness of the general public and the disability community about the positive effects of the European Union process for the people with disabilities and to support them to adopt the EU process in Turkey. The coordinating institution of the project is the Sinop Spastic Children's Association (<https://www.sinopscd.org.tr/>). The partners of the project are the NGOs; IPP (<http://cluj.institutphoenix.ro/>) from Romania and CEIPES (<https://ceipes.org/>) from Italy.

The objectives of the project are:

- Analysing the perception of people with Disabilities in Turkey to EU process from the aspect of disability rights,
- To demonstrate the potential positive effects of EU process on disability rights to people with disability,
- To promote collaboration between EU and Turkish Disability CSO's,

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report has been prepared in order to reveal the developments and deficiencies regarding the rights of people with disabilities in Italy. The good examples about the contribution of EU to people with disabilities in Italy is included at the report. In addition to the current practices in Italy, the report includes Problems or compliance between Italian governments and authorities at disability field, financial support of EU for people with disabilities in Italy , Italian network on disability and development, Italian legislation on disability. The perception of Italian people with disabilities about EU support and mechanisms is also mentioned.

The aim of the report is to identify the contribution of the European Union to a founder member country. It will give an idea to Turkey stakeholders on disability field.





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1. The Contribution of EU Legislation to People with Disabilities in Italy

Italy is internationally recognised as an important player about disability policies. In November 2010 the Italian Cooperation approved its Guidelines on disability drawn up on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006 and ratified by Italy.

Key disability initiatives

- The European accessibility act, EU directive 2019/882 on the accessibility requirements of products and services
- regulations on the Rights of Passengers with Reduced mobility in main modes of transport
- EU directive on the accessibility of website and mobile applications of public sector bodies
- EU disability card
- EU parking card
- EU directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation

The Commission also supports Member States in the implementation of the UNCRPD through the European Semester and with EU funds.

European Disability Strategy 2021-30

The strategy aims to ensure that people with disabilities can experience full social and economic inclusion on an equal basis with others and live free from discrimination. It will focus on implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and consolidating the EU's body of law in this field. It will build on the 2010-20 strategy, both through targeted action and by ensuring disability rights are considered across all EU policies, programmes and instruments. The new European Strategy for people with disabilities aims at improving their social inclusion, their wellbeing and enabling them to fully exercise their rights. To this end, the Strategy provides for complementary action at European and national levels.

Guidelines for the Introduction of the Disability Issue Within the Policies and Activities of the Italian Cooperation

Persons with disabilities account for 15% of the world's population, most of these people live in developing countries. In many cases a disability can be the cause of poverty since it jeopardizes these persons' ability to fully participate in the economic and social life of the community they live in, especially if no adequate infrastructures and facilities are available. At the international level, the UN "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", adopted by the General Assembly introduced a new international legal and cultural standard and is an important tool in promoting human rights and equal opportunities.





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The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation is one of the main innovations of the cooperation reform law and has the ambition to align Italy with the main European and international partners in the commitment to development. The Agency is a model used in all the main European countries and must respond to the need for more professional and innovative cooperation, with the necessary degree of flexibility of the instruments in a scenario that is constantly changing.

The aim of the Italian Cooperation is to increase the effectiveness of Italian aid and contribute to sustainable development reducing all forms of poverty and inequality. The Italian Cooperation holds a significant track record in the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, and intends to continue along this pathway, as development can only be achieved by promoting freedom of choice and equal opportunities through an inclusive perspective. As indicated by the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, it is acknowledged that disability results from the interaction between person's characteristics and the environment in which he or she lives and operates. It therefore becomes important to remove the various types of barriers that impede those with disabilities from exercising their rights, and this must be done through the firm commitment of all the members of society. The involvement of the institutions, of civil society and of the business world is particularly important in contributing to create usable products and services that enable persons with disabilities to study, work and live without discrimination in the community to which they belong.

The mandate of the Italian Cooperation has always fought against social exclusion and the mandate it was given by the Convention (Art. 32) strengthened its role: *"States Parties recognize the importance of international cooperation and its promotion, in support of national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the present Convention and will undertake appropriate and effective measures in this regard, between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities"*.

In compliance with Law 49/87 that regulates the Central Technical Unit action, the Italian Development Cooperation has mapped the initiatives undertaken between 2000 and 2008 to promote and guarantee the rights of persons with disability. The mapping process represents the first step to introduce the disability issue within the Agenda of the Italian Development Cooperation; this process has also been useful to draft the revision of Guidelines on Disability, in compliance with international commitments (i.e., UNCRPD). The resulting data have been collected in the "Report of the Italian Development Cooperation for promoting and guaranteeing the rights of persons with disability". The draft of this report has also been presented during the International Forum for a Global Partnership on Disability and Development" (Turin, October 15, 2009) that has been organized by the Italian Development Cooperation, the World Bank, Global Partnership for disability and Development and Fondazione





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Cassa di Risparmio di Torino. During the forum every participant has been provided with the report to start a constructive debate. Afterwards, the results have been collected by a working group composed of experts and external consultants of the Italian Development Cooperation, as well as members of other ministries (i.e., Welfare and Social Affairs) and World Bank staff. Thus, “Recommendations” presented in the report provide the basic framework of the Guidelines review on Disability; this document mainly aims to include disability issues in policies and activities undertaken by the Italian Cooperation. Finally, the document has also been approved by regional and local institutions, the civil society, universities, as well as the organization of people with disability, who join the meeting organized by the Italian Cooperation on June 30, 2010. The final text includes any considerable intervention or contribution that has been made in that session. The dialogue between the Italian Cooperation and these actors will last in the future to fulfill the goal of promoting the rights for persons with disability, as well as enhancing disability mainstreaming policies in the Italian Cooperation programs.

The commitment of Italian Cooperation toward the implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has its foundation in the experience that Italy has achieved in this sector. From a legal point of view, Italy is considered one of the most advanced countries involved in the affirmation and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, since the Italian legislation provides several policies devoted to disability issues. Based on the national legislation, the Italian Development Cooperation has always considered the issue of disability as an essential component of its action and has always pursued an inclusive approach, aimed at overcoming special services for people with disabilities. When drafting the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006, Italy had the possibility to carry out a propulsive action by making its contribution to certain priority areas, for instance those concerned to the role of international cooperation, the importance of adopting specific measures for women and children with disabilities, inclusive education, as well as the important role that family has for a person with disabilities. Italy was one of the fifty countries to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. By signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention and the Optional Protocol (Act March 3, 2009, n. 18), the Italian Cooperation has been entrusted by Art 32 with a specific mandate that should be pursued. To fulfil the mandate entrusted by the Convention, the Italian Cooperation has carried out a mapping of the initiatives funded in 2000 to 2008. The results of this work have been collected into the “Report of the Italian Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”. The analysis of the data presented in the report is also included in this document, which is mainly aimed at providing principles that can guide the Italian Cooperation in identifying equipment and actions to include the issue of rights of persons with disabilities in its policies and activities. This work pursues the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on the centrality of the human being, as well as on the valorisation and inclusion of persons





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with disabilities, so that they can fully participate in the social, economic, political and cultural context of a society that accommodates and respects their differences.

The Italian Cooperation will provide its contribution to the activities concerning:

- National Observatory on the condition of people with disability

The law ratifying the entry into force of the UN Convention also established a “National Observatory” for the condition of persons with disabilities that will have the task to draft a detailed report on the measures taken to effectively implement the obligations ratified by the document and on the progress obtained for this purpose.

This Observatory could:

- Envisage the presence of a representative of the Development Cooperation to report information about the two-year action plan scheduled by the Observatory.
- Contribute to the monitoring activities through the elaboration of a detailed report on measures undertaken at an international level to implement the UN Convention (Art.35).
- Annual Report to Parliament: section devoted to disability issues

To report the implementation of the cooperation policies for development, the Annual Report to the Parliament by GDDC should contain a specific section devoted to disability issues.

Planning and Monitoring of National Policies on Disability

Training Activities

- Training on disability issues and development for GDDC personnel, and more in general for the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following the example of other bilateral cooperation. The same training program could be accomplished for all the executing entities which implement projects on the issue of decentralized cooperation, NGOs and DPOs (UN Convention, Art. 4 point i), as well as for collaborators in partner countries, taking account of the channel of university cooperation.
- Promoting "modules" of training on "development, human rights and disability" in the different areas where GDDC participates, such as university courses and master's degrees (UN Convention, Art. 8-point d);
- Training activities described in the paragraphs above should aim to promote the emergence of an increasingly open and sensitive approach toward disability issues, both in Italy and in the partner countries to overcome all the socio-cultural barriers still existing.





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Twin Track Approach

Twin Track approach is a particular type of participatory approach. The strategy developed by Italian Cooperation implies the involvement, the taking of responsibilities, the linkage and integration of all stakeholders through a participatory approach. In this sense, the need for taking a twin-track approach was stressed at international level: on one hand, pursuing initiatives specifically targeted at persons with disabilities, taking into account their rights and specific needs; on the other hand, favouring the inclusion of persons with disabilities among the targets of all projects. To this end, any useful linkage and coordination with other sector-specific guidelines (e.g. on children, gender, decentralised cooperation, emergencies, poverty) should be sought.

- The Italian Cooperation must increase its efforts for promoting disability mainstreaming policies in its activities.
- It will also be important to continue implementing initiatives that specifically address persons with disabilities considering their specific needs (disability specific activities).
- With appropriate and regularly issued statistics we will be able to monitor this approach. This can also be done by way of accessible web pages (based on the standards provided for by Italian Law 4/2004) on the Ministry's website. Soon, an interactive databank should be developed, which could be accessed online and include all national and international information on the subject.

Increase technical qualifications and project capabilities to define the needs and the rights of persons more accurately with disabilities in catastrophes and natural disasters

Implement the provisions contained in **Art. 5 of the Charter of Verona** (Carta di Verona) on saving persons with disabilities in catastrophes and natural disasters considering the responsibility of institutions at all levels in implementing the provisions needed to guarantee the right level of protection and security of persons with disabilities in a risk situation and ensure that all services be provided, avoiding any discrimination on the grounds of disability. Also, the initiatives of Italian Cooperation will have to constantly consider the evolution of the international legislative framework on strategies, policies and interventions in favor of persons with disabilities in emergency situations.

Formulating Initiatives and Projects for Persons with Disabilities

In its budget, the Italian Cooperation should allocate part of the funds specifically to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Priority should be given to funding interventions at the regional level with a coordinated investment that would guarantee greater systematic order and a greater impact by avoiding the geographical fragmentation of the interventions.





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Considering the tight link between poverty and disability and considering the 2009-2011 Guidelines and Programs, the Italian Cooperation should increase its efforts towards the poorest countries, like the African countries.

Enactment of Measures Concerning “Accessibility”

Since only 3.9% of projects mapped by the report implement activities aimed at eliminating physical and sensory barriers, it would be necessary to:

- Enact directives devoted to the accessibility issue, along the lines of what other cooperation agencies have done
- Ensure the accessibility of the infrastructures funded by GDDC (both new and renovated), in compliance with the UN Convention, Art. 9, par.1, point a.
- Promote the implementation of initiatives aimed at making LTU infrastructures accessible, by organizing training activities that will introduce the concerned personnel to a deep understanding of the national and international legislation that regulate the access of persons with disability.

Planning and Formulating Initiatives and Projects for Persons with Disabilities

The Italian Cooperation should ensure that the financial proposals submitted to the decision-making body of GDDC will be aimed at:

- Analyzing the context by collecting data about the population so that it will be to clearly identify persons with disability, distinguished by age and gender
- Adopting an updated terminology that takes account of the evolution of the international language which is increasingly becoming aware of the fact that disability, as well as the respect of human rights represent a many-sided issue (UN Convention Art.1)
- Considering of the approach based on the principles of accessibility (Universal Design). This corresponds to plan accessible infrastructure, as well as to adopt accessible technologies (UN Convention, Art.32, par.1, point a)
- Based on the European experience in allocating structural funds for 2007- 2013, fostering projects to be accessible for persons with disability
- Giving priority to the institutional strengthen of countries involved in the field of promotion of the rights of people with disability. Such approach could be more clearly directed towards those countries (i.e., Italy) that have ratified the UN Convention and should proceed to the updating and predisposition of the referential legislation, as established by this Convention.
- Within this context, supporting capacity building and empowerment activities of the

DPO in the developing countries.





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Ensuring Coordination and Consistency of Policies on Disability to Improve Cooperation Activities

- As stated in the 2004 OECD-DAC Peer Review and announced in the Peer Review of 2009, GDDC aims at examining consistency of policies on disability. This activity should be in line with national policies and procedures on disability, as well as international commitments (Art.4 - UN Convention). For this purpose, GDDC should promote initiatives, both on disability and education, aimed at encouraging partner Countries to adopt a legislation for the protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities
- Establishing a monitoring system that should be structured on at least three levels: in the dialogue and negotiation phase with partner Countries when identifying policies, we plan on supporting and activities we plan on implementing, and in evaluating completed initiatives
- In the dialogue with the European Union, to whom the Italian Cooperation provides significant funding. One of the responsibilities of the European Union, that ratified the UN Convention on November 26, 2009, is development cooperation, emergency and the agendas with third countries, which should be regulated and monitored in compliance of article 32 of the Convention.
- In cooperation, that has been implemented through multilateral channels (United Nations, the World bank and regional development banks, etc.).

Systematic Data Collection According to the OECD – DAC Categories

Promoting the possibility to identify more clearly the projects directed to persons with disabilities, in compliance with the OECD-DAC classification mechanism. This would also produce an instrument that would enable us to better comply with the monitoring requirements set by the Convention on commitments made by Italy.

Collaboration with Other Cooperation Agencies for Development

To obtain a greater effectiveness of aid and to promote joint policies, the Italian Cooperation should take the lead in promoting initiatives aimed at encouraging an exchange of information and experiences on inclusive development with the other cooperation organizations that work for Development Aid.

Involvement and support of organizations of persons with disabilities

- Encouraging measures specifically directed to persons with disabilities, their organizations and their networks.
- Engaging persons with disabilities in identifying policies, in managing and evaluating cooperation programs.



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- Article 32 of the Convention invites all States Parties to undertake measures “that will lead the International Cooperation, as well as international development programs, to include persons with disabilities.” This refers to the beneficiaries of the projects as well as to the operators.
- Building on the best practices developed by the World Bank, we propose the creation of an accommodation fund to implement such inclusion.

Valuing the NGOs

GDDC could support initiatives with broader scope that involve NGOs. Their presence and involvement would be coordinated, and their initiatives would be implemented at a regional level.

Business Community Involvement

- Identifying mechanisms that would responsibly engage the business community. The business community is competent in several fields (employment, training, providing civil works and services, technical assistance, etc.) and could better address the challenge of access to services, buildings and transportation
- Information and technologies, in compliance with the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility
- The active involvement of entrepreneurs could help design and develop accessible work environments that would facilitate the job integration of persons with disabilities by eliminating the barriers that deny their access to training, to jobs and to carrier’s opportunities
- The involvement of the Italian business community should include the promotion of working activities in favor of persons with disabilities, as well as a financial investment in support of activities promoted by the Italian Cooperation in the countries where it operates.

Sharing Information and Experiences with Italian Institutions and Utilizing Their Knowledge and Experience

- Encouraging the Italian Cooperation to support the involvement of universities, businesses and local agencies (decentralized cooperation) so that the experience Italy developed nationally could be known and utilized internationally.
- This involvement should be further enhanced by creating structured collaborations.

Furthermore, GDDC could act as a catalyst for political, cultural, and financial investment by promoting synergies among Italian actors at the Country level, to implement coordinated measures in this field.





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Monitoring and Evaluating the Application of Guidelines

- Defining a procedure system that complies with **Art.32 of the UN Convention** and aims at introducing the disability issue in all the initiatives undertaken by the Italian Cooperation, including projects not directly focused on this issue. Furthermore, it should be evaluated the effective application of any project, as well as the effect it exerts on final beneficiaries (i.e., it will be useful to introduce the “disability” marker in the proposal for financing).
- Identifying specific indicators to measure the impact of the projects for persons with disability. Those indicators can be used in assessing project proposals funded by the Italian Cooperation.
- Promoting every useful link between this document and the revision of other Guidelines as approved by GDDC, in compliance with Art.6 and Art.7 of the UN Convention (i.e., gender issues or the rights of minors).
- Realizing an action plan of GDDC to regulate the implementation of its Guidelines.





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Italian Development Cooperation Disability Action Plan

Italy was among the first signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. It was also the first country to issue Guidelines on disabilities in accordance with the Convention, as well as a Disability Action Plan in line with international reference standards. The preparation of this document is an example of good practice. It is the outcome of a fruitful process of cooperation across the various offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, especially its Central Technical Unit and Offices VI and VII. This process led to produce a document that reflects, among others, and enhances the value of Italian civil society's experience. Further insights were gained from the numerous meetings, which were held with representatives from central - and local - government institutions, civil society, decentralised cooperation, academia, research centres and companies. Therefore, the document is the result of a broad ranging consultation during which it was gradually developed, obtaining wide approval and support. We hope that the dialogue with civil society and institutions will continue for the implementation of the actions described in this document, because we believe that these mechanisms of consultation can increase the effectiveness of Italian Cooperation efforts.

In the world, 90% of persons with disabilities have no access to services, over 85% are unemployed and less than 4% of minors with disabilities have access to formal education. These persons are nearly always excluded from the advantages of development. Disability is therefore both the cause and the effect of poverty since persons with disabilities are subject to discrimination and have no access to equal opportunities. This situation limits their participation in society and entails continuous violations of their human rights. The negative attitudes of society towards persons with disabilities produce a very strong social stigma, which is reflected in all the spheres of economic, cultural, political and social life. In case of wars, natural and man-made disasters, persons with disabilities are the first to suffer the direct consequences of emergency situations, often resulting into death and neglect.

Since Italy's signature of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and ratification in 2009, the Central Technical Unit of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), has been mapping and analysing the funded projects, with a view to mainstreaming disability in the Italian development agenda. The CRPD, ratified by 132 countries and, in January 2011, by the European Union, has become a new international standard. It protects the rights of all persons with disabilities "who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments" and thus marks a turning point in international cooperation policies as well. Indeed, the CRPD introduces new principles into development cooperation (art. 32) and emergency response (art. 11) activities. The European Disability Strategy includes the theme of the external action of the European Union (being the world's biggest development aid donor), requiring that appropriate attention be paid to persons with disabilities in bilateral





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agendas, as well as in development and emergency programmes. The Italian Forum of International Cooperation (Milan, October 2012) relaunched the role of international cooperation in Italy. The Forum saw a strong participatory process, which gave useful inputs, brought forward new themes for reflection and development, and emphasised the need for pursuing national policies of inclusion of persons with disabilities, to be promoted as part of international cooperation activities. In November 2010, the DGCS approved the document “Guidelines for the introduction of the disability issue within the policies and activities of the Italian Cooperation”, drafted based on international standards. The document is the result of an inclusive process of consultation with Italian institutions (including regions, autonomous provinces and local authorities), decentralised cooperation actors, civil society and DPOs. It provides for the drawing-up of an Action Plan aimed at implementing the above-mentioned Guidelines. After a year’s work and several meetings extended to other major stakeholders, the Panel produced this Action Plan, which is divided into the thematic areas arising from the debates. The document relied on a participatory process, involving various stakeholders in its first drafting stage and 50 entities (institutions, associations, local authorities, universities, research centres and companies) in the 4 working groups, which put forward valuable suggestions and proposals.

The Five Pillars of the Italian Development Cooperation Disability Action Plan

The Action Plan rests on five pillars, each of which includes actions in terms of:

- Policies and strategies. National disability policy planning and monitoring tools
- Inclusive project planning & design
- Accessible and usable environments, goods and services
- Humanitarian aid and emergency situations including persons with disabilities
- Leveraging the experience and skills acquired by civil society and companies in disability

Within 3 months of the submission of the Action Plan to the Steering Committee of DGCS, the Panel (set up in 2011) and the MFA members of the Working Groups will develop, among others, the timeline for implementing the above activities, in contact with the MFA offices concerned. In the implementation stage, resort will also be made to external experts in the various sectors.

Considering available resources, the actions to be initiated in the first year of implementation will concern, among others, education, training & awareness, mapping and data collection. All the activities envisaged in the Action Plan will be implemented by activating synergies with other sector-specific Italian Cooperation Guidelines (gender, minors, poverty, health and decentralised cooperation).





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2. Problems or Compliance Between Italian Governments and Authorities at Disability Field

For years, Istat in Italy has produced numerous data on people with disabilities, documenting their living conditions and the differences that exist with the rest of the population. The data currently produced describe the areas of life and aspects relating to the main dimensions of the social inclusion. Istat, conforming to the directives issued by the European statistics system, uses a single question in population surveys that identifies people who report having limitations, due to health problems, in carrying out usual and ordinary activities.

The lack of individual autonomy and the inability to make their own choices are certainly among the most serious aspects that people with disabilities can experience during their life. The health condition is one of the main risk factors, but equally important are the level of education, employment, availability of income, participation to social, cultural and sporting life.

In Italy, people with disabilities are about 3 million and 100 thousand (5.2% of the population), almost 1.5 million over seventy-five and 990,000 of them are women. The "geography of disability" sees the Islands in first place, with an incidence of 6.3%, against 4.8% in the North. The regions in which the phenomenon is most widespread are Umbria and Sardinia. Veneto, Lombardy and Valle d'Aosta are, on the other hand, the Regions with the lowest prevalence: 4.4%.

Given the particularly elderly structure of the population with disabilities, a critical point is represented by the fact that over a quarter of people live alone. In fact, the latter are particularly vulnerable, as they risk living alone for many years, without family support; this risk is quite widespread, because many people with disabilities survive all family members, even before reaching the age of 65.

Article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes the right to enjoy the best possible state of health, without discrimination based on disability. The importance of health goes beyond the material aspect, since the WHO defines it as a "*state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not simply the absence of disease*". In other words, to use a terminology borrowed from the ICF, health is considered a means and a resource that enables people to lead a satisfying life in all respects, including that of their social fulfillment. The state of health of people with severe limitations is significantly worse than that of the rest of the population; in particular, they suffer more frequently from one or more chronic pathologies. The share of people who report being in poor health is equal to 61%; against 0.6%, in the rest of the population. Considering the elderly population alone, the differences are even more marked: 68.7% against 1.6%. Women with serious limitations reveal worse health conditions, in fact 56.4% of those under the age of 64 suffering from at least three serious chronic diseases, against 47.4% of male peers. Gender differences lessen among the elderly: 83.4% among women and 80.4% among men.





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The importance that the environmental context has in transforming a health deficit into disability is evident in the case of the reduction or loss of autonomy, which forces us to depend on others also to carry out elementary but essential activities, with profound damage to the sense of individual dignity. The lack of autonomy affects 1 million and 400 thousand elderly people, mostly over 75 (1 million and 200 thousand). These are unable to take care of themselves, that is, to perform activities such as bathing or showering alone, lying down and getting out of bed or sitting and getting up from a chair, dressing and undressing, using the toilet and eating. Almost 7% of the over 65-year-olds have serious difficulties in three or more of the activities mentioned; this share rises to 12% among the over seventy-five-year-olds. About 4 million elderly people (and almost half of the over 75s) are unable to carry out independently other activities instrumental to daily life. In addition, just under a third of over-65s are unable to carry out the heaviest household tasks independently, 17% are unable to shop alone, about 12% are unable to prepare meals. Older women report more difficulties than men both in personal care activities (14.1% women against 7.3% men) and in domestic activities (37.9% women against 20.4% men). The greater difficulty of women is also confirmed net of age (12.2% women against 7.6% men for care activities and 34.8% women against 21.4% men for domestic activities).

Article 24 of the Convention recognizes the right to education of persons with disabilities as an instrument for the development of their potential, as a guarantee of their human dignity as well as an indispensable means for their individual autonomy and the ability to make choices in conditions of freedom and equal opportunities. The data show that the goal of ensuring conditions of equal opportunity for people with disabilities in education is far from being achieved, despite some significant improvements. In fact, considering the 35-54 age group in which school and university education can be considered completed, among people with disabilities only 44.5% of men and 46.3% of women have at least a school diploma. In the rest of the population the corresponding percentages are: 59.0 and 64.8%.

One of the rights referred to by the UN Convention is that linked to equality in the degree of freedom in choices and in the space of action, from this point of view the differences in the type of high school attended can signal unequal opportunities for choice. The data highlight significant differences between people with disabilities and the rest of the population, in fact, in 2017, 49.8% of pupils with disabilities enrolled in a school with a vocational orientation, against 20.1% of the total of pupils. This means that about half of pupils with disabilities prefer training courses geared to immediate work and effectively renounce extending their training to university.

Unemployment, as various experts, including Amartya Sen in particular, have pointed out, entails a significant loss of freedom and is one of the main causes of social exclusion. This happens not only because the ability to lead an independent and dignified life, fulfilling one's aspirations, depends on income, but also because the absence of work can impoverish human relations and compromise the development and maintenance of social relations. Also in this area of life, there are obvious





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disadvantages, as evidenced by the fact that, in the population aged 15 to 64, only 31.3% of people with disabilities are employed (26.7% among women, 36.3% among men) against 57.8% recorded in the rest of the people.





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3. Financial Support of EU for People with Disabilities in Italy

Among the various funding opportunities for the disabled are the projects of the **European Social Fund**, the body within the **European Commission** that actively deals with human capital by promoting access to employment and the provision of funds and financing against social exclusion. The European Social Fund (ESF) disburses funds to local, regional or national projects and bodies that deal with the social integration of protected categories and in particular of people with disabilities. Funding from the ESF is not directed to private citizens but can be requested by associations and organizations dealing with disabilities. Loans for the disabled are granted by public or private entities in the form of loans or mortgages for the purchase of goods or services and are aimed at all those people who have a form of certified handicap. Usually, the conditions of loans for people with disabilities are different from those of common loans or mortgages, but it is not always easy to obtain them.

The family is, in Italy in particular, a fundamental institution for the life of people with disabilities, as it often plays an important role in countering the risk of social exclusion. In Italy there are about 2 million and 300 thousand families in which at least one person with disabilities lives, 32.4% of them receive support from informal networks to assist these people; this is almost double the percentage of total households (16.8%). In general, nearly half of these families receive three or more types of aid per month, while half of all families receive only one type of aid.

Often the informal aid network is not sufficient for families, who are forced to request paid services, as evidenced by the fact that almost a quarter of families with disabled buy them on the market. In addition, families with disabilities bear costs for the purchase of medicines (this is what 91% of them declared) and for medical care (79.2%). The incidence of these expenses on family budgets is considered very heavy by about half of the families and the burden grows considerably if we also consider the expenses for home care with specialized personnel. To this economic burden is added the reduced availability of income found in these families: their average equivalent annual income is € 17,476, 7.8% lower than the national one. The lower average level of income and the burden of incompressible expenses determine a high risk of material deprivation of families with disabled people. The indicators produced by Istat show that 28.7% of families are in conditions of material deprivation (the national average is 18%). The most relevant signs of deprivation are these: 67% of families in which at least one person with disabilities lives cannot afford one week of vacation a year away from home, 53.7% are unable to face an unexpected expense of 800 euros, more than one fifth cannot heat the house sufficiently or eat an adequate meal at least once every two days.

Social inclusion is also expressed through participation in numerous activities. The indicators developed on these aspects show that only 9.3% of people with disabilities frequently go to the cinema, the theater, a concert or visit a museum during the year. In the rest of the population the figure is 30.8%. Only 37.5% of Italian





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museums, both public and private, are equipped to receive people with severe limitations; just 20.4% of them offer material and information supports (tactile paths, catalogs and explanatory panels in Braille, etc.) which may be essential to make the visit a useful and quality experience. Only 9.1% of people with disabilities do sports regularly, compared to 36.6% of the rest of the population. In general, almost 80% of people with disabilities are completely inactive and one million of them attribute this choice to a health problem.

The social protection system in Italy intervenes with economic transfers, services and structures to assist people with disabilities and reduce the risk of marginalization. The Regions, through their regional health services, offer social and health assistance to people with disabilities, providing outpatient and home services or hospitalizations in residential and semi-residential structures. The overall expenditure incurred for this type of assistance for people with disabilities is approximately 987 euros per capita; approximately 78% of the expenditure is allocated to outpatient and home care, the remainder is committed to residential and semi-residential facilities. The Municipalities provide interventions and services aimed at guaranteeing care and support for social integration. The expenditure for this type of assistance in favor of people with disabilities amounts to approximately one billion and 797 million euros, equal to 2,852 per year per capita.

The largest share of social protection expenditure committed to people with disabilities is represented by monetary transfers of a welfare and social security nature. In 2017, total monetary transfers in favor of people with disabilities amounted to approximately 37 billion euros, of which 23 billion are of a welfare nature and 14 billion of a social security nature.

In conclusion, Italy has shown a particular sensitivity in designing processes and paths aimed at promoting the full social inclusion of people with disabilities. This far-sightedness is evidenced by the legislative production of the last 30 years which places us at the forefront also in relation to other countries. Despite this, in the areas of life briefly analyzed there are still significant disadvantages of people with disabilities compared to the rest of the population. This allows us to believe that the instruments put in place have not obtained the expected results but have only attenuated the differences or prevented them from amplifying. Even the families of these people find themselves in great difficulty, as they experience situations that strongly affect their ability to produce income and lifestyles. Despite this, the family has always played a fundamental role, but in perspective, the rarefaction of family networks and the progressive aging of the population risk undermining the sustainability of our country's welfare model based on their significant contribution.





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4. Italian Network on Disability and Development

AIFO, DPI Italy, EducAid and FISH formed the **Italian Network on Disability and Development** – RIDS – which expresses community of interest and the belief in cooperation aimed at implementing initiatives and joint events, at national and international levels, in the field of development cooperation addressed to people with disabilities. RIDS's activities of training, information and consultancy in protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities, fit into the scenarios outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CRPD – fully implementing articles 11 and 32 in the view of fostering a development cooperation system which is attentive to disability from an inclusive standpoint. The awareness that CRPD's real sustainability will only be possible where the voice of people with disabilities and their organizations is strong and competent, therefore able to interact with public and private institutions and civil society, makes it so that **empowerment** is RIDS's guiding principle. The network is made up of important Italian organizations, rooted in the territory and extensively involved in the definition of policies and programs on disability in cooperative activities, including Italian and foreign institutions.

Founded by AIFO, DPI Italia onlus, EducAid and FISH, RIDS stems from the desire to create a synergy of their respective powers and capacities, creating a network based on the exchange of appropriate practices in publications, on the circulation of experiences and expertise on the promotion of tools, methods and projects that support the implementation of the CRPD in all countries of the world.

- **AIFO** – Italian Association of Friends of Raoul Follereau is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the international cooperation and socio-sanitary field. It is a non-profit organization, recognized as eligible for development cooperation activities by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and ECHO. In Italy AIFO leads opinion campaigns and conducts information and development education. AIFO was constituted in Bologna in 1961 and its projects deal mainly with physical, mental and socio-economic rehabilitation and community development, following the approach of the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). All initiatives abroad tend to self-development and sustainability.
- **DPI Italia onlus** is the Italian section of Disabled Peoples International, a worldwide organization present in 135 countries and recognized by major international and European agencies and institutions. DPI works to promote and protect human and civil rights of persons with disabilities. DPI is also a movement of social and cultural nature, whose constitutive principle is based primarily on the direct leadership of persons with disabilities. The Assembly of DPI Italy ONLUS was born October 16, 1994, while Italy was still a provisional member of DPI since 1990. DPI ONLUS Italy adheres to the following organizations: FISH (Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicap), CND (National Council of Disability), DPI (Disabled Peoples 'International) Europe and Disabled Peoples 'International. In addition, through the CND is part of EDF (European Disability Forum).





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- **EducAid** is an NGO working in the field of international cooperation to prevent and reduce, through educational and social work, disadvantages and difficulties of persons with special and cultural needs. Active since 2000 through projects co-financed by the European Union, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Nations Agencies and Local Authorities, Educaid has the primary objective to favour the pedagogical and social innovation and skills development of individuals and institutions who have responsibility for education, care and aid. Among the priorities for action is the promotion of inclusive education with the addition of the promotion of social work methodology designed to address all forms of social exclusion and institutionalization of people with disabilities and children without parental care.
- **FISH** – Federazione Italiana per il Superamento dell’Handicap (Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicap), founded in 1994, is an umbrella organization comprising a few the most representative associations operating at national and local levels, in policies aimed at social inclusion of people with different disabilities. The principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities constitute a suitable manifesto for the Federation and the associative network that recognizes and identifies FISH as their unified voice towards the main institutions of the country. Through collaboration with the Italian Forum on Disability (FID), the body that represents Italy within the European Disability Forum (EDF), it connects the national policies with those at transnational level. E.net Agency is the statutory instrument which the Federation uses to design and manage their projects and initiatives, taking as reference the strategies developed by the FISH Board and acts according to the methods of work for the network and participatory planning. The Agency is made up of local groups, active in various regions, and a national coordination.





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5. Italian Legislation on Disability

Law 104/92 “Framework Law for assistance, social integration and rights of the handicapped” aims at guaranteeing the respect for human dignity, the rights to freedom and autonomy of persons with disabilities, while promoting their integration in families, schools, work and society; preventing and removing negative conditions that stop the human development, the highest possible level of autonomy and participation in social life, as well as the enjoyment of civil, political and patrimonial rights; achieving a functional and social rehabilitation of people with physical and sensory impairment, while ensuring adequate services and prevention, care and rehabilitation measures, as well as a legal and economic protection; preparing adequate initiatives to overcome marginalization and social exclusion.

Law 68/1999 provides for the assessment of the work skills of persons with disabilities to put them in appropriate working places through support services and measures of targeted employment, which have been strengthened in 2015 (Legislative Decree 151/2015).

Companies of 15–35 employees must hire one individual, 36–50 must hire two, and 50 or more have a quota of 7%), while conversely employers may receive incentives for employing people with disabilities, such as tax subsidies, wage contributions, and reimbursement for workplace adaptations. Penalties exist for failing to meet quotas.

The Italian federal law Law 9, January 2004, n. 4 “Provisions to support the access to information technologies for the disabled” addresses accessibility considerations in Italy. The act is commonly referred to as the “Stanca Act.” The Stanca Act applies to public sector organizations, regional municipal companies, public assistance and rehabilitation agencies and ICT services contractors working with public agencies. The provisions of the law do not apply to private sector organizations, except those in the transport or telecom sector that have partial government ownership. At the national level, the implementation of the law is monitored by the Department for Innovation and Technology; at the regional, provincial and municipality levels, each organization is responsible for overseeing their own implementation of the Act.

The European Parliament and the Council came to a provisional agreement on the Commission’s proposal for a [European Accessibility Act](#) on 8 November 2018.

But the biggest obstacle for the country’s physically challenged may be the fabled Italian family. Because of the social stigma that still attaches to disabilities, “they tend to keep disabled people at home” and out of public view. Public transportation and infrastructure are inadequate. For years, Italy ranked just above Greece and Portugal in terms of worst European accessibility.





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6. Perception of Italian People with Disabilities About EU Support inclusive in favour

Disabled people in Italy are still paying the historical consequences of poor policies. These policies led to their segregation in institutions for the disabled, or at home with their families, which inevitably results in isolation from the outside world. Often there is institutionalisation of disabled people. In those cases, the disabled person is “dumped” to an institution for persons with disabilities, without his consent. Unfortunately, segregation and isolation lead to the creation of an easily visible wall. This wall is very difficult to break down and is sustained by prejudice and ignorance, conscious or not, of civil society. This attitude may lead to an environment which is physically not available to disabled people, thus creating additional barriers. Barriers may also lead to a lack of educational integration of pupils with disabilities, for example where children do not receive services to which they are entitled. They do not receive individual support, even though, on paper, they are entitled to a total of hours of individual support. In fact, they receive far fewer hours than their entitlement.

Through an examination of the theme of disability, the backwardness of Italy can be seen, and of many other European countries such as Greece and Spain. In Italy the State assigns the economic benefits. These benefits are made based on the degree of invalidity.

Often, given the small number of benefits, the disabled person cannot be independent as they are forced to be financially dependent on the family. As the State does not wish to implement the practical measures in order to enhance the skills of the disabled, which can help the disabled person to find employment, this is the price which is paid.

Today in Italy people with disabilities, through appropriate medium, may play sports, work, study, and have their own family. Appropriate measures of support and backing, which allow people with disabilities can have a normal life, are repressed due to lack of economic resources. Italy does not realise that fees for disabled persons (costing about EUR 3000 a month, in the case of the 24-hour assistance). Unfortunately, the practice of Italy is to institutionalise people with disabilities since there is no real political will to change the approach on disability. Italy in fact remained still backwards in approach until the end of the 90s. This approach defined disabled as "sick, a person in need of care" and offered social protection to separate them from the Community. Due to stereotypes which still exist, Italy does not in fact succeed in adopting an approach that is not based on disability but considering the environmental barriers that people with disabilities face in everyday life. Disabled people should be recognised as citizens, living in civil society, with different requirements, through appropriate measures guaranteeing them the right to effective and full participation in civil society. Statistical data from Eurostat shows that Italy spends very limited public funds for the benefit of persons with disabilities (EUR 430 per capita), which places it in the lower part the European average (538 place). According to an Istat survey Italy is home to over 3 million people with severe disabilities, of these only 1 million and 100





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thousand benefit the allowance for accompanying. Live 960.000 men and 1.864.000 women with disabilities. Unfortunately, more than 200,000 adults are segregated in institutions for disabled persons. As a result, they are prevented from deciding where, how and with whom they live, as required by the **UNCRPD**.

Municipalities spend less than 3000 euros a year for disabled, i.e., 8 euro per day for disabled. 70% of families with a disabled Member has no support in the form of home care, 7 disabled out of 100 enjoy support in their homes. This results in conditions where households are left to manage alone, since they are totally abandoned by the institutions, which should give them assistance. As a result, persons in the households are often forced to relinquish their life in order to dedicate themselves to the care of the disabled family member, without any recognition. An area of exclusion which is stronger, and more alarming is employment. Only 1 in 5 disabled persons work. This comes with many associated consequences, including the lack of personal fulfilment, loss of earnings and the inevitable depletion of that person. From this it follows that it is no coincidence that disability is the main cause of poverty, as it leads to a constant and forced economic dependence of the disabled on their family. Employment levels for people with disabilities in Italy is at 21%. It should also be borne in mind that amongst disabled persons 27% are totally incapable of work. Disabled women suffer from double discrimination. The employment rate for women is only 11% compared to 29 % for men. Skills and professional qualifications held by the disabled are neglected. This is even disregarding the bureaucratic, long and exhausting process to which the disabled person must submit before applying to the lists of targeted placement. Probably people understand that that the system does not work in this context will be published guidelines for the targeted placement, still undergoing parliamentary debate. Much hope is placed by the associations for the disabled on these new guidelines on "targeted placement", which should mark a turning point for the actors involved, thereby abandoning dated standards and policies. The targeted placement system does not work, as employers simply take on disabled people out of charities, or because the law requires them to do so. Employers should take the disabled because they have the professional qualifications required by the work that the person should perform, for the benefit of the company.

It would also be necessary to create a system in which people with disabilities can be involved, for example, using the instrument of "private placement". This is a practical way which enables disabled people to feel part of civil society. In this way, the disabled person is in a position of equality and equal opportunities, with respect to other potential workers. It may dispel prejudices, including by the potential employer. Every disability has its own requirements, its limitations and involves different and diverse need. The posts to be filled are of course different and should take account of the degree of disability and the skills and professional qualifications of the disabled. To achieve proper reform cooperation of disabled people is needed, and they should be helped by representative associations to believe in their expertise, through the aid of professional staff selection. Using these instruments, disabled persons are enabled to





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improve and to train for one or more future selections of actual work. Such actions may be a key for the life of disabled people, and a constructive management of public expenditure. It is pointless to submit professionals which are no longer useful to the European labour market. It produces further unemployment. Innovative training which is especially useful in the labour market, and vocational training, which should result in a real working opportunity.

There are people with disabilities that, due to the poor management of public money, do not receive any form of support and are forced to choose to live with their family, even if they would prefer to make the choice of independent living. 42% of persons with disabilities consider the emoluments they receive to be insufficient, which does not allow them to satisfy their essential needs relating to everyday life. The need for autonomy of people with disabilities is hampered by barriers inflicted by the management choices of the various Italian institutions.





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7. Conclusions

Each Member State has its own issues, its weaknesses and strengths, concerning policies on disability. Each State should aim to address the issue of disability, not only as a matter of creating dependency, leading to exclusion of disabled people from society. At the same time, they should ratify the European legislative acts, such as the UNCRPD. Many Member States, including Italy, are insisting to adopt some approaches on disability which cannot go together because they are manifestly incompatible with each other. Member States should address the issue of disability, as a crucial issue concerning the principals of equality and equal opportunities, on an equal basis with others from civil society. It is, of course, also essential that there is in fact homogenisation of disability policies, in all Member States, thereby creating a genuine synergy. Things cannot work if one State is behind at the political level in relation to another. It is not enough to ratify the core European standards; they must be enforced in practice. Member States should also use the reinforcements in practice given from European laws on disability (the CRPD, the European Disability Strategy, the European Accessibility Act and the proposal for Directive 78/2000/EC).

Of course, a real step for change from all Member States, legal, practical, political and social, should not be overlooked. It should not be forgotten that disabled people also have to work with Member States to create a synergy between them and the Member States. Persons with disabilities also have the responsibility to deal with this precarious situation. If they do not aim to improve their skills on autonomy the situation will not improve. For a genuine change of the situation, we need a real empowerment of persons with disabilities, supported by representative associations. Another key ingredient is collaboration from families, which have the task of supporting people with disabilities during their process of emancipation. It is necessary a genuine cooperation of all stakeholders on these topics in different capacities, such as the institutions at all levels, people with disabilities, associations, Member States, and families.

It would therefore be necessary the correct application of European and national legislation by all States of the EU and the use of European Social Funds (ESF) to help the disabled to be autonomous. Member States and associations must support and educate families who believe that disability is an obstacle. The goal is to achieve a real inclusive policy of disabled people in civil society with the real purpose of the effective participation of disabled people. Member States may spend the European Social Funds (ESF) with a view to proposing services which can support the disabled person in its autonomy.

Member States could create services to facilitate the direct employment of disabled persons. Cooperation with targeted placements would help the disabled to discover their skills. This new system can help the disabled to get involved, in the same way as other citizens who look for employment. This could be a constructive way to spend in Italy the European Social Funds (ESF).





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In the future there may be a real and progressive improvement of the situation of persons with disabilities in Italy and Europe. However, all interested parties should act, while playing their essential contribution.





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