

Erasmus+

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Literature Survey:

European approach and methodology concerning teachers and other professionals working for individual with intellectual disabilities

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Index

Methodological note	3
International and EU Legislation	4
EU wide financial supports	5
EU wide evaluation.....	5
EU countries legislation (examples)	6
EU countries description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN	10
EU Countries provide support for para-professional training.....	13
EU countries program samples/best practices.....	14
EU countries providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs ..	16
EU countries evaluation in regard to in-service para-professional programs.....	16
Legislation in Italy.....	17
Italian description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN	18
Italian financial support.....	20
Italian program samples/best practices	20
Italian providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs	21
Evaluation in regard to in-service para-professional programs	21
Local legislation	21
Local description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN	22
Local financial support.....	23
Local program samples/best practices.....	23
Local providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs	24
Local evaluation in regards of in-service professional programs	24
Bibliography.....	25

Methodological note

This research aims at spreading light on European policies to support paraprofessional for SEN children. It takes into consideration the European Union and its countries, with a view to highlight legislation in force and future trend. Within the research, there is a short description of some EU countries, such as Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy and Turkey. Countries taken into consideration are significant for two reasons. Because they are project partners (Germany, Italy and Turkey) and because they have an advanced legislation concerning training addressed to SEN paraprofessionals (France, Czech Republic, UK-England- and Finland). Furthermore, it is possible to find a section concerning Italy and its regions. Among Italian regions, we have chosen those whose legislation and policies are advanced (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Tuscany, Piedmont and Lombardy). Within the text, it is possible to find many links to other webpages. In this way, readers can focus on information they are more interested in knowing.

International and EU Legislation

European rules concerning training and education for paraprofessionals working in special education or with student with SEN (Special Education Needs) have been inspired by some international and European important documents, such as:

- **European strategy for education and training (2014-2020)**
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)**
- **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Communities, 2000)**

Article 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Communities, 2000) provides a guiding principle for EU legislative and policy measures to support full inclusion of children with disabilities. Further relevant measures include **the Council Directive 2000/78/EC** (Employment Framework Directive) which aims to promote equal opportunities and combat discrimination on several grounds, including disability, in employment, self-employment and occupation (European Commission, 2000). As of 2006, or 2007 in the case of the new acceded countries Bulgaria and Romania, all Member States were required to incorporate the directive into their domestic law. Many Member States have already implemented this directive at national level (The Citizens Information Board, 2011).

The European Commission is responsible for monitoring Member State practices and responding to any failure to properly implement legislation, including through launching enforcement procedures in the European Courts (Council of the European Union, 2004).

Measures in favour of SEN children are reflected in the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission, 2010), which clearly supports the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education. Furthermore, it commits the EU to support, through the Education and Training 2020 programme (Council of the European Union, 2009), the member state's efforts to remove legal and organisational barriers to people with disabilities entering the general education and lifelong learning systems and to guarantee them inclusive education and personalised training at all levels of education.

Moreover, the European Commission has stressed that the EU 2020 Strategy will be successful only if the most vulnerable groups are taken into consideration, and the access of young people with disabilities to the labour market is ensured.

The Lisbon Strategy constituted a positive step for groups that had traditionally been excluded from the labour market. The aims of the Lisbon Strategy, specifically the inclusive policies relating to disadvantaged learners including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, were also emphasised in the Council Conclusions of May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training, and the Council Conclusions of May 2009 on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (OECD and European Commission, 2009).

Within this framework there are several agency and policies to promote special needs and inclusive education. The most important European agency for paraprofessionals working in special education or with student with SEN is the **European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education**.

This agency drafted many important documents to support European policies in this field such as:

- **Empowering Teachers to Promote Inclusive Education**
- **Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education - Summary Report**
- **Five Key Messages for Inclusive Education**

■ European Patterns of Successful Practice in Vocational Education and Training

EU wide financial supports

The **SOCRATES** programme was an educational initiative of the European Commission; 31 countries took part. The initial Socrates programme ran from 1994 until 31 December 1999 when it was replaced by the **Socrates II** programme on 24 January 2000, which ran until 2006. This, in turn, was replaced by the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013 and by Erasmus plus (2014-2020).

The Leonardo Da Vinci programme (1995 – 2013) was dedicated to vocational education and training and aimed to support the improvement of vocational training systems in the Member States by enhancing the language skills of participants and disseminating innovative practices in this area of work. (European Commission, 1995, 2000). More recently the EU replaced it by **Erasmus + programme (2014-2020)**.

These EU programmes financed many projects that sought to improve the quality of training for people with disabilities.

The ‘Agora’ project, for example, was developed in 1996 and sought to identify the factors contributing to the low percentage of young people with disabilities entering the labour market following their initial vocational training in the United Kingdom, Italy and Greece (Leonardo da Vinci, 1996).

Another relevant programme is ‘**Vomasi**’ (2001-2002), which was developed with the main aim of bringing together leading European experts in the area of employment of people with developmental disabilities. The experts analysed existing policies aimed at promoting vocational mobility, rehabilitation and training for people with developmental disabilities in Europe (Leonardo da Vinci, 2002).

The European Commission has promoted other significant projects such as ‘**Opti-work**’ (optimising strategies for integrating people with disabilities into work). **This project began in 2006 and lasted 3 years**, involving partners from the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Finland, Greece and Belgium. Researchers evaluated the implementation of national policies relating to vocational education and training that affect disabled persons across these European countries, in areas such as vocational assessment, aids and support for adults looking to come back to work (McDaid and Matosevic, 2008).

The project Raising Achievement for all Learners – Quality in Inclusive Settings, running from **December 2011 – November 2012** set out to identify the key issues that need to be explored and strategies that appear to be successful in raising achievement for all learners in inclusive settings.

Another interesting project is The Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems (FPIES). This project **will run over a three-year period from 2016 to 2018**. It will build upon the one-year project on Financing of Inclusive Education that has run throughout 2015. Co-funding will come from the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Key Action 3 ‘Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects’ framework.

EU wide evaluation

There is a movement in which countries with a clear two-track system of special needs education (relatively large special needs education system beside the mainstream system) are developing a continuum of services between the two systems. Furthermore, special schools are more and more defined as resources for mainstream schools.

Legislative progress regarding inclusion was achieved in many countries. This applies especially to countries with a big segregated special needs education system, which developed new legislative frameworks concerning SEN within the mainstream school.

In some countries, governments pay special schools on the basis of their needs. The indicator for “need” here is the number of pupils with special needs. The decision-making processes are mostly organised by regional or school based commissions. The countries that work with this type of “input-based” funding at the (special) school level are Austria, Belgium (both Flemish and French Communities), France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands also.

In other countries, central government allocates the funds to municipalities via a lump sum (with possible corrections for socioeconomic differences) and where the municipality has the main responsibility for dividing the funds to lower levels. The first step can be characterised by a throughput model: funds are allocated to municipalities independent of the number of pupils with special needs within those municipalities. In the second step, needs-based indicators can be used, but also other types of allocation processes may be used. Countries that focus strongly on this type of decentralised special needs funding are Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Here, municipalities decide upon the way that special needs education funds should be used and about the degree of the funding.

In a further group of countries, the financing is not delegated to municipalities, but to a higher level of aggregation such as provinces, counties, prefectures, school clusters and so on. In this model the central government funds special needs education indirectly through other layers where the main responsibility lies for special provision. Examples of countries that use this model are Denmark (for the more severe special needs), France (for integrated services), Greece and Italy.

The transformation of special schools in resource centres has been continued in most countries. A few countries have already gained some experience with resource centres (Austria, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, for example); others are implementing the system (Cyprus, Portugal). In some countries special schools are obliged to co-operate with mainstream school in the catchment area (Spain), or special schools supply ambulant or other services to mainstream schools (Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, the UK).

The role of special schools in terms of inclusion is, of course, strongly related to the education system of the country. In countries with almost no special schools, like Norway and Italy for example, their role is structurally modest (in Norway, 20 of the previously state special schools, are defined in terms of regional or national resource centres). In Cyprus, the 1999 Special Needs Education Law demands that new special schools must be built within the boundaries of a mainstream school to facilitate contacts and networking and, where possible, promote inclusion

EU countries legislation (examples)

Many EU member countries have introduced significant changes in their legislation concerning SEN children over the last few years. Most countries placed increasing emphasis on the legal entitlement of all learners to attend a mainstream school, while a smaller number gave parents the right to choose schools for their children with special educational needs/disabilities. Another small group of countries refers to education being provided in the most appropriate setting or to learners receiving education appropriate to their needs and abilities. However, it is widely recognised that enshrining the right to support services in any legal framework remains a challenge.

Research reveals that the development of inclusive education systems depends on: policy makers' commitment to inclusive education, schools' ability to include diversity issues in their policies, supportive environments for teachers, learners and parents, and most importantly on the removal of barriers to learners' participation to the learning process (OECD, 1999; Ebersold, 2011, Agency, 2009, 2011). Research from the OECD (1999) highlights barriers to the development of inclusive education on three levels.

Barriers at a policy level, are related to: the absence of a comprehensive policy to advance inclusive education and in particular to limited early childhood intervention; the absence of overall legislation including non-discrimination legislation; a lack of awareness of the rights of people with disabilities; inadequate funding mechanisms; inappropriate teacher training systems and inaccessible physical environments, both within and outside of the school setting.

The factors outlined in the previous section depend on countries' overall education systems, as well as on the specific contexts of their systems for inclusive and special needs education. These factors highlight the need for collected data to be situated within a clear understanding of the wider educational context, in order to avoid simplistic interpretations of country situations that may result from purely statistical indicators relating to changes in special and inclusive education.

Below it is possible to find data on different country systems: CZ, DE, TR, UK, FI, FR.

- **Czech Republic:** the Act on Education regulating the whole education system in the Czech Republic was approved in September 2004 and came into force in January 2005. It has been updated several times since then.

The Act on Educational Staff (563/2004) defines, among others, the qualifications of teachers working with children with special needs. Teachers are generally required to have attained university-level education. For pre-school teachers, upper-secondary level/higher level of education is accepted. **University teacher training in special education or additional university training in special education is requested.** All university teacher training programmes include modules on the education of pupils with special needs. Teachers who want to work as SEN-Counsellors and/or special teachers of pupils with special needs have to complete the five-year university master's programme in special education.

The in-service teacher training, counselling and guidance system has an important role in developing inclusive education. **The multi-disciplinary teams in pedagogical and psychological counselling centres provide counselling and guidance support.** These teams consist of psychologists, special education teachers, speech therapists and social workers. They co-operate with professionals from other sectors, such as medical doctors and professionals from the area covering the family/child social care. Close co-operation with parents and class teachers is essential.

Pupils generally receive support concerning their choice of further education and professional career by means of special guidance and counselling. The head teacher at each school (mainstream as well as special schools) appoints a school consultant, who must meet the professional profile by means of specific in-service training and is responsible (in addition to their teaching duties) for such counselling. This consultant helps pupils to solve problems related to education, helps them with educational, vocational and labour market orientation and is also in contact with pupils' parents and relevant social partners. Pupils with special needs receive particular attention. Pupils can also use the special counselling services outside the school. These services (which are outlined in more detail in the Special needs education within the education system section) enable pupils to draw up their action plans by focusing on their ideas and strengths.

ACT No. 563 (24th September 2004) shall regulate the prerequisites for the performance of duties by pedagogical staff, their further education, and the career scheme; shall cover pedagogical staff of schools and school facilities included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities and pedagogical staff at facilities providing social care.

- **Finland:** On 14 March 2006, the Ministry of Education appointed a steering group to prepare a proposal for a long-term strategy for the development of special needs education in pre-primary and basic education. The steering group proposed that the current practice be changed to focus on earlier support and prevention.

The changes to the Basic Education Act came into force on 1 January 2011. The Finnish National Board of Education revised the National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary and Basic Education according to the new provisions and they were adopted on 1 January 2011. The amendment supplements provisions on pre-primary and basic education and support given to pupils. **The aim is to strengthen the learner’s right to early, preventive support in learning and growth and special support, if needed.** The support intensifies by stages: general support, intensified support and special support. Provisions on the handling and confidentiality of personal data and learner welfare services were also amended and supplemented.

As a part of the reform, a development project of intensified and special support began in 2008. The objective was to implement the strategy (2007) for the development of pre-primary and basic education. The Finnish National Board of Education was responsible for the project. Helsinki University Centre for Educational Assessment carried out developmental assessment of the project. Jyv skyl  Continuing Professional Development Centre, Edu Cluster Finland organised national training for the project. The development project was completed in 2012.

- **France: Law no. 2005-102 of 11 February 2005 on the Equality of Rights and Opportunities, Participation and Citizenship of People with Disabilities, transposed into the Code of Education** Articles L112-1 – 112-5, legislative part: the right to education and schooling in mainstream settings. **Decree no. 2005-1752 of 30 December 2005** determines the training plan for pupils with disabilities. It presents the various modes of schooling for learners with disabilities, emphasising that the mainstream curriculum must always be the reference for constructing their school career.

This decree takes precedence over the Circular of 17 August 2006 presented below. It stipulates that any student whose school life takes place ‘entirely outside the reference school establishment in a medico-social or health care facility (i.e. a special school)’ is a student ‘that cannot attend a school or educational establishment full-time’ (Article 14 of the Decree). The case of schooling taking place entirely outside the reference school in a medico-social or health care establishment is therefore a borderline case, in which part-time schooling in a mainstream school setting is reduced to zero, but without eliminating the principle of this part-time presence. (In regulatory terms, a student whose school life takes place ‘entirely outside the reference school in a medico-social or health care facility’ is a student whose part-time schooling in a mainstream school setting is equal to zero).

Circular no. 2006-126 of 17 August 2006, on the implementation and monitoring of the **personalised schooling project (PSP)**, provides for different schooling situations, while giving explicit priority to enrolment in the student’s reference school.

Order of 2 April 2009 specifies the procedures for setting up and organising **teaching units** in medico-social or health care establishments. These teaching units are new in specialised education and have a strongly inclusive significance. Indeed, when the teaching units were created as a system, they eliminated de facto the special classes and schools that had been in place since 1975 within specialised establishments (Article 1). **This system aims to develop and implement a pedagogical project, based on the personalised schooling project (PPS)** of learners with disabilities, founded on

‘teaching they receive in a “reference” school or other mainstream school’. This pedagogical project should make it possible ‘to achieve the learning objectives set forth in the student’s PPS as a complement to existing school programmes or in preparation for teaching received in schools’ (Article 2).

- **Germany:** the Vocational Training Act (2005) contains legal provisions for vocational training. The Vocational Training Promotion Act of 1981 governs vocational training planning and statistics, as well as the terms of reference and organisation of the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (Bundesinstitut f r Berufsbildung). According to the Third Volume of the German Social Welfare Code (SGB III), the Office of Employment (Arbeitsamt) is responsible for providing career orientation.
- **Turkey: Special Education Regulation (No. 573), published in 1997**, defines the basic principles of special education, and emphasizes the importance of including students with special needs in regular education classrooms. According to these principles: (1) special education is considered an indispensable branch of general public education; (2) all children with special education needs should be provided with special education services irrespective of the severity of their disabilities; (3) early intervention is a crucial step for special education provision; (4) children with special needs should receive individualized educational programmes addressing to their unique needs; (5) children with special needs should be educated in the least restrictive environments with their non-disabled peers; (6) vocational education and rehabilitation services should be provided without interruption for children with special needs; and (7) for all levels, education services for children with special needs should be planned by the relevant institutions (Donmez, 2000).

To implement successful inclusion practices, the Salamanca Statement (1994) highlights that teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service, should address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools. Turkish recently adopted inclusive educational policies that were implemented after the Salamanca Statement in 1994 were reviewed on a selective basis. This policy helped to create connections between the global inclusive education policy changes and local practices in the Turkish education system.

- **UK (England):** The **Children and Families Act 2014** imposes certain duties on local authorities (LAs), the administrative areas responsible for the provision of statutory education for England. For special educational needs (SEN), Part 3 of the Children and Families Act replaces duties for children with SEN under the Education Act 1996 and for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities under the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on schools and LAs not to discriminate against pupils with disabilities: they must not treat them less favourably and must take reasonable steps to avoid putting these pupils at a substantial disadvantage, including providing auxiliary aids and services as part of the reasonable adjustments duty. Schools must prepare Accessibility Plans, showing how they will improve access to education for disabled pupils. Guidance on schools’ duties under the Equality Act is available from the Department for Education. The Equality and Human Rights Commission also provides technical guidance on schools’ and colleges’ duties under the Equality Act. The Children and Families Act requires LAs to provide parents and disabled children and young people and those with SEN with information, advice and guidance on special educational needs and disability. Local authorities must also make disagreement resolution services and mediation available to parents and young people. The Equality Act 2010 also requires public bodies like schools and local authorities to have regard to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between different groups of people.

EU countries description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN

- **Czech Republic:** There have been progressive changes in the Czech educational system since 1989. All these changes have opened the way to greater differentiation and individualisation of educational possibilities. The most important changes concern children with special educational needs, who had limited or even restrictive access to education before. New educational philosophy, which responded to the tendency and trends of the society's democratic development and orientation, was first formulated in the **National Programme of Education Development in the Czech Republic (White Book) by the Ministry of Education in 2001**. The main changes concerning the access of pupils with special educational needs to education since 1989 are as follows: a broad range of in-service training courses is offered to teachers and round tables on inclusion are organised.
The Act on Educational Staff (563/2004) defines the qualifications of teachers working with children with special needs. University teacher training in special education or additional university training in special education is requested. All university teacher training programmes include modules on the education of pupils with special needs. Teachers who want to work as SEN-Counsellors and/or special teachers of pupils with special needs have to complete the five-year university master's programme in special education.
- **Finland:** Special kindergarten teachers provide special needs education for pre-primary pupils, special needs teachers provide part-time special needs education, while pupils who receive special support in special classes are taught by special needs class teachers. Vocational special needs teachers work in both mainstream vocational institutions and special vocational institutions. It is possible to study special needs education as a major and take the higher first degree. In addition, teachers can qualify as special kindergarten teachers, special needs teachers or special needs class teachers.
In addition to special needs teachers, educational services also employ assistants, educational guidance and school welfare officers, psychologists, doctors, pupil and student counsellors and various therapists. State-owned special schools and vocational special institutions also have social workers, nursing and accommodation staff and other staff to, for example, cover school transport. Universities' teacher education departments and continuing education centres and the National Board of Education provide teachers with further and continuing education and training every year. A broad-based curriculum ensures that newly prepared Finnish teachers possess balanced knowledge and skills in both theory and practice. It also means that prospective teachers possess deep professional insight into education from several perspectives, including educational psychology and sociology, curriculum theories, assessment, special-needs education, and pedagogical content knowledge in selected subject areas. All eight universities have their own teacher education strategies and curricula that are nationally coordinated to ensure coherence, but locally crafted in order to make the best use of the university's resources and other nearby resources.
- **France:** The INS HEA (L'Institut national sup rieur de formation et de recherche pour l' ducation des jeunes handicap s et les enseignements adapt s), an institute specializing in the training of French National Education teachers and managers for pupils with SEN is a partner in the elementary school master's offered by l'Universit  de Paris Ouest Nanterre La D fense. The Teacher Training Colleges and INS HEA (National Institute of Advanced Training and Research for the Education of Young People with Disabilities and Adapted Teaching) implement the following training programmes: CAPA-SH (vocational training certificate for assistants to students with disabilities – pre-primary and primary), 2 CA-SH (secondary), DDEEAS (principals of adapted and specialised educational establishments), ASH National Initiative Training Modules (MFIN 2012-2013) and Academy Training Plans.

L'Universit  de Grenoble, which has a very dynamic language science laboratory for the inclusion of language variation, offers a master's in partnership with l'Universit  de Savoie, which supports a part of training for teachers specializing in the deaf (under the Ministry responsible for Social Affairs).

The problem of special needs is present in the school teachers training courses in core subjects, and it is sometimes expanded upon in the form of a specific course in the second year. The Acad mie de Paris gives an example by offering everyone, starting in the first semester, a teaching unit called "knowledge for teaching and transmitting knowledge", for which one of the course lessons is, "child development and the learning process", which addresses the issue of difficulty in its description: "we will examine the various dimensions of child development (cognitive, affective, social, psychomotor, and motor) and disorders that can affect learning."

■ **Germany: Specialist training** - Teachers of special education receive their training via:

- A basic course of study: it is possible to study special needs education at university as part of initial training by passing the First and Second State Examination. This is basically divided into two stages: a course of higher education and practical pedagogical training;
- An additional follow-up course of study subsequent to other teacher training courses.

The two forms of training exist side-by-side or as alternatives.

In accordance with a decision reached by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *L nder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), the standard period of study (*Regelstudienzeit*) for a first course of study is nine semesters. The course includes the study of educational science and subject-related studies in at least one or two subject areas and in special education. About half of the course is devoted to the study of special education, while the other half is devoted to educational science and subject-related studies at an approximate ratio of 2:3. Didactic studies and teaching practice are an integral part of the course. In some *L nder* it is compulsory to do a course in the teaching area of inclusion.

Student teachers select two of the following subject areas relating to special education, the weighting of which can vary in the course of study and examinations:

- education for the blind
- education for the deaf
- education for those with intellectual disabilities
- education for those with physical disabilities
- education for those with learning difficulties
- education for those with hearing impairment
- education for those with visual impairment
- education for those with speech defects
- education for those with behavioural problems.

In all *L nder*, training is divided into higher education and practical pedagogical training (preparatory service). The first period of training includes:

- a specialist component with the study of at least two subjects or subject areas; relating to special education the subjects correlate with the current forms of disabilities;
- an educational science component with compulsory study of educational theory and psychology; --- teaching practice, sometimes of several weeks' duration, accompanying courses of study.

For all teaching careers, higher education is followed by the 'preparatory service' (*Vorbereitungsdienst*) as the second stage of teacher training. Depending on the *Land* and the type of teaching career, it varies in length (from 18 to 24 months) and places emphasis on different areas. It involves setting lessons, guided and independent teaching at training schools and studies in

educational theory and subject-related didactic at seminars which reappraise and consolidate experience gained through practical training.

Training includes general information on disabilities, teaching methods and assessment. Practical pedagogical training after higher education at university (as the second stage of teacher training) varies in length from 18 to 24 months, depending on the *Land*. It involves lessons, guided and independent teaching in training schools, studies in educational theory and subject-related didactics at seminars which reappraise and consolidate experiences gained through practical training. In some *L nder*, general information about inclusion is also included.

- **Turkey:** One of the most important issues in the continued development of special education is the training of professionals. Before the Higher Education Council took over the management of teacher training programmes in 1982, the Ministry of National Education was controlling these programmes in Turkey (Ozden, 2004). When the Ministry of National Education took over the responsibility of special education provision in 1951, there were no trained professionals in the area of special education. As the pioneer institution in the special education field, **Gazi University in Ankara opened the first Special Education Department and started a special education teacher-training programme in 1952**. Even though the department was closed after a year, it was re-established in 1987 in order to train teachers for individuals with mental retardation and visual impairments (Senel, 1998). Although special education is viewed as a novel and evolving area in Turkey, it has been considered an important educational service of the Ministry of National Education since 1951. However, today's implementation of special education was established based on the regulations of the  zel Egitime Muhta Çocuklar Kanunu Kanunu (Children with Special Education Need Law) (No. 2916), which was enacted in 1983. According to this, special education is mandated by the General Directorate of Special Education, Guidance and Advisory Services in the Central Ministry Organization, and by the Centre of Guidance and Research in the Provincial National Education Organizations (Ozsoy et al., 1998).

- **UK (England):** The government has sharpened the focus on meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities within the standards for qualified teacher status. The government's aim is to have a well-trained and confident teacher workforce which is equipped to identify pupils' SEN and disabilities at an early stage and put in place appropriate support which addresses their needs.

As part of this, the government aims to improve access for serving teachers to undertake specialist special educational needs and disability (SEND) training and professional development opportunities. It has published materials on its online portal, Gov.uk, which have been developed with and are maintained by a leading UK SEN association, Nasen. They consist of **five specialist modules (autism spectrum disorders; dyslexia/specific learning difficulties; speech language and communication difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; and moderate learning difficulties)**, a resource library for teaching pupils with SEND in mainstream schools and a set of complex needs training materials.

Furthermore, the government has recently conducted the fourth round of the National Scholarship Fund for Teachers which provides part-funding for teachers to undertake specialist postgraduate SEND qualifications individually or in collaborative groups. The government is also continuing to support the implementation of **the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO)** role in mainstream settings. All mainstream schools are required to appoint a qualified teacher to the role of SENCO. After funding 12,000 SENCOs since 2009, the masters-level National SENCO Award has been successfully handed over to the school-led sector to fund, accredit, award and lead.

In addition, the government is also supporting **clusters of schools**, through its teaching schools network, to identify and share expertise and high-quality practice in SEN and disability to raise the quality of provision across the school system.

EU Countries provide support for para-professional training

In some countries, funding is devolved to local authorities or municipalities (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, UK). In others (e.g. Finland), there is a mix of central and local funding. Regarding special education, in most countries central funds are provided for additional staff, specialist equipment and transport (e.g. Austria, Sweden, Belgium (Flemish Community), Cyprus).

- **Czech Republic:** General government expenditure on education as a share of GDP was 5.2% in 2013, surpassing the 5.0% EU average. This represents a 0.2 percentage point increase compared to 2012. New funding was also allocated to enable municipalities to increase capacities in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and for early stages of compulsory education, as a result of rising pressure due to demographic trends and the decision to increase participation in ECEC. As regards teacher training, the TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) survey shows an overall proportion of teachers undertaking some professional development in the previous 12 months close to the EU average (82.5% compared to 84.7%). Teachers are entitled to further education and in-service training. The Ministry provides financial support to cover expenditures connected with the in-service training and further education of teachers on courses that are approved by ministerial decision. In order to support inclusion, teachers are supposed to participate in in-service training on acquiring the skills to deal with the diversity and various needs of pupils.
- **Finland:** The Ministry of Education and Culture has also granted special government subsidies to support education providers in adopting the basic education quality criteria. Many programmes have been launched to ensure the availability of competent and knowledgeable teaching staff. The aim is to increase participation in staff development training, enhance its impact and improve job satisfaction.
- **France:** From 2005 to 2010, public spending in the area of disabilities was unusually high. The change in public expenditures in this field reflects the effective implementation of the new principles laid down by the Law of 11 February 2005, as well as the commitments made by the President of France at the National Conference on Disability in June 2008.
- **Germany:** The public funding arrangements for the education system are the result of decision-making processes in the political and administrative system in which the various forms of public spending on education are apportioned between Federation, L nder and local authorities and according to education policy and objective requirements. The agencies responsible for financing are government, districts (rural districts and municipalities with the status of a district) and communes. Decisions on the funding of education are taken at all three levels, but the L nder and the local authorities provide over 90% of the funds. Specialised teachers receive a higher salary, equivalent to that of teachers working in upper-secondary education.
- **UK (England):** The local authority provides top-up funding for pupils and students with high needs, in special schools and specialist colleges as well as mainstream schools and colleges, to meet the costs

of additional support in excess of these thresholds. This high needs funding system extends to students up to the age of 24.

The government is also continuing to support SEN Coordinator (SENCO) role in mainstream settings. All mainstream schools are required to appoint a qualified teacher to the role of SENCO. After funding 12,000 SENCOs since 2009, the masters-level National SENCO Award has been successfully handed over to the school-led sector to fund, accredit, award and lead.

- **Turkey:** Special Education Department is a four-year teacher education program which aims to train special education teachers for the education of the students with special needs. Special Education Teacher Training Programs actively train teachers for different kinds of disabilities. Special Education Programs include Departments of Mentally disabled, Hearing Impaired, and Visually Impaired. Recently, the Teacher Training Program for Gifted Individuals was established. The programs consist of 143-144 credit hours of courses offered in eight semesters. A minor program is also included in these programs. Mentally-disabled Education Program undergraduate students can choose both Vocational Education and integration minor programs starting from their third semester.

EU countries program samples/best practices

The European Agency for Special Needs and Educations is actually running a vast range of projects. Many European countries are participating in those projects with a view to implementing their national systems. For instances all the UE countries taken into consideration (Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy and UK – England-) are participating in Raising the Achievement of all Learners in Inclusive Education (2014–2016). A project designed to provide evidence of effective practice in raising achievement and building the capacity of schools and communities to include and support all learners. Another project which involved all the above mentioned countries is “Inclusive Early Childhood Education”(2015-2017). The main goal of the Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) project is to identify, analyse and subsequently promote the main characteristics of quality inclusive early childhood education for all pupils. Thus the focus will be on structures and processes at ECE level that can ensure a systemic approach to providing high quality Early Childhood Education in mainstream provision that effectively meets the academic and social learning needs of all the learners from the school’s local community. Furthermore, each country participated in Teacher Education for Inclusion- Challenge and Opportunities-(2009-2012). Among major outcomes of this project there were country specific reports. Below it is possible to find specific point concerning country programs and challenges for supporting SEN teachers

- **Czech Republic:** The following issues that impact on teacher education for inclusion need consideration:
 - Strengthening the self esteem of teachers, their competences and responsibility to teach all children in a class successfully;
 - Breaking the belief of mainstream teachers that including children with special needs into a mainstream class will distract the other students;
 - Changing the pattern of treating inclusive education as integrative education. Teachers do have the knowledge for diverse teaching approaches and methods however they are rather reluctant to use them in practice;
 - Lack of a clear policy for the professional development of teachers and a lack of systematic in-service training for teaching pupils with special and diverse needs.In addition to the information provided in the Eurybase report, the main principles and priorities are: social cohesion, life skills, multicultural diversity, school for all, curricula adaptation and mainstream

education of Roma pupils. The **National Action Plan of Inclusive Education was approved by the Czech government in March 2010.**

- **Finland:** The strategy for the development of special needs and inclusive education emphasises the importance of the wide basic education network which supports the right of every child to attend the nearest mainstream school. The current practice will be changed to focus on earlier support and prevention. This intensified support will be adopted as the primary form of support before a decision of special education is made. The support will be divided to three parts; common support, intensified support and finally, special support. The common and intensified support will be used to bolster learning and growth and prevent the escalation of problems relating to learning. (Special Education Strategy 2007.)

- **France:** within courses implemented in the project framework the lessons were largely based on the analysis of observed or actual practices of student teachers, and classes more often relied on analysis of the classroom situation and case studies often made by trainers. Students were often required to prepare and present group work in different areas.

With regard to practice, student teachers received advice from an IUFM trainer and a teacher trainer conducting a visit to each training period and, following their observations and the conversation which followed, they drew up a report on what had happened. The observations focused on preparation and classroom and student management, the content of the lesson, and the interactions between teacher and students. Many IUFM relied on the teacher skills framework to guide the evaluators' observations.

New teachers are followed up by advisory visits by trainers.

- **Germany:** The seminar 'Grundschule – F rderschule – Gemeinsamer Unterricht' has been offered to mainstream teacher students for the last ten years at Siegen University. Here the students are asked to visit inclusive educational settings as well as special schools. They are also encouraged to get in touch with head masters, therapists, counsellors and other professionals in the inclusive education field. Initial contacts and a basic understanding of various points of views from different perspectives are main goals of such meetings, observations and interviews.

At Siegen University students who want to become primary and secondary school teachers can participate in the course 'Grundschule – F rderschule – Gemeinsamer Unterricht'. This seminar is not mandatory. However, the participants collaborate in various respects: with regards to fulfilling cooperative seminar tasks, when the students visit special schools and inclusive settings and within seminar discussions.

- **UK (England):** After initial training all teachers who get a teaching post then undergo an induction year where they are supported and have further training etc. Newly qualified teachers have to meet a set of professional standards at induction in order to become teachers (known as Core standards); these standards build on those for Qualified Teacher Status and are cast in the same format (i.e.: they describe the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes required across a number of key areas). There is also a national survey of newly qualified teachers' perceptions and evaluations of their initial training – see TDA website for details of these annual survey reports.

- As regard **Turkey** it is possible to say that courses in special education programs consist of special education, changing attitudes towards disabled people, introduction to the education of mentally-disabled children, education of the mentally disabled, developing individualized education programs and evaluation, educational and behavioural assessment, integration and special education support services, behaviour management, early childhood education for mentally disabled children, training and guiding parents of the mentally disabled children counselling and, training courses for various disciplines, and teaching practice courses.

EU countries providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs

- **Raising the Achievement of all Learners in Inclusive Education:** All the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education member countries are participating in the project activities. The main target group for final project outcomes are policy makers for inclusive education working at national and European levels. However the information for this project is of high interest to researchers and organisations working in the field of inclusive education.
- **Inclusive Early Childhood Education:** The Agency member countries involved in the Inclusive Early Childhood Education project are: Austria, Belgium (French speaking community), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). Two experts per country have been involved in the project activities. The project activities and outputs are targeting policy/decision makers at national and local levels. In addition, it is anticipated that the project activities and outcomes will be of interest to researchers and practitioners in the area of inclusive early childhood education.
- **Teacher Education for Inclusion- Challenge and Opportunities-** these Agency member countries participated in project activities: Austria, Belgium (both the Flemish and French speaking communities), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK (England), UK (Northern Ireland), UK (Scotland) and UK (Wales). In addition representatives from European Commission, DG Education and Culture, UNESCO-International Bureau of Education and OECD-CERI participated in project activities as observers.

EU countries evaluation in regard to in-service para-professional programs

- **Raising the Achievement of all Learners in Inclusive Education:** Recent Agency work on the Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) asserts that teacher education is a key leverage point for the wider systemic change needed for inclusive education more generally. Recognising this key role, the project identified a framework of core values and areas of competence that would prepare all teachers to work in inclusive education and reinforce the critical message that inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just for particular groups with specific needs. The areas of competence needed by teachers who are likely to be successful in raising the achievement of all learners are: valuing learner diversity; supporting all learners; working with others; personal professional development. The outcomes of the project highlighted that changes to teacher education and the development of school leaders are needed to overcome the idea that learners from certain groups will inevitably be low achievers. A categorical approach should be replaced by a quality education for all that will build in support – and resilience – for all those at risk of under-achievement. A presentation prepared by the team from Slovenia stressed the need for effective general teaching strategies that are relevant for all learners and in particular, the need for content in teacher education that would help teachers confront their own views and prejudices. They also pointed out the need to change the assumption that the most effective learning takes place in homogenous groups.

- **Inclusive Early Childhood Education:** In line with the European Quality Framework in ECEC, produced by the European Commission Thematic Working Group on ECEC with a view to support Member States to develop quality ECEC systems as part of the education system, the project will focus on five thematic areas:
 - Access and procedures in early year’s education for all children , including the most vulnerable ones such as children with SEN/disabilities and/or at risk, children with severe disabilities, immigrants and newcomers, information for families and parent participation, etc.
 - Workforce -roles and staff, organisational status of the professionals, initial and in-service staff training, values and attitudes, leadership, the role of the support teacher, collaboration with parents, co-operation with external personnel, collaboration with health and social services
 - Curriculum/content - focus on all aspects of the child’s development(cognitive, social, emotional and physical), learning, participation, pedagogy, pre-school environment and relationships, and child perspectives
 - Evaluation and monitoring – crucial role of early identification and first assessment process, ongoing assessment of children and teacher work
 - Governance and funding – role of leadership, accountability, funding models
- **Teacher Education for Inclusion- Challenge and Opportunities-:** the Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project has explored how all teachers are prepared via their initial education to be ‘inclusive’. The three year project set out to identify the essential skills, knowledge and understanding, attitudes and values needed by everyone entering the teaching profession, regardless of the subject, specialism or age range they will teach or the type of school they will work in. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2.4MB, PDF) has been developed as one of the main outputs of the Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project. It has been developed as a guide for the design and implementation of ITE programmes for all teachers. The intention is that the Profile should be considered as stimulus material for identifying relevant content, planning methods and specifying desired learning outcomes for ITE and not a script for ITE programme content.

Legislation in Italy

Law 104/1992 prescribes to remove any barrier (architectural and sensorial) and to introduce appropriate aids and tools to support pupils with disabilities in education and training.

In 2009, the Ministry of education has published the ‘Guidelines for the integration of pupils with disability at school’, with the purpose of increasing the quality of educational interventions for pupils with physical, psychic and sensory impairment.

The Ministerial Directive 27 December 2012 applies to a wide range of children’s difficulties: disabilities, SLDs (specific learning difficulties), SDDs (specific developmental disorders), socioeconomic, cultural or linguistic disadvantage or pupils that can be anyhow in need of special care. This, in order to ensure more inclusive practices in classrooms through individualized and personalized educational plans.

According to the 2012 MIUR guidelines, training concerning didactic strategy to deal with learning disabilities have to address all teachers. This principle is important in order to include all professionals in constructing effective didactic plan for SEN children.

According to the 2014 specific guidelines, starting from this year each school has to draft an Annual Plan for Inclusion (PAI) as a base for the POF (Plan of the educational offer). The POF is the basic document describing the curricular, extra-curricular, educational and organizational resources that each school adopts

according to its autonomy. At the end of each school year, schools should monitor and evaluate the efficacy of their inclusiveness.

According to the collective school staff employment agreement, school staff have the right and the duty to undergo in-service training. Law 128/2013 introduced the principle of compulsory in-service training.

Since pupils with special educational needs are the responsibility not only of support teachers, but of all the school staff, teachers and school principals at all school levels undergo specific in-service training for pupils with special educational needs. Training activities focus on topics such as early risk identification, didactic measures to be adopted both with the pupil and with the class group, assessment procedures and guidance. The specific training plans are drafted by the MIUR and by schools, according to their autonomy. Training activities may also involve universities, research institutes, scientific organisations, associations and local health authorities.

Moreover, the MIUR has founded a network of schools named Territorial Support Centres (CTS). CTSs are schools (103 units spread all over Italy) dedicated to special needs, with teachers/researchers specialised in technologies for inclusive teaching. Using a peer-to-peer approach, teachers working in CTSs collect and disseminate best practices, support colleagues in managing special needs and supply schools with technological devices.

Italian description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN

The goals of teachers training, together with the general aims and allocation of financial resources, are established in the national collective agreement. At the present time, in-service teacher training is regulated by sections 63 to 71 of the current collective national labour contract for the school division. The current collective national labour contract of the school division establishes that teachers' training is fundamental for the professional development of teachers as well as to support the target changes and an effective policy for the development of human resources. The training has various aims: initial training, in-service training, mobility, re-qualification and professional re-organisation, specific requirements

As regards in-service trainings, there are three activity and decision making levels:

- the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is responsible for intervention of general interest, above all those necessary for innovations, for the year of training of newly recruited teachers, mobility and professional re-qualification and reconversion, general co-ordination of the interventions; the Ministry annually establishes the priority objectives for planning and carrying out of formative interventions, the distribution of available financial resources according to criteria established in the labour contract, the role of the different actors, bodies and institutional levels;
- the regional school administration guarantees, on single schools request, professional services to support the planning character of schools, equalising actions and interventions related to territorial peculiarities and specific professions;
- schools or school networks, according to school autonomy, plan training initiatives and prepare the relevant annual programme.

Bodies and agencies for the training of school personnel must be accredited and their training activities must receive specific recognition from the Administration. The contract in force makes a distinction among

entities offering teacher training, among those which are qualified in themselves (schools, Universities, University consortia, research institutes, included the National Agency for the development of school autonomy), those which have been qualified after having gained the Ministry's recognition (like professional associations) and those that have received specific accreditation.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research has the overall responsibility over the education system, coordinates and organizes educational activities and supervise of all educational institution.

According to the 2009 guidelines of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) concerning the scholastic integration of SEN children training of professionals working in this field is a fundamental aspect of the whole system. Trainings have to be designed to include all teachers as they are in charge of ensuring the proper integration of SEN children. They should be able to adopt a proper learning methodology. It should encompass peer to peer activities, tutoring, group activities, computer, special software and other ICT tools.

The 2012 guidelines on SEN children focuses on the need to provide trainings to special education professionals. A key argument expressed in this legal instrument is that there is a deep need to adopt a uniform didactic approach at national level. That is the reason why MIUR signed an agreement with many Italian universities to make them activate professional courses or specific masters addressed to SEN professionals.

Moreover, Regional School Offices (RSO) were activated with a view to coordinating local institutions in building integrated path for SEN children. The RSO oversees observance of general provisions for education and minimum performance requirements, the effectiveness of training actions and observance of standards. Along the RSO were also activated **Inclusion Local Offices**, which support and advise schools on administrative and accounting procedures and the planning and innovation of the educational offer. They monitor implementation of provisions on school buildings and safety and deal with the integration of immigrant and special needs pupils, the promotion of student participation in schools and, in collaboration with municipalities, they monitor compliance with compulsory schooling. They also carry out any activities that are delegated to them by the head of the Regional School Office.

The MIUR 2013 guidelines on detection of specific learning difficulties foresees an active collaboration between Regional School Offices, schools and healthcare institutions. They have to sign official agreement with a view to ensuring an early detection of special educational needs.

According to the 2015 (MIUR) guidelines addressed to professionals working as coordinator of SEN activities, it is fundamental to enhance the following competences:

- coordinating pedagogical and educational activities and supervising them;
- dealing with complex and difficult relational systems;
- supporting didactic project and providing in-service training;
- optimizing the use of resources for inclusion, included the ICT ones;
- easing relation with families and the institutional subjects involved in the integration process;

Regional Educational Offices are in charge of selecting specific schools to provide training in a local contest. Each professional training has to last 50 hours and cannot include more than 45 professionals per class.

Italian financial support

The 'Department for the Planning and Management of Human, Financial and Capital Resources' is responsible for financial policy, procurement, administrative human resources in schools, and managing information systems. The Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities (Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università italiane - CRUI) gives its opinion on the three-year plan drafted by the Ministry on the objectives for the university system and the allocation of financial resources. It also makes recommendations in areas aimed at optimising the management of teaching and scientific regulations. The school manager is the legal representative of the institution and is responsible for its overall management, the management of financial and material resources and the quality of the service provided.

The reimbursement of duly documented self-updating expenses of teachers is an initiative in favour of all teachers. **Law n. 448 of 28th December 2001** provided a grant of 35,000,000 euro for year 2002. Refundable initiatives can be grouped as follows:

- training initiatives promoted by accredited bodies;
- university specialisation courses (masters, research scholarships, etc.);
- stages in enterprises;
- book purchase and subscription to specialised magazines;
- educational software purchase;
- subscription to web sites and rentals

Italian program samples/best practices

In Italy it is possible to find many trainings for professionals working with special needs. Among them there is the "Be and Able" course. It is an initiative carried out in Rome by an organization specialized in special needs education, and in particular dealing with autism. Teachers are Camilla del Balzo and Laura Antonelli. Courses are designed to inform and educate participants on international guidelines on autistic children and are linked with a wide web of associations in Rome. Thanks to these connections Be and Able can insert participants in the local job market. Each class is formed by 30 students and lasts 100 hours. At the end of every educational path participants are requested to make a stage to test the new method in a jobcontest.

Another course is provided by Assodolab. Within this framework participants are updated on the Italian legislative framework. Assodolab fund its course on the bio-psychosocial model. The association use it to ease the SEN children inclusion in the school contest and to provide participants with proper tools deal with SEN children's difficulties. Courses are divided in basic (35 hours), intermediate (150 hours) and advanced (300 hours).

At university level, one of the major courses is "Didactic and Innovative Tools for Supporting Special Educational Needs" organized by Nicolò Cusano University. Activities are organized as follows: European and national legislation concerning SEN children and SEN teachers (150 hours); identification and assessment process (600 hours); planning formative and didactic intervention (450 hours); new technologies for supporting SEN children (150 hours); relational competences (150 hours).

Italian providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs

Be&Able was created in 2010 by Camilla del Balzo and Laura Antonelli, with a view to meeting and answering to the needs and problems of children with autistic spectrum. Be&Able is a center where SEN children can learn and share experiences with other person. Here they can be oversight by a team of experienced professionals who work accordingly with the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Be&Able is currently caring a group of about 80 children aged between 18 and 25 and can count on more than five years of experience.

ASSODOLAB is a professional association of “workshop” teachers. It is a qualified center as it was recognized by MIUR to train Italian teachers. Its activities vary from planning new course to carrying out educational activities. Currently ASSODOLAB is carrying out 27 courses in different Italian regions as for instance Abruzzo, Basilicata, Puglia, Molise, Umbria, Liguria and Piedmont.

University Niccolò Cusano is a very versatile university offering both traditional face to face lessons at its Campus in Rome and modern e-learning lessons, for degree courses in six areas: Law, Economics, Political Science, Education, Psychology, Engineering. Once enrolled in the university, students can follow courses on an online multimedia platform. They can access, through an ordinary pc connected to the internet, all the courses related to their study programme, and thus make best use of the time that dedicate to their studies.

Evaluation in regard to in-service para-professional programs

The courses organized by Be&Able are really effective. Almost all participants are satisfied with activities carried out by the center. Participants felt that content of courses is useful for improving their capacity to work in an effective way. In this school, they receive useful tools to oversight their activities and to plan a proper individualized program for their students. Moreover, they learn an effective methodology, which allow them to be coherent and to become more effective in implementing their educational activities. The basic course costs 150 euro while the advanced ones costs 300 euro.

ASSODOLAB have been a qualified center for training teachers for 16 years. This association is one of the few Italian organization, which organizes on-line courses for SEN professionals. Video lessons are simple and effective. They are effective in allow participants keeping a high level of attention. In particular, courses to address properly dyslectic children’s problems are positively evaluated by participants. On average, basic courses cost about 90 euro, intermediate’s cost 150 while advanced ones costs 300 euro.

Students assisting to the “Didactic and Innovative Tools for Supporting Special Educational Needs” organized by Nicolò Cusano University” are satisfied with activities provided. Many activities are designed to provide students with innovative approaches to teach to SEN children. Students could learn a wide variety of contemporary didactic approach to address problems and learning needs of SEN children. In addition, this master include in its program the teaching of a set of new information and communication technology tools which can be used with SEN children. The cost of this master is 500 euro.

Local legislation

In 2012 MIUR signed an agreement with the Conference of the Italian Regions. This instrument was designed with a view to supporting regions in setting proper legislative contests to identify problems

concerning learning disabilities as early as possible. This tool pushed Italian regions to adopt a common approach on SEN children.

Below are listed more specific legislative tools concerning SEN professionals:

- The Region of Piedmont introduced specific legislative tools to support SEN professionals to improve their skills and competences. In particular, the **regional law n. 170** (October 2010) enhanced trainings designed to SEN professionals. According with this law, every school should provide training courses designed to SEN teachers working in the scholastic structure. Moreover, the Regional Educational Office set a shared model of personalized educational plan. Thanks to this instrument, all professionals can project their intervention upon a common ground.
- The Region of Lombardy introduced specific legislative tools to support SEN professionals to improve their skills and competences. Indeed, accordingly to the **regional law n. 152** (January 2010) Lombardy's Region carries out, along with the regional School Office and the vocational system, trainings designed to improve skills and competences of SEN paraprofessionals. Moreover, this law introduced training courses addressed to healthcare paraprofessionals. Specific concern about training of professionals is expressed also in the 2015/2016 educational policy plan.
- The 2016-2017 Friuli Venezia Giulia's plan to improve educational system in the region includes measures to enhance SEN paraprofessional's skills and competences. In particular, this measures are designed to introduce ICT tools within each personalized schooling project (PSP).
- The 2012 guidelines of the Region of Tuscany innovated the educational policy of the region. This instrument divided the region in 35 local areas to involve local institutions in implementing educational policies. Each area is coordinated by a local conference, which is in charge implementing educational action in the frame of the national and regional legislation. Moreover, the Region of Tuscany adopted a specific legislation on SEN children. In particular the Project for the didactic and pedagogic support to regional kindergartens included among its objectives the support to well trained professionals. Thanks to this measure, the Region of Tuscany aim at improving the integration and inclusion of SEN children. Moreover, schools are required to include in their educational programs courses for SEN professionals. Those training should provide professionals with proper didactic and methodological tools to address properly new challenges in this field.

Local description of model/approach to preparing/developing training programs for para-professionals in education of students with SEN

- As foreseen in the accreditation handbook of the Region of Piedmont each training and development agency has to identify professionals involved in the development of every personalized schooling project since the beginning of it. The purpose is to share objectives, methodologies and activities of the personalized schooling project among all teachers.
- As foreseen in Lombardy's regional law n. 152 (January 2010) the regional educational system is designed to guarantee the early detection of special educational needs. The Region of Lombardy carries out initiatives to update teachers on SEN children's challenges to be properly included within society. Furthermore, the Region of Lombardy provide trainings to SEN teachers in order to equip them with the proper didactic and methodological tools to integrate them and to work together with other institutions.
- In 2014 the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia signed a memorandum of understanding with the Regional School Office, in order to provide training to SEN professionals. According to this tool

training initiatives aimed at easing early detection of SEN children have to be carried out by both the region and the RSO. Moreover, special working group will be set. These groups will be in charge of carrying out activity of research concerning SEN children.

- Trainings for professionals are addressed both to kindergarten teachers and to primary schools ones. This principle ensures a wider methodological coherence in the educational system of the region. According to the memorandum of understanding between the Region of Tuscany and the Italian Federation of Kindergartens, they make every possible effort to develop proper methodological and didactic tools as well as professionals' skills and competences in order to guarantee the rights of SEN children throughout their schooling.

Local financial support

- The Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia set an invitation to tender valid in 2016 and 2017 to support the educational system of the region. This instrument is meant to provide support to singular schools training program for SEN professionals. In particular it is designed to support action to enhance didactic and methodological tool.
- Accordingly to the regional law n. 152 (January 2010) Lombardy's Region foresees financial support to families of SEN children in order to allow them to acquire ICT tools. These tools are meant to facilitate paraprofessionals work at home and, consequently, SEN children learning process in every contest, both at school and at home.
- In 2014 the Region of Tuscany allocated 7 million of euro for its childhood educational policy. Fifteen per cent of this sum is dedicated to training courses for in-service paraprofessionals. Moreover, the region allocated €. 550.000,00 in the 2013/2014 scholastic year to guarantee the objectives foreseen in the above mentioned Memorandum of Understanding with Italian Federation of Kindergartens.
- According to the Regional Law n. 28 of 2007, the Region of Piedmont choose how much money allocate to provide training for SEN professionals in its three year education plan.

Local program samples/best practices

- The Region of Piedmont carried out the #No Problem (2007-2013) project in order to inform and prevent discrimination concerning SEN children. Some objectives of this project targeted SEN professionals. It aimed at equipping SEN professionals with proper competences to address SEN children's difficulties and in particular it was meant to make them acquire: a greater knowledge of SEN children, a more effective capacity to behave correctly with them and a wider knowledge of proper didactic methodology;
- According to the Welcoming Document (2015-2016) of Lombardy's Regional School Office, training for SEN professionals should meet local needs. They should suit local exigencies of SEN children. This document foresees a particular referent for special educational needs within each school. He/She is in charge of providing other teachers with proper information concerning legislation and with didactic and ICT tools.
- The Region of Tuscany carried out the project Local Educational Programs (2014). It divided the region in 35 areas. In this way, the region wanted to meet the specific need of each territory and to coordinate the intervention of each institutions which operates in the same area. The Region of Tuscany dedicated special attention to set an effective educational system for childhood.

Local providers and the structure of the organization in developing and delivering the programs

- The project #No Problem was carried out by a group of 7 associations: Anastasis Soc. Coop, Area onlus, Open Group, Centro Accoglienza la Rupe, Coopas. Coop., Voli Group and Rupe Formazione.
- The project Welcoming Document was carried out by the Regional Educational Office along with the teaching staff of all schools of the Region of Lombardy.
- The project Local Educational Program was carried out by administrative staff of the Region of Tuscany.

Local evaluation in regards of in-service professional programs

- Within the framework of the project No Problem a group of 14 teachers created innovative didactic and ICT tools to work with SEN children. These instruments were tested in a group of schools participating in this project. Once the testing phase was finished tools were fine tuned and spread with other regional schools.
- Evaluation of the Welcoming Document will be carried out by teachers staff at the end of every academic year;
- In Tuscany within the framework of Local Educational Programs were carried out many trainings. About 7.500 professionals participated in training activities. Among them were educators, kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers. The Region of Tuscany contributed to spread results of these activities by realizing website, expositions, publications and other activities.

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