FINANCING POLICIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Country Study Visit Report: Italy

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report aims to summarise the discussions and the main conclusions of the Country Study Visit (CSV) that took place in Italy between 6 and 8 February 2017. A wide range of stakeholders and representatives from both local and national levels attended, in addition to members of the project team from the Agency and visitors from other countries participating in the FPIES project.

The aim of the visit was to discuss the Italian financing system for inclusive education. Italy has a multi-level framework for administration and governance (central government/ministries, regions and former provinces, municipalities). These, together with the Local Health Authorities, the regional and territorial offices of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and the Territorial School Networks (according to Law no. 107/2015), among others, all play a role in financing education.

The system of funding inclusive education is rather complex, as a result of regulatory evolution. The first model, set at the end of the 1990s, saw the devolution of powers from central government to local ones ('vertical subsidiarity'). The second model, characterised by 'horizontal subsidiarity', was modified in 2001, according to the Constitution. In this model, governance is at a local government level, while the central government establishes general guidelines or laws (see also the Italy FPIES Country Report).

Italy's requirements for education are consistent with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Learners with special educational needs (SEN) are required to be educated in general education classrooms at schools in the communities in which they live. They are ensured an equal quality of education, with additional support services and accommodations which are individualised to the needs of each child. National laws also enforce these requirements, which comply with Article 24 of the CRPD and the Revised European Social Chart.

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2. ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS IN THE COUNTRY STUDY VISIT

The discussions focused on the key issues included in the concept, scope and objectives of the FPIES project, assuming financing as a key factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education. These key issues are:

- inclusive education (in a broad sense);

- financing;

- governance;

- accountability;

- quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms.

The core issue was our multi-level governance system. In this, the MIUR guarantees the uniformity of national educational provision by laying down, for example:

- general educational goals;

- specific learning goals based on learners' skills;

- the minimum national curriculum;

- standards related to the quality of educational services;

- general criteria for learner assessment;

- the organisation of adult education (also comprising learners aged 16–18 who, for specific reasons, don't attend mainstream education).

The central administration of the MIUR, as well as regional, former provincial and local administrations (municipalities) are responsible for setting up and operating educational establishments all over the country, based on the age of learners and the geographical context. The MIUR, social services and local health authorities ensure the right to education for all, support mental health and provide various services specifically tailored to the needs of areas characterised by socio-economic disadvantage.

The MIUR provides 80% of school funding, covering core services (general funding)[1]. The regions and local authorities provide the other 20% of school funding for ancillary services, through two types of interventions: direct and indirect. Direct

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[1] Table B1.2 in: OECD, 2016. *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing

interventions include scholarships, cheques and contributions aimed at enabling school attendance. Indirect interventions comprise some free services, such as transport, meals and textbooks (input funding). Finally, municipalities provide support services and assistance to all learners with disabilities attending schools in their jurisdiction (input funding).

Inclusive education is financed mostly by the MIUR. Most of the expenditure is general funding (school functioning, salaries for teachers and administrative staff, improving schools' educational and training offers, compulsory in-service teacher training, provision of technical equipment and teaching tools).

Local authorities (social services) and local health services provide:

- throughput funding (projects for groups of learners with disabilities or socio-economic disadvantages or to promote mental health);

- input funding. Regions, metropolitan cities and municipalities provide assistants for autonomy and communication, as per individual education plans. Social services provide educators at home, depending on the social project.

Local tasks and duties related to inclusive education allocated by the government are compensated by the following:

- funds from MIUR for schools (general funding);

- funds from the Ministry of Health for local health authorities, for example, for mental health projects (throughput funding);

- funds from the Ministry of Health for families, for specific aids for disabled learners (input funding);

- the National Fund for Social Policies for municipalities, for example, for social services to fund interventions with socio-economically disadvantaged groups (throughput funding).

This 'co-participation' in school funding between central government, regions and local authorities depends on their abilities to monitor and guarantee efficacy in provision and involve all levels of government in the inclusion process. It is based on two principles:

- at a central level, the guaranteed equality of the system across the country;

- at a local level, subsidiarity as the basis of all intervention.

Subsidiarity is both vertical and horizontal, because it is realised through administrative action in collaboration with associations and the third sector.

Due to the horizontal subsidiarity described above, regions, metropolitan cities and municipalities – partly financed by transfers from the central government and partly from local taxation – have local freedom to plan and act according to the peculiarities of their territories.

Inclusive education means education for all, regardless of disability, migrant status, poverty, hospitalisation, or a need for home schooling. As such, the discussion topics were on the measures devoted to these issues and their effectiveness.

The municipality of Cortona has been nominated as a 'child-friendly city' by UNICEF. They presented examples of integrated projects from various entities and stakeholders, including projects for pro-sociality. In these projects, learners, teachers and families have received training in managing conflict and recognising the limits and potential of others, to enable positive relationships. Other projects, financed entirely by the municipality, aim to promote child autonomy, socialisation through playing, reading, summer activities and sport for people with different abilities and communication methods.

The visitors could see the added value of this kind of approach. It improves the quality life for all, not just for children and young people with SEN, but also for the adults involved in the process.

Crucial to the effectiveness of these activities over the last 30 years has been the continuity of the working network, regardless of changes in management, social operators or teaching staff.

The National Project aimed at the inclusion of Roma children, carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (the general directorate for inclusion) is financed through the National Fund for Social Policies. Part of this is the National Fund for Children and Youth, established by Law no. 285/97, which enables the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This is a complex project. It involves both local entities and central government, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and a number of experts. It reaches all classes that include Roma, Sinti or Traveller children. Activities are carried out at school and in the learners'

living environments, in order to remove obstacles to school attendance, such as living conditions. At school, the work is on raising awareness of multicultural diversity.

The other two key points of the project are:

- co-operation with local health authorities, bringing paediatric and vaccination services into the camps;

- the fostering of local governance and co-operation between various departments in order to solve problems, such as transport to school or the provision of school meals.

One area of improvement is the approach to Roma learners, who are at risk of school drop-out. Another is the involvement of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers representatives, which is particularly difficult, being a very fragmented reality.

A case of joint programming (local health authorities, municipalities and schools) aimed at empowering school inclusiveness regarding mental health and disabilities in the developmental age was also presented. The project started as a response to the increase in learning and behavioural difficulties/disorders in classes. Through a scoping school network, funded by schools, the municipality and the local health authority, activities have been carried out to strengthen pro-social abilities in learners and teachers. The experimentation has been considered successful, and other, similar networks have been created using the know-how developed by the pilot project.

The added value is not only the real commitment of the various organisations involved, but also the definition of a 'common pedagogical language'. This goes beyond the specific 'technical language' of the individual organisations (for example, medical language). Changing the language, through profound, shared reflection, changes the attitude towards the meaning of inclusive education and avoids labelling and stigma.

This is just one example of how autonomous schools or school networks plan and act with funds coming from the MIUR, local authorities and others, or with private funding. Their actions vary depending on the needs of their territory, their school population and the teaching/non-teaching staff.

Some other examples include:

- the creation of psycho-pedagogical helpdesks that advise learners, parents, and school staff;

- projects on differentiated teaching/learning, which start with learners with SEN but involve the whole class;

- opening schools on afternoons or holidays, especially in summer. If schools are open to all in the holidays, it overcomes socio-economic differences.

Another useful tool for inclusion comes from remedial courses. During the afternoons, or when schools are normally closed, secondary schools can set up courses to help support learning. These courses, funded by the Ministry of Education, usually give good results. This contributes to the prevention of early school leaving, which remains a widespread problem, particularly in southern regions.

Discussion participants viewed the complexity of the system and the various levels of funding and provision as a strength. The complexity ensures democracy, due to the participation of all actors.

In such a complex system, collaboration between the various actors involved (authorities and stakeholders) is crucial. Framework Agreements co-ordinate all levels involved in inclusive education. Participants discussed how to make these agreements more effective and how to simplify the number of decision-makers allocating resources. This would allow better assessment, at national level, of public expenditure at local level.

However, the planning with municipalities and regions is influenced by the managerial capacity of local authorities and their resources. As such, it may not be possible to ensure uniformity of interventions across the nation. Therefore, MIUR intervenes, equalising the resource allocation to schools or to individuals.

This happens via throughput funding. It aims to provide support teachers in classes, specific training for teachers working in at-risk areas and additional resources to schools that enrol large numbers of disadvantaged learners. Throughput funding is also distributed following applications in response to open calls published by the Ministry of Education. For instance, additional support is allocated via projects to:

- improve the integration of learners with disabilities, unaccompanied foreign minors and Roma and other disadvantaged groups;

- prevent early school leaving in peripheral metropolitan areas with high rates of school drop-out, unaccompanied foreign minors, etc.

Financing also comes from input funding for scholarships, funds to ensure the right to education and funds for educational equipment for learners with SEN.

The Regional School Office (*Ufficio Scolastico Regionale*, USR) plays a key role in awareness-raising and monitoring activities carried out in schools. In fact, these territorial units could be the locations for assisting with the redistribution of resources or the possible integration of funding provided by the MIUR. There is a need to optimise resources across the regions by making the levels of decentralisation of resources more standard between regions. This would ensure the dissemination of project outcomes between the various regions and the sharing of experience at both regional and central levels of the Ministry. It would also create economies of scale with the spread of best practice.

An example of this is the collaboration between USRs and the regional school networks to provide hospital and home schooling services. Hospital and home schooling are public services, rendered to all those learner patients who are unable to attend school because of pathological conditions.

The network is composed of schools (up to upper-secondary education) which have a separate section inside the hospital and specifically-trained teachers. Each hospital school (SIO) regional network is headed by a core school.

The MIUR allocates resources to the core school to cover the service across the regional territory. In collaboration with the USR, the network plans the service based on emerging need (numbers of hospitalised learners, duration of their hospitalisation, number of teachers, number of home schooling projects, etc.).

The service aims to:

- reduce school drop-out and early school leaving;

- provide learning opportunities with personalised teaching and tools in as serene an environment as possible;

- support learners' motivation;

- facilitate learning through the application of differentiated strategies and methodologies;

- ensure the wellbeing of sick learners and their families.

Home schooling is an expansion of the service. It recognises the duty and right of sick learners to education at home, if necessary. Home schooling for learners with serious illnesses is available in all geographical areas. It aims to guarantee the right to education for learners suffering from conditions that require hospital admissions and home therapies that are incompatible with school attendance.

The support of different technologies (synchronous and asynchronous) is essential in allowing learners, and particularly older learners, to maintain collaborative and continuous contact with their class group.

The School at Hospital website has assumed an increasingly important role. It is a monitoring tool of the general system and of the actions taken. It is also a tool for dialogue and comparison between operators and a means of spreading new management and teaching practices and operating models.

In the case studies presented, the co-operation within the school network and the initiatives implemented within hospital structures, funded by projects or by the Ministry of Education, are of the utmost importance. This top-down funding mechanism aims to broaden schooling initiatives. It includes learners who would be excluded from the national and local school attendance programme due to serious health problems.

3. ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE FPIES PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The second session of the CSV was devoted to accountability, quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms, both at state and school level. As most of the financing for schools is managed by the MIUR, the first discussion was on the allocation criteria.

As already discussed, most funding for schools is general funding (for staff salaries, school functioning, in-service training, improvement of the educational offer). It is allocated based on the complexity and size of each school, in terms of number of learners, teachers, school staff, technological needs, teaching tools and goods, etc.

This data is available through the National Register, which is managed by the MIUR Statistical Office. The Office collects data regarding all schools, including the number of classes, teaching/non-teaching units and learners are in each school.

The National Student Register is an administrative source, established by Legislative Decree no. 76/2005 regarding the fulfilment of young people's right to education and training. Ministerial Decree no. 74/2010 improves its function in monitoring school drop-out.

The Privacy Ombudsman and the Child Rights Ombudswoman indicate that the National Student Register collects data suitable for determining learners' disability status in a separate partition. This is important in the allocation of specialist teachers.

Data is processed as per the national legislation on privacy. This means that only school head teachers and groups for inclusion (GLI) know who the learners with disabilities are and their disability types. This data is protected and managed collectively for requests (to the MIUR) for support teachers and additional staff and (to the local authorities) for assistants for autonomy and communication. The USR and the MIUR see only aggregated data, which they use to allocate additional human resources and monitor trends (see also the Italy FPIES Country Report). In this way, the MIUR can also find out the trends in the number of foreign learners. This is useful to determine the amount of specific throughput funding that is required.

Another tool is the National Register of School Buildings. This issue needs particular attention. School real estate consists of approximately 41,000 buildings, the refurbishment of which is the responsibility of the regions and local authorities,

from mixed (national and regional) resources. Because it is so difficult to follow the money and identify how the money is spent, Law no. 23/1996 established the National Register of School Buildings. It contains data regarding each school building, to allow planning for their maintenance. The register is now online, which speeds procedures up. However, fund allocation is through agreements between the regions and the local authorities. The register has been integrated with UNI standards in the field of maintenance. This should produce positive results in terms of the quality and quantity of data available for the Information System. The Information System represents an essential tool for streamlining time and costs for inspections and interventions.

There is a risk of inequality between the regions in the provision of additional services. In the core educational service, equality is guaranteed through common principles and the essential levels of provision stated by the Ministry.

For example, although the responsibility for school buildings is at a local level, a general framework sets the minimum security and health characteristics required. Any buildings which do not fulfil the minimum requirements cannot be used for educational purposes.

The role of the MIUR in educational service is more important. This explains why the biggest part of general expenditure is current expenditure (teachers and non-teaching staff). The MIUR sets rules about the number of learners per class and the number of teaching and non-teaching staff based on the number of learners enrolled in schools. It allocates resources to each school accordingly.

Last school year there were 7,816,408 learners. Of these, 224,509 were disabled learners and 736,313 were foreign learners. There were 370,597 classes and 804,772 teachers, of which 124,572 were support teachers (who are equivalent to Resource teachers).

It is known that Italy has the lowest ratio of teachers to learners.[2] This is due to the geographical reality of the country. School is an essential service and the aim is to allow learners to attend a school close to their home.[3]

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[2] See for example IES/NCES, EDUCATION INDICATORS: An International Perspective, but also *Education at a Glance*.

[3] See MIUR-MEF, 2007, *Quaderno bianco sulla scuola* (in Italian).

The MIUR employs all teaching and non-teaching staff. There is a national level that sets standards for qualifications and requirements for all staff that must be the same throughout the country. The MIUR selects all teachers through national recruitment and allocates them to schools through its territorial branches. Teachers' statuses and salaries are determined by the national collective labour agreement.

Internal MIUR–MEF (Ministry of Economy and Finance) surveys, which analyse trends in expenditure, proved that this 'centralisation' helps in controlling the expansion of public expenditure. However, the allocation procedures (in terms of staff and budget) are not simply top-down. Instead, they are the result of a dialogue between the administration and each school.

It has been said that Italian schools are partially autonomous, because the MIUR employs all staff and controls the way schools spend their money through external auditors.[4] The Board of School Auditors is composed of one member of the MIUR and one member of the MEF.

The Italian system is characterised by multi-level monitoring and control. For example, schools are monitored by the MIUR and by stakeholders and the MIUR is controlled by Parliament and by stakeholders. For this reason, all the branches of administration must be transparent, to make clear to citizens and to Parliament what happens with the public money.

In the last 20 years, the system of budgetary decisions and the structure of national accounts, both at national and local level, have been aligned, in parallel with a public administration reform. The aim was to streamline the economic and financial planning process and the allocation of public resources. Budget decisions at national and local level must be based on standard requirements (ESL) as parameters for calculating the amount of resource allocated to local authorities. This ensures the full funding of basic levels of provision relating to civil and social rights and the fundamental functions of local authorities throughout the national territory. Framework budgeting legislation has also been unified for all public entities through co-ordinating procedures between the different levels of government.

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[4] The evidence for greater school autonomy leading to improved learner results is not compelling. Some studies show strong positive effects, but others find that greater school autonomy has little impact on learner achievement.

Schools in Italy are a branch of Public Administration, and their budgets are strictly linked to their educational offer. According to Law no. 107/2015, based on the three-year budgetary term, each school draws up its own Triennial Educational Offer Plan (*Piano dell'offerta formativa*, PTOF). This is the basic document setting out the cultural and planning identity of the school. The PTOF must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the various kinds of study and specialisms set at national level. At the same time, it must reflect cultural, social and economic requirements at local level.

The school budget (annual programme) is linked to the PTOF. It is the basic accounting document at school, drawn up on the basis of the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and economy. A report also accompanies the revised budget, giving evidence of the degree of realisation of each objective. Therefore, reports give evidence to qualitative (objectives to be achieved) and quantitative aspects (financial aspects).

The control of financial management is carried out both by the school board and the Board of Auditors. Evidence for Accounting documents are made external through their publication on school websites.

Though schools receive most of their funding from the MIUR, they can also receive other funding by other public bodies (for example regions or municipalities) or raise funding privately (Legislative Decree no. 44/2001). Law no. 107/2015 begun a process of simplifying the accounting procedures in terms of resource management and a review of the current accounting regulation. This envisages various forms of private partnership and school sponsorship, which make the model more autonomous on behalf of school institutions.

Italian schools overwhelmingly decided to communicate the so-called 'social budget' to stakeholders (parents, learners, teachers, and the people and institutions of the territory). This budget addresses two aspects: the social-educational-organisational and the purely financial. Through analysis of the first aspect, the school communicates its organisation, results and how it intends to improve its educational action to its stakeholders. Through the analysis of the second aspect, the school communicates how it used the funds given by the Ministry and local authorities and even by private individuals.

Schools at pre-primary, primary and secondary level have teaching, organisational and research autonomy, recognised by the Constitution. Participants discussed how

the schools build their educational offer (and therefore allocate resources) in an inclusive way and how quality evaluation and school improvement plans are linked to the National System for Evaluation of schools.

The National System for Evaluation of schools (SNV) aims to improve all processes that schools undertake, with all subjects involved, to raise learners' achievements, improve the educational offer and quality and innovation in the learning environment.

School evaluation is carried out in three steps:

- school self-evaluation: using data provided by MIUR and INVALSI, schools draw up a self-evaluation report (RAV);

- external evaluation: carried by an external evaluation team (NEV) on a sample of schools, following protocols drawn up by INVALSI. Schools use the evaluation results to redefine their School Improvement Plan (PdM);

- social accountability: schools publish and disseminate the evaluation results to ensure the transparency of their actions.

The implementation of the SNV started in 2014/15. The key point of the system is to ensure that all relevant actors and stakeholders are involved.

Through the drafting of the RAV and the PdM contained in PTOF, educational institutions are rethinking and improving their educational activity. The RAV analyses in detail the context, in terms of resources, the educational achievements and the processes underlying them.

The guidance counsellor corps (co-ordinated by inspectors from the MIUR) offers support to schools during the evaluation process. Public reporting starts with the publication of the RAV. It continues with the results of the improvement process during the three-year cycle, with a view to offering stakeholders greater transparency.

With regard the monitoring of essential levels of provision, a reform is ongoing. The new School Reform Act (Law no. 107/2015) allows the Ministry of Education to define the essential levels of the services provided by schools (LEP) in the next year. Particular attention will be paid to inclusive matters. This will provide a dataset which will be useful to stakeholders when comparing and evaluating school services.

The CSV showed how much stakeholders are involved in decision-making and allocation processes in Italy.

It is not possible to know how all 8,406 comprehensive schools use their budget. There are 125 centres for adult education (CPIA) and 8,281 comprehensive schools, of which 472 are primary schools, 4,869 are comprehensive first cycle schools, 199 are lower-secondary schools and 2,741 are upper-secondary schools.

An organisation model of school networks (schoolnets) has been trialled and is now established by law. As with the scoping school networks, these schoolnets are headed by a core school. Law no. 107/2015 strengthened this model, organising territorial schoolnets according to the local organisation of the MIUR (*ambiti territoriali*). Schoolnets will be able to work together to manage their teachers and administrative staff, to request funds for specific projects and to gather their own funds to organise some services more efficiently.

Summary

The general strength of the system discussed by CSV visitors was a clear vision of inclusive education. Efforts have been made to create an inclusive education system at all levels, including a commitment to inclusive education from all stakeholders. This was evidenced by the various types of support that exist and by the capacity building strategies developed at national level. It was also evidenced by the holistic approach to inclusive education, which aims to involve and empower all stakeholders.

The main learning points reported by the participants involve the importance of a comprehensive, multi-level framework for inclusive education, which includes a variety of funding sources and capacity building opportunities.

Challenges relate to the prevalence of an input model of funding, which connects support to an official decision. There are also weaknesses in governance, monitoring and accountability mechanisms that prevent the development of well-co-ordinated policies and a streamlined system.

Discussions also highlighted the added value of a clear set of criteria to finance and monitor schools' commitment to inclusive education.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY'S SYSTEM OF FUNDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Improvements can still be made by schools developing their autonomy and networks. Presidential Decree no. 275/99 states that schools can be flexible in adapting teaching time, curricula and didactics to learners' specific learning needs. They can also provide extra-curricular education and activities based on their cultural, social and economic context, as well as through networks and agreements with other schools, universities, agencies and others.

The Good School Reform Act

The Good School Reform Act (Law no. 107/2015 and its enabling decrees (ongoing)) is heading in this direction.

Autonomy and accountability

Regarding school autonomy, the law:

- establishes the creation of school networks at local level;
- provides schools with more teachers: 100,000 units, plus a further 50,000 via a public competition;
- gives school leaders responsibility for planning the school's main goals over a three-year period, in accordance with the three-year budgetary term (Three-Year Educational Plan, PTOF);
- links PTOFs to a national triennial teacher and school staff training plan;
- introduces provisions for teacher training and evaluation and sets out compulsory on-the-job training for teachers.

Regarding accountability, the law includes the implementation of the SNV. Through the drafting of the RAV, and especially through the Improvement Plan (PdM) contained in the PTOF, educational institutions are rethinking and improving their educational activity.

A key role will be played by the local branches of the MIUR (*ambiti territoriali*, ATP), who will create a dialogue with the territorial core schools to improve the tracking and allocation of funds. This will help to revise the criteria already in place on inclusive education. It will also connect financing and monitoring. This will allow the

implementation of recommendations to be followed up after the school evaluation and will help schools to solve problems at a local level.

Simplification of inter-institutional dialogue: the shift from an administrative to a holistic point of view

As described in the Country Report, the Italian system has different levels. At regional level, co-operation in the school system is enabled by Region-USR conferences.

There are also Workgroups for Inclusion. These are composed of teachers, medical staff, parents and other professionals (social services, psychologists, physiotherapists, etc.) involved in the learners' education and life:

- at regional level (GLIR);

- at provincial level (GLIP);

- at school level (GLH/GLI).

The reform simplifies these groups, stating that there will be one territorial level in dialogue with the core school of the territorial school network.

However, there will still be different administrations. These must co-ordinate their actions properly and find a common understanding between different technical languages (education, social services, health services) and different interpretations of provisions and services. This will allow the shift from an administrative view of inclusive education to a more social view, focusing on the enabling effect of the support provided to schools.

As stated in the Country Report, Law no. 104/1992 foresees that all institutions that contribute to the inclusion of learners with SEN should sign a framework agreement. This aims to regulate, integrate and co-ordinate the function and funding allocation policies of the various entities planning educational, social and health intervention aimed at disabled learners enrolled in schools and in Education and Vocational Training.

Over 20 years of monitoring since Law no. 104 was brought into force has shown that it has only been successful in some areas of the country. This is due to the variety of organisations involved (health authorities, municipalities, schools, MIUR provincial office, training institution and stakeholders' associations) and the complexity of the procedures to reach the agreement.

The solution is service integration. It is known to produce positive outcomes for users, carers and the organisations involved. It can create the conditions for services to provide a comprehensive, person-centred approach and respond more quickly and effectively to users' needs. Service integration can avoid the duplication of tasks and share back-office tasks, such as human resources and technology solutions.

One of the pilot experiences presented during the CSV has proved successful. It was a model for functioning of local agreements at socio-sanitary district level between all authorities involved (local health service for mental health and rehabilitation in developmental age and socio-sanitary district, social services for municipalities, schools and school networks) and the third sector.

As stated, the added value is not only the real commitment of the various organisations involved, but also the definition of a 'common pedagogical language'. This goes beyond the specific 'technical language' of the individual organisations (for example, medical language). Changing the language, through profound, shared reflection, changes the attitude towards the meaning of inclusive education and avoids labelling and stigma.

This kind of agreement envisages a progressive, three-step (culture, policy, action) development in service integration, focused on the school environment. The agreement procedures identify priorities and shared goals to achieve through intervention, by:

- sharing common 'guidelines' for procedures aimed at integrating services;

- harmonising the three plans drafted by each authority (the schools' Annual Plan for Inclusion, the socio-sanitary districts' Local Implementation Plan and the municipalities' Social Plan).

These priorities and goals should combine into an 'Action Plan for Inclusion in Schools'. This would form the basis on which each authority would allocate resources, thereby carrying out co-designed actions. A monitoring process would allow the redefinition of guidelines, in a virtuous cycle made of building a new, shared culture of social inclusion in schools.