

SCHOLASTIC INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES | S.Y. 2020-2021

The organization of teaching improves but critical issues for inclusion persist

During the academic year 2020-2021, the number of students with disabilities that attend Italian schools increases (+4 thousand, 3.6% of the total students).

Participation in teaching improves: students who are excluded from distance learning decrease to 2.3%, in contrast to the 23% of last year. The differences are also due to the new rules that require students to attend lessons in class with their classmates (38%).

Requests for distance learning devices are satisfied in the 98% of cases.

The number of learning support teachers increases. The ratio of students to learning support teachers is better than the legal provisions, but one in three teachers has no specific training and 20% of them are assigned late.

+27%

The computers in classrooms for students with disability in the last three years

2 in 3 schools have inadequate computers

32%

The accessible schools for students with motor disability

1%

The schools equipped with accessibility aids for students with visual disability

16% of schools have light signals

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During the school year 2020-2021 more than 300 thousandⁱ students with a disabilityⁱⁱ attend Italian schools (3.6% of the total students) (from MUR); approximately/about 4 thousand more than the previous year (+2%). This is due to: a greater attention in diagnosing and certification of disabilities among young people, an increased demand of assistance from families and finally to an increased schools' sensitivity to inclusion of student with disabilities. The persist of distance learning, due to the pandemic, has made the process of school inclusion more complicated, preventing interaction between students and learning participation. However, compared to the previous year, there has been an appreciable increase in participation levels, also due to a more adequate schools organizationⁱⁱⁱ.

In the school year 2020-2021, students with disabilities excluded by the distance learning are 2.3%, compared to the 23% recorded in the previous year. The share rises to 3.3% in the southern schools, with maximum of 4% in Calabria and Campania.

The main reasons that limited the participation of students with disabilities in distance learning are unchanged compared to the previous year. The more frequent are: the severity of the pathology/disease (26%), the socio-economic disadvantage (14%), the family's organizational difficulties (14%) and the lack of adequate devices (11%). Additional reasons for exclusion are: the difficulty of adapt the Educational Plan for Inclusion (PEI) to the distance learning (6%) and the lack of specific teaching aids (2%).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL YEAR . Values for 100 students of the same level.

	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	PRIMARY SCHOOL	LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL	ALL SCHOOLS
s.y.15/16	1.5	3.1	3.9	2.3	2.8
s.y.16/17	1.9	3.3	4.0	2.5	2.9
s.y.17/18	2.1	3.5	4.1	2.6	3.1
s.y.18/19	2.4	3.8	4.2	2.7	3.3
s.y.19/20	2.5	4.1	4.3	2.9	3.5
s.y.20/21	2.4	4.4	4.4	3.0	3.6

Gets better the organization of distance learning

The students with disabilities took part in distance learning activities mainly using online lessons together with other students and teachers (41%); the 38% of them participated in personalized courses with their classmates. These students always carried out a face-to-face learning (even when the class was remotely) with the support teacher and with a small group of classmates in presence (25%) or remotely (13%).

The 19% of students with disabilities attended lessons with the learning support teacher only, without classmates and other teachers. For them it was impossible to guarantee interaction with their peers. Finally, 2% of pupils with disabilities were completely excluded from distance learning activities.

Schools provided computer devices to almost all of applicants

With distance learning, schools had to deal with the lack of devices in students' homes. In 2020-2021, about 17% of student with disabilities applied for these tools, compared to 7% of the rest of the students. The greatest demand comes from upper secondary school (20%) while it decreases in primary schools (13%) where distance learning was less frequent. Also notable are regional differences, the greatest requests came from southern regions, highest levels reached in Basilicata and Calabria (respectively 25 and 32%). Schools provided equipment to 98% of applicants, without significant territorial differences.

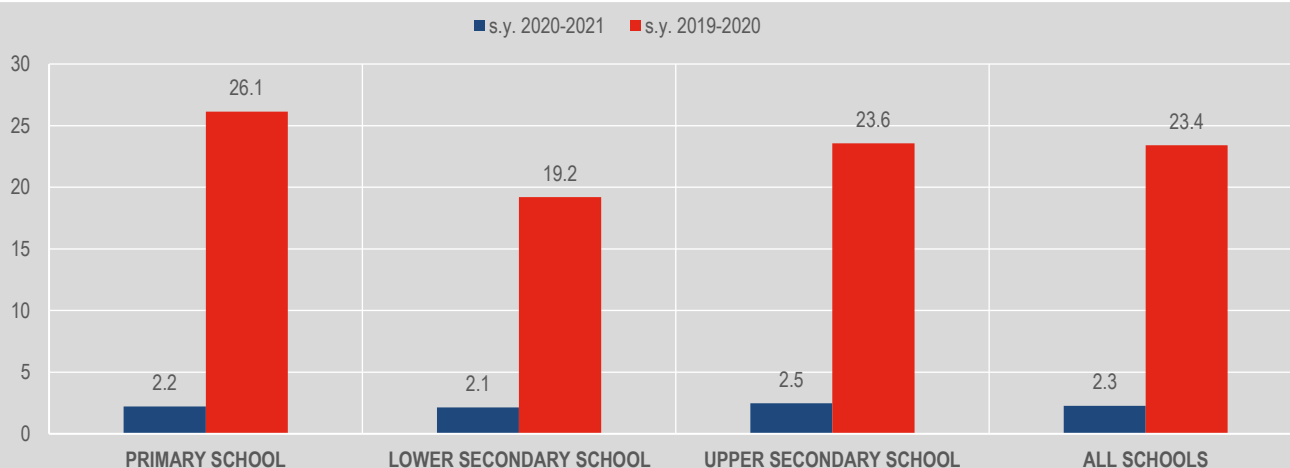
Learning support teachers increased, but specialized ones are still not enough

In the Italian school system, the main professional figure to assist the student with disability is the learning support teacher, who can play a key role not only in the student's educational path but also in the scholastic inclusion process, carrying out individualized interventions strictly related to the specific needs of each student.

In the 2020/2021 school year, there are almost 191 thousand learning support teachers (MIUR). There are just over 184 thousand in state schools (source MUR) and about 7 thousand in non-state schools (Istat). At national level the student-teacher ratio is 1.4, better than that provided by Law 244/2007 (two students each teacher for support)

Of these teachers, about 65 thousand (34%) do not have a specific training. This happens more frequently in the Northern regions (44) while percentage decreases in the South, reaching 20%. The lack of qualified teachers is often combined with a delay in assigning them to a specific school. About 20% of learning support teachers were not yet assigned at the beginning of school. The percentage rises to 27% in the North-West regions and reaches its maximum in Lombardia (29%) and Liguria (34%).

FIGURE 1. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXCLUDED FROM DISTANCE LEARNING BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION. Values for 100 students.



Training in inclusive models is not widespread among teachers

With distance learning the competence of teachers on inclusive educational models played a key role. However, this type of training is not yet widespread; only 24% of teachers and 28% of learning support teachers attended this course. Teachers of upper secondary school were less trained (21% of teachers and 25% of teachers for support).

Lack of assistants to autonomy and communication in southern regions

In Italian schools the assistants to autonomy and communication are more than 60 thousand; the 4% of them knows the Italian sign language (LIS). They are specialized operators, financed by local authorities, which facilitate the communication with students with disabilities and incite the development of their skills.

At national level the ratio students-assistants is 4.6 but data point out regional differences. In the South, it was observed a lack of assistants, the ratio, in fact, grows to 5.4, maximum values are observed in Molise and Campania (respectively, 9 and 15 students with disabilities for each assistant). The number of assistants is increasing in the Central and Northern regions (with a ratio of 4.1 and 4.3 pupils per assistant, respectively), Lombardia and Marche have the lowest figure (3.2 and 2.9 respectively).

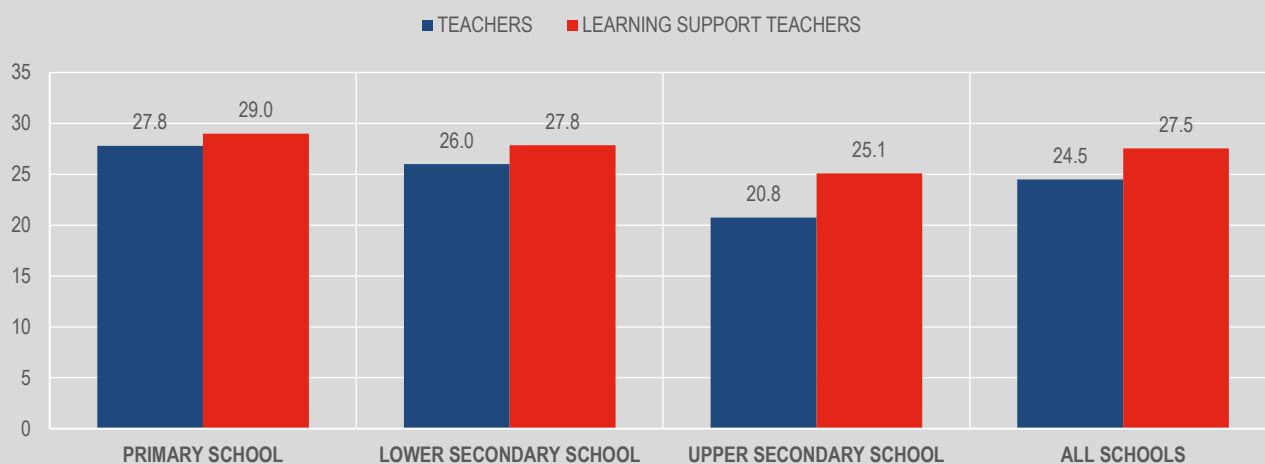
Technology: a facilitator that is still underused

Technology can play key role in the school inclusion process, supporting students in the learning process and increasing comprehension levels.

In Italy 75% of schools have computers adapted to students with disabilities. There is not much difference between regions (78% of schools of Center vs 75% of schools in the North and 74% in the South).

Needs for these tools is not always satisfied, in 67% of schools the provision of computer stations is considered insufficient. This shortage decreases in the North (58%) and increases in the Center and the South (69% and 77%). The primary schools are the educational level with the greatest percentage of unsatisfied needs.

FIGURE 2. TEACHERS AND LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS TRAINED ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL MODELS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION. Values for 100 teachers and learning support teachers. School year 2020 2021.



Computers in the classroom are increasing

To promote inclusive educational model, it is important that adapted computers are available in the pupils' class. This placement is used rarely (47% of schools), for the majority of schools (53%) computers are located in specific area such as: classroom for the learning support teacher or laboratory. The different placement converts a facilitator into an obstacle to learning participation.

Although computers in the classroom are still insufficient, there has been a moderate improvement compared to the previous years. The schools with computers in the classroom has risen from 37% to 47% in the last 3 years.

Architectural barriers: accessibility in schools is still limited

In 2020-2021 there are still too many physical barriers in the Italian schools: only one school out of three is accessible for pupils with physical disabilities. It seems to be better in the North of the country where the highest values are found (37.5% of schools in accordance with the law), the lowest are in the South (28.4%).

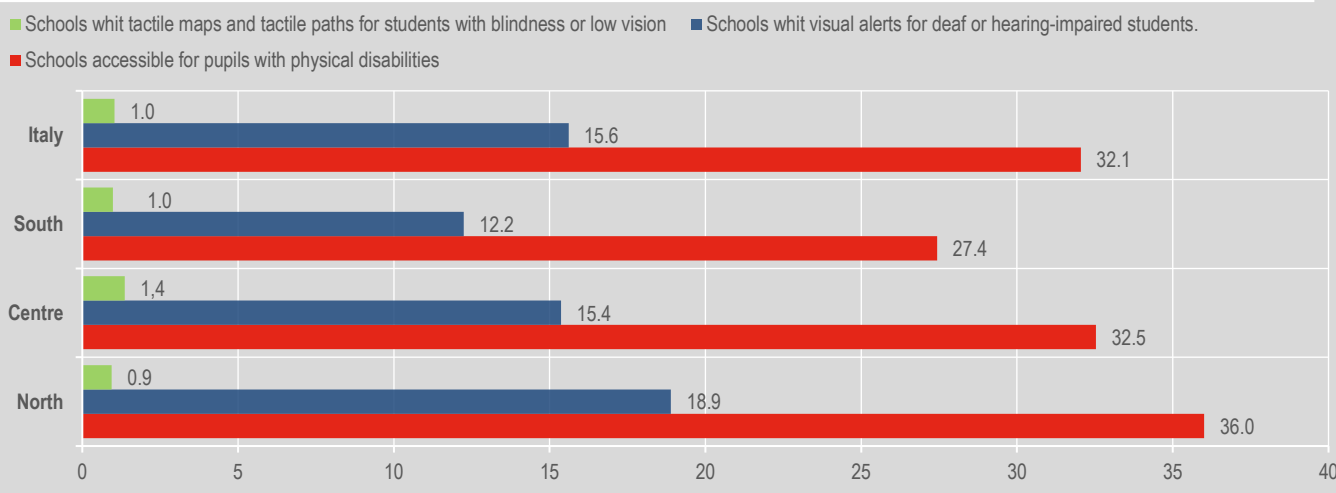
The lack of an elevator or the presence of an elevator not suitable to transport wheelchair are the most common barriers (45%). Schools without ramps are also frequent (33%) as those without accessible toilets (29%).

Worse the accessibility for people with sensorial disabilities

The accessibility is worse for student with sensorial disabilities. In Italy, only 16% of schools have visual alerts for deaf or hearing-impaired students. Printed tactile maps and tactile paths for students with blindness or low vision, are installed in only 1% of schools. There are few differences between the North and the South of the country.

Data on accessibility point out a serious delay of the Italian schools, even though only the 17% of school have carried out works for breaking down architectural barriers and 18% of schools would need to do them.

FIGURA 3. ACCESSIBILITY BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AND TYPE OF ACCESSIBILITY. School year 2020 2021.
Values for 100 schools



Methodological note

Objective of the survey

The National Statistical Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, University and Research annually conducts a survey on all state and non-state schools of all educational levels. The survey detects the resources, activities and tools available to each school. In the school year 2020-2021 it has been included a new section on distance learning.

Due to the health emergency from Covid-19 it was not possible to collect socio-demographic and epidemiological information on students with disability.

The survey is conducted using a web electronic questionnaire. The data relating to the autonomous province of Bolzano were collected by the ASTAT, the territorial statistical office.

Reference population

The survey provides information on all schools of all educational levels. The target population is made up of all schools (early childhood education, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools) regardless of presence of students with disabilities in the school

Normative requirements

The survey is provided for by the National Statistical Program which includes the set of statistical surveys of public interest. The National Statistical Program in force can be consulted on the Istat website at: <http://www.istat.it/it/istituto-nazionale-di-statistica/organizzazione/normativa>.

FIGURE 1. RESPONSE RATES BY REGION

Piemonte	86.2
Valle d'Aosta	51.6
Lombardia	79.9
Bolzano-Bozen	95.1
Trento	49.4
Veneto	81.4
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	83.0
Liguria	74.1
Emilia-Romagna	79.8
Toscana	81.3
Umbria	86.4
Marche	87.5
Lazio	73.4
Abruzzo	76.8
Molise	66.4
Campania	70.5
Puglia	79.1
Basilicata	84.1
Calabria	78.3
Sicilia	73.4
Sardegna	81.1
Italy	78.1

Note

ⁱ MIUR (Provisional data). Students with disabilities in the province of Bolzano are not included.

ⁱⁱ The collective of students with disabilities is made up of students who need to be supported by a teacher for support.

ⁱⁱⁱ DPCM 24 October 2020, DPCM 3 November 2020.

For technical and methodological information

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