

Speech by Graziamaria Pistorino FLC CGIL - Italy at EI meeting - Global Disability Summit 2025 - Berlin

Inclusion of children with disabilities or difficulties in the Italian school system.

The Italian school system is currently organized around the concept of inclusion. In particular, the inclusion of students with disabilities is something the FLC CGIL is proud of. The state school system welcomes overall, from kindergarten to upper secondary school, about 340 thousand students with disabilities, who represent about 4% of the entire school population.

The path of inclusion in Italy has ancient roots, **in 1977 an important law** abolished special classes and placed students with disabilities into ordinary classes. These children were attended to by a support teacher who worked with them together with the other colleagues.

Subsequently, the term "placement" was replaced with "integration"; this meant that the general teacher would teach to all students with the help of the support teacher. During this time there was a more general renewal of teaching professionalism. Even ministerial programs changed, from a rigid top down tool they became flexible indications in the hands of teachers and Schools teams in order to cater for all needs and teach "each and every one". In 1992, the **law known as Law 104 of offered a framework law** for assistance, social integration and protection of the rights of people with disabilities. This law represents a regulatory pillar still today, and not only in schools but also in welfare services to families and communities.

Another very important measure is Law 68 of 1999 aimed at promoting the inclusion and integration of disabled people in the world of work.

A further point of progress is represented by the emergence of **the concept of "inclusion"**. **While with the term integration the child with disabilities is considered different from the rest of the group, the term inclusion ceases to see the class group as homogeneous. The inclusive class is designed to include students of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs, creating a heterogeneous learning environment where** to explore the potential of learning for the entire group.

What is used today to support heterogeneous classes is the bio-psycho-social approach to special needs which draws from International Classification of Functioning, drawn up in 2001 by the WHO, a model of reference for all social, educational, health policies.

These revolutionary cultural passages have not always been matched by an adequate investment and the Italian way of inclusion in schools and society is now full of hurdles as a result of insufficient financial resources. The most difficult problems are: widespread precariousness of support teachers, limited university specialization courses, undersized auxiliary staff, inadequate buildings and infrastructures.

The FLC CGIL places investments among the priorities of its claim platforms **necessary not to disperse the heritage that for over 40 years** has allowed schools to be a model of inclusion all over the world.

It is necessary to stabilize the teaching workforce, to invest in the training and recruitment of specialized staff, to plan for school building and safety projects centered on inclusion.

We reiterate that school inclusion represents a conquest of civilization and it calls into question the responsibilities and choices of politics. In this delicate phase, recalling the EI campaign *Go Public! Fund Education!*, the FLC CGIL asks for a concrete effort to fully realize, within the more general re-qualification of the school system, inclusion processes to ensure that all students have effectively equal educational opportunities, necessary for life.