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We Train with Equity Project



*Report of the state of the art of inclusive education system in Italy, current challenges and analysis of innovative teaching methods to improve the quality of inclusivity within Italian and European schools.*

*Intellectual Output 1*



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## Abstract

The following report represents the first intellectual output produced by all the partners of the 'We Train with Equity' project. The scope is to investigate the wider historical scenario regarding social inclusion in the Italian, Polish and Romanian educational environment, in order to understand strengths and weaknesses of traditional teaching and learning methods and possible new ways and resources that could improve the quality of education through social inclusion. Moreover, socio-cultural factors causing social exclusion of society minorities like immigrants, people with disability, and LGBT will be analyzed and discussed to advocate concrete policies and measures within the EU aimed at mitigating the discrimination phenomenon. The research will mainly focus on some best practices of alternative teaching methods applied within Italian schools, and a laboratory proposal addressed to pupils of secondary schools that aims, through the creation of 'Parish Maps' to promote cooperation between peers and teachers, the sense of belonging to a community and values like solidarity, tolerance, understanding, social inclusion and mutual help.

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## 1. Social Inclusion: An Overview.

### 1.1 Shifting paradigm of 'diversity'. Development of a legal framework for social inclusion at a European level.

During the 1980s, interest in social exclusion spread throughout Europe; it was being increasingly adopted in official policy frameworks as exemplified by the establishment of the European Community Programme to Foster Economic and Social Integration of the Least Privileged Groups. This was followed in the early 1990s by the **European Observatory on Policies to Combat Social Exclusion**, established to study the measures which the Member States are taking to combat social exclusion: in particular, in terms of guaranteeing aid and resources to people in socially disadvantaged conditions, subjected to ethnic, economic or disability prejudice and cultural bias. The Observatory is also producing a set of reports concerned with social services in the various Community countries and their significance for action to combat social exclusion<sup>1</sup>. Within the European Union (EU), addressing social exclusion became a mainstream policy framework. In 2005, after the draft of a Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and the provision of the **Social Agenda** as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council identified priority actions aimed at combating the deep cause se of poverty and exclusion:

- increase labour market participation;
- modernise social protection systems;
- tackle disadvantages in education and training;
- eliminate child poverty and enhance assistance to families;
- ensure decent housing and tackle homelessness;
- improve access to quality services;

<sup>1</sup> Observatory on national policies to combat social exclusion: ITALY, C. Saraceno, Department of Social Sciences, University of Turin. 1992.

- overcome discrimination and increase the integration of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and immigrants (first and second generation).

It was designed to be a close partnership between the European Commission and member states, with a clear division of responsibilities and a strong emphasis on maximising the synergies between the Community and national levels, and between different economic policy areas through The National Reform Programmes.<sup>2</sup>

In 2010 The European Commission launched the **The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion**<sup>3</sup> to place the fight against poverty at the heart of its economic, employment and social agenda – **the Europe 2020 strategy**. With law 2010/0758 heads of State and Governments agreed a major breakthrough: a common target that the European Union should lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion in the next decade. Complementary national targets for all Member States will follow. The law provided therefore a broad overview of major social exclusion causes and specific disadvantages:

- **Financial exclusion** and loss of employment that lead to persistent marginalisation and poverty.
- **Exclusion of ethnic minorities and migrants**, who experience lack of access to social services and security safety nets.
- **People with disabilities or who suffer from severe chronic illness** are frequently confronted with major economic and social difficulties, which often involve the whole household on which they depend: some 6.5 million of the people at-risk-of poverty or exclusion declare some form of disability.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 2644th Council meeting, Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 3 March 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion, European Commission, Brussels, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2010) 758, The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion, Brussels, 2010.

At the international level, the term 'inclusion' appears in Unesco's official documents in 1994, following the **Salamanca Declaration** on education principles, policies and practices and special educational needs according to which education must be accessible for all.

The inclusive logic has as its objective the creation of a "new culture" capable of enhancing the peculiarities and differences, and encouraging each person to express his/her own special "talents", without being afraid of being victim of forms of discrimination.

United Nations launched **The Action Plan Education 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>5</sup>. With **Goal 4 - "Quality in Education"**<sup>6</sup> it calls for "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". The principle of educational equality states, first, that children have a right to access to, and to complete, a quality education regardless of their level of ability or social background (status, gender, race...); secondly, that school populations should be heterogeneous with respect to race, class background and ability levels. The OECD gave its contribution to the issue stating that inclusive education is recommended as it is globally recognized as an economic development pillar and an effective channel to promote the respect of human rights and improve social cohesion and trust among all individuals, thus encouraging integration of cultural and social minorities <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, SDG's, <https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

<sup>6</sup> SDG 4, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4>

<sup>7</sup> OECD, No more failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education, 2007, <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/39676364.pdf>



## 1.2 Index for Inclusion and the Universal Design of Learning: building capacity to create inclusive environments

In 2000 the Center for Studies on Inclusive Education of T. Booth and M. Ainscow distributed the Index for free throughout England, which represents the theoretical-practical proposal of ideas, strategies, materials designed to accompany schools in self-assessment process of the effectiveness of learning contexts (classes, play spaces, staff offices, etc ...) and on their progress towards inclusion. The index for inclusion is therefore a tool designed to be able to offer a wide range of indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, relating to the construction and evaluation of inclusive school and social life areas with a view to improving the effectiveness of the school. The indicators contained in the Index are represented by questions that develop around three interconnected dimensions:

- **inclusive culture** (the values and the relational climate of the school),
- **inclusive policies** (organizational aspects related to school accessibility)
- **inclusive practices** (teaching, learning, resources, curricula).

The structured collection of indicators relating to inclusion envisaged by the Index makes it a flexible tool in adapting and / or modifying them according to the different types of schools and their educational-didactic design carried out in a self-assessment perspective. The primary objective is to allow the unlimited growth of the levels of participation, learning, communication and belonging to all thanks to the competent accompaniment of the protagonists of school life, including families, in order to promote perspectives and contexts of development of inclusive school and social values respectful of diversity (considered as a resource and no longer as a problem to be solved). Concepts of accessibility to places, relationships and communications, sustainability, citizenship and

belonging rights, outlining a horizon, are very important as they can guarantee the best possible education. Regarding the approach to the social model of disability, the Index proposes the use of the concept of "obstacles to learning and participation" as elements strictly related to the understanding and enhancement of "special educational needs", in order to focus attention on communication dynamics, socialization related to inclusive paths between pupil and community context, rather than on individual functioning.

The idea of a world and a school without barriers and obstacles capable of creating facilitating contexts where competences, organization, flexibility, collegiality, common work capacity exist is a source of inspiration for the change in education systems, supported by a revolution in the new communication technologies and innovative educational design, which over time becomes increasingly centered on the person, rather than on the categorization of people according to the logic of one size fits all. Therefore, more attention is given to the needs, even the unexpressed ones and the expectations of each individual, resulting in a valid approach and inclusive tool to design individualized and personalized interventions and spaces for all pupils, without any potentially discriminating distinction in the learning processes, teaching and socialization-communication. From this original perspective the idea of **Universal Design for Learning**<sup>8</sup> was born, with the idea of creating physical environments and tools in the school system to improve the experiences of each and every pupil.<sup>9</sup>

In Italy, this model found its theoretical expression with the introduction of the concept of "Special Educational Need" in the national legislative framework, and on the practical level of the **Personalized Educational Plan** in schools, which will

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<sup>8</sup> The term "universal design" means a concept or philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities, which include products and services that are directly usable (without requiring assistive technologies) and products and services that are made usable with assistive technologies. (U.S.C. § 3002)

<sup>9</sup> Universal Design for Learning, D.L.Edyburn,2001.



be discussed in the next paragraph. Special Educational Need is identified as a macrocategory which includes all the possible educational-learning difficulties of the pupils and in particular, "any evolutionary difficulty, in the educational and learning environment, expressed in a problematic functioning also for the subject, in terms of damage, obstacle or social stigma, regardless of etiology, and which requires special individualized education plans ».



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## 1.3 Social inclusion system in Italy

### 1.3.1 Legal steps towards a more inclusive education

It is important to underline that on an international level, the first legal steps implemented in perspective of a full inclusion in schools by the majority of countries are quite recent and officially entered into force from the moment in which many countries ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)<sup>10</sup> to end segregation of disabled students from mainstream settings. However, Italy had already made such a choice several years before with **law 571/77**, through which differential classes for disadvantaged pupils had been definitely abolished and all pupils with disability were for the first time allowed to enter primary and lower secondary schools. Furthermore, tools necessary to fulfil this obligation had been identified:

- specialized support teachers
- numbers of pupils per class not exceeding twenty
- specialist interventions by the State and Local Authorities.

In Italy, the national educational provision is laid down by the The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), which is charged with the assessment of general and specific educational goals, standards related to the quality of educational services and general criteria for pupil assessment and the organisation of adult education. Italian schools have a high degree of autonomy, made explicit by the **Regulations on School Autonomy** (Presidential Decree no. 275/99) which establishes guidelines for planning the school's main goals to be defined in the the educational offer and internal organization (school time and groups of pupils). Each year, schools develop a **Plan of Formative Offer (POF)**,

<sup>10</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

which is the most important programmatic and informative document of an institution constructed around Ministerial curriculum requirements. The POF is developed by teachers and parent representatives and includes overall learning objectives for course offerings, and must define all the actions aimed at promoting school and social inclusion of all pupils, indicating the **teaching practices that actually promote inclusion**. The class councils will therefore coordinate didactic activities and prepare materials based on needs and requirements of students, to fully participate in the conduct of school life. School inclusivity is placed in a framework that starts from the assumption that the potential of each student must find the answers to allow everyone to express their best, in the didactic proposals, in the planning of the school and in the construction of the learning environments.

The most important Italian legislative act came with **law 104/1992**, which represented and still represents the focal point of inclusion of all students: it guarantees people with disabilities and their families the **ownership of specific rights**;

- states the full integration and the adoption of prevention measures and functional recovery;
- provides assistance;
- ensures social, economic and legal protection.

The law guarantees **pupils with special needs a tailored educational plan (regularly reviewed)**, which is defined by health service operators, specialized teachers, and a psycho-pedagogical expert, in collaboration with the parents.

A further step forward was the promulgation of law **53/2003** which introduced the drafting of **Personalized Didactic Plans (PDP - "Piano Didattico Personalizzato")**, to supplement the **Individualized Didactic / Educational Plans (PEI "Piano Educativo Individuale")**. Law 170/2010, which stated that pupils with learning impairments don't need special teachers, but a new way of teaching,

after the identification of their way of learning and specific interventions that could help them to express their intellectual potential. The main purpose of the law was to **shift the focus from a clinic to a pedagogic view**, by empowering all subjects involved in the educational process. Students started to be identified as having disabilities, including Specific Learning Disabilities ( In italian *BES - Bisogni Educativi Speciali* ), not by the school, but by offices of local health services, and the identification is codified on the basis of medical systems of classification, namely the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) and International Classification of Functioning. At this point a paradigm shift on ‘special needs’ within schools occurred: with the new point of view, **disability wasn’t seen anymore as ‘lack of ability’, imperfection or abnormality, but a condition that implies a diverse way of learning, being, feeling, and a different cognitive, emotional and relational knowledge that has to be recognized, empowered and promoted.**

The concept of **Special Needs**, in Italy, goes beyond the “needs” of those subjects with specific and certified disabilities, as it includes all those pupils who at have difficulties at school recognized as barriers to a normal learning process. An inclusive didactic and educational action is based on the personalization of the interventions that promote the uniqueness of each student, therefore it is necessary that the activation of an individualized and personalized path for a pupil with SEN is deliberated in the class council - that is, in primary schools, by all members of the teaching team. All teachers in charge in public schools become **inclusive teachers**, attentive to the individual differences of the students, in order to develop pedagogical approaches and didactic methods that take into consideration the different potential of each student. Moreover, with the establishment of the so called **Support Territorial Centers (CTSS)** among the national territory within selected schools with the purpose of disseminating the best practices of ICT (*Information and Communications Technology*) for inclusion, supply schools with technological devices and fulfill the growing

demand for IT skills, teachers, school managers and students were finally provided with a focal point to turn to, in order to be updated about new technologies and teaching tools with potential positive benefits on learning process. Moreover, like tutors or supervisors, and through a peer to peer approach, teachers working in CTSs support concretely colleagues working in other schools in managing special needs in their classrooms.

Recently, **law 107/2015** introduced ‘*The Good School*’ reform (**La Buona Scuola**) to affirm the central role of the school in the knowledge society and to guarantee the lifelong right to study, followed by the **Legislative Decree 65/2017** which strengthened the concepts of **equal access to quality education** for every single pupil and fosters their learning achievements. With regards to **Inclusion for learners with disabilities**, the decree introduces important innovations through the redefinition of ‘support teachers’ initial training, the provision of indicators for self-evaluation and the assessment of school inclusion and of compulsory initial and in-service training for school leaders and teachers on pedagogy, didactics and organisation for inclusive education; It also aims to ensure **more welcoming schools** for learners with disabilities by strengthening the role of families and associations in inclusion processes and involving all school staff, particularly through in-service training.

Despite the promises of full inclusion, inclusion at any level provides challenges. The everyday reality in Italian classrooms is more complex than one may perceive after being acquainted with its national education framework. In some situations we are still at risk of seeing students with disabilities dealing only with the support teacher outside the classroom, causing the so called *push and pull-out* phenomena as students with disabilities in regular schools learn in settings apart from their peers. Such situations raise issues like absence of cooperation between support teachers and general education teachers. The regular teacher, due to a general lack of competence on the special needs teaching and lack of

special materials and resources within classrooms, typically addresses responsibility of special needs groups to the support teacher. According a recent Istat<sup>11</sup> analysis conducted in the 2017-2018 school year about inclusion of students with learning support teachers, statistics showed that the ranking of specialist teachers for support is not sufficient to meet the demand, therefore 36% of teachers for support are selected from the curricular teacher lists. Moreover, only 43% of schools in Italy are provided with computer workstations in the classroom. These issues underlined the need for greater coherence and synergy in quality assurance approaches they're contributing to create diversified forms of micro-exclusion.

### 1.3.2 Analysis of prejudice and discrimination level in Italy

The levels of discrimination perceived or implemented within civil society in Italy are a real problem that in 2015 the World Observatory of Human Rights itself in its annual report had pointed out. In fact, the Italian government has set up the Department for Equal Opportunities since 1996 to deal with eliminating all types of discrimination. The recent political history of these years in our country has in particular turned the spotlight on the news on very specific areas of discrimination such as racial discrimination, that related to one's sexual orientation or finally gender.

An ISTAT investigation has highlighted the most recurring reasons why Italians feel discriminated against. The investigation focused on gender discrimination, sexual orientation and ethnicity. A sample of 5,000 residents in Italy over 18 years of age was taken. The general picture that emerges, according to those who conducted this investigation, is that of a country that too often gives in to

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<sup>11</sup> National Institute of Statistics, [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/01/Alunni-con-sostegno-as-2017\\_18.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/01/Alunni-con-sostegno-as-2017_18.pdf)

stereotypes towards the "different" and which still has worrying attitudes towards sexism. The data of this survey make us think. One in three of the people interviewed said they had been victims of discrimination in their life in at least one of the following areas: at school, meaning the University as a reference area, in looking for work or in the workplace.

This trend spares neither men nor women, both have percentages ranging between 28% for men and 30% for women. The main motivation for being discriminated against is young age, especially in the workplace. But above all, from ISTAT data it is clear that there are clearly more decisive reasons than others for being discriminated against today in Italy. Political ideas and their own autochthonous origins seem in fact to dominate, reporting more than double the discrimination events related to them compared to any other case series. This however concerns the Italian population living in our country. The European Commission, chaired by Laura Boldrini and made up of one Member from each political group, as well as representatives from the Council of Europe, the United Nations, ISTAT and other research centers, was established in May of 2016 and worked for 14 months, reporting the consideration transcribed below. "The report demonstrates the essence of a pyramid of hatred at the base of which stereotypes, false or misleading representations, insults, hostile language" normalized "or trivialized and, at higher levels, discrimination and therefore language and hate crimes". (textual quotation of the text).

A law of 2006 provides for inhibitory and compensatory protection for people with disabilities who are victims of discrimination but has been little applied in judicial and even school affairs. Often the parents of children or young people with disabilities tell, especially in the pages of social networks, episodes concerning their children who undergo micro or macro exclusions in school life, or even more or less serious episodes of real discrimination. These are very heterogeneous events, ranging from school routine to educational outings, from

relationships with peers to those with teachers, with managers and which, of course, deeply disturb the serenity and well-being of their children. It is not uncommon that they also report attitudes of closure or blatant hostility from other parents, especially if the situation of disability experienced by their children is the cause of behaviours that are perceived by them as disturbing action of school activities. Many families try to find out, to understand if their children are actually victims of discriminatory attitudes. For this reason, they acquire more knowledge over time, including regulatory ones, which lead to a greater awareness of the rights of their children, in school and extracurricular life. Many parents, therefore, are now able to reject illegal requests such as not participating in a trip or reducing school time, which inhibit the exercise of the right to full participation in school activities. At the same time, they often resort to administrative courts when the right to an adequate presence of the teacher for support activities is not protected if administrations allocate insufficient resources.

However, there is an important law which, although created precisely for the judicial protection of people with disabilities who are victims of discrimination, has so far found little application, even in the school environment. This is the **Law n. 67/06**, which introduced in Italy a real means of obtaining protection from discrimination against disabled people. It provides that, if discrimination has been ascertained, the judge can order compensation for the damage suffered and the cessation of discrimination (if still ongoing). It can also take appropriate measures to remove the effects of the discrimination against which it is possible to appeal are ascertained. The discriminatory actions against which it is possible to resort are the direct one (less favourable treatment for reasons connected to disability) and the indirect one (in which an apparently neutral fact puts a person with a disability in a disadvantageous position. Furthermore, it is also possible to react against the harassment and against those behaviours put in place for reasons connected to disability, which violate a person's dignity and freedom or

create an atmosphere of intimidation and humiliation towards him. However, this law has so far been little used in Italian courts and the processes celebrated on the basis of Law 67 are very few. It is a useful and effective tool for combating discrimination, but the full potential of which has not yet been exploited. It is therefore important that people with disabilities and their families can get to know it and ask for its application, if they perceive discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that are harmful to their own person or that of their relative, at school, in work and social life, in public relations or in exercising citizenship rights.

### 1.3.3 Discrimination relating to homosexuality

Homophobia, that is, the sentiment of those who experience fear or disgust towards homosexuals or their feelings, is still present in Italian society and culture. In the days when civil unions were approved, let's talk about 2016, the party was stained by the umpteenth episodes of homophobia. In Turin, a gay couple had to move house and neighbourhood, tired of listening to insults, of finding themselves offenses written on the walls and the elevator, of receiving anonymous letters and finally real physical attacks. Across the country, in Bari, Paolo 18 years old, launched himself under a train after writing "Forgive me, I love you" to his boyfriend. The adoptive parents did not accept his homosexuality and quarreled daily. Classmates said that Paolo was being beaten, that parents often "forgot" to set the table for them or to clean his clothes. They would also go so far as to tell him that if they had known before that he was gay, they would not have adopted him. Currently the situation has unfortunately not changed much: we still have news reports that highlight how discrimination and homophobia can lead to actual suicidal acts of the subject or violent third parties to his detriment. Despite the previously reported episodes of violence and homophobia, 2016 was a historic year for the world of gays, lesbians and transsexuals in our country, because precisely that year, after long years of discussions (to think that the first bill dates

back in the late 1980s), Parliament managed to definitively approve a law recognizing rights for same-sex couples.

However, a law is not enough because in any case episodes of homophobia and discrimination are still existing as mentioned and to understand the levels of openness or not in our country we analyze Istat data. These figures photograph a country halfway: on the one hand the Italians are shyly opening up, on the other old taboos or prejudices remain. 61% of our compatriots admit that gays are very or fairly discriminated against and 73% believe it is unfair not to hire or rent a house to a homosexual person. 74% do not consider homosexuality a disease, 73% are not immoral and 74% do not consider gays a threat to the family. For 65% gay love is equal to love between hetero. In addition, 63% of Italians are in favor of civil unions and 43% in favor of marriage, a figure decidedly below the European average.

In the workplace, the role of the teacher both male and female is not well seen for the majority of Italians if performed by a homosexual person while for other professions the percentage of those who are against making gay people carry out a type of profession it is below 20%. We also find that 55% of Italians would like homosexuals to be more discreet and 29% that gays and lesbians would do better to keep their sexuality secret. 40% admit that it would be difficult to accept a gay couple between neighbours and 80% are opposed to adoptions or the idea that homosexuals have children. The result of this conflicting situation is attributable to the fact that gays in Italy, to date, prefer not to expose themselves much: among those who exhibit, 40% say they have suffered at least one episode of discrimination in their life. family seems to be the most hostile environment: only 20% came out with their parents. Higher instead are the numbers of those who confided in brothers / sisters or cousins (44%), colleagues (55%) and friends (77%).

A glimpse of a better situation comes from the younger generations: according to a survey by *La Stampa*, the lower the age the more tolerance increases. If among the elderly only 60% accept homosexuality, among the under 25 the same percentage reaches 90% and the vast majority are in favor of marriage and oppose any discrimination. In a context where Italy is one of the most homophobic country in Western Europe, it is undoubtedly a sign, albeit minimal, of openness.

### 1.3.4 Discrimination relating to gender differences

For the majority of our citizens, we speak of 57.7% of the population, the situation of men in Italy is better than that of women: women think it, 64.6%, more than men, 50.5%. For four out of ten citizens, women suffer from discrimination, that is, they are treated less well than men. Even in this case, women think it more, but the percentage of those who say otherwise is slightly higher. The stereotypes about the most common gender roles are: "for men, more than for women it is very important to be successful at work", "men are less suited to deal with household chores" and "it is the man who has to provide for the economic needs of the family ". The less common stereotype is "that it is up to man to make the most important decisions regarding the family". 58.8% of the population finds themselves in these stereotypes without particular differences between men and women, they are more common with increasing age and in less educated contexts. Very often the concept of gender difference leads to the concept of violence against women, the two things seem to be very correlated, or rather it seems from the percentages that we will describe later that sometimes the justifications for violent attitudes both physically and verbally and psychologically by men towards women, they are to be found in the stereotypes mentioned above. 7.4% of the population believe it is acceptable always or in some circumstances that "a boy slaps his girlfriend because he flirted with

another man", 6.2% believe that in a couple it is normal for a slap to escape every now and then.

Compared to control, more than double the number of people (17.7%) believes that it is always acceptable or in some circumstances that a man routinely controls the cell phone and / or activity on the social networks of his wife / partner. On the reasons that according to the people interviewed are the basis of the violence that men have against women we find that: 77.7% think it is due to the fact that women are considered objects of property; 75.5% blame the use of drugs or alcohol on violent subjects; 75% think it is a man's need to feel superior to a woman. A good percentage of people emerge from this population parameter who in some way do not hold the woman responsible in any way for the violence she suffers from the man but unfortunately, however, a prejudice persists that charges the woman with responsibility for the sexual violence she has suffered. Even 39.3% of the population believes that a woman is able to avoid sexual intercourse if she really wants to, showing in this the underhand thought that during a sexual violence the woman was partially consenting. In this panorama there is also a good percentage, we are talking about 23.9%, who thinks that women can provoke sexual violence through too provocative ways of dressing. The picture that emerges from reading the results on the stereotypes and sexual violence module, including opinions on the acceptability of couple violence and its possible causes, shows five profiles: two represent individuals with the most stereotyped beliefs, two less stereotyped and a group qualifies for indifference to the theme.

### 1.3.5 Discrimination relating to immigrants

The majority of Italians think that immigrants residing in our country are 30%, instead of 8%, and that Muslims are 20% when they are 4%. Moreover, more than



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fifty percent of people interviewed in the report of the parliamentary commission "Jo Cox" (established in 2016) on the phenomena of hatred, intolerance, xenophobia and racism in Italy, believe that "a neighborhood degrades when there are many immigrants "and that" the increase in immigrants favors the spread of terrorism and crime ". An absolutely distorted and exaggerated perception of the immigration phenomenon in Italy. These false representations also emerge in the report, published in August 2019, on the mission conducted in Italy between 28 January and 1 February by the OHCHR (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), to assess the situation on racism in our Country. According to the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right , legislative, legal, institutional and political measures against racial discrimination in Italy are appreciable, but note that some gaps remain. Although various projects and initiatives are underway, the implementation of these measures must be strengthened, through clear actions and the prompt and systematic condemnation of all racist speeches and hate crimes.

### 1.3.6 Socio-cultural factors of discrimination processes towards people with disabilities

Italy has shown a particular sensitivity in designing processes and paths aimed at promoting the full social inclusion of people with disabilities. This foresight is evidenced by the regulatory production of the past 30 years which places us at the forefront also in other countries. However, significant disadvantages of people with disabilities still emerge in life areas compared to the rest of the population. This allows us to believe that the instruments put in place did not obtain the expected results, but only attenuated the differences or prevented them from being amplified. For example, Welfare policies, implemented largely through monetary transfers, have reduced the risk of poverty of families, but have not solved the problem of material deprivation affecting people with

disabilities. The labour inclusion policies have been inspired by the principle of enhancing the skills of individuals, also with the aim of promoting the dignity of the person and the right to economic independence and autonomy, however employment levels are still far below the national average and workers with disabilities are often relegated to secondary jobs.

The network of services and structures reveals strong territorial imbalances, due to the disparity of resources available to local authorities; as a result, people with disabilities and their families suffer discrimination based on where they live. For example, the overall material deprivation indicator highlights the greatest discomfort of families with disabled people: 28.7% of them are in conditions of material deprivation while the national average is 18%. The most relevant signs of deprivation are these: 67% of the families in which at least one person with a disability lives cannot afford a week of vacation a year away from home, 53.7% is unable to face unexpected expenses of 800 euros, more than a fifth cannot heat the home sufficiently or eat an adequate meal at least once every two days. These uncomfortable conditions particularly characterize the regions of the South. Furthermore, the offer of assistance still appears to be too focused on institutionalization rather than on forms of help that allow people with disabilities to continue to live with their families or in housing conditions that allow them to have complete independence. A recent analysis conducted by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) (2017) highlights how Italy is one of the countries where differences in education levels tend to persist across generations, hindering mobility social and consolidating inequalities between individuals. The degree of schooling of the parents is therefore decisive in defining the study path of the children and in promoting their success, a figure that reflects the difficulties of our country to make up for the disadvantages that people have in terms of resources and to guarantee all individuals equal opportunity for success. But if it is true that in Italy young people face numerous difficulties in reaching higher positions than those of their family of origin, what

happens for people with disabilities? Does the context of origin take on the same weight in defining the growth paths of individuals or does it take on a greater weight, thus increasing inequalities in terms of opportunities?

The following analysis analyzes the education levels achieved by individuals in relation to some socio-demographic characteristics of the family of origin distinctly:

- for people with serious limitations;
- with minor limitations;
- without any limitation.

For this purpose, a logistic regression model estimated separately on the three populations was applied.

In the analysis, only individuals between 25 and 45 years of age living with at least one parent were considered: the selection criterion is dictated by the need to gather only the people who have completed their studies and for whom information is available about the family of origin. The model assumes as an dependent variable the educational qualification achieved by each individual (variable classified in the two high and medium / low modes) and as covariant some context variables that take into consideration the territorial, social and family context in which the individual lives:

- type of municipality;
- geographical breakdown;
- parents' educational qualification;
- parental satisfaction with the economic situation
- type of family (cohabitation with a single parent or with both parents);
- gender and age group (25-34, 35-45).

To compare the three collectives, the average marginal effects of the three models were estimated. The results of the analysis highlight a strong relationship between the educational qualifications achieved by the children and the

resources available to the family of origin. In the absence of limitations, the propensity to achieve high educational qualifications increases among female persons under the age of 35, from more educated families who live in a satisfactory economic condition; on the other hand, the territorial context of belonging does not seem to affect education: the type of municipality and the geographical distribution are never significant. Another factor in favor of obtaining high educational qualifications is the coexistence with both parents: living in single-parent families represents an obstacle for children to schooling. Even the interventions aimed at reconciling work and caregiving of a family member with a disability have not achieved significant results, as evidenced, for example, by the careers often below those experienced by the rest of the population, particularly in the case of women. In our country, families continue to play a crucial role, they are a sort of fulcrum around which the institutions have built a network of complementary, social and welfare interventions. Looking ahead, however, the rarefaction of family networks and the progressive aging of the population risk jeopardizing the sustainability of this welfare model<sup>12</sup>.

We can note, therefore, that discrimination occurs already starting from one's family of origin, defined as the first place of discrimination, highlighting a lack of attention and respect for the rights of the person with a disability precisely within the context that , you imagine, it should contain and welcome. Sometimes it is so subtle that it does not allow real awareness of the discrimination itself, other times it is so invasive that it exacerbates personal situations, making them even heavier.

Often what emerges is a profound solitude and the impossibility of living the emotional and sexual sphere as fundamental components of one's existence, so much so that sometimes the resignation of never being able to love another takes over.

Discrimination against disabled people in social life, and in particular in school and work, as can be seen, is still widespread.

The school often represents the first concrete moment of socialization and confrontation with the outside world for the disabled person: the place to experience social inclusion for the first time or, on the contrary, to face discrimination. Despite the fact that school integration is guaranteed in Italy from a legislative point of view, there is no lack of obstacles in everyone's school that prevent full inclusion. In particular, the opportunity for pupils with disabilities to attend classes and have full access to all spaces is limited by the lack of necessary services and aids. Therefore, the school is configured as a positive moment of socialization, sometimes the first, but also as a moment of first reflection on disability.

Talking about job inclusion in the southern regions is really difficult, given the high percentage of unemployment for everyone. Generally, people with disabilities without work are not even considered unemployed, and they themselves have little awareness of their skills as potential workers.

It emerged how difficult it is to be included in one's community, to participate in social life, not to be stigmatized for disability, to be recognized as people. Objectives, these, still far from being achieved, to which physical and cultural obstacles that produce discrimination stand in the way. The barriers, in fact, are not only architectural, but are often cultural barriers, and as such even more difficult to break down. Discrimination therefore arises from a widespread cultural approach, which has repercussions both in daily battles to see one's rights respected, and in the approach that characterizes the existing service system. The cultural orientation not only determines discriminating attitudes and behaviours on the part of the community (as in the typical case of reserved parking spaces that are often occupied by those who are not entitled to it), but also permeates the system of social services and conditions the relationship with the institutions.

The processes of discrimination of people with disabilities originated from the difficulty of participating in community life within an accessible environmental context, and therefore to see their right to be citizens fully protected and guaranteed.

With the term accessibility, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities refers to spaces, opportunities, personal mobility, information and communication. "Universal design" means any design relating to spaces and products that takes into account the needs of all citizens (consumers), including those with reduced abilities. An approach that considers a priori the needs of a plurality of "consumers", initially eliminating the problem of adaptations that are not always possible and very expensive "

The discriminatory processes and acts that emerged within this thematic area seem to characterize the South in an almost homogeneous way and primarily refer to the absence of guarantees and facilitations for personal mobility, starting from the transport and architectural and sensory barriers present in the public places. In relation to the territories, there are no notable differences between the Northern Region and the Southern Region, while strong inequalities between the center and the periphery, between the cities and the countryside emerge. If in some urban centers, in fact, mobility services are present and guaranteed, albeit with limits, in almost all the countries of the southern Regions there are no effective services and measures to guarantee personal mobility for people with disabilities, in support of greater autonomy.

The freedom to move around the city with means of transport is complicated, even more so in the country (...) with disability everything becomes more difficult. The constant discrimination and impediments encountered in daily life refer to the condition of invisibility in which people with disabilities live, and require a real change of perspective, capable of leading towards the construction of a truly inclusive society, attentive to planning universal, which can only be a resource "for all". On the contrary, as pointed out several times in the focus groups, the

mentality and cultural approaches remain in the South such that they cannot even "see" and "recognize" discrimination.

One discrimination that emerged in particular is that addressed to disabled women, who find themselves experiencing a double discrimination: being a woman as a subject, together with other women, to the lack of equal opportunities, and being disabled as a victim of exclusion social, discrimination and difficulty of participation.

Women with disabilities are the result of a multiplication of discrimination, they do not enjoy equal opportunities with respect to other women, nor with respect to men with disabilities. Throughout the history of legislation, policies to overcome gender inequality, feminist thinking and the movement of people with disabilities, very little importance is given to issues relating to disabled women.

According to recent research, ISTAT data reveal that 36% of women with disabilities have suffered physical or sexual violence against 30% of able-bodied women. More precisely, the risk of being raped is double in the former compared to the latter, we speak of 10% against 4.7%. If we talk about psychological violence exercised by the partner, the index is around 31.4% in the case of disabled women against 25% of able-bodied women. The first time that the issue was really taken into consideration was during the 2006 UN Convention, subsequently corrected in 2009, where it is recognized that disabled women are subject to multiple discrimination.

Considering this, we aim to identify these discriminations, try to remove them, guaranteeing them full development, progress and emancipation. At the same time, awareness is reached that women with disabilities are more exposed to the risk of violence, abuse and mistreatment both inside and outside the home. Subsequently the problem is taken up again in several contexts.

The picture does not improve much in 2019, data published by ISTAT in November 2019 are alarming. Out of a sample of 519 women with disabilities, between 16 and 81 years old, it was found that 33% suffered violence by their

current partner, or an ex, a family member (51%), an acquaintance (21 %), an unknown (20%) or an operator (8%). There is a clear difference between perceived and truly endured violence. Usually the first generic question if there is violence is answered 33% but if you go deeper with specific questions the index reaches 65.3%. This depends on the fact that very often these victims find it difficult to recognize and define it as "violence".

In fact there are various types of violence, some difficult to recognize as such:

- the psychological one suffered by 54%,
- the sexual one exercised also through the web (37%);
- the physical one (24%);
- the economic one (7%).

The violence suffered depends very much on disability. The rate of women with a cognitive / intellectual deficit is 82%, rises to 85% in cases of psychiatric illness. If we are faced with a multiple disability the index hovers around 74% drops to 64% if it is a limitation. In October 2019, four motions submitted by different political groups were approved in the Chamber of Deputies:

- Noja motion: aims to give concrete help to disabled women who have suffered violence, offering information and support to file a complaint, and secondly to helping them and assisting them in the path to exit the violence
- Lollobrigida motion: very similar to the previous one
- Versace motion: proposes to set up a specific session within the National Observatory dedicated to violence for women with disabilities to offer them concrete support both from a psychological and economic point of view
- Locatelli motion: commits the government to carry out initiatives that contrast violence against women with disabilities and at the same time implement paths that guarantee concrete support for these victims, starting from the reporting phase.

In conclusion, it can be said that much has been done in recent years with regard to violence against women with disabilities, but the road ahead is still very long.

### 1.3.7 Socio-cultural factors of discrimination processes in LGBT people

There are many indications that Italy constitutes, within the so-called industrialized countries, a particularly critical environment in terms of pervasiveness and frequency of discrimination by sexual orientation and gender identity, and that LGBT people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexuals and Transgender) in Italy suffer greater social exclusion and lower quality of life than most western countries. Within Italy, there seems to be evidence of a more hostile environment towards these people: in the southern regions, although the geographical aspect is by no means the only relevant one, in the division between medium-large and small urban centers or rural, in the differences in income and / or employment, those between men and women, those between homo / bisexual and trans people. In our country there are very few men and women admittedly LGBT in top positions, both in the public and private sector, as well as there are few public coming outs by leading figures in the world of politics, art, sport and science.

With regard to the protection of gender identity, in the Italian legal system there was a trend that could be defined as stop and go. In a first phase, we witnessed the recognition of gender identity as an element of the individual's personality, to be protected with a view to achieving psycho-physical well-being. The approval of law 164 of 1982 placed Italy as the third country in Europe (after Sweden in 1972, and Germany in 1980) to recognize the possibility for an individual to change sex, so that he could adapt it to the gender perceived by himself . This legislation, dictated by the need to recognize trans people the sex acquired as a result of interventions made abroad, since they were not allowed in Italy, was approved on the wave of a season of 'strong' affirmation of the right to health enshrined in 'art. 32 of the Constitution; enhancing the fundamental need of the

transsexual person to make the physical coincide with the psyche, and thus to achieve full personal well-being.

Following a hormonal treatment and a path of psychological support, the person who intends to change sex has access to the surgical sex reassignment treatment (RCS), which is followed by the modification of the personal sex and therefore of the name.

Once the transition process is over, the person is definitively 'acquired' to the new sex. Even if today law 164 requires adjustments, it should be noted that for years the condition of trans people in Italy has been a safeguard and guarantee as regards the completion of the transition path. This protection appears more nuanced and less guaranteed in areas relating to the family status of trans people, and the possibility of changing the name also during and not only at the end of the transition process. If in the latter case the jurisprudence has shown significant openings, including the right to the name in the context of a general right to personal identity, it should instead be noted that in one case as regards marriage, a divorce was de facto imposed ex lege a person who, married, had changed sex. On the basis of the (alleged but not necessary) heterosexuality of the marital bond, the dissolution of the marriage was declared ex officio, but thanks to the appeal to the Court of Cassation, a greater opening was obtained with sentence no. 8097/2015, which "ordered the cancellation of the notation of termination of the civil effects of the marriage of the parties that the registrar had placed in the margins of the marriage certificate following the resumption of the judgment of rectification of attribution of sex of one of the spouses. The Supreme Court held that it is necessary to preserve the rights and duties acquired by the spouses before the final judgment of the attribution of sex attribution becomes final." With the establishment in 2016 of law no. 76. law on civil unions, the establishment of a civil union between spouses becomes automatic which, in the face of the adjustment of the attribution of sex of one of the same, have not declared the will to dissolve the marriage or to end its civil effects.

In general, it should be considered as the most problematic phase, in terms of potential discrimination, is that of the 'transit', in which the person is still recognized and coded in the sex of birth and not in the 'election' sex. This means, for example, that there are objective difficulties in the contexts in which segregation is based on sex (hospitals, prisons) and in all those areas in which identity documents must be shown because, during the transit phase, due to the legislation they see a mismatch between the gender of the person, as it appears to others, and the sex (and name) that result from identity documents. The cases of discrimination most often documented concern the refusal to rent, the request for rental fees much higher than the prices in the local market (often exorbitant rents without regular contracts are offered to transgender workers, especially if involved in prostitution), as well as bullying and harassment of same-sex couples, for example when moving to a new home.

An important chapter is that of education. Educational institutions (schools, universities) play a fundamental role in transmitting and strengthening the social and cultural norms related to sexuality, through teaching modules but also through the socialization experiences of young people. The consequences of homophobic and transphobic behaviour in schools have been examined by a substantial body of literature. High rates of verbal, physical and sexual harassment, exclusion by peers, teachers, or school management themselves heavily affect young LGBT people, and have been documented in many industrialized countries.

Homophobic behaviour within educational institutions translates into negative consequences on different aspects of the education of LGBT youth. In extreme cases, refusal of access to school has been documented, through bullying and harassment: in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Latin America (Jolly, 2010).

In industrialized countries, bullying, on the other hand, is often related to poor school performance and low school attendance. Serious consequences of discriminatory attitudes may be the abandonment and early school leaving of

LGBT youth. For example, students from sexual minorities who are victims of harassment show a lower average grade mark in the United States or Brazil (Gordon, 2012; Alexander and Santo, 2011). In Italy, although young people show greater openness towards LGBT people, as also in many other European countries, heterosexuality is still taken for granted and actively promoted in all areas of education and school (Saraceno, 2003; Burgio, 2008; Prawns, Maio and Selmi, 2009). However, it would seem that the main strategy for defending against discrimination is, or at least was, until recently, invisibility. In fact, among LGBT people there would even seem to be an average level of education higher than the rest of the population, perhaps as an 'insurance' strategy against discrimination that is expected to suffer in the future.

It is evident that sexism, homophobia, prejudice and gender stereotypes are learned from the early years of life and are transmitted through:

- socialization;
- educational practices;
- the languages;
- media communication;
- social norms.

The scientific contribution of these studies joins what has already been recognized, for more than forty years, by all international, scientific and professional associations that promote mental health (among these, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the World Health Organization, etc.), which, deriving from homosexuality from the list of diseases, reiterated a conception of homosexuality as a normal non-pathological variant of human sexuality.

Unicef, in the Position Statement of November 2014, stressed the need to intervene against any form of discrimination against children and their parents based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity. A similar policy has long

been followed by UNESCO. Encouraging sexual education in schools and inserting contents concerning gender and sexual orientation into didactic-training projects does not mean promoting a non-existent "gender ideology", but clarifying the constitutive dimensions of sexuality and affectivity, promoting a culture of differences and respect for the human person in all its dimensions and by implementing adequate and effective preventive strategies capable of contrasting phenomena such as homophobic bullying, gender discrimination, cyberbullying.

The serious and appropriate dissemination of these studies through correct didactic-educational methodologies can therefore offer opportunities for personal and cultural growth to pupils and school staff and to contrast discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation in school contexts, enhancing a culture of exchange, of relationship, friendship and nonviolence.

The AIP (Italian Association of Psychology) recognizes the scientific significance of Gender Studies, Women Studies, Lesbian and Gay Studies and reaffirms the importance of the diffusion of scientific psychological culture for the cultural and social growth of our country.

Italy has a high share of workers employed in the public sector and in the manufacturing branch of industry. This implies that, on the one hand, public administration personnel policies have a strong role not only as an indication and example for private operators, but also precisely in quantitative terms: improving the working conditions of many employed LGBT people ( or aspiring such) in the public sector and, in this way, indirectly for private operators, given the strong role that such a large sector plays in determining the overall conditions in the market (e.g. in terms of wages, contractual standards, etc. ). On the other hand, the high share of work in the industry highlights a potential multiplicative effect of the discrimination phenomena found in the literature, as the manufacturing sector seems to be one of the least 'hospitable' sectors for LGBT people, who would seem to rather seek a ' employment elsewhere (D'Ippoliti and Schuster,

2011a; for a specific analysis of the sector, see also the specific survey carried out by Fiom-CGIL).

Secondly, it must be remembered that the main cultural roots of discrimination against LGBT people are substantially two (others could still be found, D'Ippoliti and Schuster, 2011b): the roots of the ideology that sees in the nuclear family (so-called 'traditional', although in Italy it is not today the majority form of family typology, nor is it historically the prevalent form for much more than a century) as the only ethically legitimate family form, or at least as the only one that should be protected and promoted; the spread, and the strong patriarchal and conservative character, of gender roles - of which heteronormativity can be considered a pillar. In relation to this second element, it is therefore worth noting that gender discrimination in the Italian labour market, and in particular in the Southern Regions, is stronger than elsewhere (for example, the rate of female activity in Italy is the second lowest of Europe, after Malta): on the one hand, gender roles are a con-cause of this situation, on the other hand they are strengthened and perpetuated (D'Ippoliti, 2011). Given the cultural link between the two forms of discrimination, it is therefore likely to expect that this greater relevance of gender and related social norms in the Italian labour market will also imply a greater risk of discrimination of LGBT people.

Another relevant feature of the Italian labour market is the segmentation in many of its parts, where the experience of individuals can be very different. We thus have the problem of territorial duality which implies more difficult industrial relations and limited contractual strength for workers and their intermediate bodies. The duality of contractual forms operates in the same sense, with a wide range of workers, especially women, young people, workers in services, etc. that - because of the contractual framework in so-called flexible forms, or worse still, because of the illegitimate abuse of organizational methods such as self-employment, consultancy, etc. - they enjoy far fewer rights, receive lower wages and have much less bargaining power than so-called typical workers.

It is possible to say that in Italy there is a prevalence, at least on the expenditure side, of passive rather than active policies, and that, moreover, these measures are generally of a non-universalistic nature.

The project showed that half of the transgender workers had experienced discrimination in the workplace one or more times, and the government's response was primarily to inform and raise awareness about the discrimination of transgender and transgender people, as well as providing a psychological and practical support for the latter. Thanks also to the cooperation of the associations of transsexual people, targeted training courses were organized for employers, since the majority of them declared that they did not know the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. We cannot hide the evidence of the presence of strong homophobic violence in the Italian social fabric and these continue to be numerous and reliable: first of all, we report the reports drawn up by Arcigay on the basis of news relating to episodes of a clear homophobic mold recorded annually by the masses. average. The portrait that emerges from the 2019 report of the cases of homotransphobia, noted since 17 May 2018, is worrying: 187 cases of homotransphobia recorded by the press are increasing, compared to 119 cases of the previous year. Obviously this number does not exhaust the dimension of the phenomenon (not all discrimination or homotransphobic violence ends up in the newspapers) but the comparison of this indicator with those of the past years traces a trend that cannot fail to alarm.[9] One aspect, which in the last year has dramatically increased, is that of institutional, "paradoxical" homotransphobia, underlines Arcigay, "in a country that only three years ago adopted a law for the recognition of couples made up of people of the same sex". They range from episodes of threats and violence against LGBT activists as well as vandalism at the association offices, to blackmail, almost always for extortion purposes, precisely in terms of the visibility of sexual orientation, up to violent attacks, beatings and murders clearly homophobic in nature. The growing quantitative data, in addition to the

qualitative one regarding the severity of the episodes, also affects. In fact, according to the report available for the years 2013-2014, 75 reports of physical or verbal attacks of a homophobic nature were recorded in those years (about half as compared to today). Not to mention the numerous external statements from politicians and institutional.

To cite the English example only, looking at the recent statistics of the English Home Office, it clearly shows the consistency of the crimes inspired by discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, crimes numerically inferior only to the crimes motivated by racial and religious discrimination, characterized by a incendiary language, full of hatred or threatening towards homosexuals, which has grown in the last year, as shown by the report cited, externalizations that alone account for the cultural climate in which homophobia grows and feeds itself.

Lastly, the data collected by Vox, the Observatory for Rights, intervened as the statistical data and media reports made by Arcigay, which mapped intolerance based on the study of I hate on the net. In particular, from the third online hatred mapping it emerges that in the years 2017-2018 homophobic hatred decreased (negative tweets fell from 13,195 in 2017 to 8,727 in 2018).

The most updated data for 2019, provided by the fourth mapping of hatred online, confirm a slight decrease in homophobic hatred, but also indicate that, where debates of homosexual families are taking place, hatred resurfaces, especially on the occasion of controversial events such as The Family Forum in Verona: negative tweets in 2019, in the period March-May 2019, are 7,808 against 3,933 positive tweets, out of a total of 11,741 tweets. However, according to their content and the language used, the aggressiveness of homophobic hate messages is particularly strong.

It also emerges from the latest Vox surveys that in 2019 there were 187 episodes of homotransphobia, a figure in line with that reported by Arcigay: 70% of homosexual students are bullied at school, discrimination in the workplace

increased by 6% to the detriment of LGBT people, there are over 20,000 reports to the toll-free number against homotransphobia, mainly from minors. It can therefore be said, in the light of statistical data, without fear of denial, that, if traditionally the crime of hatred is par excellence the crime of racial hatred, today the latter contends the field, so to speak, with the crimes inspired by homophobia.

The Global Gender Gap Report provides us with a comprehensive overview of the current state of the global gender divide and the efforts and insights to bridge it. In 2019 Italy occupied the 70th place, this year it is in 76th place out of 153 countries. On the education front, Italy seems to be well positioned, with a ranking of 55 out of 149 countries, the same thing on the political front, even if we dropped from the 38th to the 44th country. As for the working situation, in Italy still less than one woman out of two works. According to the latest Istat data, the gap between the employment rate for women and men is 18.9%, in Europe only Malta is worse. If women have children, the situation worsens: 11.1% of mothers with at least one child have never worked. In particular, the difficulties can be found in the jobs where women are most represented - in the retail trade and in the white collar sector - most penalized by progressive automation. Furthermore, women do not fall into those professions where wage growth has been most significant (in the STEM sector in particular). Finally, they are the most disadvantaged by the lack of assistance infrastructures and the difficulty of accessing capital.

The question of the role of women in society cannot be reduced to the place they occupy in the labour market, but it remains true that this is a structuring element of social life. The effort of women to enter and remain in the labour market indicates deeper difficulties, rooted in the reconciliation between the different social roles occupied, in particular the professional and family (mother and, more and more often, daughter of elderly and needy parents of care). The low

incidence of a legal framework of formal parity tells us that the problem does not lie only on the regulatory level, which also remains important, but has its roots in the cultural one. In the areas of politics, family, work, education and the media, sexist stereotypes persist which indirectly act as powerful obstacles to the full realization of women and in this way perpetuate gender inequalities and asymmetries.

The statistical survey, published in November 2019, on stereotypes on gender roles and the social image of violence, carried out by Istat in the framework of a collaboration agreement with the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Council Presidency, allows the analysis of models cultural and factors influencing the attitudes of discrimination and violence against women in the Italian context; some of these data are also reported in paragraph 3.

The rootedness of stereotypes on gender roles, on the one hand, and the attitude towards discriminatory and violent behaviour, on the other, are in fact the keys to understanding the cultural context in which violent relationships find genesis and justification. Their knowledge is essential to better understand the causes of discrimination, violence and monitor them over time, in order to assess, at least partially, the impact on the population of policies relating to the prevention of violence in terms of cultural change. Looking at the opinions on the individual statements, there are no major differences between men and women, with some exceptions. Men are more convinced that they must make the decisions in the family (10.7% are very or fairly in agreement against 7.1% of women) while women argue that it is more important for men to have work success compared to women (34.7% of women and 30.3% of men). Only for the lower educational qualifications, the difference is reversed: 45.3% of women are very or fairly in agreement with 49.6% of men.

The cultural level, specifically the differences between the different levels of education influence the opinions on who should provide for the economic needs of the family. 54.7% of those who have an elementary education degree or do not

have a qualification believe that it is man who has to provide for economic needs against 10.8% of graduates; for men these differences are even more marked (66% and 13.2%). The stereotype about the inadequacy of men to carry out household chores goes in the same direction, distancing those with a high educational qualification by about 35 percentage points from those who do not have it. In this case, however, it is women who present the most stereotype, 55% of women with low educational qualifications against 51.9% of men in the same position. Female graduates are less in agreement with this statement (15.9% of cases against 21.9% for men).

Gender stereotypes: perception and causes of violence in couples. Taking into consideration the stereotypes concerning the causes of violence of the couple, as already reported in the previous paragraph, among the most frequent we find: in the first place the consideration of women as objects of property, in the second abuse of drugs or alcohol, in the third the difficulties in the management of anger by men and finally in the fourth the association of violence with religious reasons.

Also in this case there are differences, some more evident others less, due to gender, cultural level and geographical area of origin and depending on the stereotype that is taken into consideration, specifically:

the differences between educational qualifications are more evident when it come to violence due to the need for men to feel superior to their partner, indicated by 81.4% of those with a degree and 62.7% of those with a qualification of low study or does not possess it at all, and when the reason for the violence is identified in considering the woman as an object of property (respectively 83.3% and 68%).

At the territorial level, the only cause for which there are clear differences are the religious reasons, most indicated in the Center-North, with a peak in Friuli Venezia Giulia (45.7%), and less in the South, while the other causes have a regional spread in leopard spots. The difficulty in managing anger is reported more often

in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Umbria (75.6% and 75.1% of cases respectively), less in Calabria (64.3%). The consideration of women as property is more frequent in the province of Trento (81.9%), again in Friuli Venezia Giulia (81.2%) and in Emilia Romagna (80.3%) while it is less so in Abruzzo (71.6%), Calabria (72.9%) and in the autonomous province of Bolzano (72%). The negative experiences of children are indicated in a higher percentage in the province of Bolzano (68.1%) and in Basilicata (68.0%), while women's emancipation is identified more by the inhabitants of Emilia Romagna and less from those of Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Abruzzo.

Tuscany and some northern regions, in particular Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna and Lombardy, report more frequently as a reason for violence the need to feel superior to their partner, while in Sardinia, Lazio, Trentino Alto Adige, Molise and again Lombardy and Friuli Venezia Giulia are more often pointed out than in other regions to abuse alcohol and drugs as a cause of violence in the family.

Considering the three possible causes of violence that focus on the role of a woman and the relationship with her partner (the woman considered as an object, the man who must reiterate her superiority and the annoyance for the emancipation of the woman) it emerges how these are all three indicated by 51.3% of the population, with a decided prevalence of women (60.7%) and, in particular, of 30-44 year-olds (63%), compared to men (41.1%). Higher shares are in Emilia Romagna (57.2%) and Friuli Venezia Giulia (54.3%), followed by Puglia, Campania, the autonomous province of Trento and Tuscany.

Another element that emerges is that in the case of knowledge of a woman who has suffered violence from her partner, the most frequent advice is to report; also in this case there are differences, especially regarding the cultural level, specifically:

64.5% of the population between 18 and 74 years old would advise her to report her partner to the police, while a third of the population (33.2%) would tell her to leave him. 20.4% would refer women to anti-violence centers (25.6% of women versus 15.0% of men), 18.2% would advise them to contact other services or professionals (consultors, psychologists, lawyers, etc. ) and only 2% would urge you to call 1522.

3.8%, on the other hand, would advise the woman to try to talk to their partner, 2.6% would not know what to do or advise and 1.1% of the interviewees would not give advice so as not to get involved in family matters that do not concern them. Of those who would advise trying to talk to their partner, 13.5% would also recommend leaving, while over a third (38.4%) would also suggest reporting.

17.8% of the population would advise both to report the violent partner and to leave him, while 9.5% in addition to the complaint, would direct the woman to an anti-violence center.

From the data of the relationship between stereotypes on sexual violence, stereotypes on gender roles and tolerance towards violence, it emerges that: the percentage of those who agree with at least one stereotype on sexual violence, 54.6%, reaches 62.9% of people who have gender stereotypes and 68.1% of those who consider violence against women acceptable.

The most common stereotypes are those according to which a woman always has some responsibility when she suffers sexual violence. The most widespread claim is that "*women who do not want sexual intercourse manage to avoid it*", with 39.3% of the population declaring themselves very or fairly agree. This idea is more often than men (41.9% against 36.7%) and people with low and medium-low education levels.

Between the two sexes, the differences are accentuated among the younger ones, he believes that "*women who do not want sexual intercourse can avoid it*" 41.4% of boys aged 18-29 against 32.4% of their peers, and among the most educated (37.9% of graduates versus 28.9% of graduates).

Less frequent is the idea that when faced with a sexual proposal "women often say no but actually mean yes", supported by 7.2% of the population. The stereotype according to which serious women are not raped seems to be even more overcome (6.2% of the population very or fairly agree), although this still remains relatively widespread among people aged 65-74 (9.7%) and among people with no qualifications or elementary school (14.9%). Finally, few agree, 1.9%, with the statement that "a husband / partner who forces his wife / partner to have sex against his will, does not commit violence".

In general we can say that stereotypes are one of the bases on which the processes of discrimination of women, still present in our society, are grafted. By their nature, in fact, gender stereotypes tend to have a regulatory function in that, by defining what people are and what they should be, they produce different expectations with respect to female and male behaviours, ending up conditioning not only ideas, but also the ethical dimension of social action, for this reason the fight against gender stereotypes and discrimination must act transversely on multiple contexts and on several levels.

### 1.3.8 Socio-cultural factors of discrimination processes against immigrants.

In recent decades, a new reality has taken shape in Italy, the reversal of migratory flows has progressively brought our country from land of emigration to destination for immigration. The change is particularly evident in the social composition of the school population. In the S. 2016/2017 the male and female students of migrant origin present in Italian schools numbered around 826,000 with an increase of over 11 thousand units compared to the school year 2015/2016 (+ 1.38%); in the 1996/1997 school year there were 59389. It is a consolidated fact that students of migrant origin are an integral part of the national school population, making the Italian school increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural.

It is true that in the last decades in Italy there has been an increase in the migratory phenomenon, but as previously reported there is a distorted and exaggerated perception of the immigration phenomenon by the population.

The ideas of Italians prove to be among the least tolerant of developed nations towards minorities: by far the least accommodating in Western Europe, surpassed in this sense only by some Eastern countries; this is one of the data that emerged from the first results of the last edition of the European Social Study Survey, an academic analysis based in London, but extended across the continent to its ninth edition through a series of public interviews conducted between the end of 2018 and early 2019. Every two years, the study investigates what citizens of a large number of European countries think about a number of social, economic and political issues, with the aim of understanding what values, experiences and ideas make them similar among them and which instead distinguish them.

One of the questions asked respondents if they believe immigrants make their country a better or worse place to live.

On a scale from zero to ten, in increasing order of responses more favourable to foreigners, the Italians of 2018 are surpassed only by the Czech Republic and Bulgaria for the frequency of more negative responses - those that went from zero to two. Over 10% of Italians, for example, have indicated the most negative value possible, to support immigrants in the strongest way that they believe has an extremely negative effect. More generally, over 25% share an opinion of this type, albeit with different nuances, while the first other large nation developed to follow is France where, however, it does not reach 15%. United Kingdom and Germany, slightly exceed 10. Among the most tolerant nations, on the other hand, we find the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. These data are not related to the number of foreigners present, according to OECD, Italy is not among the countries in which most foreigners live. For example in France, Germany, or even in the same Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland the numbers are greater.

Furthermore, it does not appear that in Italy there is a much higher number of illegal immigrants than elsewhere.

Prejudices and stereotypes towards other cultural, national and ethnic communities are widespread and difficult to unhook because they are based on a profound differentiation between oneself and others that is connected to systems of value attribution from which the subject tends to ascribe to his own collectivity positive qualities and to send out negative characteristics.

Ethnic prejudice throughout history has taken different forms and has often overlapped with racial preconceptions, the expression ethnicity and race, although conceptually distinct, in common language are often still confused; especially those minorities who maintained ties with the traditions of origin and more than others did not allow themselves to be fully assimilated into the culture of the host community were the victim of this prejudicial attitude. Today prejudicial and stereotyped opinions seem to be legitimized no longer by ethnocentric arguments, but more by a widespread perception of social threat in which the immigrant is perceived as a possible antagonist in job competition, as a threat to personal and social security or to perception of saturation "there are too many", "the state must think first of the Italians"; however, these are not confirmed in the objective data.

If we consider the numbers relating to security: the number of people of foreign origin has been growing regularly for some time, but practically all crimes are stable when not exactly decreasing. In recent years, in fact, fewer thefts, fewer robberies, fewer murders have been reported. On the other hand, there does not seem to be any link between the real number of asylum seekers hosted and the attitude of people towards immigrants in general. If this were the case, we would have to find very negative opinions, for example in Germany, which in a few years has accepted several hundred thousand - many more than Italy - but in fact this is not the case, it is 10% of Germans who believe that immigrants make Germany a worse place to live.

*How are immigrants presented? In which contexts? What is the image they convey? What is the perception that Italian readers draw from it?*

Carmela Maltone, in her article "*Immigration in the Italian media. Disinformation, stereotypes and innovations*"; has answered these questions, below we quote some parts verbatim.

The issue of how Italian television and the press talk about migrants, in which contexts and what image they convey has been addressed in various studies and investigations since the early 2000s. "In Italy 90% of adults are informed through television; from the Censis, report which examined the contents of the main national public and private television broadcasters, it emerges that 90% of immigration is treated by the news, which is 80% confined within the news and for the 56.7% are relegated to the crime / illegality topics. Overall 78% of the news concerning immigrants are negative and report, with a certain degree of sensationalism, of criminal acts, drug dealing, thefts, murders, prostitution, clandestinity, illegality as well as situations of social degradation generated or suffered by immigrants. Irregular landings on the southern coasts regularly occupy the news. The less dramatic news, an expression of normality or positive, appear marginally: the work and socio-cultural activities of immigrants represent respectively 3% and 3.5% of the reported facts, assistance and solidarity behaviours on 13 %."

"In 76% of the news, immigrants are designated by their nationality, ethnicity or place of origin. In addition to producing dangerous stereotypes, this custom tends to consider the immigrant rather as a representative of a category than an individual with his specificities. Immigration as a theme is rarely addressed with debates, headings or inquiries as is the case with facts concerning Italian society. In addition, the narration of the news reports tends to involve the emotional sphere of the user: in 81% of cases they arouse compassion, pietism or concern. Although immigrants are frequently present on the screens, they have only a marginal opportunity to express themselves on issues in which they are directly

involved: in 65% of cases they are only mentioned and only in 25% are consulted or interviewed. In 85.8% of the television news, men are mentioned below representing women who instead make up 49% of the total immigrant population. [...] The use of such a linguistic register helps to create the stereotype: immigration equals danger. "

Carmela Maltone concludes "Immigrants are now a structural component of the Italian population and in the current multi-cultural and multi-ethnic context, less ethnocentrist information, free from generalizations, phobias and prejudices, becomes increasingly indispensable. Information respectful of diversity, which considers difference as an asset to be protected, which looks at diversity as a resource can play a key role both in the process of inclusion of new Italian citizens and in giving them one more reason to reflect with trust and hope in the country Italy and to feel constructive part in the adoption society".

## 1.4 Social inclusion system in Romania

After signing The Common Memorandum concerning the Social Inclusion on June 20 2006, the role of coordinating the policies for social inclusion was taken by The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection. In this respect, it was constituted through Government Decision no. 412/2005 concerning the organization and operation of The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, with subsequent additions and amendments, the Office of Social Inclusion Programmes which has as main attributions supervising and coordinating the implementing of priorities identified in Joint Inclusion Memorandum, as well as collecting the qualitative and quantitative information in the respective area. For coordinating the strategic process concerning the social inclusion in Romania, the Government Decision no. 385/2006 was adopted for constituting a Director Committee. The Committee includes managers of institutions responsible for social inclusion. It was adopted the Order of Minister no. 436/2006 regarding the monitoring mechanism of priorities identified in social inclusion area. Based on this order, there were established the working method, the main attributions of the Bureau for policies, strategies, social inclusion programmes and were also approved the sector indicators for monitoring which were proposed for use in the progress report concerning the social inclusion. The coordination mechanism is done in a transversal way through the implication of the participants from the district. In this way, the Compartment for Social Inclusion was installed for each territorial deconcentrated structures subordinated to the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection. As a consequence, the monitoring and evaluation of social inclusion is done through an informational and managerial system which allows collecting and analyzing information on a local, central and territorial level. In order to promote dialogue between all the involved partners for implementing policies of social inclusion, on November 30, 2005 a first **International Conference for social inclusion** was organized, following the second one called 'The Way from Good Practice to

Social Policies -The Premises of an Inclusive Society'. For 2006, Romania pledged to continue the efforts concerning the consolidation of institutional capacity to rationalize the policies of social inclusion in national policies and to enable coordination between ministries and governmental and public institutions and the civil society. In this way, the Government Decision concerning the setting up of a national mechanism for promoting social inclusion in Romania was approved. This normative act represents the previous step before elaborating The National Strategic Report for Social Protection and Social Inclusion from September 2006 and its goal is to extend the institutional consultation degree involving more and more the territorial structures.

With a view to improving the process of analysis of the poverty and social exclusion situation, in Romania, the efforts of the year 2007 focused on the establishment of the **Social Observatory**. The main mission of the Social Observatory is to provide information on the poverty and social exclusion situation existing in Romania.

The 2008-2010 stage will have as core objective the strengthening of the national mechanism for social inclusion, so as to become a framework for the coordination and drawing up of the social policies, created for the purpose of understanding better the social exclusion situations in order to set sectorial priorities, promote the active inclusion and create an adequate environment of the development of joint social policies in different intervention areas. This objective shall be achieved by the implementation, as from 2009, of a project financed by the European Social Fund within the Sectorial Operational Programme – Development of the Administrative Capacity.

The focus shall fall on the modernisation of the social inclusion mechanism that will enable the coordination of the national policies with the local and regional ones and on the adoption of the measures proposed for the actual needs of the citizens, observing the proximity principle. The cooperation capacity of different institutions involved in the social inclusion process will be strengthened in order to

have a broad perspective, a joint understanding, in order to find joint solutions, to ensure the decentralisation of the responsibilities and efficient distribution of the resources required for the implementation of the local policies.

In order to be efficient and sustainable, the social inclusion policies must be integrated and transversal; they may have the same vision/a joint understanding of the problems; they must promote a general agreement with respect to the observance of the diversity and differences, equality in the exercise of the rights and joint liability undertaking in decision-making.

The local authorities must anticipate the problems of each territory from a structural perspective, taking into account all the factors that may entail vulnerability, risk or social exclusion situations. Any action must be provided with a view to improving the situation and facilitating the social inclusion need related to the identification of the needs, within a preset framework, with clear criteria (for identification and action). This requires an administrative reform (according to the relational government approach, systematic and cooperative approach), the provide better training for education professionals, develop cooperation and support networks among the public authorities from different levels of the administration, as well as between the public and private sector.

The drafting of the national plans and sectorial strategies having as purpose the promotion of the social inclusion requires a more efficient coordination between all the partners. If in the process of drafting the plans reaches a mutual agreement, a higher degree of achievement of the proposed objectives will be obtained. In this respect, the most important actions that may contribute to the improvement of the social inclusion process may be summarised as follows:

- increase inter-institutional cooperation in the field of social inclusion by a clear distribution of the resources and responsibilities;
- promote public debates, at well-established intervals, regarding priority themes related to social inclusion, involving numerous participants from all the activity fields, as well as representatives of the political class;

- community development for the purpose of supporting the local level in the development of the own mechanism for drafting social inclusion plans, in order to be able to assess the actual faced needs, as well as to have an actual assessment and monitoring mechanism;
- the need to rely on data and indicators when assessing the policies and monitoring the social inclusion programmes;
- drafting studies and researches which to enable the analysis of the current situation and drafting recommendations on priority themes in the field of social inclusion, identified at a national level; organisation of training sessions for the personnel of the local and national administrations holding responsibilities related to the promotion of social inclusion.

#### 1.4.1 Social inclusion in Romanian schools

The Romanian partner **Liceul Teoretic "Stefan Odobleja"** also explored the process of reforming the "special needs education" ideology of the Romanian school system toward the European target called "inclusive education". After the dissolution of the communist regime very few disabled students succeeded to be integrated in the general education and these happy cases happened in the prestige schools with dedicated teachers and mainly because of the huge efforts of the parents. The most part of the disabled students had to address the old special schools (much less organized and financed than they used to be) to get vocational training for the special protected units that disappeared in the meantime.

An inclusive school would be fit for an inclusive society but when the labour market and society as a whole is excluding this category, the segregated education seem the proper approach and illustrate the reproductive efforts of the society through the education in the Bourdieu perspective.

In fact the “inclusive education” European model seems still far for Romania. Even the objective is clear the path is still unclear, due the discriminatory resistance of the society. A learning process is needed but the process seems difficult because “students” refuse to learn it and teachers seem very hard to find.

The more and more accelerated rhythm of these reforms brought along the dilemma between tradition and modernity. In the most recent part of the Romanian history, the country succeeded to become a member of the European Union and since 2007 accepted and applied the values, norms and attitudes regulated by this international organization. By doing so a reform of the functioning of many sectors of our society and the old dilemma reappears periodically, grouping the citizens in partisans and contesters of the European innovative requirements are needed.

Education is a decisive domain in preparing the young students for the future life in the society. It offers the main abilities for a future profession, provides social skills for human interrelations, and offers the social and political tools for adapting to the community life and for developing the society. It offers knowledge and understanding and the education system can be described, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms (Bourdieu, Pierre Jean Claude Passeron, (1990), as a «reproduction tool» used by the society to assure its continuity.

As Fink (2008) observes: “*Education is more than preparing students to make a living, although that is important. It is also about preparing them to make a life*”.

In this perspective, the admission of the disabled students in the mainstream education, excluding and segregating them from the start from their normal social inclusion process represents the greatest barrier. It also means depriving these youngsters from a fundamental citizen’s rights, the constitutional right to participate in the educational system on a geographical base as any other young student of the same age.

Social inclusion is about giving recognition to, and empowering, local people to take charge of the educational project for their own needs. It may also be about actively allowing socially critical voices to be recognised and represented.

New Labour has attempted in various ways to intervene in promoting functionalist and economic versions of social inclusion through its educational policies. It has mainly focussed on standards, reform of educational structures and practices, the continuing marketisation of the education system and the creation of a culture of performativity. Put simply, if the education system can be made more effective through outcome measures, if in particular 'standards' can be driven up in those parts of the system serving variously disadvantaged groups and if this educational improvement can be accompanied by other policies to address the range of barriers experienced by these groups, then there is no reason why social exclusion should not be overcome. The focus has been on the functioning of schools generally, with extra attention paid to those serving disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged communities of learners. These schools have been targeted with extra resources and support, they have been subject to incentives and penalties and their leaders have been given autonomy, encouragement and training on the assumption that, at some point, they will be able to make the breakthrough with their students.

Many entities respected this policy approach aimed to improve schools in disadvantaged areas and that reflects in many ways the current status quo with regards to the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Leadership in these terms is about ensuring effectiveness of the organisation regardless of local conditions and for ensuring effective and efficient local practice. The styles of leadership adopted however may vary from heroic and transformational approaches (the school leader as hero in times of difficulty) to forms of distributed leadership where leadership is shared between role incumbents at all levels of the school.



There is no doubt that this view of the role of education in relation to social inclusion/exclusion has proved immensely energising, not least to education professionals working in what were previously seen as hopeless situations. There are also, without doubt, success stories to tell – the initial hike in primary attainment scores, for instance, some indications of the lowest-performing schools doing better at GCSE level and multiple accounts of such schools being ‘turned round’ by energetic and charismatic headteachers. However the evidence that the historical links between social exclusion, low educational achievement and limited life chances have been definitively broken is hard to come by.

As we have already highlighted other aspects of government policy are suggestive of a more holistic approach to education which acknowledges questions of learner identity, cultural

expectations, the nature of teacher-learner relationships and the nature of the school’s context. The Every Child Matters agenda, operationalised in the Children Act 2004 and supported by a range of guidance documents (DfES, 2003a, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c), promises to take a holistic view of the needs of children and families and to create integrated structures and services aimed at meeting those needs in. At the same time, the development of Extended and Full-Service Extended Schools (DfES, 2002, 2003a, 2003b), offering a range of services to children, families and communities and acting as the base for other community agencies seems to offer a new model of schooling which will be much less narrowly focused than its immediate predecessors and which may require different forms of school leadership.

In the early stages of the evaluation of the latter set of initiatives (Cummings et al., 2005, 2004, Dyson et al., 2002) there are indeed signs of things beginning to be done differently. Some school leaders have set up an impressive array of activities and services for children, their families and communities. They have developed, in some cases, a sense of how their work with these three constituencies interacts. Typically, they claim that they are aiming to change



attitudes towards learning and wider cultures of aspiration and achievement in families and communities as a means of changing attitudes and levels of achievement amongst their students. They recognise that a uni-dimensional focus on 'standards' is not in itself able to impact sufficiently. Unlike them, however, they have systems and strategies for addressing wider issues. Indeed, in some cases, the work of these schools and its leaders is set within the context of local strategies for the regeneration of neighbourhoods or even whole towns which align their work with policies in housing, economic development, crime reduction and community development. Where this is the case, schools commonly work not as isolated educational institutions, but as part of a network of other schools and community agencies supporting each other and pooling their resources in a sustained effort to address disadvantage in the areas they serve.

In many respects this type of schooling points to leadership approaches that attempt to contextualise the work of schools in order to meet the needs of the community. We have termed this localising leadership in that school leaders are seen as a means of ensuring that the service is fitted to the local context. Here the argument is that the delivery of education through schools can't be left to central government because they have to be shaped to local conditions and the role of school leaders in such contexts is to make this happen which implies that school leaders need to know about the local context.

This doesn't necessarily imply local democratic leadership but it does suggest that the way schools should be run reflect realities of the context within which the school is located. Leadership strategies may therefore include consulting with the communities serving the school to ensure that the education delivered meets the needs of local people. In many respects leadership styles linked to a localising agenda might be reflective of both instrumental approaches (eg. the need to collaborate to improve school performance) and/or reflect the biographical realities of school leadership in such situations that are suggestive of tensions,

challenges and nuances of working with a variety of educational agendas and stakeholder communities. The perspective underpinning this rationale and style of leadership is also most likely to be generally functionalist with hints of a socially critical perspective depending on how localising the school leader and school agenda becomes.

Other aspects of government policy, particularly with regards to citizenship, neighbourhood renewal and community empowerment are suggestive of the need for local people to be consulted and have a direct say over the approaches and type of public service provided at the local level.

And in a sense this brings us to the new localism agenda suggested by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister. In their report for the ODPM (Aspden and Birch, 2005) focus on the way local government can work with service users to look at ways of improving the design and delivery of services so that they can take into account decentralised and better local decision making, revitalised democracy and enhanced civil and community renewal. In essence their report was fundamentally interested in the extent to which local people participated in and had, or felt they had, control over the services and environments which had direct impact on their lives. The authors examined evidence that focused on ways of effectively working with local people, ways to improve partnership working, the different models of participation and perhaps most radically an examination of the impact of more direct partnership initiatives that linked to notions of capacity building, mainstreaming and maintaining.

Although improved forms of consultation and sounding out of communities by local authorities were explored, perhaps the examination of direct participation provided some of the strongest evidence of levels of user engagement, delivery and decision making.

They also recognised that in order to engage local people with service design and delivery there was a need to for service users and other partners to develop key skills and competencies in a variety of areas including managing



performance etc. In addition there was a requirement to enhance capacity not just at the level of the individual but also at an area and authority-wide level to ensure continuity, coverage and representation.

It is suggested the need for initiatives to be mainstreamed to avoid the possibilities of sidelining opportunities. In order to achieve this goals, there was a suggestion that users get involved at the early stages of planning and decision making in relation to the service delivery. All of this suggests an active engagement by local people in forms of school leadership that not only deal with efficiency and effectiveness issues and the need to take into account local needs but have at their core the notion of co-construction through user engagement in service delivery and decision-making.

This policy direction is therefore suggestive of our third ideal type as a public service that has the central notion of co-production via user engagement in service delivery and decision-making. We have termed this democratising leadership.

Democratising suggests the participation of local people in decisions about things in their lives and with regards to schools. This suggest the need for democratic forms of leadership and governance where local people are resourced and decide on all aspects of rationale, strategy and definition of what the school should offer (Ranson, 2000). A manifestation of this might be that giving democratic control to local communities may result in the delivery of different types of educational outcomes. This leads us to a possible paradox in terms of social inclusion, in that local communities themselves may desire outcomes that are contrary to social inclusion, such as ethnic segregation (Lindsay & Muijs, 2006). Critical educational leadership is about the questioning of educational policy and its impact on school life. It is also about being critical of taken for granted approaches to hierarchical school organizational structures and leadership approaches that are focused on delivering particular types of educational outcomes. Here the person begins with their political values. This type

of narrative is communicated by those who make a case for critical approaches, and who report on evidence of how this works in practice in ways that make a difference.

In this perspective **the new function of education in the case of special needs students should change from integration to inclusion.** “What is needed is a moral commitment to the integration of all children into a single education system as part of a wider commitment to the integration of disabled people into society” says Michael Oliver (1996). “The history of the twentieth century for disabled people has been one of exclusion. The twenty-one century will be struggle for inclusion. In this struggle special, segregated education has no role to play.”

To conclude, we can affirm that there are important barriers in admission of the disabled students in mainstream schools (at all levels but increasing as the education level increases). The most hindering factors concerning inclusion of students with disability into mainstream education are primarily teachers that claim lack of resources and special training and also a big number of students in the class, that decrease the possibility of individualized activities with students. Another factor is the competitiveness perspective: schools like enterprises are competition-oriented and disabled students cannot play their role. Competition and averages are the bases of admission in secondary schools, high schools and universities and the special schools are not entering the competition. The perspective of human rights (disabled children have rights to education) is replaced by the perspective of special rights (disabled children have rights to special and segregated education made by experts - specialists). The society as a whole is discriminating the disabled citizens as much as the labour market does, so that inclusive school would not fit very well in a segregated society.

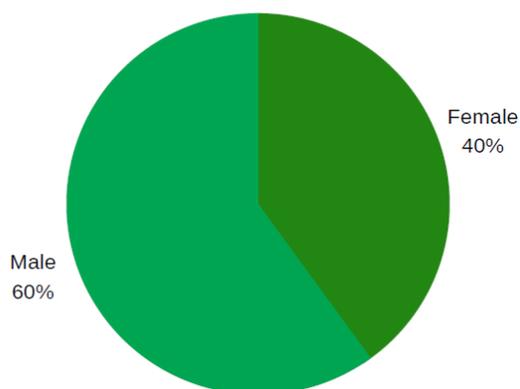
Therefore, the Romanian educational system, its organization and administrators have still long way to go to find the inclusive perspective, very present in the contemporary developed countries. Even if some measures appeared and some

steps have been made, inclusion remains an important, but still faraway requirement of our school and society.

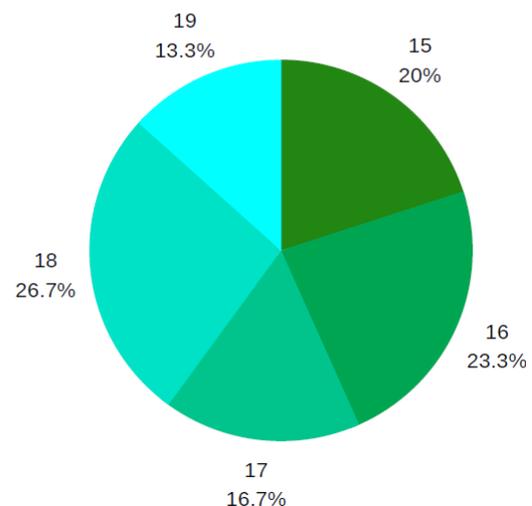
But what about other categories of children subject to discrimination and bullying both in schools, public and private areas in Romania? A research conducted by the project partner **CONIL Association Bucharest** showed that most of the studies related to discrimination in urban areas in Romania are related to the discrimination of the Roma children. These studies show that most of the Roma children have difficulties integrating in the society, as they often face negative comments and stereotypes, but the research is not particularly focused on the chosen age group. The reasons why children from the selected categories are not well integrated vary from language barrier, poverty, low educational level, social stigma to lack of awareness related to the issues.

CONIL conducted a research survey on a number of 30 participants, both male and female.

## 1. Gender



## 2. Age



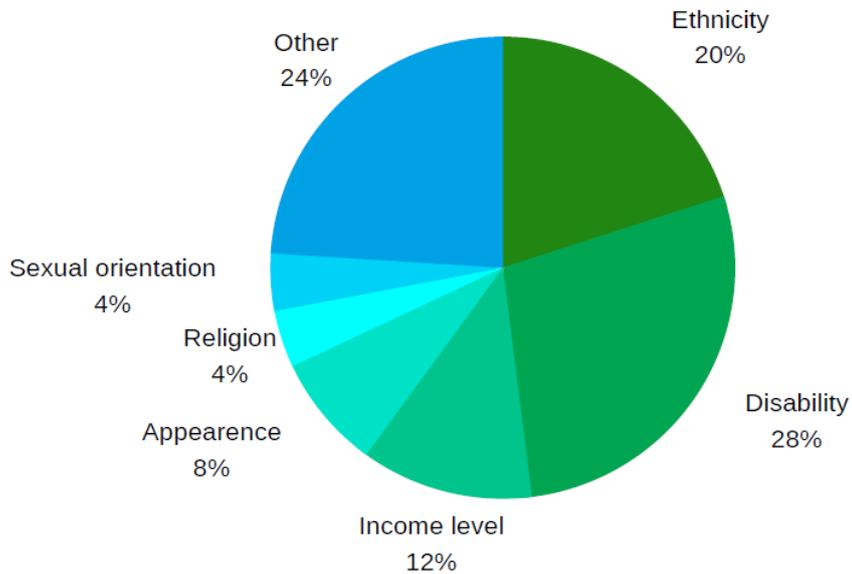
The participants were asked if they have ever heard or seen anyone being bullied. Out of the 30 subjects, 2 have answered no while 28 said they have witnessed a bullying episode. They were also asked how they reacted, out of which 8 did not interfere, while the rest either informed their parents/teachers about it or discussed it with the parties involved.

When asked if they have ever bullied someone, 20 participants, making up 66.7% said no, while 33.3% said yes. This question is not the actual representation of the percentage of bullies, as it gives room to the Horn effect. The Horn effect occurs when an interviewee/subject to a research gives a certain answer due to stigma surrounding the topic. However, the percentage is still rather high, showing how alarming the situation is.

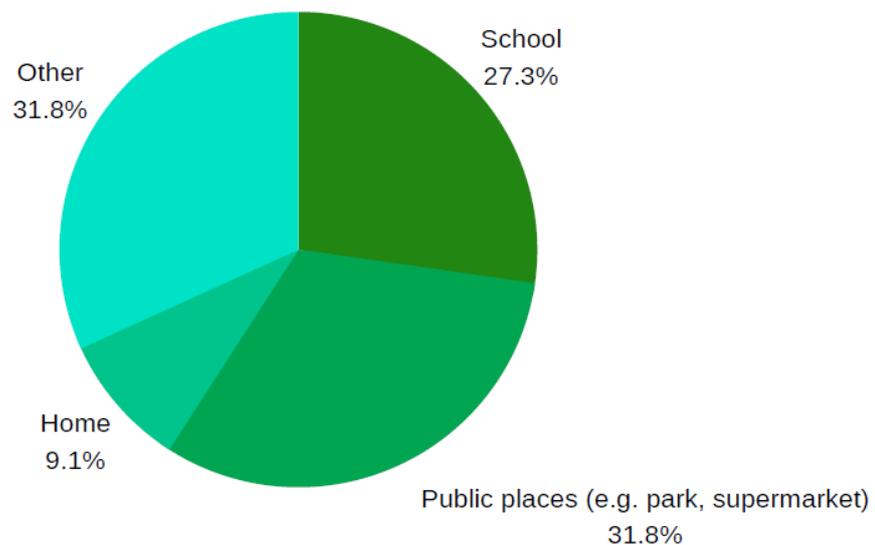
Furthermore, the matter of cyberbullying was approached in the survey. 66.3% of the subjects said that their internet browsers are not supervised by any adults, and 66.7% of them have received unsightly/disturbing content via the internet.

This includes text messages and photos/videos. Only 1/30 participants has received intimidating content via a phone call. When asked if they have ever felt discriminated, 63.3% of participants said yes, out of which 12 said they either did nothing or they felt afraid and panicked. Some of the other participants said they have reacted by telling their teachers/parents, and 2 participants said they have started a fight with the bully. Participants were further asked questions related to the bullying episodes they have been part of. The results are represented accordingly in the graphics bellow.

## Reasons for which they have been discriminated against/ received a different treatment



## Places they have been bullied



Furthermore, the participants were asked how they felt when they were subjects to discrimination and bullying. Most of them recall feeling anger, rage, but also

fear. The subjects describe feeling powerless and unsafe, and would usually not fight back. However, some of them report the episodes to others or take the matters into their own hands and fight back. The study showed that participants report deep scarring due to bullying episode, some of them having to start therapy after intense experiences. Therefore, when asked if they believed discrimination in school was harmful, 100% answered that it is. They have described discrimination as a toxic behaviour, that can cause fear and anxiety. As a last question, the participants were given an example of an anti-bullying campaign and were asked about their opinion on the most successful ways of combating discrimination.

The CONIL desk and field research showed that high school pupils in Romania are being discriminated against mostly based on ethnicity, disabilities, income level, appearance, religion and sexual orientation. From our thorough research, researchers concluded with suggesting some best ways of combating discrimination:

1. Creating striking and meaningful campaigns to raise awareness on the issue. Knowledge is power, thus informing others will help validate these children's feelings, as well as help them come forward in situations of distress.
2. Making discrimination/bullying a punishable offense. The cases of bullying in Romania are hardly ever approached, therefore enabling and creating a safe environment for bullies to discriminate and act in heinous manners. Thus, by creating a good punishment system, we can educate children to not act this way.
3. Teaching values such as respect, friendship, love by creating interactive lectures/games/outdoor group activities to deepen the civic sense of these children. If thought about compassion and empathy through channels that

enable a discussion between the teachers and pupils, children will be able to express themselves without means of violence.

4. Educating children about Roma culture (the most mentioned ethnic minority group).
5. Educating high-school students about children with disabilities, integration and tolerance.
6. Educating children about different religions and cultures.
7. Promote values such as inclusiveness and educate children on matters such as sexual orientation and sexual education.



## 1.5 Social inclusion system in Poland

### 1.5.1 Discouraging early school leaving through educational practices that boost participation, self-esteem and positive self-assessment

In the EU, early school leavers are considered to be young people who have completed lower secondary or lower education and do not participate in vocational education and training (EU Council, 2011). In some Member States, the term ESL applies to a wider group of students. Early school leaving may therefore mean that in some countries there is a lack of fulfillment of the obligation to study, leaving school before obtaining the minimum qualifications required, or giving up education before completing the stage of upper secondary education. The way ESL is defined at the country level plays a huge role in creating strategies to counteract this phenomenon and limiting its spread.

In 2012, 12.9% of young people in the EU aged 18-24 completed lower than upper secondary education and did not participate in any forms of vocational training. Statistical data indicate that in this group a higher percentage are young men rather than women, children of immigrants and representatives of national minorities (e.g. Roma). Vocational school students also fall more often from the education system. The prevalence of early school leaving among young people varies from one Member State to another. According to data from the Eurostat 2012 study, in countries such as Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic or Slovakia the percentage of early school leavers is not high and fluctuates around 4-5%. In other countries, the scale of the phenomenon is much bigger. In Portugal and Malta, this figure is around 20%, while in Spain it reaches 24.9%.

Poland belongs to European leaders in the field of effective reduction of the ESL phenomenon. Since 2001, i.e. the beginning of the publication of data from Poland

by Eurostat, there has been a systematic improvement in this respect. In 2001, the ESL rate in

Poland was 7.1%, in 2007–2008 it decreased to 5%. In the following years it increased slightly - in 2009 it was 5.3%, and in 2012 - 5.7%. Considering these results, it can be concluded that in recent years the ESL phenomenon in Poland has stabilized at around 5%. At the same time, a closer analysis of a group of Poles aged 18-24 with low education (at most lower secondary) and not participating in education or training indicates challenges for Polish educational and social policy. Most of these people are unemployed (almost 60%) and this result is higher than the EU average for a similar category of people, amounting to less than 50%.

The phenomenon of early school leaving has huge implications for both individuals and the European economy. A smaller number of educated employees means lower economic growth and a greater burden on the state budget forced to increase expenditure on benefits, training of the unemployed, etc. ESL limits productivity and competitiveness, increases the risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The consequences of early school leaving have an impact on the lives of young people and reduce their chances of participating in social, cultural and economic life. People with low qualifications have problems finding a job or take an unstable, occasional or low-paid job. The unemployment rate in this group is on average 40%, compared to 22.8% of total youth unemployment in Europe. Many young people become regular clients of social care, receive benefits and use other social programs. This reduces their quality of life and often leads to social exclusion.

Resigning from education is rarely a decision that young people make easily and fast. Early school leaving is usually the result of the whole process of dropping out of school,

for personal, social, economic, geographical, educational or family reasons. The reasons why young people leave education and training prematurely are very

individual, but it is possible to identify certain recurring factors. Early school leaving is particularly evident among children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds and among children from immigrant families (25.6% of students dropping out of school in the European Union come from immigrant backgrounds, compared to 11.6% of indigenous citizens), and also often occurs in connection with poverty and social exclusion. The figures are from the Eurostat surveys mentioned above. More often, boys leave school than girls, students with special educational needs (SEN) or with physical and mental health disorders. Early school leavers are often students with a complex educational path, experiencing school failures, manifesting behaviour disorders and social problems. Students from this group usually have more serious problems with school discipline and more often they miss classes. The phenomenon of early school leaving affects both rural areas remote from larger centers, where it is usually associated with limited access to education as well as overcrowded areas of large cities. Most countries also see the causes of ESL in the malfunctioning of education systems: in the lack of flexibility hindering the transition from secondary to vocational schools, the poor reputation of vocational education, and large restrictions on the autonomy of schools in making modifications to the way the core curriculum is implemented. Economic factors and the situation on the labour market play an important role in shaping ESL. In some EU countries, the increase in the percentage of young people resigning from obtaining the necessary professional qualifications was affected by easy access to seasonal work that did not require high qualifications. Rapid economic growth in the last decade and the development of the real estate market - providing young people with many low-qualified jobs - have caused a high percentage of students to drop out of education. This situation particularly applies to tourist areas with the tourism and construction industries thriving at that time.

Analyzing the factors influencing the decision about early school leaving and their relationship with the phenomenon of social exclusion following this decision, it is worth focusing especially on three issues:

1. Self-assessment level among technical school students.
2. Motivation to learn in technical school.
3. Functioning of students with disability in public schools - technical secondary school.

Self-esteem is an ambiguous term and understood in various ways. It is used interchangeably with the terms "self-assessment", "self-respect", "self-confidence". These terms, although related, are not the same. In this study, the use of the terms "self-esteem" and "self-assessment" is considered reasonable.

Self-esteem is treated as an integral part and a value-judging factor of self-image or self-concept. This is a set of judgments and opinions that an individual relates to himself.

Thanks to self-assessment, the individual is able to define his own essence, separate himself from the environment. Self-assessment makes it possible to assess one's own value in terms of ability, success, significance in the environment, allows the individual to determine his or her abilities.

The development of self-assessment takes place in three stages, which fall into:

1. the period of the oldest group of kindergarten children (children are able to draw attention to themselves in terms of having positive and negative features, but they are not able to critically analyze their behaviour and get rid of unwanted features;
2. middle school age (self-assessment becomes more profound, it begins to be important in regulating behaviour;

3. adolescence (this is the highest stage of self-esteem development, as the individual demonstrates the ability of independent and critical self-reflection.

Taking into account the accuracy of self-assessment, a distinction can be made between self-esteem: apt or irrelevant, adequate or inadequate. Considering the level of self-esteem, we distinguish high or low self-esteem. Finally - the stability factor will determine if self-esteem will easily change under the influence of various factors (so it may be stable or unstable).

Self-esteem is a sense of dignity, self-respect and self-confidence, which determine the effective performance of the individual, the ability to maintain specific roles both in the family and in the social environment, as well as the degree of personal freedom. It is the belief of the individual that he can cope with challenges. It is one of the earliest and most important regulatory structures formed in humans. Self-esteem determines, among others, harmonious personality development, shaping proper social relations and intrapersonal attitudes, as well as a sense of personal well-being and happiness. A person with a high level of self-esteem believes in their abilities, better copes with anxiety and problems in a difficult situation. High self-esteem ensures a sense of security in social relations, reduces the fear of rejection and exclusion.

The pursuit of high self-esteem motivates to solve problems effectively and overcome difficulties in the areas of life that are crucial for self-assessment. People with high self-esteem experience negative emotions less often, are less prone to depression, have a higher level of optimism in relation to future events, show better coping with stress and loneliness.

Positive self-assessment determines a sense of security, builds awareness of one's own usefulness, and makes it easier to take on challenges. Self-esteem

creates the framework for good functioning in a group. Increases the ability to receive feedback from other people, resistance to criticism and rejection. Research results show that people with high self-esteem are more resistant to social pressure and less suggestive [Strelau, 1985; Korman, 1966 after Grabowiec, 2011, p. 58]. High self-esteem facilitates (but does not guarantee) positive social contacts and proper emotional development. A person with high self-esteem is less exposed to the influence of the environment, has their own opinion, can firmly oppose the majority. The proper self-esteem ensures: the ability to see and appreciate your positive qualities, faith in your own abilities, thinking about yourself in a friendly way, effectiveness in implementing agreed plans and life priorities, respect for yourself and others, ability to resolve conflicts, ability to admit mistakes, ability to accept criticism and drawing the right conclusions for the future, openness to positive influences, willingness to support people and receive help from others, assertive attitude, entrepreneurship, creativity, courage in taking initiative, ability to make decisions and take risks, ability to cope with changes, flexibility.

Adequate self-assessment favors undertaking actions to the best of the individual's ability. Youth with a high level of self-esteem are characterized by high social commitment and a relative sense of personal security in situations of social functioning as well as better learning outcomes. High self-esteem serves to support learning, to refrain from destructive behaviour and to prepare for life.

However, low self-esteem makes it difficult to establish social contacts. People with inadequate self-esteem engage in behaviours that are socially unacceptable or self-destructive.

So they receive negative messages from the environment, which further reduces their positive self-image. People with low self-esteem behave hesitantly, are critical of themselves and often have a sense of guilt and shame. Low self-

esteem significantly limits the activity of the individual, who often has many symptoms of social maladjustment. Research shows that people with low self-acceptance avoid competition, spontaneous social contacts or teamwork, are afraid of being an object of ridicule, tend to be socially inactive, which in turn limits the possibility of social recognition and popularity in the group. In addition, these people are overly self-centered, characterized by a high level of anxiety [Bach – Olasik1992; Gurycka 1986 after Dymek, 1997, p. 54]. People with low self-esteem are willing to assume that other people are trying to cheat or exploit them. This type of conviction often leads to isolation and a sense of loneliness, as a result, they gradually lose sensitivity to the fate of other people, become apathetic, sometimes humiliate others. In escaping reality, they are prone to addictions. People with low self-esteem automatically transfer their fears and deficiencies to other people. They are very critical, especially towards their loved ones and they are unable (or have very low skills) to deal with criticism in a healthy way. Depression is often the consequence of this. They have a tendency to worry about the future, to anticipate a "bad" future, which additionally deepens low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem show greater sensitivity to the impact of everyday events and a stronger tendency to respond emotionally to stimuli, more often they feel negative emotions. People with low self-esteem find it difficult to deal with situations that require quick decisions, then they are frustrated and terrified of responsibility.

People presenting a negative attitude towards themselves are characterized by:

- low self-acceptance,
- focusing on weaknesses and threats,
- low sense of personal dignity and self-efficacy,
- no joy of life, expectation of the worst,
- perceiving difficulties as impassable obstacles,
- fear of loneliness and simultaneous fear of establishing and maintaining correct

- contacts with others,
- excessive self-guilt and blaming others for their own mistakes,
- lack of tolerance towards other people's mistakes and excessive justification of their own,
- difficulty adapting to new situations, fear of change.

Self-esteem, whether high or low, is one of the cornerstones of our existence, although it changes throughout our lives. The most important period of self-esteem development falls on childhood and adolescence. The source of self-esteem changes as it develops. Younger school children attach the greatest importance to adults' opinions. Usually two basic elements that influence the child's self-esteem are indicated:

- the multitude of discord between what he desires and what he thinks he has achieved,
- the total sense of support that he experiences from important people (if he feels that others like him as he is, he has higher self-esteem than a person who does not notice such opinions). Anatomical-physiological factors (appearance, physical fitness) as well as opinions and features of others, successes and failures, comparing yourself with personal patterns, experience gained at home or school are also important.

The role of social origin, parents' education and their socio-economic position should also be noted. An important role in the process of shaping self-esteem is played by messages about oneself (especially those of parents, peers, teachers) and personal activity (it is possible to

take actions that will make changes in the area of relation to oneself). It should be emphasized that the foundation of healthy self-esteem is the acceptance and non-judgment of individuals by significant people.

The family is the basic group in which the child learns self-esteem. This is where the process of assessing his behaviour appears. Here he makes his first assessment of himself.

According to psychologists, a child accepted by parents has an unconditional self-esteem. Educational practices based on unconditional acceptance of a child and empathic understanding are factors that significantly contribute to shaping trust in one's own strengths and capabilities. Creating conditions for the child's physical and mental security, feeling of being loved and building constructive relationships predisposes the child to believe in his own strength and to be open to positive messages developing self-esteem. Proper relationships in the home environment play an important role here. A positive self-image formed in a family, a friendly way of referring to others, no sense of danger allow the child to make contact with the environment. Positive relations with others are a source of satisfaction, increase trust in people and convince individuals of their own value. Correct relationships in the family build a sense of security in the child. A positive attitude to the world and people facilitates contact with them. The environment reads the individual and his approach as good, responds with approval and strengthens his openness - he feels liked and valued as he is, so he tries to be himself. Parental warmth, clearly defined boundaries, and respectful treatment should be mentioned among the factors that cause an individual to consider himself valuable. It is worth emphasizing that parents who have proper self-esteem bring up their offspring in such a way that they also know their true value, while parents with low self-esteem often raise children disturbed in this aspect. Low self-esteem appears in a child as a result of strict rules reigning in the family. The formation of a child's low self-esteem is significantly influenced by upbringing errors of parents during childhood. Destructive effects are brought by

combining love for a child with fulfilling parents' expectations or specific conditions, negative comparisons with peers, underestimation of the child's achievements, more frequent criticism than praising the child, constant pointing out errors, using violence against the child, severe punishment, lack of confidence in his possibilities, lack of the consequences in upbringing, disregarding the views and opinions of the child. These attitudes inhibit the development of faith in one's own strengths, foster uncertainty and fearfulness. An important stage of forming self-assessment takes place during the school years.

The school plays a special role in shaping the students' self-esteem due to the adolescence period. The school provides children with systematic and long-term impact. Children also acquire a scope of knowledge about themselves. Both teachers and peers communicate (directly or indirectly) messages that value a given person. These behaviours can increase and strengthen a child's self-esteem and self-acceptance, but they can also lower it. Pupils with learning difficulties and adaptation to school conditions may be in a difficult situation.

A student at risk of negative self-esteem is tense, he feels anxiety that can be defused by various behaviours:

- he may exhibit aggressive, provocative behaviours - masking in this way an internal threat,
- he may tend to avoid others, to be in isolation,
- he can reduce the threat to his value by changing the picture of the situation causing
- the threat (e.g. accusation and reducing the value of others),
- he may show excessive dependence in social relations, becoming more sensitive to the assessment of colleagues.

Contemporary education has a responsibility to help the pupil in its development, self-realization and self-assessment. The ally of building self-esteem in a child is the school in which they exist: justice, motivation, appreciation, attention and

discipline, and respect for the dignity of the child. Korczak was convinced that showing respect for a child consists in increasing the requirements resulting from faith in his growing possibilities. For pupils, self-esteem should be measured by successes in action, reinforced by a friendly assessment of adults, which does not always have to be boiled down to praise. Shaping adequate self-esteem of students is a task not always undertaken by the teacher-educator. The teacher's duty should be to help students work on getting to know themselves. Three groups of issues should be considered here:

1. help in developing self-diagnosis skills, i.e. I-today (my strengths);
2. help in shaping projection skills (planning and forecasting) of oneself and one's own activity (Who should I be?);
3. help in improving skills and making choices (What lifestyle to choose? What value system should I use? - Me in the future).

Self-image properties such as honesty, purposefulness, self-acceptance and the ability to communicate well condition efficient performance, good adaptation, life satisfaction, inner peace and reconciliation with ourselves. Therefore, these properties should be consciously formed. An educator who wants to strengthen self-esteem among students should ensure that they are aware of the qualities and behaviours that should be worked on.

A significant place among the helpful methods of building self-esteem is the training of positive thinking, affirmation and self-suggestion, and related exercises verbalizing what students like in themselves and consider their strengths. The school's practices for assessing students' own behaviour and activity should be welcomed, as a student who learns to evaluate his behaviour properly and respect his work through it will be respectful and kind in the future of work done by others.

Among the duties of a teacher who helps students shape their self-esteem, the following actions should be included:

- showing interest in students, perceiving their individuality,



- meet the basic psychological needs of pupils, if possible,
- respecting the student's subjectivity principle,
- practicing active listening in contacts with students;
- using the correct procedure for assessing the child,
- limiting competition among students, promoting cooperation,
- diagnosing students' problems and undertaking cooperation with specialists.

In shaping self-esteem in students (from younger school years), the quality of the child's relationship with peers plays an important role. By comparing with peers, the child learns about its strengths and weaknesses, experiences successes, failures, and competes. It is a difficult time in the child's development, because quite often there are differences between what the child originally thought about himself and how he is perceived and evaluated by others. An unfavourable difference reduces a child's self-esteem. Therefore, the teacher's watchfulness, awareness about what is happening in the group and knowledge of group processes are important. It is important to think that at school, not only the individual's intellectual development of the child is important, but also his functioning in the group, as well as the entire group of students who have their own dynamics of life. Proper self-esteem is constructed by building the right position of the student in the class / group. Self-confidence is fostered by proper relationships between children, peer acceptance is the foundation of everyday well-being and an increase in self-esteem. If a child is recognized by a group, feels liked or admired by peers, he or she creates a favourable picture of himself / herself. However, ignoring by colleagues results in the decision to withdraw from social contacts (self-image is then characterized by a low level of self-acceptance). The teacher / educator, by undertaking activities that build the student's conviction of self-worth, should start by implementing the principle of acceptance in a relationship with pupils. Fostering this creates a proper (safe)

atmosphere. Therefore, the teacher's actions to strengthen the positive self-esteem of all children, especially those who are not accepted, are important. It is worth showing them a friendly attitude, focusing on their strengths, using positive qualities and skills, showing examples of helpfulness, and creating an atmosphere of tolerance in the classroom. The teacher should provide necessary assistance to unaccepted students who have poor academic performance. His duty is also to care for fair treatment of pupils.

The student also builds his image based on information about his intellectual functioning, his abilities and skills. The child acquires this information by observing himself in the classroom among peers, comparing his achievements with the achievements and successes of other children. However, feedback from a teacher or parent is decisive. It is therefore important to communicate to the child the effects of his work in such a way that it stimulates further activity and creates a desire to learn, and does not leave the child with a sense of inefficiency and ineffectiveness of his activities. The message about the student's work, which, in addition to drawing attention to possible shortcomings, also draws attention to the pros and achievements, emphasizes the importance of the person and his actions, gives a chance to shape the child's faith in himself and his sense of agency, efficiency and effectiveness of his own actions. It is also worth signaling that the teacher should care about maintaining permanent cooperation with the family home of unacceptable children. It is also important to educate parents.

Relationship between low self-esteem of children and young people (regardless of its source) and early school leaving seems obvious. A student who does not have the right level of motivation to act, without faith in his own abilities, not noticing the sense and purposefulness of personal development and gaining additional and broad qualifications, and additionally feeling the lack of acceptance or even hostility from the school environment, sooner or later will give up continuing education and will seek a path of self-fulfilment away from the public education system, exposing themselves to social exclusion.

At various stages of education, some of the factors motivating school achievement change depending on the age and level of maturity of the student. Personality, intelligence, gender and the psychosocial environment play a particularly important role here. The school sets itself different goals. One of the most important is to create optimal conditions for acquiring the knowledge necessary for proper functioning on various planes of life. Therefore, it is necessary to take various actions so that the student will be happy to learn, i.e. trigger appropriate motivation in the pupil. In psychological literature, motivation is defined as a process, as all mechanisms (simple and complex, internal and external, affective and cognitive) responsible for activating, directing and maintaining and ending specific behaviour [Łukaszewski, 2000, p. 427]. When it comes to cognitive perspective, motivation to learn is primarily associated with the active role of the student, who as a result of various experiences creates the so-called personal knowledge, own concepts and values. The motivation to learn includes individual beliefs about their skills, competences, abilities, which determine the adopted goals and expectations of success or failure [McCombs, Pope, 1997, pp. 14-15]. The indicator of motivation is primarily the level of involvement in the learning process.

Motivation can be, as mentioned above, internal or external. Inner motivation stimulates action that has value in itself; it is interest or love for something, e.g. satisfying one's own curiosity. External motivation creates an incentive to act that is somehow rewarded or that avoids punishment; in such a school, motivation is favoured by a system of rewards and punishments (e.g. grades, scholarships) and a whole set of regulations governing the course of study (studies). As Stanisław Bobula writes, "until now, the entire student motivation system has been based on behavioural assumptions proposing reward and punishment systems that were to encourage young people to learn. Meanwhile, it turned out that behavioural systems (which are quite effective in the short term) are a dead end, because they are based entirely on external motivation. And if this external

stimulation is lacking, then young people immediately lose the desire to make effort and learn. That is why we need a new approach to stimulate learning motivation among young people, which will strengthen internal motivation. " Motivation to learn depends on the arrangement of various factors affecting the individual during development, but also innate predispositions. Before internal motivation arises, which results from the need for self-fulfilment, the child should be engaged in specific actions based on regularity, willingness to make effort and a sense of accomplishment of tasks set by the environment. Many factors can inhibit motivation - above all, it is a lack of success despite the effort put into acquiring knowledge. The motivating factor for learning is noticing a constant relationship between the student's workload and the result (successes, achieved level of student competence). Significant importance is attributed to the sense of location of control over the course of events. Students with an inner sense of control are more persistent and achieve better academic performance. The basis for effective learning is to activate internal motivation, which is associated with focusing on important learning goals, pursuing interests while minimizing fear of failure. External motivation (e.g. parental praise or willingness to receive good grades, systematic learning, good organization of work) fosters internal motivation (need for self-fulfilment, interest in specific content). Studies confirm that there is a relationship between the level of school achievement and motivation. Therefore, important elements that are to strengthen internal motivation and encourage young people to adopt the attitude of a lifelong learner are: awareness of purposefulness of action, clear, understandable and transparent assessment criteria, proper feedback on student achievement, reflection on one's own learning. Students' motivation to learn can also be created using properly tailored curricula and work methods to meet the diverse needs and capabilities of students in class. By supporting a variety of learning styles, intellectual possibilities or gender, we will be able to bring out from young people those qualities and opportunities that they do not yet know.

Getting to know yourself - your potential and limitations by working in different configurations and circumstances is a great experience for teenagers, which will probably be a driving force encouraging them to continue working.

Motivation undoubtedly plays an important role in school learning. It is a stimulating force to learn, acquire knowledge and expand interests. A good teacher can influence a student to develop a positive motivation: the condition of success. Of all the personality traits of the student (innate and acquired), motivation has the most significant influence on the course and effects of the learning process.

High motivation, which is manifested by the student's constant interest in learning the subject and faith in success, is much more important than the teaching methods and techniques used. A strongly motivated student will master the required knowledge and skills with the help of any method, and even against it, while the best teaching method will prove to be ineffective if it is not well received by the student.

Raising positive motivation in a student in relation to learning a given subject and maintaining it at an appropriate level throughout the entire learning process is one of the central problems of modern didactics. Internal stimulation can and should imply internal motivation to learn. Motivation raises a number of positive emotions in the learner, among which curiosity has a central place and interest. The importance of both of these factors lies in the fact that only they excite, sustain and direct the student's intellectual activity in a natural way. The increase in interest causes adequate stimulation of the body, which leads to an increase in the level of general activity of the student, which is expressed, among others by the student's general ability to act, proper focus, concentration of attention, better perceptive capabilities, easier memorizing and greater efficiency of intellectual processes. The direct effect of intensive mental work is acceleration and improvement of the learning process.

Low motivation of the student during the lesson reduces his ability to remember and acquire knowledge, which leads to a deterioration of academic performance. Lack of motivation can lead the student to school failure. We talk about such a situation when a student with high abilities achieves very poor results. School failure is generally referred to as a lack of harmony between school requirements and a student's attitude. According to the Psychological Dictionary, "school failures are a clear contradiction or discrepancy between the school's expectations, didactic requirements and the student's learning outcomes". Among school failures, we distinguish: episodic failures - lasting for a short period, and persistent lasting for months and years, fragmentary (partial) - in the scope of only a certain batch of material or extensive (general), in the scope of the whole subject or several subjects, hidden, which we talk about when teachers and educators do not notice deficiencies in mastering the material, and explicit, when such a lack is clearly stated. Explicit, persistent and extensive failures lead to unsatisfactory assessments, and in extreme conditions to retaking the year or two, and even to leaving school and dropping out of school before graduation [Szewczuk (ed.), 1985, p. 176].

The reasons for the school failures of the students, who have a reduced level of motivation, are extremely complex and multiple. The complex nature of the reasons is emphasized by all authors who have dealt with their analysis so far. The author's accounts show the reasons for school successes and failures with multi-faceted foundations. The following aspects are listed: economic, social, psychological and pedagogical. The combination of the first two aspects mentioned will make up the term 'socio-economic factors'. They cover all relatively stable social, material, and cultural conditions [Kupisiewicz, 1982, p. 14].

Most students called "difficult" have problems that are caused not only by school but also by the family. There are many factors that cause a lack of motivation. In the literature, many authors can distinguish general reasons:

- socio-economic reasons (e.g. poor material and housing conditions, breakdown of the family structure);
- pedagogical reasons inherent in the teaching process (no teaching aids, excessive number of students in the classroom);
- biopsychic causes (poor health, mental retardation, physical defects).

These causes can be manifested by: anxiety, frustration, apathy, shame, isolation, rejection,

anger, jealousy, lies, shyness, lack of self-confidence, exclusive feelings, aggression, imitation of aggression and brutality used at home, contrariness, lack of understanding occurring especially in only children, thefts, denunciation, cheating in play (very important signal), desire to dominate, excessive guardianship towards others, provoking bullying (scapegoat), falsifying grades to postpone a moment of confrontation with parents, lack of discipline, perceiving the teacher as a parent and giving him similar feelings, which ultimately leads to more impudent behaviours like truancy, discouragement from school, abandonment of school.

To prevent the above-mentioned situations, the education system, parents, school and the teacher-educator have an important role to play. The current education system in Poland includes teaching and raising all children, regardless of their level of functioning in the intellectual, social and emotional sphere. Most children are able to fulfil their compulsory school attendance, in the classroom system, covering the basic scope of the curriculum. Good family, environmental and school conditions as well as psychophysical health guarantee the child proper intellectual and emotional development, as well as give a chance for school and professional success. However, this ideal situation does not apply to all children. In each age group we meet children who are not able to properly and efficiently fulfil the compulsory schooling in public school conditions. These children, in order to achieve the education goals assumed by the school system,

i.e. achieve moral socialization, a certain level of intellectual ability and independent thinking, as well as personal development and self-fulfilment, prepare for social roles - they require special methods and forms of education, therapy and teaching.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons for low motivation to learn among students at all educational stages and education profiles, it is worth paying attention to one more aspect, primarily related to high school students, including technical high school students. Research conducted among vocational school students [Jegorow D., Niećko I. 2010, p. 75] clearly show that unsuccessful educational choices can often be the source of a lack of motivation to learn. Many young people lacked professional advice and a basic, reliable diagnosis of their school competences, predispositions and talents. Such a situation may be the basis for bad decisions related to the choice of education path. This can lead not only to poor academic performance, but also to frustration and discouragement. One of the main reasons why young people decide to study in technical school are real benefits, which include the possibility of gaining a specific profession, and thus taking a job after graduating from high school. Students of vocational schools and technical colleges in the curriculum value the most the large number of apprenticeships and the opportunity to contact potential employers.

Competent teaching staff or modern teaching materials are less important to them. Choosing a secondary school is a special choice in the life of every student. If it is consistent with the skills and interests of a young person, then science will give him satisfaction and contentment, as well as motivate him to deepen his own knowledge.

However, research shows [Jegorow D., Niećko I. 2010, p. 73] that often such a decision is caused by the recommendations of parents and the environment, not specialists. The measurable results of such activities can be seen already after starting school, when the first school failures appear - students stop believing in

themselves and their own abilities. They feel discouraged and their motivation to learn weakens. For many years, the Polish reality has been lingering with the conviction that people who have learning difficulties or are less successful at school should continue their education at vocational school after junior high school (currently primary school). This is a very misleading and unfair opinion, because, contrary to appearances, students of vocational schools have a lot more material to master than students of general high schools. In addition to the educational content of the basic curriculum, they must also acquire knowledge that is closely connected with a specific profession and participate in a number of practical classes, not only at school, but also in workplaces. Most of the additional subjects in technical and vocational schools are based on science such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. It is widely known that the youth of Polish schools have great difficulties with these subjects. Unfortunately, students who often do not deal with such educational material often go to vocational schools. There, each day, their knowledge gaps are gradually expanding. This situation not only leads to increasing problems at school, but also causes discouragement and loss of self-confidence. As a result, students have problems with going into the next grade, or they end up giving up school. Junior high school education unfortunately allows them to get jobs requiring low qualifications and poorly paid. Motivation as an attitude that evokes actions leading to, for example, acquiring knowledge and related needs, is a process permanently inscribed in human nature. However, it is not constant and unchanging in every period of life. As well as its changes do not occur in the same way when it comes to all students. Being aware of the reasons for the decrease in motivation and its location in time, a skillful teacher can try to take actions that will limit this process. However, it should be remembered that stimulating the learner's motivation depends on many factors. The same tasks provide different learners with different motivations. Human motivation depends not only on the person or only on the external situation. The results of research on motivation clearly indicate

the possibility of stimulation by teachers. As part of the content they teach, he or she can create conditions in which students show willingness to improve knowledge and skills and maintain them at the highest level. Therefore, motivating consists in influencing others so that they move in the chosen direction. Because the strength of a person's (student's) motivation to act effectively (make an effort) depends on their belief that they can achieve what they intend to do.

### 1.5.2 Inclusive education practices for students with special needs in Polish public schools

In Poland, actions are taken to create appropriate conditions for the development of education for children and youth with disabilities, for their full participation in society on an equal footing with others. These activities are reflected in regulations regarding educational law. The idea of integrating disabled people and equal educational opportunities has its legal grounding in the Act about an education system that provides all children with the right to education in accordance with their needs and abilities. Including:

1. the possibility of receiving education in all types of schools by disabled children and youth in accordance with individual development and educational needs and predispositions
2. care for students with special needs, by enabling implementation of an individualized education process, forms and curricula as well as revalidation classes,
3. 3. adaptation of the content, methods and organization of teaching to the psychophysical possibilities of students (Act on the education system of 7 September 1991. Journal of Laws No. 173, item 1808).

The reform of the education system has been conducive to educational integration. Integrative forms of education in accordance with the Act on the

education system is one of the four recognized forms of teaching for disabled children in Polish system along with special needs education, public and individual education. Legal basis were created giving parents the right to choose and define the place of their child's education. The general education core curriculum is common for both able-bodied and disabled students (hearing impaired and deaf, visually impaired and blind, physically handicapped, with mild mental retardation). The degree of implementation of the program should be tailored to the individual requirements and capabilities of students with special educational needs. A common core curriculum facilitates joint teaching of children in the conditions of an integration or public class. For students with moderate and severe mental retardation, a separate core curriculum is developed on the basis of which individual educational programs are prepared. (Regulation of the Ministry of National Education and Sport of February 26, 2002 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and general education in individual types of schools, Journal of Laws No. 51, item 458, as amended: Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 210, item 2041; Dz. U. No. 19 of 2005, item 165). The decision on the need for special education issued by psychological and pedagogical counselling centers is the basis for placing a child in an integration, public or special needs school. The counselling center can only suggest the form of education, parents always have the decisive voice in choosing the form of education. The statement of psychological and pedagogical counselling centers contains indications regarding the adaptation of the curriculum to the needs of the child, specifies the conditions for implementation and indicates the need for additional classes depending on deficits. (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education of February 12, 2001 on stating the need for special education or individual teaching of children and adolescents, and issuing opinions on the need for early support for child development, as well as detailed rules for referring to special education or individual teaching (Journal of Laws No. 13 , item 114, as amended, Journal of Laws of 2003 No. 23, item 192). For children and adolescents who have a

certificate about the need for special education, a financing system in the form of additional weights depending on the type of disability is provided, which allows the organization of help and support regardless of the place of education: public, integration and special school. (Ministry of National Education ordinance on the rules for the distribution of part of the general educational subsidy for local government units, issued each year). This decision should not be confused with a disability certificate issued by disability assessment teams for which no additional funding is available in education. (Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of July 15, 2003 on deciding on disability, Journal of Laws of 2003 No. 139, item 1328). Kindergartens and schools in which disabled and socially maladapted pupils study ensure that they follow the recommendations included in the statement of psychological and pedagogical counselling centers. They ensure the implementation of curricula, educational and preventive programs tailored to the individual needs and capabilities of the child, using appropriate methods and forms of work, revalidation or sociotherapeutic classes in accordance with the recommendations contained in the statement. Last but not least they ensure integration with the peer environment. In kindergartens and schools with integration class divisions, additional teachers with special pedagogical preparation are employed to co-organize educational classes, conduct educational work. Relevant specialists providing psychological and pedagogical assistance to the child and his family are also employed. The provisions of this regulation form the basis for developing a program to support a child's family, parallel to the individual educational program developed for the child at school. (Regulation of the Ministry of National Education and Sport of 18 January 2005 on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing and care for disabled children and youth and socially maladjusted in kindergartens, schools and public or integration class divisions, Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 19, item 167). Legal basis, financial incentives in the form of subsidies to increase the appropriate weight for disabled students, greater awareness of parents, an increasing

understanding of the needs of disabled students among teachers and educational authorities mean that an increasing number of disabled children are learning in the open education system in integration or public schools. The direction of development of educational policy for disabled students tends to promote inclusive education. Inclusion does not mean placing children in elementary schools. Instead, it means changing schools which better meet the diverse needs of children and organize appropriate support for them. The school as a whole must change in such a way that it provides access to the full range of educational offer and enables full social integration for all students. Positive experiences resulting from the joint presence of children in integration classes regarding social functioning have resulted in the growing number of parents placing disabled children in public class divisions. Although these students benefit from social contacts, they learn in less favourable conditions - numerous classes and insufficient specialist support. Teachers themselves rate their competences regarding the skills of working with a disabled student low, especially when it comes to adapting the program to the needs of the student and in creating individual programs. Public schools are often not prepared to accept students with disabilities, they need support to help them with their education. The real picture of the functioning of disabled children in a Polish school is illustrated by the conclusions resulting from the implementation of the "School for All project under the Safe and Friendly School program by the Methodological Center for Psychological and Pedagogical Assistance in Warsaw [ed. Bogucka J., Al-Khamisy D. 2009, pp. 62-63]. The authors of the project report that among disabled children included in public schools, the percentage of children with mild mental retardation (35%) and behavioural disorders (10%) is the highest. In recent years, the number of students from the last group has increased significantly and, as it turns out, it is a challenge for teachers and the school. The most commonly used way of educating this group of students are reprimands, discipline, and complaining about difficult family environment. Too often, the

disturbing fact is noticed - individual learning is organized for students with behavioural disorders which has a clear segregation aspect. For students with mental retardation, teachers most often apply milder assessment criteria and lower requirements. In public schools there is a tendency to transfer these students after the first semester to special need or integration schools. In public schools, apart from disabled students, there is a significant percentage (30%) of students with opinions from the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Center. They also require help and support. School principals and teachers often do not differentiate between certificates about the need for special education and disability certificates. This indicates that the awareness of the law relating to the presence of a disabled student is insufficient. Principals do not provide students with the possibility of attending revalidation classes, teachers do not take into account the recommendations contained in the rulings when developing individual educational programs. School education programs, Intra-school Assessment Systems do not take into account the specific needs of disabled students related to their functioning at school.

In order to facilitate recognizing individual educational needs of students and creating individual educational programs, schools should establish teams to support and educate students with SEN. They should also cooperate with local integration and special needs schools. Legislation should be sought to reduce the number of students in a class with disabled children. Provisions should be made regarding the formulation of certificates issued by the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Center. Practice shows their low precision, as a result the certificate is an insufficient basis for the school head to mediate with the local government in support of a disabled child. It would be advisable to set up regional centers to support the education of the disabled child in public schools. They would constitute a substantive, methodological and specialist base for the teacher. Schools that cope with the education of children with disabilities should be promoted. What is more, we should definitely depart from educational effects

school rankings. Sometimes headmasters themselves are afraid of students with disabilities who lower the level of results and the school falls out of rankings. It is not uncommon for parents of able-bodied children to object to integration, claiming that their children lose a lot through it. It is therefore crucial to prepare able-bodied students for cooperation in one class with someone who seems to them different, worse, weaker. A new model of teacher education at all levels seems obligatory, taking into account the specificity of disability. Such a model should equip teachers with an appropriate range of interpersonal, cognitive, therapeutic and organizational competences that will support the implementation of education for the disabled child. In a public school, both the student with special educational needs and the teacher expect support. On the Internet, on discussion forums related to education, you can find a lot of questions, requests for help, doubts. It shows the lively interest in the subject of teachers who understand the need for true integration. They support it, but do not feel prepared to implement it.

The facts presented above clearly show that the Polish school is still not ready to accept disabled students and provide them with conditions for development to the best of their abilities. The reasons for this situation are different and require long-term system solutions on many levels. As the school reality shows, this may result in early school leaving for students with disabilities who do not feel accepted and fulfilled in a Polish school (including a technical school), they are often rejected by it, and their educational needs are marginalized.

### 1.5.3 The NEET phenomenon in Poland: early school dropout and increase of unemployment of youngsters due to social exclusion

To analyze the phenomenon of early school leaving due to lack of integration and social inclusion within the Polish education system the CRAS association, partner of the project, conducted a research on the impact of social exclusion on school dropout, the economic and social impact of *NEETs* on society and

proposed methods to battle the increase of such phenomenon. The phenomenon of NEET youth is relatively new. It was noticed in the global socio-economic landscape just over two decades ago. Its emergence and development is associated with entering adulthood, and thus into the labour market of the so-called *Generation Y (millennials)*, and then *Generation Z* (also sometimes called *Generation C* - from the English words: *connect, communicate, change*), i.e. people born from the 1980s onwards.

The concept of NEET was introduced at the end of the 20th century. It comes from English from the words: *Not in Education, Employment, or Training*. And it means people who do not study, work or train. This term was first used in 1999 in the British government report entitled *"Bridging the Gap: New opportunities for 16 - 18 year olds not in education, employment or training"*. In Poland, in order to refer to the NEET phenomenon, the phrase *ani, ani youth* is often used which means young people who are *neither in education nor working*. In the following years, the presence and growth of the NEET phenomenon was noticed throughout Europe. Its occurrence and development has been subjected to many analyses and researches. A definition framework was created and the age range in which it is considered was proposed. The problem turned out to be so complex, serious and widespread that it was taken into account in the financial programs of the European Union. In the current financial perspective of the European Funds, i.e. for the years 2014-2020, dedicated funds have been allocated to the activation of NEETs under national operational programs.

According to *Eurostat* data for 2018, in the European Union in the NEET category there were 16.5% of people aged 20-34. The highest rate was recorded in Italy - 28.9% and Greece - 26.8%. The lowest rate was recorded in Sweden - 8% and the Netherlands - 8.4%. The scale of the NEET phenomenon in Europe, broken down by EU member state in 2018, was presented in an infographic created by one of the business websites. In Poland, the NEET rate was 16.4% and was characterized

by a downward trend over the decade. However, in numerical terms, this value gives over 1.2 million inactive young people. Translating European percentage data into numbers, the result obtained oscillates around 15 million people of working age. So many young Europeans are outside the labour market and education system! It is a very disturbing phenomenon and a poor prognosis for the future in the context of other processes on the labour markets of individual countries - including leaving the labour market of baby boom generations, an increase of the number of people receiving pensions, staff shortages signaled by employers and supplemented by, e.g. foreign employees, as well as dynamic technological and IT changes. Analyzing the available articles and studies on the phenomenon of NEET one can get the impression that the phrase *NEET youth* has negative associations. In the texts available on the web - published e.g. on news portals, there are such phrases as: *idle youth; young excluded, at odds with life; young claimants; day-to-day youth; generation - 3 times nothing; people who don't want to want, etc.* Such content can be read even in the titles of articles, a large number of which has been observed inter alia on Polish portals in the last several dozen months<sup>[6]</sup>. These types of associations may cause a negative public opinion and build barriers in particular between generations and when in the *employer-employee* relations. Due to the scale and scope reached, it is worth touching upon the topic of *NEETs* to better understand the whole phenomenon as well as to propose and implement effective countermeasures.

The NEET phenomenon has now reached pan-European scale. It also occurs in other areas - especially in highly developed economies (including the USA, Southeast Asian countries). Factors influencing the emergence of NEET youth groups in societies are very similar in most countries. However, each country or region also has specific conditions that affect the intensity and picture of the NEET phenomenon. In the article published on one of the portals of the company from the *Human Resources* field, its author presented a number of reasons for

the phenomenon of NEET on a micro, meso and macro scale. The main reasons at the micro level include:

- low self-esteem,
- lack of persistence in difficult and stressful conditions,
- lack / low level of determination in undertaking challenges accompanying education or seeking employment,
- lack of motivation (to act),
- aversion to different requirements and sacrifices,
- inability to comply with the rules present at school or in the workplace,
- stress and irritability (which in a simplified way can be associated with low mental resistance).

Education was indicated as the main factor at the meso level. Namely, commitment to acquiring knowledge and subsequent degrees of education less likely causes a threat of becoming a NEET than early school leaving. This applies directly to the group of young people as well as the generation of their parents.

Factors at the macro level relate in particular to the occurrence of economic crises and their impact on national economies. Such phenomena are difficult to predict and forecast. We are currently observing an example of such a factor. A pandemic virus that causes respiratory disease, which has spread to all continents in recent weeks, will have unpredictable effects. Current economic forecasts and economic models are losing importance. The future of the world economy remains a great mystery. All industries will be affected by the consequences of a pandemic. However, their scale, range and related social effects and behaviour cannot be predicted at this time. An aspect contributing to the intensification of the NEET phenomenon may be the worldview, characteristic for some societies, which promotes long stay in the family home, the so-called *extended dependency model*. It is characteristic for Italy (the highest NEET percentage) and more and more often also observed in Poland. The main threats

to cultivating such a model are: lowering the independence of the young generation and making it difficult for young people to develop an autonomous approach to life<sup>[8]</sup>. It is worth noting that the scale of the NEET phenomenon is smaller in countries perceived as richer, with deeply rooted traditions of entrepreneurship, including family-owned, in societies considered disciplined and emotionally restrained (countries of the German-speaking area, Scandinavian countries). The characteristics presented in the cited article are based on the conclusions of the Eurofound report, entitled *NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe* published in 2012. The report paid special attention to the scale of the problem of young people withdrawing from the labour market. It estimated, among others, the level of risk of being in the NEET category depending on the set of characteristics that a person possesses, in relation to people who do not have such characteristics, namely:

- people with a low level of education - they are exposed 3 times more than people with higher education and 2 times more than people with secondary education,
- people from families where parents had low education - 1.5 - 2 times more likely,
- people living in smaller towns and remote areas - 1.5 times more likely,
- people struggling with some form of disability - 40% risk, in relation to healthy people,
- people from an immigrant background - 70% risk,
- people with parents who have experienced unemployment - 17% risk,
- people who have divorced parents - 30% risk.
- people from low-income families.

The scale of the NEET phenomenon has been gaining strength over the last 20 years. It is subject to numerous observations and researches, the results of which

can be found in various studies. They are important because the NEET community is not homogeneous. And the problem itself is very complex. It is difficult to apply remedies. The group of people remaining outside both the education system and the labour market includes, among others:

- conventionally unemployed, constituting the most numerous group represented by young people who are jobless for a long and short term;
- young people unable to take up activity in the sphere of work and study due to diseases, disabilities or obligations arising from having their own family - this aspect applies in particular to women. The so-called people unavailable;
- uninvolved youth who are not looking for a job or educational opportunity and they are not limited due to obligations or incapacity for work, as well as those who lead a risky or antisocial lifestyle;
- young seekers of jobs or opportunities to train and improve their own qualifications, but at the same time awaiting opportunities that they consider beneficial due to their skills or status;
- freewill NEETs - young people engaged in other activities, e.g. art, music, acting, self-study or devoting time to travel.

It is pointed out that the NEET group consists of educated young people on the one hand who encounter difficulties in finding a job consistent with their education and aspirations, on the other hand those with low qualifications and those who discontinued school. The lack of motivation to continue learning or change and development of own qualifications as well as total passivity in the professional sphere are listed as the features connecting all the above-mentioned people. However, looking at the groups mentioned above, it is difficult to admit this statement is fully correct. For example, having family commitments does not have to mean a lack of motivation to develop, but rather a lack of opportunities. Similarly, engaging in activities other than professional work is not

necessarily synonymous with total passivity in the professional sphere. It should be treated as acquiring skills, experience and contacts, which may be useful in the future in strictly professional work. Already this brief deliberation indicates the complexity of the NEET phenomenon. Each case or group of cases should be considered on an individual basis. This approach, however, escapes statistics and research that covers wider contexts.

The presence of the NEET phenomenon in societies is extremely worrying because it means being away from the labour market of (sometimes permanent) youth, i.e. the group on which the long-term future in all aspects will depend most. Entering the labour market is one of the key steps in life. You could say the most important thing. Professional success gives you the opportunity to become independent of your parents, start a separate life on your own, implement life plans - starting a family, owning a house or a flat. Financial independence is determines the autonomy of the person. In addition, professional work should not be just a source of income, because it is one of the most important areas of life to which people devote the most time. Therefore, in addition to the material dimension, its dimensions related to self-satisfaction, personal development and fulfilling ambitions are equally important. Lack of satisfactory and developmental work is the cause of many frustrations of young people. They do not have the opportunity to meet their needs, but above all they can't implement their life plans. Young people are suspended between financial dependence on the family and self-reliance. Removing young people from the labour market is worrying because getting out of the protracted state of inactivity and undertaking a satisfying job will be more and more difficult for them. The main obstacle will be a prolonged lack of professional experience and outdated qualifications. Unfortunately, in their case it will be very painful to feel the truth that *whoever stands still moves backwards*. The NEET phenomenon, like most social processes, goes beyond the rigid framework of statistics and mathematical calculations. NEETs are a heterogeneous group. In each country, it consists of collections of

individuals with various characteristics. Descriptive interpretations allow to look at a wide range of connections and dependencies that occur among people considered to be educationally and professionally passive.

At the end of the first decade of 2000s, a group of Polish specialists attempted to analyze the situation of the young generation. On the basis of their work, they created a report entitled *Młodzi 2011*, which described the social and professional conditions of the young generation. In their study they paid attention to the historical context that shaped the reality in which young people of the 2000s came to live. They particularly focused on the fact that the current shape of the Polish economy is due to *the generation of great change* - the *Solidarity generation*, which after the breakthrough year 1989<sup>[13]</sup> built Polish democracy and the foundations of a free market economy. Modern generations of young people and also young employees have grown up and educated in the world shaped by their predecessors. The features possessed by representatives of *the great change* generation, in particular innovation and adaptability, have triggered systemic transformations and changes in the social structure.

Nowadays, there is a growing dissonance between them and their children and grandchildren, sometimes referred to in Poland as the generation of *historical hope and opportunity* <sup>[14]</sup>. And according to the world classification for the so-called *relay generations* belonging mainly to *the generations Y and Z*. NEET issues are related to making decisions about your professional future, entering adulthood and making long-term commitments. These aspects will be briefly examined in this study. Polish experts studying current socio-economic phenomena point to one of the very important reasons for the loss of young people on the labour market. It is the lack of sufficient knowledge about the current situation on the labour market, its possibilities and the necessary qualifications and competences. The mid-90s and the beginning of the 2000s was a period in which planning the educational, and consequently also professional

future of youth, in many cases was based on often unrealistic ideas, as well as suggestions and opinions of parents. In the Polish education system, there was no career counselling / orientation almost until the end of the second half of the 2000s. The need to counteract this trend was clearly articulated in the second half of the 2000's. The reason was, among others, growing NEET (the highest level in 2013), dynamically changing economy and the need to adapt employees, including those entering the labour market. It became obvious that career path planning should start at the early stages of education. In Poland, over the past 30 years there have been significant changes in the economic and social system. Beginning in 1989, the country moved from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy, from a totalitarian system to civil society, from a stable to a dynamic and unpredictable labour market. The rapid development of technology and digitization have radically changed all areas of life. Poland's accession to the EU structures in 2004 opened up previously unavailable opportunities - open borders, free movement of people and capital, financial and institutional support. These changes caused that adolescents growing up in the 90s and 2000s found themselves in a completely different world than their parents and grandparents. In these new realities, the knowledge and experience of previous generations proved to be insufficient and did not always match current conditions. Young people entering adulthood lacked competent guides who would show the right and satisfactory direction of educational and professional development. All the more because the parents' generation also had to adapt and look for their own professional routes in the dynamically changing economy. Some did it better, others worse. Therefore, their children may have lacked a work pattern that ensures satisfaction and success. A large part of the younger generation of parents went abroad looking for a better job. The opening of European borders to Poles since 2004 has initiated a wave of economic emigration. As a result of mass trips to foreign work, an unprecedented phenomenon of so-called *Euro-orphans* appeared in Poland. They are children

who were brought up without at least one parent who went abroad for work purposes. In 2009, i.e. after only 5 years, it was estimated that 110,000 families and every 5th Polish child were affected by Euro-orphanage in Poland. Some of these children are today around 20-year-olds who are entering or should already enter the labour market. Childhood traumas and the effects of pathologies (e.g. permanent abandonment of the family by the parent / parents, alcoholism), emotional and relational problems that they struggled with alone, currently have an impact on their social and professional functioning. Negative experiences gained from families, related to the professional activity of parents, very often affect the choices of young people and young adults. The authors of the report *Młodzi 2011* have identified 4 types of barriers encountered by young people entering the Polish and European labour market. Young people fail to overcome them that is why they often find themselves in the NEET category. Sometimes only temporarily, sometimes unfortunately for a long time. These people are also at risk of falling out of the labour market completely. Despite the fact that almost a decade passed since the creation of the cited study, in Poland there has still been no significant improvement in levelling these barriers, which include<sup>1</sup>:

- mismatch of skills sought by employers and possessed by potential employees. This applies to both *hard skills*, i.e. technical, as well as so-called *soft skills*, i.e. social and emotional,
- expectations related to work and the situation on the labour market. Despite the ongoing economic growth and the increase in the number of jobs, the following are still being observed: discriminatory practices of employers towards young people - i.e. worse job offers, civil law agreements, the possibility of faster dismissal. On the other side there are too high expectations of young employees both in terms of working conditions and the expected remuneration,
- faulty system for recognizing competences in employee-labour market relations (employer). On the one hand, employers still lack the ability to

signal expectations of the candidate, and on the other, jobseekers fail to inform employers about their qualifications. The most popular and the most readable signals have lost their value, i.e. certificates, diplomas. Information about actual qualifications has become really important,

- the fourth type of barriers indicates problems associated with job creation and business development as an alternative to the deficits of classic employment. Efforts have been made to eliminate this obstacle for several years (e.g. creation of start-up companies, business incubators, subsidies for young entrepreneurs). However, young people are still not sufficiently prepared to run their own business and face market challenges. In particular, this problem is visible among young people without higher education. According to data from a survey carried out in 2018, only 12% of students in final grades of upper secondary schools would consider setting up their own business. It is true that almost 60% of them do not exclude this in the future<sup>[19]</sup>. However, the time horizon for such a decision is not specified.

This is a brief description of the reasons why it turned out necessary to introduce targeted and professional support - career counselling during education. All the more so that the period of education is the time when the future fate of today's several- and several-year-olds is shaped and decided. The value of education in the process of shaping the individual and society cannot be overestimated. It is a long-term investment which is a response to changes taking place in societies, economies, and above all in the labour markets. Currently, in the Polish education system, career counselling is compulsory. The figure below presents a graph showing changes in the level of NEETs in Poland over the years 2008-2018.





The first conclusion that comes to mind after looking at the graph is the majority of women in the NEET group. In the whole decade, their level exceeded 23%, reaching the highest in 2013 - up to 26.6%. Until 2013, an increase in the percentage of NEETs in Poland was systematically observed. The analysis of the above data shows that, unfortunately, the practical effects of actions taken in the Polish education system are not yet fully satisfactory. It is indicated that the number of hours of counselling classes is still too small. And career counsellors are not fully prepared to work with young people. However, it should be reminded that career counselling in Polish schools has been compulsory for only 2 years. In addition, although the NEET ratio is high in Poland, it has fallen from over 20% during the past 5 years (2018 to 2013). The positive aspects of the consultancy program introduced include raising awareness of the school environment and parents, and career counsellors specializing regarding the needs of children and young people. Above all, children and schoolchildren have access to educational and career counselling, which increases their potential in relation to their predecessors. Observations show that both the Polish education system and labour market institutions have still a lot of work in the area of effective preparation and introduction of youth to the labour market.

Among graduates of Polish upper secondary schools aged 18-19, according to a 2018 study, interesting professional work is on the 3rd place in the list of life values and aspirations - 40%, after relationships (love, friendship) - 52% and family life - 42%. Only subsequent places occupy such goals as: achieving a professional position and making a career as well as obtaining wealth and high material position - 33% each. The quoted conclusions regarding the *Z generation* coincide with the data contained in the report of the Deloitte advisory and consulting company „*Pierwsze kroki na rynku pracy 2018. Polska*”. The report is a record of the results of surveys carried out on a sample of 2.5 thousand students and graduates of higher education, aged 18-30. Among the respondents, women predominated - 70%, men - 30%. Main conclusions from the report:

- almost half of the respondents declared their willingness to work in different locations and at flexible working hours, with flexible hours being a priority,
- over 60% of respondents want to work in international corporations,
- young employees are much more likely to see themselves as experts than managers. They are not interested in leadership roles. Sociologists associate this attitude with the general withdrawal of young people from making greater commitments and aversion to responsibility,
- there is a growing interest in comprehensive development and gaining diverse experience - more than doing a career,
- the level of coping with stress decreases - 1/3 of respondents declared stress resistance,
- the ability to process and analyze information looks positive - 65% of respondents declare this skill,
- the possibility of using modern technologies in professional work is a motivator and affects the level of attractiveness of work - in particular for men, 61% of them declared so,

- 13% of respondents are interested in running their own business, however, interest in freelancing (53% of this group) and reluctance to taking risks prevail,
- 51% of respondents would choose full-time employment. It is expected to give opportunity to develop and acquire new skills,
- the value of education's usefulness decreases in favor of diverse experience,
- professional work is perceived as a means of obtaining money, the view that professional work is the key to social advancement and wealth is losing importance,
- over the time, the percentage of people who are ready to sacrifice for work is decreasing - in the research sample such readiness was declared by 23% of people. Young employees / job candidates would like the work to give them more free time for other activities and rest. And almost every second representative of the group believes that work cannot require giving up the necessary things in private life. So private life is more important than work,
- remuneration still plays a key role in making decisions about choosing / changing employers.

The topic is quite difficult and raises a lot of controversy. At the same time, in Poland, both sides of the market focus more often on problems and negatives. Employers, especially SMEs from traditional industries, but not only, accuse young people of laziness, demanding attitude and lack of responsibility. They also claim that young people lack the appropriate qualifications. On the other hand, young job applicants present arguments about excessive demands, poor work atmosphere, exploitation - understood as performing hard, in their opinion, work for unsatisfactory remuneration. This type of behaviour is not conducive to improving the situation on the labour market. There is a lack of a common search for solutions and an attempt to understand each other's reasons. Youth rebellion

in a clash with the authoritarian approach causes escalation rather than conflict resolution. The described situation is also one of the less noticed, but not less important reasons for the growth of the Polish version of the NEET phenomenon. Young people, discouraged by the lack of success on the labour market and negative experiences with employers who did not meet their expectations, more or less rational, give up or postpone professional activity. They are often supported by parents who are uncritical and convinced of the uniqueness and genius of their children who are underestimated. Unfortunately, the emotional approach to the matter is not accompanied by the reflection that *standing still means going back*. And the key to success is compromise. This dependence applies to both sides of the market. The dynamics of economic and social changes force the correction of attitudes and behaviour. Dialogue is necessary, thanks to which it will be possible to develop joint and satisfying solutions.

**The "CRAS" Association - Center for the Development of Social Activity** based in Rzeszów is a Polish non-governmental organization. During several years of activity, the Association has implemented independently and in partnership dozens of projects and initiatives with a unit value from several thousand to several million zlotys (PLN), addressed to various target groups, including:

- adults - disabled and unemployed, including both people over 30 and NEETs as well as people with low qualifications, including people from disadvantaged areas (in each project approx. 20% of participants lived in rural areas). They were and are mainly consulting, training, educational and internship projects, grants for establishing and running a business,
- employees of the SME sector - mainly training projects aimed at increasing / obtaining professional qualifications, including specialist industry ones,

- children and youth, including socio-therapeutic club, international project for children from Poland and Ukraine,
- primary and junior high school students (projects regarding the organization of extra classes and retrofitting schools in partnership with local governments),
- seniors - educational and activating projects,
- organizations operating in small local communities, e.g. The Farmer's Wives' Association, Volunteer Fire Brigades - activating projects.

The association is open to new ideas and initiatives, willingly undertakes actions in partnership. The aim of the projects was to increase the employability of the people participating in them and the subsequent accomplishment of employment and socio-employment performance indicators.

The following support path is implemented in dedicated NEET projects:

- identification of the participants' needs and their degree of distance from the labour market as well as individual career counselling. This activity includes: diagnosis of professional predispositions (in the form of an Individual Action Plan) in terms of planning career development. This part is necessary to choose the further support path, i.e. the course / vocational training and / or vocational area in which the internship will be carried out,
- vocational counselling in the form of group workshops, covering in its scope, preparation for the interview, getting to know instruments and services of the labour market and the current market situation. These types of workshops are designed to prepare the participants to take up an internship and effectively search for employment, by equipping them with knowledge and skills related to career development planning, raising and / or supplementing professional competences and qualifications, improving active job search methods,



- vocational training as needed - the purpose of this training is to acquire or increase or adapt the competences and qualifications of participants in the context of their identified needs and the requirements of the labour market. An individualized approach is used, i.e. each participant carries out the training he or she needs the most since the lack of sufficient financial resources to cover them makes it impossible to use commercial training. In several years of the Association's practice, there were demands for a wide variety of trainings, including cosmetics, HR and accounting, CNC or forklifts operator, programming, sales, cash register service, administrative and office employee. Training on the use of the office suite (MS Office) enjoyed great interest in all editions of projects targeted at NEET. This observation shows that, despite the seemingly large computerization of society, especially its young part, specific, basic skills, useful in both private and professional life, are not at a sufficient level. This situation is worrying because the use of the office suite is included in the curriculum in the field of computer science in primary school. Apart from the possible difficulties in accessing equipment or programs, or deficiencies on the part of teachers, perhaps young people lack sufficient awareness that the knowledge, especially practical, passed on at school is of great importance in their future careers,
- professional internships usually cover a period of 6 months of practical work experience. Their purpose is to acquire or supplement professional experience and practical skills in the field of occupation. Employers accepting internships are chosen so that their business profile is most compatible with the training profile and / or predispositions of the project participants.
- job placement - individual support consisting in helping the participant navigate the labour market, help in finding internships or jobs, as well as

contact with employers and matching contacts and meetings between the employer and project participant.

The practice of implementing these NEET projects has shown that they are very popular. In each of them the assumed number of participants was recruited, there were also reserve lists. And this was despite the fact that on the local market from several to several dozen similar projects were carried out simultaneously, selected in a given round of competitions. The forms of support turned out to be attractive for young people. The biggest advantage of each project was the opportunity to undergo a professional internship. Professional training came second - interest in them varied, depending on what kind of people were included in the project and what were their qualifications in relation to the current needs of the labour market.

However, in the opinion of the Association's staff working directly with participants, other forms of support offered in projects, classified as so-called *soft* are also very important. Individual meetings with career counsellors make it possible to discover a person's professional potential, as well as to identify barriers that do not allow them to be effective on the labour market. It often turns out that a person also needs different, specialized help - e.g. psychological, medical, or even styling. Then the role of the adviser also involves showing the possibilities and forms of necessary assistance to the participant. **Group workshops**, in addition to the strictly educational dimension, allow for establishing contacts, interaction, undertaking group cooperation and communication containing feedback. Association trainers conducting group classes in career guidance indicate that in some groups there was even a therapeutic dimension. Participants had to verify their current attitudes regarding employment and the labour market when they encountered other people and real information in the form of job offers and employers' requirements. In a word, participants internally worked through certain areas of their personality and came to their own

conclusions. The effectiveness and need for the so-called *soft* action is best evidenced by the fact that project participants are trying to keep in touch with both the Association and individual employees with whom they had contact. Very often, after completing the project, they inform about their successes or look for information for themselves or friends about other possibilities supporting / developing their careers. An alarming trend that has been observed among project participants over the years is focusing on purely material issues. I.e. financial factors play a major role in the selection of the project - the amount of scholarships envisaged, reimbursement of travel expenses, other gratuities and financial incentives. This attitude is dangerous because young people do not ask *"what benefit will I get?"* or *"how will the project help me?"* but *"how much will I make on it?"* More popular projects are those which provide higher funding for participants, while not necessarily offering a wide range of support tools. Another phenomenon, somewhat related to the previous one, is the behaviour of young people who make their life dependent on projects. Some of the NEET group treated participation in projects as a current way of life. They do not participate in the project to achieve a satisfactory goal, i.e. acquire permanent or at least long-term employment, but after completing one project, they look for another one, without showing commitment to employers during the internship. In the opinion of the Association's employees, this attitude is very disturbing, not at all favourable to leaving the NEET category. In addition, the fact that such people lack such qualities as responsibility, independence, resourcefulness and the desire to self-development, in the future may cause that they will not want to take up paid work and will go to help institutions. This is a very worrying forecast for the future. The experience described shows that young employees need a very wide range of support in entering the labour market. First of all, it should be remembered that they are young people with little experience and very few tangible social and professional contacts. Often, contrary to appearances and adopted attitudes, they are also lost in a highly computerized world. The first

steps on the professional path are therefore very difficult for them. Moreover, as a result of the changes taking place, they follow *the way not paved* by parents and do not have the so-called *generational experience*.

The work of the Association's staff with NEETs showed that the successful introduction of young, professionally and educationally inactive people requires a very wide spectrum of activities. It is necessary to apply an individual approach while combining knowledge from various fields, both economic and psychosocial. Career counsellors and other people involved in the activation of NEET are assigned very difficult tasks. Therefore, the CRAS Association in its work is very open to the exchange of experiences, as well as the adaptation of good practices of other institutions supporting NEET. The main goal of the undertaken actions is to provide the best possible help to participants of implemented projects. This is even more important because the requirements contained in the regulations of competitions for funding from the *European Social Fund* at regional level narrow down the catalogs of support and focus mainly on the so-called *hard activities*. In order to best respond to the needs diagnosed and adapt to constant changes, the Association has attempted to exchange experiences and learn solutions for NEET in other European countries. This action took the form of taking advantage of a grant financed from the *European Social Fund* for the extension of the project implemented for NEET by a transnational cooperation component (Measure 4.3 Transnational Cooperation POWER). Unfortunately, the occurrence of a pandemic also in Poland suspended the work of committees assessing submitted applications. The main conclusions drawn from the experience of work in the field of career counselling with school youth relate primarily to the openness and willingness of young people to cooperate in determining their future. However, for such work to be effective, stability of educational conditions is necessary. Young people should be specifically aware of the educational path and the opportunities it offers. Important observation of advisers also concerned the criteria for choosing the further path of education. Among young people from

rural areas and smaller cities (and this area was covered by this project), the main criterion for choosing a school after finishing primary education was distance from the place of residence. Youth did not sufficiently analyze their skills and predispositions, but indicated schools in the nearest neighboring towns. It is worth paying attention to this aspect, because broadening horizons in this area will allow for a better tailored choice of education in line with the predispositions and needs of the labour market. This in turn has a chance to limit the growth of NEET in the future.

Several years of work of the Association's staff with various categories of the unemployed, young and NEETs, as well as observations of the surrounding socio-economic reality both on a national and European scale allow to draw the following conclusions:

- it is necessary to familiarize young people with the labour market and its needs and requirements in the form of, among others career counselling from the first stage of education,
- young people need support in acquiring professional experience - in the form of apprenticeships and professional internships and establishing contacts with employers to take up their first job after completing education,
- continuing the path of cooperation between secondary, tertiary education and the labour market that has already begun in Poland, which aims to prepare employees in occupations that are in demand on the labour market and international youth exchange projects,
- along with entering the labour market of youth, the growing needs of young people in the so-called *soft* area, i.e. motivation to act, adaptation to changing conditions of the labour market, socialization, self-empowerment, reformulation of thinking in the direction of ceasing to use family support, planning,

- the needs of young people in a special situation or disadvantaged people requires attention. Work on motivation and independence as well as opportunities for development is particularly important for people with disabilities as well as those struggling with illnesses (including depression affecting an increasing number of Polish teenagers). On the other hand, for people from small towns, it is necessary to broaden their horizons and increase educational and professional mobility, including abroad, taking into account positions other than, most often chosen, simple physical works (e.g. trips abroad for fruit and vegetable collections),
- the need to take action directed at entrepreneurs - mainly SMEs, who have negative experience with young employees or are afraid of lack of competence and involvement of young employees. Realizing that the basis in the employer-employee relationship are proper communication, mutual respect and openness to the other side. Building a good relationship between the company and the employee is the basis of its market success, which cannot be forgotten by small business enterprises,
- the need to take action directed at the general public, stigmatizing attitudes of overprotection, social acceptance of passivity, and promoting entrepreneurship, independence, creativity, social and civic activity of young people. Also promoting the idea of Long Life Learning, which should permanently appear in the social worldview due to dynamic economic and technological development and progressing social changes.

These lines of action will reduce the growth of NEET. As a implementer of various types of initiatives, working with people from various social groups on a daily basis, the CRAS Association is aware that the fulfillment of the postulates is not possible through individual actions. Actions in many areas are needed in order to achieve the goal of activating the NEET group and limiting the development of this phenomenon in the future in Poland and Europe. From state institutions responsible, among others for education and labour market institutions, through



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the activities of the enterprise sector and NGOs to bottom-up, social initiatives that support and help. On the other hand, the area of *European Funds*, based on adjusting financial support to the needs of regions, is of strategic importance in eliminating social and economic inequalities and preventing adverse phenomena on a European scale. In this aspect, the key dimension is the exchange of information and experience, which are the basis for tailoring interventions to the needs of individual countries and regions.

The growing problem of economically and educationally inactive young people on a European scale has resulted in undertaking various types of actions aimed at improving this situation. Awareness of the growing problem and possible future effects inclines to take actions supporting the educational and professional development of young people in terms of the needs of the labour market. In Poland, the main activities in this area include:

- introduction of educational and career counselling to the primary school curriculum. Its aim is to familiarize with the educational offer and the needs of the labour market as well as educational and professional orientation,
- Poland's accession to the European Higher Education Area (the so-called *Bologna system*), i.e. education in a uniform study system in Europe and the use of comparable diplomas. The purpose of this action is to increase the mobility of young people, enable education and work abroad,
- cooperation of vocational, secondary and higher education with employers from the region, which aims to prepare employees in terms of current market needs. At the level of secondary education, this mainly applies to basic vocational and secondary vocational schools - profiles of occupations which are in demand are created (e.g. hospitality technician, chef, programmer technician, welding technician),
- enabling the acquisition of additional qualifications during school education - e.g. driving licenses of various categories, certified vocational

courses based on the school's infrastructure. Students from a given school are completely or largely exempt from paying for these courses. This is to acquire new qualifications and increase competitiveness on the labour market,

- creating the so-called *fields of study ordered* at universities - creating, in consultation with employers and the regional government, fields of study of key importance for the knowledge-based economy (e.g. aviation and astronautics, construction, mathematics, technical physics),
- serving apprenticeships and professional internships during secondary and higher education - enabling familiarization with the job in a given industry, gaining first experience, presentation of the employer,
- use of EU funds by schools for the creation and equipment of classrooms and practical school training centers - students can practice using machines and devices in workplaces,
- cooperation of regional companies with universities (mainly technical) - equipment for laboratories and research laboratories - students can perform tasks on devices used in industry,
- grants and research projects - from public funds and commercial sources - students, doctoral students and university employees can carry out research and test solutions for use in individual industries,
- program of student internships in regional companies - on the basis of appropriate agreements, students have the opportunity to learn about work in a given company. This type of cooperation has a chance to end with an employment offer,
- transnational mobility and exchange programs for pupils and students and teaching staff - financed mainly from EU Funds (e.g. Erasmus + program), but also other NGO funds and grants that aim to exchange experiences, learn / improve language skills, increase openness and creativity,

establishing international contacts, knowledge of other cultures. These are skills very much desired by many employers,

- internship programs and career development paths for young employees - mainly offered by large companies and corporations, giving young employees the opportunity to face the reality of work in a given industry,
- the option of combining education with work - available thanks to the flexibility of both education institutions (e.g. consent to an individual course of teaching) and employers (flexible working hours),
- activity of career offices at secondary schools and universities - in these places are available, among others internship and work offers from the regional market for students and graduates of universities,
- organization of job fairs - cyclical, open events during which employers present their companies and jobs. It is possible to make contact, gather information, and apply directly to current job offers,
- offer of activation projects: training, educational, internship addressed to young people. These are projects financed mainly from EU Funds, implemented by enterprises, NGOs, as well as Job Centers. Thanks to these instruments, their participant receives an individually tailored support path, which aims to lead to effective employment or acquisition of new skills and qualifications,
- offer of vocational and qualification trainings and courses, but also the so-called soft skills in social, coaching and general development areas - available both stationary and via the Internet.

The several examples mentioned above show that there is a wide range of possibilities and support for young people entering or preparing to enter the labour market. Actions are taken in the form of system solutions at the state and even supranational level as well as initiatives of the enterprise sector or activities of individual entities. The above catalog does not exhaust all available options. Observations of the regional, national and European labour market and



phenomena occurring on it show that many actions taken still require development. System solutions are subject to the risk of not keeping pace with dynamic market changes due to the need to maintain the legislative procedure. However, this does not change the fact that at many levels intensive activities are undertaken to limit the development of the NEET phenomenon and the wasting of the potential of young people. Analyzing the current situation, the targeted offer and drawing from own experience in working with young employees, the conclusion is that there is a lack of in-depth work on the sphere of motivation. Arousing young people's willingness to act according to the rule *where there is a will there is a way* should be the basis for working with young people and young employees. This should also be accompanied by the message that work will translate into measurable effects in the form of achieving a satisfactory standard of living. Young people have unlimited potential and great opportunities open to them. It is important to encourage them to mobilize and use the available tools on the road to success.

Summing up the issues related to the NEET phenomenon, it should be emphasized that it needs to be considered in the longer term. In order to counteract the increase in the number of economically inactive young people, they should be guided on a long-term, sustainable path of educational and professional development. Undertaking impulsive, uncoordinated actions will not bring results. Young people need stable and lasting employment of good quality. To make it possible, it is necessary to equip them with the proper qualifications to enter the labour market successfully. On the other hand, the labour market should be open to the signaled expectations and needs of young employees, the fulfilment of which can result in increased efficiency, creativity and commitment to the employer.



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## 2. From theory to practice: promoting diversity awareness and social inclusion through innovative teaching and learning methods

### 2.1 The role of new technologies in fostering innovative education methods

The **Guidelines for the school integration of pupils with disabilities (MIUR, 2009)** underline the importance of using educational mediators, IT equipment and aids, software and specific aids to encourage inclusion-oriented didactic planning through a the combination of computer methods and traditional teaching methods. It is well known that the use of electronic materials is characterized by the greater customization opportunities that they offer both in terms of readability (possibility of varying font size, line spacing, letter spacing, contrast, background color) and communication channels (electronic text can also be read by vocal synthesis or a natural voice).

Benefits of technology for an inclusive classroom:

- more possibilities of **access to knowledge**;
- multiple and customizable communication channels** and ways of expression that stimulates attention and **encourage participation** of students
- stimulates **motivation and curiosity** as it is commonly used by millennials as their main channel of communication;
- calls for **collaboration**, sharing and development of skills.
- possibility to present educational contents in different **creative** ways.

It is also helpful for children with special needs to communicate and interact on a more equal level with their peers. Assuming that pupils are aware of the benefits that technology might bring in the learning environment, detaching from the idea that electronic devices might be used only for entertainment, **adaptive technologies** can open a new world, especially to those with physical and cognitive limitations and make them feel better about themselves as active

learners. Some of the advantages of using technology include promoting **academic success for students with SEN** in the field of writing, mathematics, spelling, reading and comprehension, enhancing their organizing capability and most importantly encouraging their social inclusion in society. Specific softwares and platforms can indeed be used to supplement class curriculum and can help students continue learning outside the classroom. Teachers must therefore receive adequate training and information on digital tools applied to didactic methods and most important, they might understand that what really makes the difference isn't a particular software or app itself, but the logics and objectives that they put at stake when those kind of technological tools became part of regular classroom equipment.



## 2.2 Inclusive learning platforms and tools

**E-learning platforms** are the most common tech tools used by school teachers as they provide direct access to contents and teaching materials from everyone's personal devices and they represent a good resource in case of students who are unable to attend lessons. An Estonian case-study<sup>13</sup> conducted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education with contribution of the UNESCO IITE about **ICTs in education for people with disabilities** showed the successful results of the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre (ELDC) initiative focused on provide effective and inclusive training through the improvement of **e-learning solutions**, especially for students with disabilities, as e-learning adds necessary flexibility to their learning process. Physical accessibility of learning environments constitutes a bigger barrier, therefore ensuring universal access in terms of e-learning environments, hardware and software is the best approach to ensure that different learners can benefit from the use of ICT and e-learning environments, as well as possibilities for taking an individualised approach with adaptations.

Applications based on text-to-speech technology, like *Natural Reader*<sup>14</sup>, primarily have a compensatory use for pupils with specific difficulties (dyslexic or partially sighted pupils), but can actually be very useful for everyone, for instance in the study of foreign languages, taking advantage of the possibility of slowing down the reading speed. Other applications allow acquisitions of working methods useful to everyone not only at school but also in daily life; knowing how to organize an agenda or how to use a drive or a platform for sharing resources and the work done are skills that can be very useful at workplace as well as in private life. Particularly useful for students with Specific Learning Disorders are

<sup>13</sup> N.Tokareva, M.Turner, ICTs IN EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: Review of innovative practice; UNESCO, European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011; p.24.

<sup>14</sup> Natural Reader software link, <https://www.naturalreaders.com/online/>

applications like *Seeing AI*<sup>15</sup>, a talking camera app that recognizes objects and creates audible descriptions for a user with a vision impairment. The app can describe to a student the brightness of a room or the value of currency in the student's hand. Another one is *Livescribe Aegir pen*<sup>16</sup>, a device that can record audio while a student handwrites notes, which are automatically sent to the student's email or saved in the cloud. Nowadays inclusive teaching is gradually detaching itself from the traditional educational approach of the frontal lesson and of the single training plan for the classes of students (according to the *one-size-fits-all* concept) and embracing those models that tends more and more to enhance the potential of experiential activities supported by technological tools and teaching programs aimed at developing individual transversal skills through workshops and group work. Tools that allow to produce stimulating presentations like *Prezi* and *Powerpoint*, lead students to produce new creative materials that show their degree of understanding of a specific subject and their personal way to expose to others what they've learned. Also, mind-mapping digital tools could also be a great support production of maps and schemes through applications like *C-map* or *Coggle* allowing both students and teachers to visually organize complex concepts, making them easier to understand and fix them better in mind.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/seeing-ai>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.livescribe.com/site/aegir-smartpen/>



### 2.3 Innovative teaching methods

In Europe, all member states have agreed on a framework of **eight “key competencies”** that are seen as necessary for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment (European Commission) including:

- competencies in communication,
- mathematics, science and technology
- learning to learn
- social and civic competencies
- sense of initiative
- entrepreneurship
- cultural awareness
- expression.

These competencies are underpinned by the development of transversal competences like critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and decision-making.

Besides the great importance of teaching methods and teacher’s ability to face their student’s diversity and to bring harmony within the classroom, student’s ability to learn subjects in a critical and conscious way has been given more and more importance since the introduction of alternative/supplementary didactic methodologies to the traditional frontal lessons has demonstrated that using **metacognitive strategies** is the first useful step that helps reducing learning inequalities and improve student’s autonomy and personal development of self-awareness.

*Teachers who use metacognitive strategies can positively impact students who have learning disabilities by helping them to develop an appropriate plan for learning information, which can be memorized and eventually routine. As students become aware of how they learn, they*

*will use these processes to efficiently acquire new information, and consequently, become more of an independent thinker<sup>17</sup>.*

*The European Council recommendations 18/12/2016<sup>18</sup> state that "learning to learn" (which is another way of describing metacognition applied to learning) is one of the most important skills that a student must acquire. The final result should be the **transition from an uncritical study**, carried out according to predefined and uniform teaching methods, **to a personalized and conscious study**. Through didactic strategies of selection, organization and elaboration, the student learns to create concept maps and identify the central ideas of the study topic, as well as to rework and reorganize them in an organic way together with the information previously acquired. Alternative and supplementary didactic approaches are aimed to put emphasis not only on proper learning experience of students but also on the valorization of individual strengths and assessment for all key competences. Moreover, If we consider the metacognitive approach not only on an individual level, but transferred to a collective context where a group of students must apply metacognition not only to themselves, but to all members where everyone plays a defined role. Such a way of learning, also called as cooperative learning, transforms the teacher into a "supervisor" of processes, granting students a high level of autonomy. **Cooperative learning<sup>19</sup>** is a strategy used by group/number of students to achieve a common goal with mutual collaboration and support. Teachers should organize three or five members groups so that students are mixed as heterogeneously as possible. Then, cooperation between peers provides for a more structured division of roles, in which each member gives his contribution based on his skills and inclinations. Final outcomes of such method is making everyone learn the assigned material*

<sup>17</sup>Cit, Metacognitive Strategies, Inclusive Schools Network, 2015, <https://inclusiveschools.org/metacognitive-strategies/>

<sup>18</sup> European Council recommendations 18/12/2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006H0962>

<sup>19</sup> Cooperative Learning, <http://fieradidacta.indire.it/blog/metodologie-didattiche/il-cooperative-learning/>

positive interdependence (each member can succeed only if all members succeed), face to face interaction, individual accountability (each member do their fair share of work), group processing (reflecting on how they work and improve). When learning situations are structured cooperatively, regular and special education students can work together in pairs or teams to accomplish their common goals. The characteristic of cooperative teaching is that students with special needs do not have to leave the classroom during lessons, but that it is support that enters the classroom. Such methodology **encourages peer tutoring**: rather than referring to authorities outside the group, students will self-evaluate and correct their work independently, learning to bring out their personal attitudes and the idea that the common goals could only be achieved through group work will allow students to develop a positive idea of relational dependence. Team working and the ability to work in autonomy is nowadays one of the most important and, it is therefore very important to mature these skills within the school environment.



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### 3. Examples of best practices. Strengthening socio-emotional, relational and pro-social skills: an Italian case-study.

#### 3.1 The "Peer tutoring - Banca del Tempo" project<sup>20</sup>

*'Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.'*

*( John Dewey, 1915)*

Peer tutoring (or peer mentoring) helps students to learn from their peers reaching higher learning and greater retention in the considered educational/subject areas through individualized attention, closeness with the instructor, influence of a role model. Students gradually learn to play a new role, an active part in their own learning, developing a commitment to their individual success; it encourages and demands creativity, independence and self-esteem. The roles of teachers shift from assuming complete control to sharing the responsibility of building an active learning environment and provide guidance by preparing, supporting, moderating and supervising tutors and tutee. When more experienced students tutor novice students in a collaborative learning experience, both parties gain benefits like improved understanding and performance in the subject area involved, improved study skills and confidence, as well as building friendships. Such didactic method is based on "exchanges" between two (or more) students not only for educational purposes as it could also be a preventive and contrasting tool with respect to the various problems related to pre- and adolescence behaviours towards others like bullying, teasing, using verbal or physical violence, and consequently provoking lack of mutual respect and cooperation within the classroom. Peer education is, in fact, an intervention methodology with the aim of developing and improving skills and abilities both to learn and to relate to others. The expected outcomes of peer

<sup>20</sup> Didattica e inclusione scolastica. Ricerche e pratiche in dialogo, F.Schir, 2019; pp.51-61

education are mutual positive impact, the horizontal transmission of knowledge, and the creation of a positive atmosphere of mutual help and understanding.<sup>21</sup>

The "Peer tutoring - Banca del Tempo" project started in 2017 following the exchange of ideas and comparative analysis between the teachers of the "G. Segantini" and the "Gandhi" secondary schools located in Merano (Italy). The development of the project started its cycle through networking between schools and institutions. After several meetings between school managers of the schools involved, referring pupils (school representatives), project referent teachers and staff, the foundations were provided for the project, identifying operational phases: from the study of operational models to undertake peer tutoring in schools, to the methods for selecting and training the group of tutor pupils.

The selection of the tutors took place on a voluntary basis through the pupils' self-candidacy, taking into consideration not only the requirements related to school skills, but also the ability to take responsibility, to respect commitments, to have good communication skills. Seminars and ad hoc training days were organized for the tutors, with the aim of guiding them in promoting the development of empathic and relational skills in order to share personal resources, develop an attitude of confrontation between students and establish a climate of trust and collaboration between peers and between students and teachers. The 'tutor' character is the focus of the research, which main purpose is to find out if transversal resources put in place through peer tutoring can be effective in a preventive sense with respect to discomfort and exclusion of pupils and in an orientation sense with respect to school and professional choices of the students involved.

With regards to monitoring activities, in order to verify the effectiveness of the project, questionnaires were administered to the same sample of pupils at the end of the experience to identify differences between those who carried out the

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<sup>21</sup> Effective Teaching Practice: Peer Tutoring in Education for Active Citizenship, O.Bombardelli,2016.

activity and those who, didn't participate. Data analysis was therefore conducted both through a quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative approach (through observations in the schools where the project is carried out, guided diaries, in-depth interviews, focus groups).

The first questionnaires were administered in 2018 in the classes of all the schools involved in the project who experimented with the peer-tutoring methodology. At the end of the experience, the same questionnaire was administered which made it possible to compare the data to check if there are significant differences in the acquisition of life skills between those who participated in the "Banca del Tempo" project, or similar experiences, with respect to those who did not engage in similar activities.

In the end, the following types of data have been produced:

1. tutors' answers to the biographical questionnaire and to another one relating to life skills;
2. answers from tutors, tutees and teachers to interviews;
3. data derived from 'guided journals' written by some tutors and tutee;
4. information collected through the observations conducted by the researcher in the various project contexts;
5. final focus group with tutors, tutees and teachers including those also involved in interviews and in the editing of guided diaries.

The project was also useful to understand if peer-tutoring could work as an integration and inclusion tool for pupils with migrant backgrounds or different ethnic backgrounds and on the effects in relation to school drop-outs and cases of bullying in the schools involved. The peer tutoring method thus applied can be configured as a training practice capable of giving the school the opportunity to truly be a place of well-being that welcomes diversity.

### 3.2 Alternative didactic methods: challenges and opportunities

**Learner-centred approaches** similar to peer-tutoring, like *flipped classroom*<sup>22</sup>, which replaces activities usually done in the in-class sessions outside of the classroom and vice versa, and *blended-learning*<sup>23</sup>, a teaching methodology that combines face-to-face traditional teaching and online training, are equally effective and demonstrate that what these non-traditional didactic methodologies have in common, is the enhancement of individual transversal skills, but also the creation of learning environments that encourage cooperation between students and mutual support. These methods, when performed correctly, have a great potential as a **tool for violence and discrimination prevention**. When different diversity factors like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical and cognitive ability are seen by pupils as an opportunity to learn different perspectives and enrich their knowledge, instead of being reasons for bullying and exclusion, tolerance level within communities and respect towards others increase as well as pupils' well-being and their success in school.

On the other hand, we must also consider that implementation of the above-mentioned methods, also raises some challenges. They necessitate high commitment from both students and teachers. Since the learning activities always rely on the students' self-motivation, unmotivated learners tend to be

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<sup>22</sup> **Flipped Classroom** is a model that typically assumes students learn the subject individually in the online mode so that they can actively contribute in a group in the in-class learning activities. Most common reasons for students' positive perception of flipped classrooms are the possibility to study anywhere, any time, and at their own pace, and the possibility to download the materials (video or modules) pause and reread/replay them so that they learn at their own pace. EFL Theory and Practice: Voice of EED UK, English Education Department Collegiate Forum (EEDCF) 2015-2018, p.65

<sup>23</sup> **Blended Learning** lectures are recorded and put online or a learning management systems used to create a replica of the physical classroom. Besides accessibility to materials provided by teachers, pupils can also upload their own notes or integrative stuff that may help their peers to understand better the lessons, and help the teachers to participate in students learning process and facilitate understanding of contents.

uninvolved in learning consequently feel excluded. Therefore, teachers should keep on trying to motivate the students and make the learning materials and activities as interesting as possible. Participatory methods require a strong teacher training, design effort, a wide range of materials and special measures to mitigate the risk of unforeseen situations that would destroy the whole activity. Also the lack of support teachers and loss of expertise have implications for many students with disabilities and disadvantaged social status. Some qualitative studies also confirmed that support teachers share feelings of marginalisation, isolation and personal dissatisfaction, as well as 'feelings of being treated as second-class members of the staff, devoid of status and power to bring about effective support for inclusion.

To conclude, before thinking about innovative solutions and the best alternative didactic method to bring in classrooms, it is important that school staff, with families support, is aware of the importance of co-teaching in inclusive education and strategic design of each class, given a previous analysis of each student's strengths and weaknesses, potential and psycho-physical status.

### 3.3 The ‘*School-Work Alternation*’ experiment : enhancing employability and the importance of soft skills development

School-Work Alternation is an innovative education method addressed to students of upper secondary schools aimed to allow them to “alternate” periods of training in the classroom and inside companies (or other hosting establishments) so that they can apply theory to practice, useful for developing technical-professional, and soft skills. Such method was introduced because of the need to support the development of transversal skills, recognized as “ability to support adaptations and positives that make individuals efficiently ready to meet the demands and challenges of daily life”. Law no. 107/2015 emphasised the importance of bringing together knowledge with know-how, intensifying schools’ networks. Establishing partnership with associations and companies encourages the dissemination of educational processes that focuses on acquiring useful skills for the world of work, while providing educational and professional guidance, self-entrepreneurship, active citizenship, and greater involvement of all pupils in the learning processes, also thanks to new technologies.<sup>24</sup>

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The planning of SWA courses requires consideration of both curricular dimension (with attention to the connection and consistency with the disciplinary contents of the curriculum vitae), and the experiential (practical) dimension, carried out in the work context. These dimensions must be integrated into a unitary path that aims at the joint development of the skills required by the educational, cultural and professional profile of the course of study and the technical ones (where provided) and transversal ones (MIUR, 2015).

The international literature, in fact, well describes the elements of effectiveness of the training practices that integrate school and work, promoting the construction of meaningful learning and supporting students’ motivation, facilitating the

<sup>24</sup> INDIRE, <http://www.indire.it/en/progetto/school-work-alternation/>



acquisition and transfer of soft skills, supporting the development of professional identity and transition to work.

The point of view of Italian students regarding their experiences of school-work alternation has emerged through a research focused on the question “Which skills are considered essential for your future?”<sup>25</sup>. The young participants were able to indicate a series of important skills such as:

- a) **Relational skills.** Because it is essential to know how to behave in a respectful and civil manner within the work environment, interact with colleagues despite diversity or differences of thought and belief, in order to obtain an optimal final result.
- b) **The willingness to learn.** As specified by some students, ‘there is always something to learn’; “You must have the ability to keep up with the times and adapt to any situation and use all the tools that are made available in the workplace, trying to give your best.”;
- c) **Digital skills.** Given the obvious change in the type of professions and communications and the growing demand for IT skills;
- d) **Team working skills.** To be able to work in harmony with one’s colleagues and to know how to share ideas and points of view;
- e) **Communication skills.** Knowing how to talk is considered the skill that allows to achieve the right mediations between personal interests and common needs, facilitating the achievement of the overall objectives;
- f) **The spirit of initiative.** Considered as ‘the courage to jump into new experiences and to fearlessly explore the opportunities that life has to offer and to let us make the best choice for the future’; these are statements that highlight the importance of getting involved, without being afraid to seize the opportunities and take risks;

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<sup>25</sup> Lo sviluppo delle soft skills in Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro: punti di vista degli studenti italiani, C. Tino, V. Grion, Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education 13, 1, 2018.

- g) **Creativity**, seen as the strategy that allows you to always be involved and active, despite the presence of 'increasingly dynamic working contexts';
- h) **Flexibility / Adaptation**. Indicated as a process that affects both the mind and skills as a necessary condition to face a competitive working environment;



### 3.4 The inclusion of Roma, Sinti and walking children in the Italian school.

In recent years, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, University and Research, have promoted the **Project for the inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children and adolescents**, which places within an institutionally shared framework, made up of the national strategy for the inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti 2012-2020, the third national biennial plan of actions and interventions for the protection of rights and the development of subjects in developmental age and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The project proposal stems from the positive results of the comparison processes started within the coordination table of the reserved cities of Law 285/97, which in recent years has favoured the start of a process of study and discussion on specific topics and the exchange on good practices for children and adolescents. The reserved cities are committed to building a common programming, which starts from the experiences consolidated in each city to arrive at outlining an experimental model, which can be monitored and evaluated in the course of work and in the final results. The general purpose of the project is to encourage the inclusion processes of RSC children and adolescents; promote the dissemination of good work practices and knowledge; build a collaboration network between the reserved cities that adhere to the project. The project aims to work through activities that involve the two main areas of life of RSC children and adolescents: school and the living context (often the so-called "camp").

Starting from the experience and recognition of the great skills that the school has put in place in recent years to respond to the changed characteristics of users and social changes, the project has set itself the objective of offering tools so that it becomes even more capable of support the choices of RSC families to invest in education, to be more inclusive for all and to be a place of effective participation for all pupils and their families, specifically for pupils and RSC families. Particular attention is given to the improvement of the school climate in

its two components linked to the interaction between different subjects and to organizational and managerial elements of the class, focusing on tools such as cooperative learning, learning by doing and laboratory activities.

The work in the camp or in other housing contexts of the children was aimed at integrating the objectives of school success with those aimed at promoting the overall well-being of the child in relation to his family. The activities therefore sought to strengthen the work done at school, but also to encourage access to the local services of the families involved and promote health protection courses.

Compared to the first three years, **the numbers of the project increase**: the first three years involved 3,500 students, about 400 Roma, Sinti or Caminanti and 44 schools, while the new one involves 5,580 students, about 600 RSC children and 81 schools. The 2017-2020 three-year period includes training meetings, workshops and activities aimed at families. The work is centered on three areas: school, housing contexts and the local network of services.

In general, participation in school outings and extracurricular activities and the participation of parents and in general of the family in class meetings, formal and informal interviews with teachers and the retirement of the student report are significantly improved. importance of the fact that the project, at least in part of it, that relating to school, is addressed to all children, teachers and families and not only to the RSC community, and is conceived as a shareable resource.

#### 4. Developing transversal skills through cooperative learning and peer tutoring: how elements of parish maps design and deliberative democracy can be applied in a school environment

##### 4.1 Social perception of the environment: Parish Maps

A particularly suitable tool for an inclusive and sharing approach is the collective design of a Parish Map. The expression Parish Map, born within the British experience of the Common Ground (non-profit body dedicated to promoting the feeling of belonging of the inhabitants to places through actions that inspire the creative dimension).



Parish Map Britannica. Sito web: [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk)

Creating a Parish Map means expressing collectively recognized values, being involved in the issues that affect the place and taking charge of the issues related to it. The dominant goal is to highlight the richness of the local heritage by

evidencing how the inhabitants of a given area perceive their territory. It is clear that in the specific moment of creation of the map, it is possible to decide what to include and what to exclude without worrying about common standards; in addition, there is freedom to use materials, symbols, words, in defining the borders, in referring to local legends and beliefs. It can be said that a Parish Map is an expression of the spirit of the place<sup>26</sup>.

In a school context, planning a Parish Map may help building a dialogue around issues of social interest and allows the achievement of a concrete result. If one thinks of how the map is drawn up, it is clear that the document is an all-citizen product: since it is a tool that is essentially based on the free dialogue between the local residents, free from any technicalities and route schematics, the Parish Map does not run the risk of placing participants on different levels. The key to the Parish Map lies in the communicative power of the drawing: whether it is a collage, an embroidered canvas or an abstract representation, it is not a question of judging the quality of the representation but rather the effectiveness, or rather the strength, with which it conveys the values of a community, therefore the local "feeling". The process ends with the construction of something concrete, in which the manual skills and creativity of the pupils are the protagonists. The importance of the participation of each individual student therefore comes into play, since it is a collective design process having as main objective both the production and the use of knowledge, in an exercise of self-identity representation and recognition of the typical values of the place they inhabit. The community map tries to stimulate the inhabitants to identify the familiar things that need to be emphasized around them, actively showing affection for everyday places.

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<sup>26</sup>A. Turchi, Dalle Parish Maps britanniche alle Mappe di Comunità italiane: semplice trasposizione o differente interpretazione?



The community map does not only aim to create a more extensive and descriptive representation of the territory (and the stories connected to it) than that of official papers and documents. It is its subjective character - given both by choosing the elements that will be represented and by the method identified to draw them - that makes it original.

#### 4.1.1 How to realize a Parish Map?

There is no standard procedure to realize a Parish Map. It is essential that the class involved in the project identify the main stages they want to analyze, visit and put on the map.

Therefore, we proceed to the identification of the geographical area and its size. In general, this area should not be too large, otherwise the difficulties in identifying the common elements of the place capable of arousing the interest of all could multiply. The area should not be too limited either.

It is then necessary to form a working group that begins to wonder about what are the elements that define the character of a territory.

The starting questions are:

- *What is important for me in this area?*
- *What do I like and what don't I like?*
- *What makes this place different from all other places?*
- *What do we want to do with this heritage and how can we preserve it?*

The group is usually composed of a variable number of people (from 10 to 30 people) and the invitation to participate must be extended to the whole class.

The research phase produces a lot of material that will be collected and then selected on the basis of the criteria established by the working group. After the first meetings it is possible to work for thematic groups (architectural heritage, historical memories, local traditions ...) or territorial (forwards, neighbourhoods ..).

Each working group will present its research in front of the class, and at the end a meeting will be held in which the most important places to visit and deepen will be chosen.

Once the elements that characterize the territory have been identified, the map is drawn up.

The teachers will have the task of promoting the process, but not overlapping it, organizing discussion and operational groups with low hierarchy and controlling the timing of the process with respect to appropriate macro-stages, up to the definition of the map, which should take place before the end of the school year.

Not being an official map, the community map must not strive to faithfully represent reality. The goal that the map has set itself is not aesthetic perfection or dimensional correctness, but the originality and effectiveness of the message transmitted. The community map is an affective card, so the representation can be very free, using any technique (drawings, photos, collages, videos, embroidery, mixed techniques ...) and any support material.

The class is then divided into an artistic group which is entrusted with the task of supporting the work group, so that they translate the contents collected into a visual language, and a narrative group that will decide how to tell the experience through the map and other content, possibly digital.

It is also important to organize a presentation and participation meeting with all the school children and families to communicate the first results of the work and collect further ideas, suggestions and contributions, making use of post-its to be placed on the first summary papers produced .

The final version of the map will be presented in a public ceremony. A copy of the map must be displayed in a public school location. It will then be reproduced in various copies (on suitable formats and supports) to be distributed as evidence of the path taken. Furthermore, the reproduction of the map can be used for the dissemination of local knowledge: small publications, articles, calendars, postcards.



## 4.2 Overcoming prejudice and discrimination with deliberative polling in schools

Deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. Although consensus need not to be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants

are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterizes deliberation.<sup>27</sup>

Deliberation is a discussion open to all participants, in which any argumentation should be presented in a comprehensible manner. Participants are encouraged to grow past self-interested thinking and to show mutual respect for different opinions displayed. The discussants can reflect on their preferences in a non-coercive manner leading to a better understanding of alternate viewpoints.

The deliberative turn also extended possible sites where deliberation is deemed useful. **Also schools are considered to be suitable sites for deliberation.** The added value of deliberation in schools lies in its potential of fostering active citizenship. If the educational system wants to stimulate engagement among adolescents, students need to be taught how to become democratic citizens without neglecting the diversity of today's society. Tolerance towards diversity is considered to be a basic virtue for citizenship education, following the reasoning that mutual respect cannot be taught without exposing students to different opinions about public matters. Students not only learn more about the subjects at hand, but also acquire the skill of engaging in a high-quality public talk. As schools bring together a variety of students (e.g. gender, religion, social background, intelligence), adolescents run into a more diverse set of opinions on any given subject than they would in their home environment. They learn how to

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<sup>27</sup> L. Maurissen, C. Barber, E. Claes, *Deliberation in Citizenship Education: How the School Context Contributes to the Development of an Open Classroom Climate*, Social Psychology of Education, 2018

form and express an opinion and listen respectfully to others with whom they might disagree. Such reasoning teaches respect for reasonable disagreement, as students learn to agree to disagree.



### 4.3 We Train With Equity Project: a new model

The We Train with Equity project has as its final objective the preparation of an effective educational model for children of European secondary schools, able to emphasize their collaborative spirit and guide them towards a development of self-awareness and tolerance towards the weakest groups of pupils, often victims of prejudice, discrimination and therefore marginalized and excluded from their companions.

The activities of the educational model must focus on the development of analytical capacity thanks to the mapping of the territory, actively involving all students, including those with disabilities or cultural diversity. The use of alternative tools like deliberative polls is also important, which would strengthen the concept of respect for others and active citizenship, leading children to have to make decisions democratically, without excluding anyone's opinions. The dissemination of results must also pass not only through teachers, but also through the children themselves, according to the peer education model.

The partnership proposes a laboratory activity that wants to exploit the potential of Parish Maps to convey positive messages of cohesion and belonging, and the technique of deliberative polling to strengthen the critical vision of children and promote a culture of respect and tolerance for others.

#### 4.3.1 The model steps

1. *Research activity* conducted by the students on a series of places in their city that they consider important, to be intended as not only historical and cultural places, but also as a meeting and gathering point for them more than familiar. The research carried out will be presented in class.
  - Outcome: list of places identified by pupils and initial knowledge of their historical and cultural heritage.



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2. *Focus Group*: definition of the destinations to visit and insert in the map. Through the deliberative polling technique decisions must be made considering everyone's interests and through an analysis of the criteria of accessibility, proximity and orientation, also respecting the needs of companions with disability and those with cultural diversity. Teachers will be tasked to stimulate children to reflect and ensure that there is no use of verbal violence. In case of need, it may be appropriate to use the "Problem Solving" technique developed by J.Dewey in 6 steps:

1. Problem identification;
2. Proposing possible solutions (brainstorming phase or storm of ideas, where you are invited to give immediate answers, without denying any hypothesis, even the most extravagant ones that must be noted on the blackboard and on a notebook by the group reporter);
3. Evaluate the proposed solutions in a short discussion that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each one;
4. Collectively identify and share the best solution;
5. Determine how to implement it;
6. Make sure in a subsequent meeting that the chosen solution has actually solved the problem and repeat the process in case of failure;

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During focus groups it is relevant to identify a pupil, initially supported by the teacher, who has the ability to keep a diary-chronicle based on notes taken during the activities described above, will be useful for documenting and communicating the results .

- Outcome: development of transversal skills such as 'critical thinking', 'public speaking' and 'team working'.



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3. *Materials collection*: extra-school trip to visit the agreed destinations. Pupils take turns following a paper map to reach the destinations (orienteeering technique). The use of navigation apps is prohibited. For each stage, photography of the places and interviews with local passers-by are scheduled. ('Do you like / dislike this place? Why? What would you change?'). Comments and discussion when back in class.
- Outcome: development of the ability to actively listen and the spirit of initiative through the experiential approach of places, the development of orientation skills, the sharing of stories and personal visions that the boys 'touch' in first person.
4. *Working groups organization*: subdivision of pupils into two groups: creative and narrative. The first group will draw the map and choose the materials and methods for creating it. The narrative group will choose the best content collected during the visits (photos, interviews, comments). Each day of work, there will be the exchange of one or two pupils between the groups to make everyone contribute to each activity and more easily identify the potential of each student. This process must be facilitated by the presence of a tutor within the group who will be selected by lot (extraction of the name) every day, and who will have the task of writing down the strengths and difficulties of the group and suggestions for improvement, so as to give feedback to the teacher, both on the dynamics within the groups, and on the pupils personal opinions, which will be helpful to get to know them better.
- Outcome: development of organizational skills and inclusive cooperation through the exchange of ideas and the active participation of all.

5. *Interviews* between pupils about their lab experience (What did you learn about your city? What did you learn about your classmates?).
6. Preparation of a *final presentation* (in powerpoint) to tell the experience to pupils of other classes and to be uploaded on the e-learning platform.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, analyzing the state of the art of the current European inclusive system in schools from an infrastructural and professional point of view, it is evident that effective and efficient inclusion is still a challenge and pupils still face many social barriers, discrimination and prejudice, that still needs to be overcome.

Children who are excluded from groups on the basis of their group membership are at risk of long-term negative consequences such as depression and anxiety. Intergroup inclusion and exclusion refers to exclusion that occurs due to in-group bias, out-group distrust, prejudicial attitudes, and stereotypic expectations. Thus, as children begin to recognize, with age, the role of prejudice and bias, their understanding and evaluations of the consequences and implications of intergroup inclusion and exclusion also develops. Intervention techniques, such as promoting intergroup contact, can help ameliorate the prevalence of intergroup exclusion and reduce prejudice and bias in childhood. In such context, the proposed laboratory activity which involves all students of a classroom to actively participate in the creation of a Parish Map, where the contribution of each single pupil matters, may result in a strong tool for teachers of all secondary schools to create a learning environment that stimulates cooperation and mutual help between peers, but also helps them to take responsibility of their own actions, to make decisions taking into consideration everyone's opinion and interest, and most important to understand their own potentiality and strengths and feel part of a community, which means feeling more included and accepted by their companions.

The invitation to schools is therefore to guide pupils proactively, both towards objectives to be achieved and skills to be developed, and towards autonomy and independence, awareness of oneself and one's identity, as well as one's own life

project in order to achieve a dignified, satisfying and flourishing life as much as possible<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> The enhancement of disabled student's skills for a process of school and social inclusion, F.Pedone, R.Domino, F. Iovino, Rivista Formazione Lavoro Persone, No. 20.



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- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- Law no. 118/1971
- Law no. 571/77
- Presidential Decree no. 275/99 - Regulations on School Autonomy
- School Reform Act On learners with SEN Law no. 104/1992
- Legislative Decree no.297/1994
- Law no. 53/2003
- MIUR ‘Guidelines for the integration of pupils with disability at school’ 2009
- Law no. 170/2010
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