

**State of the art on current practices in the education and training of teachers in Southern  
Europe - The case of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain**

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**Abstract**

The present report provides an overview of current practices on teacher training, and how teacher training covers the needs of students with disabilities under the paradigm of inclusive education. The report aims at analysing the situation in the Southern Europe, namely presenting the cases of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain. After a general overview of the gradual change in the provision of special education services into the mainstream educational system at an international level, this report presents the analysis of teacher training/ teacher preparation in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain. It describes the context of teachers' education and provides an overview of the most frequently assessed types of disabilities that are reported in each country. Then, a review of the main teacher training providers is presented, together with a final statement about possibilities of providing teacher training/ teacher preparation in the respective countries. The report should be of interest to the educational community, particularly researchers and practitioners in inclusive education and teacher preparation.

**Keywords:** Special education, Inclusive education, teacher training, teacher preparation

## 1. Introduction

The term “Inclusive Education” appears in the international context as an educational approach that aims at providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Inclusive Education is an educational approach that aims at eliminating discrimination among all students, irrespectively of their different abilities and skills, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic background, gender or religious beliefs, creating school environments for all. It suggests that schools are responsible for accommodating the educational needs of all students, creating ‘One School for All’ (UNESCO, 1994), with the aim of improving the quality of education. In this context, schools should encourage the participation of all students in academic success and school social life, thus promoting social equity and respect to human rights (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

The first reference regarding this approach can be found in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). IDEA was originally enacted by the Congress of the United States in 1975 to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education, just like other students. This Act established the first unique educational system for all (Turnbull, Turnbull III & Kyzar, 2009). In Europe, the *Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Students and Young People* (Warnock Report, 1978), served as a reference for the planning and regulation of special educational resources. This report set the basis for the concept of Inclusive Education. The UN approved in December 2006 the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Article 24 acknowledges that, for making effective the right to education of the persons with disabilities, “States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels” (UN, 2006, p. 19), and that “persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” (UN, p. 19).

The current European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 has promoted initiatives in the “educational and training” scope to ensure that students with disabilities can benefit from an accessible educational system and to guarantee inclusive lifelong learning programs (European Union

Council, 2009). One of these initiatives is the creation of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (<https://www.european-agency.org/about-us>). Its main goal is helping the member states to improve their policy and educational practice based on evidence from research, to implement inclusive education.

The present report provides an overview of current practices on teacher training, and how teacher training covers the educational needs of students with disabilities under the paradigm of inclusive education. The report aims at analysing the situation in the Southern Europe, namely presenting the cases of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain. The structure of the document is as follows: for each country we present the context, the general regulations on educational inclusion and teacher training as well as the basic epidemiologic information about students with disabilities. The report concludes with a summary synthesizing the information presented and providing a set of emerging final remarks.

## 2. Cyprus Teachers' Training Context

### 2.1 Context

This section provides information related to the regulation and current statistics about disabilities in Cyprus. It contains three sub-sections:

- General regulations on educational inclusion
- General regulation of teacher training
- Basic information on students with disabilities

**2.1.1. General regulations on educational inclusion.** The history of special education in Cyprus “dates back to 1929 with the establishment of separate, independent and charity run special schools, like many other countries before it” (Phtiaka, 2008, p. 149). According to Phtiaka (2008) this historical period can be divided into four stages, as follows:

- **1929-1979: Gradual Establishment of Special Schools:** This period was characterized by the development and gradual establishment of Special Schools all over Cyprus, by charity-based

initiatives and associations, in the absence of an independent and strong state. Hence, all of the Special schools established in Cyprus during this period had a charitable nature rather than an educational one.

- **1979-1988: Unified Legislation – Special Schools – Segregation:** During this period all charity-based Special Schools, which were established during the previous phase, had to comply with the first Special Education Law in Cyprus voted by the Cyprus Parliament. This law was characterized by a philosophy of separatism, as was promoting Special Schools in Cyprus as ideal places for all students who deviated from the norm.
- **1988-1999: Informal Integration Practices:** This period was characterized by a conflict between the separatist official legislation and informal integration practices. This period was signified by the appearance of the word “Integration” in the Special Education Bulletin published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1988 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1988). Hence, during this period changes in practice took the form of isolated and unofficial instances of integration of students with disabilities, mainly deaf, into the mainstream school (Koupannou & Phtiaka, 2004).
- **1999: Legislative Enforcement of Integration:** During this period, the conflict which had been previously observed between the separatist official legislation and informal integration practices, came to an end as the Cyprus Parliament voted the Law 113(I)/99. According to this law, which provides the main legislative framework until nowadays, students with disabilities have the right to be integrated in the mainstream schools.

In particular, according to this law, known as the *Education Act for children with special needs*, the state takes responsibility for all students from the age of three (3) until the completion of post-secondary and higher education studies. The Law states that the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing equal educational opportunities to all students within the mainstream school and, if necessary, in the least restrictive environment. The Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education has under its supervision the schools for students with disabilities (Public preschools –

Kindergarten for Pre-primary Education and Grades 1- 6 for Primary Education), while there is also a Regional Committee for Special Education and Training. As prescribed by Law 113(I)/ 1999), this committee is responsible for (a) the assessment and re-assessment of special education services provided to students with disabilities and (b) the description of learning and environmental accommodations to be included in the student's individualized education plan.

In addition, according to the Law of 113(I)/1999, it is the state's responsibility to avoid creating a segregated environment for students with disabilities; it is a right of these students to be integrated into the single core of education, known today as inclusive education. The school settings for students with disabilities are distinguished in the three following categories: (a) Schooling in the Mainstream Classroom with additional support from a special education teacher and/or a speech therapist, (b) Schooling in a Special Unit of the mainstream school with partial, where applicable, integration in the mainstream classroom, and (c) Public special schools (Figure 1). Hence, this *Education Act for children with special needs* together with the regulations that govern it, makes it clear which student can be considered as having a specific disability, while also specifies the necessary provisions and school settings for special education, according to each case.

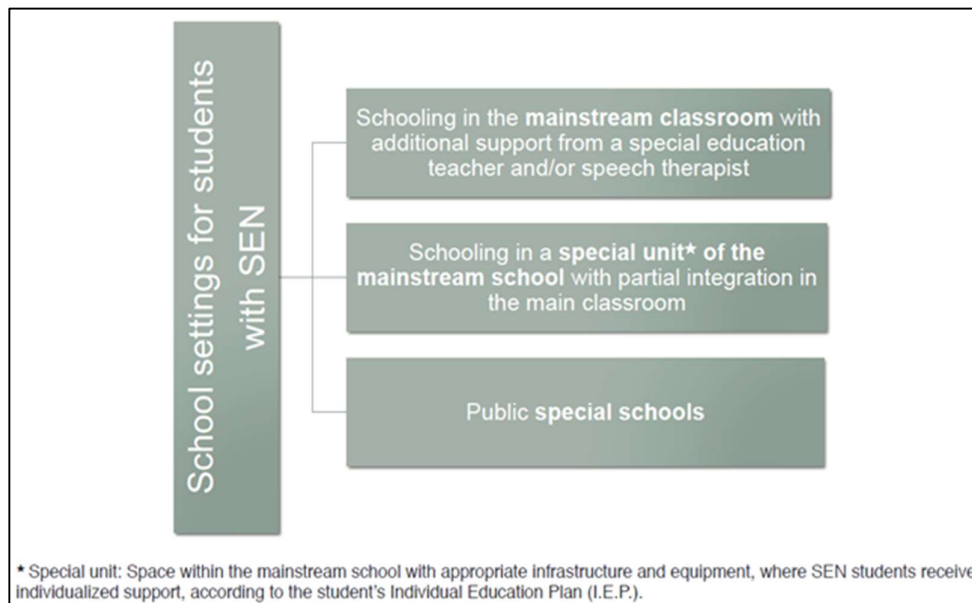


Figure 1. Application of Law 113(I)/1999 for Special Education in the schools of Cyprus

However, according to Phtiaka (2008), even though this new legislation seems to achieve a harmony between philosophy, legislation and practice of special education in Cyprus, this does not reflect the reality. Instead, the current educational system is accused and has received negative criticisms by several researchers for segregating students through curriculum and legislation (e.g. Angelides, 2004; Mavrou, 2011; Phtiaka, 2010; Symeonidou & Mavrou, 2014). Symeonidou and Mavrou (2014) indicate that even with this new legislation special schooling is still an option, while even students with disabilities who attend the mainstream public school are not fully integrated in everyday learning routines, as the system often expects them to receive remedial education in special units within the mainstream schools. According to Angelides and Michaelidou (2007), students in Special Units integrated within the mainstream public schools, are educated separately from their age-mates, while teachers of the mainstream classes do not have a particular policy or program to differentiate their teaching methods and curriculum content for addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities. At the same time, the educational system in Cyprus not only has been accused for marginalizing students with disabilities and not providing equal learning opportunities to them (Phtiaka, 2007; Symeonidou, 2009). Overall, it seems that inclusive education, is a goal that has not yet been fulfilled in Cyprus (Phtiaka, Michaelidou, Tsouris, & Vlami, 2005). These challenges are summarised in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* The challengers of the application of Law 113(I)/1999 for Special Education in Cyprus.

**2.1.2. General regulation of teacher training.** The Cyprus law of 1999 has developed and legitimized a two-track system of education, which means that students's education takes place in both mainstream schools and totally segregated special schools (Barnard, 1997). According to the *Document of Information about Special Education* (1996) published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as far as it regards the students with disabilities who are integrated in the mainstream school, *“a part of the teaching programme is offered by a specialised teacher in a special class while the rest of their needs are satisfied (by the general teacher) in the ordinary class”* (p. 58). That said, in Cyprus teachers are also distinguished as “special” and “regular” teachers, something that also affects teacher education, as teachers are again classified into “special” and “regular” categories.

Despite the fact that in the educational system of Cyprus, we meet teachers of both categories, in Cyprus there are no universities (public or private ones) that provide undergraduate programs which are fully focused on educating “special education” teachers, with the exception of undergraduate studies in logotherapy. In particular, the European University Cyprus, which is a private one, as well as our university, the Cyprus University of Technology, which is a public one, provide during last five years an Undergraduate program on Logotherapy and Logopathology. The rest of the Special Education teachers obtain their degrees from countries outside Cyprus. According to the Annual Report of the Educational Service Committee (2016) a total of 648 teachers qualified in special education, were placed in schools; however, these numbers are insufficient for meeting the diverse needs of the Cypriot students. Besides, the special education teachers are placed only in the pre-primary and primary level. Usually, in secondary education there are no special teachers and special units are more limited compared to primary education. In fact, teachers in middle schools often time are asked to function as special education resource teachers, where they pull out groups of students with disabilities to provide small-group instruction. In the middle school the term “Special Education” is not used. Instead, the term “Support” is used in its place for signifying the provision of educational services for students with disabilities. In addition, school career counsellors are expected to coordinate individualized support for students with disabilities or difficulties with literacy. However, research by Menon (2010) reported that due to the heavy workload of career counsellors,

their efficacy in this role is dubious. At the same time, pre-primary and primary education teachers are also expected to have in their mainstream classes mild cases of students with disabilities. However, what is the training of pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers in Cyprus? And what are the main regulations guiding their training?

Currently, pre-primary and primary school teachers are graduates of a four-year programme provided by the University of Cyprus (as one of the three public universities of the country) or by the private universities in Cyprus (University of Nicosia, European University Cyprus, Frederick University). In the case of the University of Cyprus, which is the only public university that provides a degree in the Educational Sciences, the syllabus content of the courses provided is defined by the University itself. To enter the University of Cyprus, high-school students interested in pursuing a degree in Pre-primary or Primary Education must first pass the National Entrance Examinations. Graduates from other universities abroad, mainly European and USA ones, can also become pre-primary and primary teachers, given that their degree is accredited by the national evaluation body. According to Phtiaka and Symeonidou (2009), a compulsory course in special or inclusive education is usually offered to undergraduate students, while other disability-related courses are provided as optional, for all the students who would like to obtain deeper knowledge in the subject.

Academic studies for secondary school teachers are rather different. As in the case of pre-primary and primary education secondary, teachers study in any of the public or private universities of the country or abroad. However, while for many decades, there was no induction programme for secondary teachers, this became necessary due to the variety of degrees provided in combination with the lack of focus on educational sciences and pedagogical skills during their undergraduate studies. Since 2007 the University of Cyprus has the responsibility for conducting a Pre-service Training Programme, as a one-year long programme, which was established for bridging the gap in a particular subject (e.g., History, Mathematics, Greek language) and pedagogy. Unfortunately, according to Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2014), the inclusive education course that is included in the program is an optional one; as such, a golden opportunity to provide a glimpse about inclusive education to all prospective secondary teachers is lost.



**2.1.3. Basic information on students with disabilities.** Precise scientific recording of students with mild disabilities and severe disabilities is, according to the legislation, a *sine qua non* prerequisite for the satisfactory formulation of policy on integration (Koutrouba, Vamvakari, & Steliou, 2006). According to the last available recording derived from the *Statistics of Education* Report (Statistic Service, 2014), during 2014-15 there were a total of 178,116 students with mild disabilities and severe disabilities, from which 88,390 boys (49,6%) and 89,726 girls (50,4%). Figure 3 provides an overview of girls and boys per educational level in Cyprus.

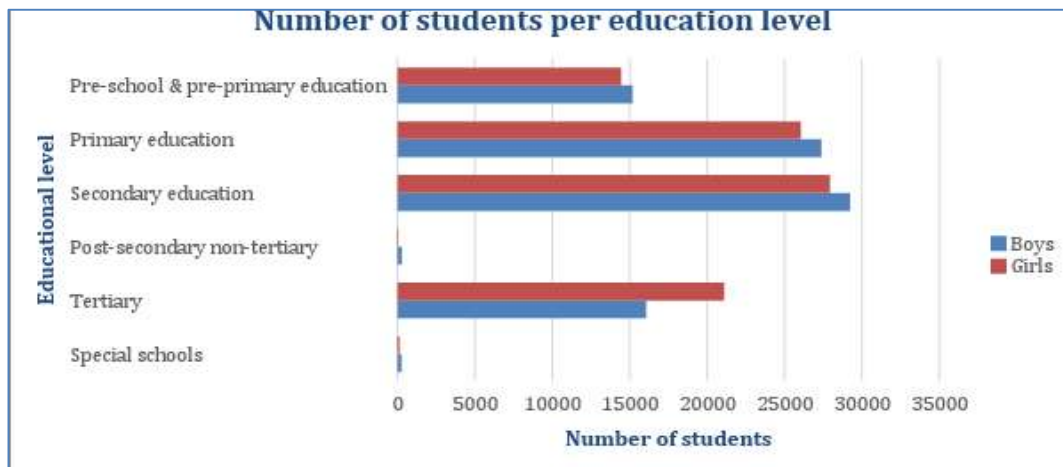


Figure 3. Number of students per educational level in Cyprus

This recording has led to identification of two educational options for Cypriot students with disabilities. According to the first option, there are students with severe disabilities, who are excluded from mainstream educational system, as they attend Special Schools. Based on the *Statistics of Education* Report (Statistic Service, 2014), during 2014-15 there were 11 Special Schools with a total of 388 students (covering 0.22% of the student population), from which 259 boys (66.8%) and 129 girls (33.2%). The students' age at the Special Schools ranged from 2-years old (0.5%) to 20+ years old (6.7%). Figure 4 provides students' numbers per disability at the Special schools. As Figure 4 shows most of the students in Special schools were physically handicapped (68.3%) or had severe mental retardation problems (18%).

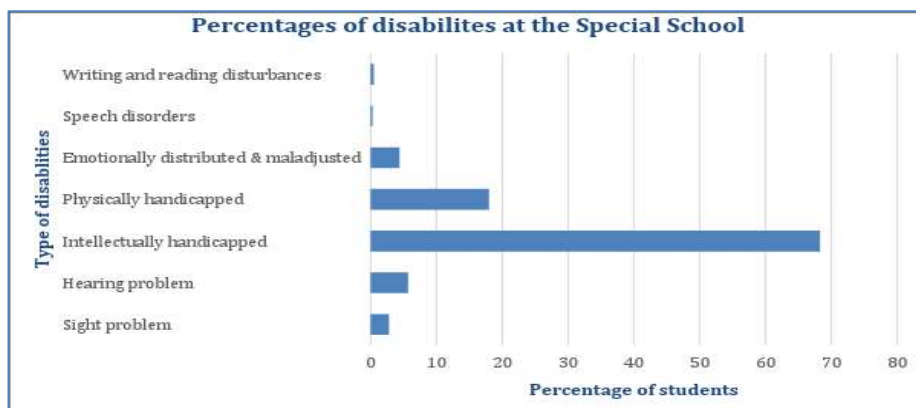


Figure 4. Percentages of disabilities at the Special Schools in Cyprus

Table 1 provides an overview of students with severe disabilities, who attended a Special School in Cyprus, during 2014-2015.

Table 1

*Overview of Students with Severe Disabilities in Cyprus*

	Boys	Girls	Total
<b>Sight problem</b>	6	5	11
<i>Blind</i>	2	1	3
<i>Restricted sight</i>	4	4	8
<b>Hearing problem</b>	13	9	22
<i>Serious hearing problem</i>	6	3	9
<i>Impairment of hearing</i>	7	6	13
<b>Intellectually handicapped</b>	177	88	265
<i>Slightly</i>	19	7	26
<i>Rather serious</i>	68	28	96
<i>Serious</i>	90	53	143
<b>Physically handicapped</b>	47	23	70
<b>Emotionally distributed &amp; maladjusted</b>	13	4	17
<b>Speech disorders</b>	1	0	1
<b>Writing and reading disturbances</b>	2	0	2

According to the second option, the remaining students, who have mild disabilities, are included in the mainstream classrooms. Some of these students receive additional teaching aid from a special education teacher and/or a speech therapist while others have schooling in a Special Unit,

hitherto are built within the boundaries of the regular school buildings, with partial integration in the main classroom. According to the last available recording derived from the *Statistics of Education Report* (Statistic Service, 2014), during 2014-15 there were 3060 students with mild disabilities in the primary education (5.7% of the total student population in primary education) and 3313 students with mild disabilities in the secondary education (5.8% of the total student population in secondary education). Figure 5 provides an overview of type of support that students with disabilities at the primary and at the secondary received, during 2014-15.

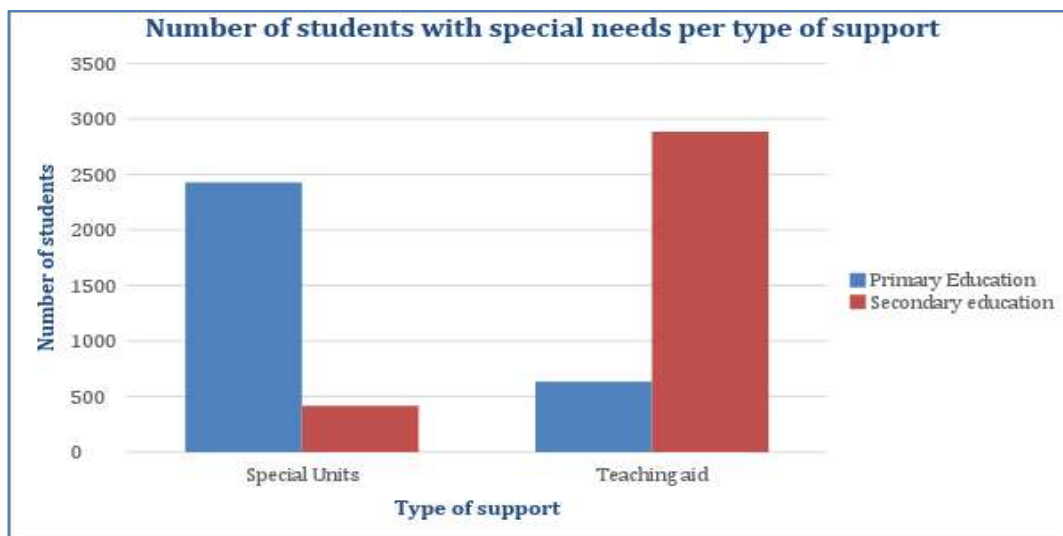


Figure 5. Number of students with disabilities per type of support

As indicated in Figure 5, one can note an inversely proportional relationship between the type of support received by students with disabilities between the primary and the secondary education, with students in primary education have mostly schooling in special units rather than receiving teaching aid from a special education teacher and/or a speech therapist and vice-versa.

Even though the *Statistics of Education Report* does not define the type of mild disabilities for students with disabilities in primary and secondary education, Koutrouba et al. (2016) state that mild disabilities are mostly related to motor, visual, hearing, learning and emotional problems, rather than mental retardation problems or students being physically handicapped.

## **2.2 Teacher Training Providers and Activities**

Teacher training in Cyprus in relation to special and inclusive education is considered as insufficient, especially when it comes to pre-primary, primary and secondary education teachers. At the moment there are three main training providers in Cyprus: (a) Public universities, (b) Private universities, (c) The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, (d) The Ministry of Education and Culture and (e) Different bodies which provide seminars and workshops on a voluntary basis, such as the Cyprus Inclusive Education Club. What follows in this section is a critical presentation of current training activities and practices per provider.

**2.2.1. Public universities.** The only public university that is responsible for preparing the prospective teachers in the pre-primary and primary education, is the University of Cyprus. Graduates of the University of Cyprus are awarded a degree upon successful completion of a four-year program at the Department of the Education. As part of their studies, all pre-primary and primary teachers, are required to attend an introductory course on Inclusive Education (EPA 311: Introduction in Inclusive Education). The course aims to familiarize the trainees with the concepts of “integration” and “inclusion”, to help them develop positive attitudes towards disabilities and disability, while also contributing to the acquisition of basic knowledge about different impairment groups. However, the course lasts only for a semester, while as it is an introductory lesson, it is difficult to provide an in-depth understanding of inclusive education. At the same, it is possible that all the trainees attending this introductory course may have not achieved the same levels of understanding, attitudes and beliefs about inclusion (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014). According to Nes and Strømstad (2003) this might be attributed to that the trainees are usually selecting such introductory courses in different years in their studies; as such, the teacher students have different backgrounds, as some of them have no or limited teaching experience at that moment or they are unfamiliar with the demands of the educational system. A set of other relevant courses are also available at the University of Cyprus, such as “EPA 312: Education & Disability”, “EPA 466: Learning Difficulties”, “EPA 467: Diversity & Inclusion”,

or “EPA 468: Disabilities in Mainstream Schools”. However, as these courses are elective, are attended only by a minority of the trainees.

As already mentioned, the University of Cyprus has also the responsibility to train all the prospective secondary education teachers through a Pre-service Training Program. According to the official webpage of the University of Cyprus: “*The programme takes into account the uniqueness of various subjects and encourages and helps the candidates to develop mechanisms for composing and reforming specialized solutions for the teaching/learning issues in every cognitive subject. It is expected, after the completion of this programme, that teachers will develop a contemporary pedagogical philosophy that will help them carry out their job efficiently.*” However, the inclusive education course that is included in the training is an elective one; as such, according to Symeonidou and Ptiaka (2014), a valuable opportunity to introduce the secondary education teachers in inclusive education, remains unexploited.

On the other hand, the Cyprus University of Technology is the only public university that provides during the last five years an Undergraduate program on “Logotherapy and Logopathology”, at the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. According the description provided at the official website of the Cyprus University of Technology, this program “*combines strong theoretical knowledge with clinical practice training in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of speech, hearing, swallowing/dysphagia disorders and deepens in the areas of psycholinguistics, neuroanatomy and neuroscientific rehabilitation*”. However, notably, taking a look at the structure of the undergraduate program, this takes mostly a medical orientation, while at the same time there is lack of educational courses in the program. As such, according to Symeonidou (2002), in many cases special language pathologists might not have the necessary pedagogical background needed. For instance, there are examples of traditional support teachers, who restrict the opportunities of students to develop independent learning skills (Rose, 1998; Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998) as they do the work that students with disabilities are expected to do.

**2.2.2. Private universities.** Similarly, to the graduates from the University of Cyprus, after 2007, pre-primary and primary teachers who graduate from the private universities in Cyprus (University of Nicosia, European University of Nicosia, Frederick University) may have attended an introductory course on special or inclusive education. As Symeonidou and Ptiaka state (2014), this course may have contributed to the development of their attitudes towards inclusion, or even to a meaningful conceptualization for inclusion. However, according to Angelides, Stylianou and Gibbs (2006), the curriculum of private universities regarding inclusive education is often characterized by conservatism, is governed by the medical-pathological model, which establishes the notion that some students are different and are not considered being among the responsibilities of the mainstream teachers, while the background of many lecturers comes from the field of psychology, a fact that may explain their reluctance to employ an inclusive approach to their teaching. As such, it seems that in many cases, the curriculum of private universities is dominated by theories that try to change students as individuals and not schools as social institutions and the way they are organized, in order to become more inclusive and democratic, based on the principles of equity, tolerance and equal rights.

**2.2.3 The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI).** The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) has the primary role for in-service teachers training, while the Ministry of Education & Culture (MOEC) has a secondary role. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute organizes professional training seminars during the school year on a range of topics and subjects, aiming to train the in-service teachers on a variety of innovative pedagogical approaches and teaching practices (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2007). These seminars are provided in all districts, are optional and have a short duration (six meetings during evenings for a total duration of 15h), while they are not taken into account for promotional purposes (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009).

The disability-related seminars that are provided by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute reflect a categorical approach, as they are grounded on the basis of the deficit model rather than on the basis of the inclusion (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014). In particular, the seminars provided by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute are usually focused on specific disabilities, such as language difficulties,

behavior and emotional problems, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2007). Unfortunately, the content and orientations of these seminars has remained unchanged throughout the years.

**2.2.4 Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC).** As already mentioned, the Ministry of Education and Culture has a secondary role for in-service teachers training, while it does not appear to have stated a concrete agenda on in-service teachers training in relation to special education and inclusion. Instead, the Ministry of education and Culture provides in-service training on a more unstructured and occasional basis, usually through the inspectorate. At the same time, according to Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2014), it seems that the seminars and workshops provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture are sporadic, are taking place due a combination of circumstances, target mostly the Special Education teachers rather the “mainstream” ones, while are usually funded by non-governmental organizations or by European projects. However, this is a paradox given that despite the Cyprus legislation of 1999, the Ministry of Education and Culture has not undertaken an active role for developing an educational policy guiding the implementation of training courses on integration and inclusion.

**2.2.5 Non-governmental organizations.** A last source of in-service teachers training are various seminars and workshops organized by different bodies and non-governmental organizations on a voluntary basis. The most well-known non-governmental organization is the Cyprus Inclusive Education Club, which in collaboration with the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus, organizes five seminars per semester focusing on inclusive educational practices. These seminars are usually attended mostly by a small number of pre-service teachers, studying at the University of Cyprus. However, according Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2014), the attendance of seminars and workshops provided by different bodies on voluntary basis, such as teachers’ unions and political or other organizations, is often problematic, in terms of their content and relevance to inclusive

education. As such, in many cases, in-service teachers with a true interest for learning more about inclusive education may receive confusing messages about integration and inclusion.

### **2.3. Cyprus's possibilities of offering teacher training activities**

Taking into account the overview presented so far in relation to the current legislation framework and teachers' training in relation to inclusive education in Cyprus, it is not surprising that inclusive education is a goal that has not yet been fulfilled in Cyprus.

Despite the current rhetoric calling for teacher training as a crucial step towards inclusion and the provisions of the Law of 113(I)/1999 for Special Education, substantive teacher training for inclusion in Cyprus hardly exists. As a consequence, the majority of pre-primary, primary and secondary education teachers at Cyprus form a superficial view of inclusive education, and as such, in most of the cases they do not favor inclusion (Angelides, Vrasidas & Charalambous, 2007; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2013; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014). According to Batsiou, Bebetos, Panteli, and Antoniou (2008), most of the general teachers seem reluctant to undertake an active role for achieving inclusion, as they assume that the integration of students with disabilities in mainstream classroom will be a time-consuming and difficult process, in which they do not wish to be involved. Another obstacle towards this direction seems to be the lack of a particular policy or programme for differentiating the curriculum or their teaching methods in order to be able to provide equal opportunities for learning to all students (Angelides & Michaelidou, 2007; Symeonidou & Mavrou, 2013). On the other hand, in a previous research conducted by Kipriotakis *et al.* (2000), it was concluded that educators agree to teach in inclusive classes only on the condition that the essential material and technical infrastructure can be provided as well as satisfactory support from specialists in the field exists.

Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), after surveying a large sample of in-service teachers in Cyprus resulted on that teachers' conceptualization of inclusion was problematic. As they stated in their conclusions "*Teachers' beliefs for the education of students with disabilities reflect their attachment to the assumptions of the medical and charity models. In particular, teachers strongly*



*believe in the education of some categories of students with disabilities in special schools, they believe that specialists know better, they agree with fund-raising initiatives for students with disabilities and they clearly state that the main goal of educating students with disabilities alongside students without disabilities is socialization” (p. 550).*

Cyprus could address these problems by focusing on the following teacher training activities and goals:

- Support teachers in developing a practical conceptualization of inclusion based on hands-on implementation of novel methods and techniques;
- Support teachers in using teaching methods and pedagogical approaches to provide equal opportunities for learning for all students;
- Support teachers by providing access to essential materials and technological resources aligned for addressing the needs of all students;
- Allow teachers to share their new experiences in a Community of Practice (CoP).

According to Symeonidou and Ptiaka (2009), as teachers’ initial education is insufficient, there is an urgent need to carefully plan and deliver teacher training programmes for addressing both theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education effectively.

### **3. Greece Teachers’ Training Context**

#### **3.1 Context**

This section provides information related to regulation and current statistics in Greece, following the same structure, as the previous (Section 2):

- General regulations on educational inclusion
- General regulation of teacher training
- Basic information on students with disabilities

**3.3.1 General regulations on educational inclusion.** Special education at Greece can be better understood only if we make a brief historical review and see its pathway. Organized and civilized societies have an obligation to protect and provide training to all persons with disabilities.

- **1970-1980:** For the first time, the Greek state and the Ministry of Education have systematically undertaken the responsibility of education for achieving social inclusion and integration of students with disabilities.
- **1981:** Law 1143 refers to "Law on Disabilities Education, Vocational Training, Employment, Employment and Decentralized Social Care". The purpose of the law is "to provide special education and vocational training to departed people, to take social care measures and to integrate them into social life". Article 3 states that Disabilities Education is provided only in special schools, classes and institutions. There is no reference to membership. The definition given to people with disabilities is medical. The attendance is not compulsory and is defined from the age of 6 to 17 years. Oral or written examinations of students with disabilities are introduced.
- **1984-1989:** The concepts of special education, special educational needs, specific vocational training, integration and social welfare and protection are introduced.
- **1985:** Law 1566 / (2) enhanced the integration strategy through the operation of special classes in general schools, the gradual integration of private schools into the public sector, as well as the transfer to the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Of all competences relating to primary education (general-vocational) integrated the teaching of a foreign language in special schools and the Braille printing for blind people, etc.
- **1986:** 'Organization and operation of special education units', PD 603/1982. "Timetable and curriculum of high school and lyceums of special education", PD. 172/1986
- **1983-1984:** The training of teachers has been officially started by a law of 1975 (L 227/75-FEK273 / 4.12.75).
- **1988:** Law 1771/1988: "Modification and completion of the system for the admission of students to tertiary education" [Article 4, sections "Allowable overwriting of blind or deaf

people". Law 1824/1988: "Regulation of Educational Issues" "Student selection for schools and departments of higher education "physically weak" candidates ", PD. 238/1988

- **1990:** Many Community funds are available at Greece for training, training and tackling the social exclusion of people with disabilities. Several research and training programs are being organized by universities to upgrade the provision of students with disabilities.
- **2000:** Law 2817/2000 introduces the inclusion and support of students with disabilities in general education schools. It also establishes diagnostic and counselling centers at the prefectural level, public awareness is promoted, as well as their wider acceptance by society. Postgraduate Special Education Departments are established in the Pedagogical Departments of Athens, Patras and Thessaloniki. Reference is made to 'complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties, autism and developmental disorders' (Article 1 (2)). In addition, for the very first time, reference is made to learning difficulties of language and mathematics (e.g., dyslexia, dissonance or dyscrasia). Measures are foreseen for people with disabilities in pre-school age and for those who have completed compulsory education. The provision of modern technology teaching tools for people with disabilities is ensured. Sign language is also recognized as the official language of the deaf.

Law 3699 / (1) introduces for the first time in history the requirement for special education, by harmonizing it fully with the provisions concerning general education. Also, it introduces the term "Special Education & Training", which replaces the term "Special Education". Moreover, it emphasizes the functionality and the possibility for participation of people with disabilities, not the disability itself. Final, it rennumbers the Centers for the Diagnosis, Evaluation & Support of Special Educational Needs.

Law 3699 / (2) introduces the matching and the parity of all levels of special pre-primary, primary, secondary, pre-vocational and vocational education with the corresponding schools of general education.

There are many benefits from interdisciplinary collaboration for students with disabilities:

1. The student is considered holistically as a person but also as a member of an interaction with the subsystems (school, family, neighbourhood, friends, services),
2. There is exchange of experiences and knowledge among professionals,
3. Common objectives are set based on complementary actions and
4. General effectiveness is targeted.

In addition, it is necessary to involve strategies for interdisciplinary team collaboration with teachers, which can offer:

1. Decision-making on terms and criteria of professional ethics and political pedagogical intervention,
2. A culture of support, solidarity and mutual trust,
3. Rules of continuous improvement grounded on new ideas and
4. Linking of personal and individual development to the professional development of teachers.

All the above can only be achieved with the necessary cooperation of both parents of students with disabilities and the general community.

**3.1.2 General regulation of teacher training.** Nursery and primary school teachers complete a four-year university degree in universities' departments of education. Also, secondary education teachers complete a four-year university degree according to their discipline, while special education teachers who work in the area of primary education, are graduates of the university departments of education.

Having taught in mainstream schools for a minimum of five years, they complete a two-year in-service training programme in special education. Many of them have also postgraduate degrees in special education. Special education teachers who work in secondary education are university graduates of different subject areas. Some of them also have a postgraduate degree in special education. Most primary and secondary teachers working with students with disabilities have attended

several training seminars in special education, which are regularly organized by universities or the Ministry of Education.

The training of teachers of all primary and secondary teachers is implemented by the Regional Educational Centers (REC). The Regional Educational Centers (REC) were established according to the Presidential Decree. 250/92 (Laws 1566/85 and L. 2009/92) and started operating from the academic year 1992-93. Each REC is an autonomous public service directly attached to the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Across the country there are currently 16 RECs, namely in Athens, Eastern Attica, West Attica, Piraeus, Patras, Ioannina, Thessaloniki, Alexandroupoli, Heraklion, Larissa, Tripoli, Lamia, Kavala, Mytilene and Kozani. The RECs as implementation bodies of the Training Policy of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, offer teachers a variety of forms of compulsory and optional training, with long and short-term training programs.

**3.1.3 Basic information on students with disabilities.** The definition of disabilities in Greece refers to difficulties in learning due to sensory, intellectual, cognitive, developmental, mental and neuro-psychiatric disorders which are diagnosed after a scientific and pedagogical evaluation. These difficulties influence the process of learning and school adjustment. Students with disabilities are considered those students who have disabilities in motion, vision, hearing, who suffer from chronic diseases, disorders in speech, attention deficit, and all-pervasive developmental disorders. Disabilities refer also to difficulties in common behaviors due to complex factors, i.e. cognitive, emotional, mental and social disadvantages deriving from the family and social environment. Disabilities included also the educational needs of “students who have one or more mental abilities developed to a degree that exceed a lot the expected abilities of their age range”.

A student may have difficulty attending a general school program because he/she faces:

- learning difficulties,
- vision problems,
- hearing problems,

- intellectual disability
- autism,
- neurological and other conditions,
- complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties,
- multiple disabilities and
- speech problems.

In order to enroll a student with disabilities in a special school or a special vocational school or to be examined by a specific examination (oral or written), he/she must first get a report from a recognized pedagogical service. In addition to diagnosing the problem, the team that will examine the student will also tell you which Special School or Enrolment Department parents can enroll in their student.

This is the relevant reference from the law: Hellenic Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (HCDCP) is responsible for the classification, enrolment and attendance of the appropriate school unit or other Special Education and Training (SET) educational framework or program, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the students educational course in cooperation with (SET) school counselors, pre-primary school teachers, primary and secondary general education officers, Special Educational Staff (SES) advisers, school unit managers, staff responsible for implementing the program, as well as with the (SES) serving in the (SET) school units.

A student with disabilities can attend:

- In a classroom of the primary school, in the case of students with mild learning difficulties, supported by the class teacher, who cooperates on a case-by-case basis with the HCDCP, with the general and specialty school counsellors and the SES advisors.
- In a school class of the general school, with supported-inclusive education, by educational SET, when this is impeded by the type and degree of disabilities. Parallel support is provided to students who can, with appropriate individual support, attend the classroom curriculum for students with the highest educational needs when there is no other SET framework (special school, integration section) or when parallel support becomes necessary - based on the HCDCP's

opinion - because of their special educational needs. In the latter case, support from a specialist teacher can be provided on a permanent and planned basis. Parallel support is provided only after the relevant suggestion of the HCDCP which, in writing, determines the times of parallel support on a case by case basis.

Requests for parallel support are submitted to the management of the school and sent to the Directorate of SET of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs for their approval and execution schedule. The time for submitting applications for parallel support is set from the date of enrolment in the school until October 20<sup>th</sup> of each school year.

- Specially organized and suitably staffed Integration Departments (ID) operating within general and vocational education schools with two (2) different types of programs.
- When the attendance of students with disabilities becomes particularly difficult in schools in the joint educational program or in integration departments due to their disabilities, these students are placed:
  - In Schools of Special Education and Training (SSET),
  - In schools or departments that function either as an independent or as an annex to other schools in hospitals, rehabilitation centres, juvenile care institutions, institutes of chronic illnesses, or mental health facilities education and rehabilitation services, as long as they have school-age disabilities. These educational structures are considered to be SSET under the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, fall within the framework of the SET of school-age students and implement educational programs supervised by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and
  - At home in exceptional cases.

The most common solution promoted by the Greek Ministry of Education is the inclusion of students with disabilities and not the isolation in special schools. The development of the spirit of

inclusion is the main concern, which is obviously the best way for both students's schooling and social inclusion.

### **3.2 Teacher Training Providers and Activities**

In Greece, the teacher training providers are mainly the public universities, which offer graduate and post-graduate studies that lead to a diploma (Bachelor or Master) in Special Education and the opportunity for the teachers to get appointed in the public disabilities schools. Other training providers are colleges that are offering training programmes in collaboration with European universities. Further training can be offered to graduates by public bodies that are organizing annual seminars with a duration of about 400 hours or more.

**3.2.1 Public universities.** In primary education, there is the only one public university department in Greece fully specialized in Special Education for teachers in Bachelor level. It is the *Department of Special Education of the University of Thessaly*, located in Volos. The program of studies cover a wide field of disabilities, offering specialization in the education of people with disabilities, such as with learning disabilities, hearing and deaf students, with visual impairments, with intellectual disability and with autism spectrum disorders. SED's main mission is to educate special teachers for pre-school and primary education, as well as advance research and development in special education.

A master's degree in special education can be offered by programs organized by the following Higher Educational Institutions:

1. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Pedagogical Department of Primary Education, Special Education.
2. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology, Direction: Special Education.
3. Department of Education and Education in Preschool, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Special Education.



4. Democritus University of Thrace: Specialization in ICT and Special Education - Integration Psychodiagnostics.
5. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: Psycho-pedagogy of integration, Direction: Psycho-pedagogical components of special educational needs.
6. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: Pedagogical Science, Direction: Special Education.
7. University of Thessaly: Postgraduate School of Education: Special Education.
8. University of Thessaly: Counselling Psychology & Counselling in Special Education, Education and Health.
9. University of Macedonia: Lifelong Learning and Disabilities Education.
10. University of Macedonia: Communication Science (Master of Science in Communication Disorders and Sciences).
11. University of Macedonia: Special Education, Education and Rehabilitation.
12. University of Patras: Education and Education Sciences.
13. University of Ioannina: Preschool Education, direction Psychology in Education and Disabilities Education.
14. University of Ioannina: Postgraduate Studies in Education Sciences, direction Psychology in Disabilities Education.
15. Hellenic Open University: Special Education and Training for People with Problems of Speaking and Writing

Due to the vast number of post-graduate programmes, the Institute of Educational Policy, has published relevant criteria for the recognition of the Special Education degrees. To summarize with, the postgraduate course should be offered by a pedagogical, humanitarian or other faculty with educational background to the Special Education. Study time should be at least 3 semesters and should include 20 ECTS of practical training. The practice should be implemented in public schools and special schools. Finally, 6/9 of the curriculum (60 out of 90 ECTS) should be related to disability issues.

Apart from the Masters, some of the public Higher Educational Institutions and other recognized state bodies supervised by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (e.g., The National Centre for Scientific Research “Demokritos”), offer training seminars in Special Education, with a duration of at least four hundred (400) hours. The holders of this certificate of attendance of annual training courses in Special Education, are given the opportunity to be appointed in public special schools.

**3.2.2 Private universities.** As the percentage of students with disabilities in education is increased, there is a need for more trained educators in this field. Apart from the public Higher Educational Institutions, in Greece there are many private universities (colleges) that are collaborating with universities all over Europe and offer training courses in Greek. For instance, the Metropolitan College is collaborating with University of East London and awards a degree on special education.

All these postgraduate programs offered by colleges, are addressed to a wide range of graduates and professionals such as Pre-Primary Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Primary and Secondary Education Teachers, Foreign Language Teachers, Psychologists, Sociologists, Speech Therapists, etc. The degree obtained can lead to the recognition of professional equivalence by the Ministry of Education's Council for the recognition of professional qualifications (SAEP) and offers the possibility to integrate the graduates in the Special Education Boards. The prerequisite that will lead to the recognition of the degree is to include sessions of practical training in public or private frameworks. However, the degree awarded to the graduates, is considered mainly as a qualification and has limited potency in the public-school settings of Special Education.

**3.2.3 The Institute of Educational Policy (prior known as “Pedagogical Institute”).** *The Department of Special Education of the Pedagogical Institute (article 14)* was founded in 2000 (Law 2817/2000), as well as in 2008, according to the new Law for Special Education of people with disabilities and special educational needs (N. 3699/2008), now called “Department of Special Education and Training”.

*The personal positions (article 14)* of the Department of Special Education are the following:

(a) two Positions for Counsellors, (b) two Positions for tenure Deputies of Special Education, and (c) seven Positions for five-year term Deputies with different specializations. For the nomination of the Positions for Counsellors and tenure permanent Deputies it is required: (a) a relevant BA degree obtained from a Greek or a foreign University, (b) a relevant PhD degree and (c) at least eight-year experience in Special Education (SSET, TE or HCDCP). For the nomination in the Positions for five year term Deputies it is required: (a) a relevant BA degree obtained from a Greek or a foreign University, (b) additional Special Education training offered in Training Centres (Didaskaleia) of Universities in Greece or abroad, or postgraduate studies in Special Education or in school psychology, and (c) eight-year experience in Special Education (SSET, TE or HCDCP).

The Mission of the Department of Special Education, as stated in the Law 3699/2008 (article 14, par. 3), is the following:

- scientific research, study and documentation of special education issues,
- planning and support for the development of Training programs, in collaboration with the relevant Training Department of the Pedagogical Institute, the “Educational Newsletter” and the relevant University Departments,
- planning and development of curricula and planning of didactic/additional supportive material for the education of students with disabilities,
- evaluation of special education programs in collaboration with the Evaluation Department of the Pedagogical Institute,
- promotion and implementation of ICT,
- scientific support of the work of the Special School Councillors, the “SES” Councillors as well as of the special education programs,
- collaboration with Greek and foreign scientific institutions and organizations as well as with specialized personnel, aiming at the promotion of special education issues and
- evaluation of the “HCDCP” work”.

### **3.3 Greece's possibilities of offering teacher training activities**

The University of Piraeus Research Centre (UPRC) is very experienced in offering qualification programmes to graduates via its centre for lifelong learning. In regards with Special Education, UPRC has gained a lot of experience through its participation in National and European projects implemented in the field of Special Education. It has already organized a MOOC on Accessibility issues for tertiary educational framework, addressed to academics and VET professionals. The first round of the MOOC entitled "Addressing accessibility issues in Higher Education and VET" had been very successful and already a second round is going to be delivered.

The evaluation of all these trainings have offered rich data about the expectations of the trainees, mainly teachers, when attending a training course. In particular, they are mostly interested in attending a course or seminar that is based rather on practical activities and is linked with previous knowledge. The main concern of the teacher as a trainee, is to obtain all these skills that will assist him/her to promote the active participation of the students in the learning process. Moreover, teachers expect to develop methodological skills for the promotion of the self-regulated learning, to ensure that their students will be able to respond effectively in the multiple learning environments. This new role of the teachers sets their educational training as a priority. In regard to special education, the inclusion of students with disabilities is highlighted as a major issue for teachers. What they need in that case, are clear and innovative teaching practices, with hands-on activities.

Taking into consideration all this assessment from previous trainings, UPRC is bound to offer a very specific face-to-face training program that will be based on practical experience and good practices. The main axes that the Greek training will focus are the following:

- Familiarize with the principles of Universal Learning Planning (UDL) and the role of the teacher in applying these principles for the promotion of inclusive educational practices.
- Become familiar with multisensory applications aimed at different types of disability.
- Understand the basic principles of designing accessible course plans and educational scenarios with the use of multisensory tools.
- Practice the skills gained and share the experience in a Community of Practice (CoP).

## 4. Italy teachers' training context

### 4.1 Context

This section provides information related to special education regulations and current statistics in Italy. It provides an overview of the history of Italian Educational System and its legislation, to conclude with the description of the current situation of the educational system related to inclusion.

**4.1.1 History of the Italian education system.** The 'integration mentality' of Italy can be traced back to the Italian Constitution of 1948. During the Fascist dictatorship, individual freedoms were denied which resulted in, after World War Two, different conflicting forces (Catholics, Liberals and Communists) to unite against fascism and all that was represented in it. The Democratic Constitution of 1948 triggered the enactment of social integration policies with big importance to the rights of minorities and the abolishment of all social, economic and cultural obstacles to citizen participation. All citizens had the right to education, including disabled people.

Inclusive Education has been an important part of the Italian education system for more than 50 years. The policy of Inclusive Education (*Integrazione Scolastica* = the term used for Inclusive Education in Italy) was put in force in 1977 through the Law n. 517/1977. Inclusive Education led to the dismantling of special schools in Italy, which until that point had been the norm, and allowed previously marginalized groups of people to attend and become part of their local community schools.

Its origins can be traced back to the socio-medical movement led by the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, who actively campaigned for the dismantling of mental asylums and was successful with Basaglia Law 1978.

Anti-discriminatory legislation has been very prolific in Italy. This is particularly evident when considering that countries are currently ratifying the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006) to end segregation of disabled students from mainstream settings whilst Italy had already made such a choice in 1977.

Not only did the Law n. 517/1977 officially abolish differentiated classes and special schools, but it also provided additional resources by which ordinary schools could be improved, such as support teachers and local specialized personnel. Thus, the schools were provided with a series of technical and pedagogical instructions as to how to implement inclusion into practice, such as special training required by the support teacher, the organization of interdisciplinary activities to support the learning of students with disabilities and the principle of individualism of learning.

#### **4.1.2 Important legislation regarding the education system**

- **Law n. 517/1977** legislated to implement ‘procedures to integrate handicapped students by providing special teachers’, both in primary and middle schools.
- **Law n. 104/1992** is the main framework for all disability issues: it guarantees specific rights for people with disabilities and their families, provides assistance, stipulates full integration and the adoption of measures for prevention and functional recovery, and also ensures social, economic and legal protection.
- **Law n. 328/2000** states that families, together with municipalities and social services, may agree upon an individualized life project for their students, aimed at full integration ‘within the family and social life’.
- **Law n. 62/2000** makes inclusive education compulsory in private schools, usually provided by religious orders.
- **Law n. 170/2010** recognizes dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthographia and dyscalculia as specific learning disorders. This Law – which states that students with learning disorders do not need special teachers, but rather a new way of teaching, according to their way of learning – promotes a change in perspective. The aim is to shift the focus from a clinical to a pedagogical view, by empowering all subjects involved in the educational process.

Subsequent regulations have specified the educational and didactic measures to be applied from pre-school education to support the correct process of teaching and learning. Law 170/2010 has

been implemented through the Ministerial Decree and Guidelines (12/7/2011); the Agreement, between State and regions, concerning procedures for diagnosis and certification (25/7/2012); and the Inter-Ministerial Ministry of Education, Universities and Research-Ministry of Health Decree (17/4/2013) concerning early detection in schools.

Moreover, a general reform of the school system “Buona scuola” is currently in progress since 2015 (law 107/2015). In this context, the school will be charged of developing an individual educational project for each student as emphasized by the interviewed teacher. In short, in the case of disability a specific diagnosis is required by a doctor (certified disability). On the contrary, for all other cases, the teacher will lead a pedagogical analysis to identify any disabilities for his/her own student. The main idea is to have more inclusive didactics for all students.

**4.1.3 Current Italian Education System<sup>1</sup>.** The Italian education system today consists of four main stages of state schooling:

- Infant education for students between the ages of 3-6
- Primary education (five years of schooling) for ages 6-11
- Lower secondary education (three years of schooling) for ages 11-14
- Upper secondary education (five years of schooling) for students between the ages of 14-19

Students with disabilities attend common classes in which curricular teachers are supported by special teachers (support teachers). Each year, the regional offices of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MEUR) allocate support teachers to each school, according to the number of students and the typology of disabilities. Support teachers are part of the teaching team: they work with curricular teachers and participate in all activities that concern the class as a whole, such as

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/italy/national-overview/special-needs-education-within-the-education-system>

planning and assessment. Not all teachers are support teachers, but all support teachers are teachers.

Classes with one or two students with disabilities usually contain a maximum of 20 students.

#### **4.1.4 Teachers' qualification**

- *Pre-schools and primary schools:* A four-year degree in primary school education (Scienze della formazione primaria) is required to teach at pre-school and primary school level. In order to specialize as support teachers, they have to choose specific courses in their curricula when drafting their learning agreement.
- *Secondary schools:* A graduate degree is required to teach at secondary school level, as well as a one-year specialization and traineeship in schools, undertaken after graduation. In addition to the basic training common to all teachers, those wishing to work as support teachers must also obtain a specific qualification, awarded by universities and in which they must earn at least 60 credits. Training includes at least 300 hours (12 credits) of traineeship activities related to the school level at which they are going to work. Each university organizes and regulates the training activities in compliance with general criteria established by the MEUR.

**4.1.5 General Regulation of teacher training.** Support teachers are part of the team of regular class teachers and participate in all the planning and assessment activities. Support teachers are also facilitators of all inclusion processes. According to the 'Collective School Staff Employment Agreement' school-staff, have the right and the duty to undergo in-service training. Law n. 128/2013 introduced the principle of compulsory in-service training.

Since students with disabilities 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 students with disabilities. Training activities focus on topics such as early risk identification, didactic measures to be adopted both with the student and with the class group, assessment procedures and guidance. The specific training plans are drafted by the MEUR (Ministry of Education, Universities and Research) and by schools, according to their autonomy. Training activities may also



involve universities, research institutes, scientific organizations, associations and local health authorities.

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

Specialization for teaching support activities for students with disabilities is achieved through attendance of specialization courses in pedagogy and special training for teaching support activities and school inclusion.

The specialization course in pedagogy and special teaching for didactic support activities and scholastic inclusion is run at the Universities authorized by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The course is annual and involves the acquisition of:

- Sixty (60) university credits, including at least 300 hours of internship, equal to 12 university credits.
- The specialization course in pedagogy and special teaching for teaching support activities and school inclusion is planned at national level by the MEUR taking into account the needs and requirements of the national education and training system. Access to the course is subject to passing an access test prepared by the University.

Starting from 2019, only those candidates who possess the access requisites provided for by the current regulations for teaching in the first and second level secondary school who have obtained 60 credits will be admitted to the course.

**4.1.7 Basic information on students with disabilities.** Students with disabilities generally attend mainstream schools, in the ordinary sections and classes at all educational levels. There are a few special institutes for students who are blind and deaf as well as schools with specific tasks in the field of education for students with particularly severe disabilities.

During enrolment, parents must submit the specific certification issued by the relevant office after the mandatory disability identification procedures have been completed. Such documentation certifies the type of disability and the right to receive specific support.

Based on the above-mentioned certification, the following documents are drawn up:

- **Functional diagnosis:** the local health authority draws this up. It provides an analytical description of the student's psycho-physical conditions and their potentialities.
- **Dynamic-functional profile:** the local health authority and curricular and support teachers draw this up jointly. It includes diagnostic elements related to the difficulties students encounter in their school activities, but above all their potentialities and development possibilities in the short and medium term.
- **Individual education plan:** this is drawn up jointly by the local health authority, curricular and support teachers, educationists or education assistants (if required), in collaboration with parents. It includes a description of the interventions planned for the student in a given period.

Assessment for students with disabilities is carried out according to the goals set out in the individual education plan. Although the same assessment procedures are applied to all students, they take students' progress into account rather than their achievements. Students who follow a differentiated study plan, which does not lead to a final qualification, receive a 'portfolio' accrediting the subjects studied, the competences acquired, and the relevant credits obtained in the final exam.

**4.1. 8 Students with disabilities.** For almost all students with disabilities in the Italian school system (including students with specific learning disorders, specific developmental disorders or socio-economic, cultural or linguistic disadvantages), the law provides for the drafting of tailored educational plans which allow them to improve their abilities and knowledge, based on their own skills and the predicted area of improvement. They are called individual education plans or personalized education plans and are drafted by teachers, medical staff, parents and other professional figures involved in the student's education/life.

Parents also participate in the school's Work Group for Inclusion (WGI) and are represented in the Local and Regional Inter-Institutional Work-Group (WGI-IWG). At school level, both the school principal and the teaching staff are responsible for quality assurance. The principal organizes the school activities according to educational efficiency and efficacy criteria and is responsible for the results of this activity. The teaching staff plans and verifies the didactic activities. Starting from the 2013/14 school year, each school has to draft an Annual Plan for Inclusion (API) as a basis for the Educational Policy Plan (EPP). The EPP 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 year, schools must evaluate the efficacy of their inclusiveness.

**4.1.9 Students with specific learning disorders.** During the enrolment of students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD), parents must submit to the school the official certification issued by the relevant national health system office. As students with SLD are the responsibility of curricular teachers, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MEUR) has issued guidelines to help schools support students with SLD in their educational path. In particular, schools should put in place specific pedagogic and didactic measures to guarantee their achievements, as well as personalized education plans and the option to avail of compensatory tools and dispensatory measures.

Table 2.

Percentage of students with disability by typology of activity in which they are not autonomous with geographical specification [in Italian]

PROSPETTO 1. ALUNNI CON DISABILITÀ PER TIPOLOGIA DI ATTIVITÀ NELLE QUALI NON SONO AUTONOMI, RIPARTIZIONE GEOGRAFICA E ORDINE SCOLASTICO. Anno scolastico 2015-2016. Valori per 100 alunni con disabilità			
RIPARTIZIONE GEOGRAFICA	Non autonomo nello spostarsi	Non autonomo nell'andare in bagno	Non autonomo nel mangiare
Scuola primaria			
Nord	10,7	15,8	8,1
Centro	13,7	18,3	10,3
Mezzogiorno	15,2	23,5	11,1
<b>Italia</b>	<b>12,9</b>	<b>19,1</b>	<b>9,6</b>
Scuola secondaria di primo grado			
Nord	8,3	9,3	5,0
Centro	11,5	13,0	6,8
Mezzogiorno	15,7	18,9	8,1
<b>Italia</b>	<b>11,6</b>	<b>13,4</b>	<b>6,5</b>

In addition, in order to facilitate the educational process of students with SLD, teachers and school principals at all levels undergo specific in-service training. Training activities focus on the early identification of SLD risk, didactic measures to be adopted both with the student and with the class group, assessment procedures and guidance. Training activities are organized directly by the MIUR or by schools and may involve universities, research institutes, scientific organizations, associations and local health authorities.

Assessment of students with SLD should be consistent with the personalized education plan, for example, by using oral – rather than written – tests to assess foreign language knowledge or by using compensatory tools.

Table 3

*Students with disabilities by typology of problem, part of Italy (North, Centre or South) and school year [in Italian]*

<b>Tabella 2. Alunni con disabilità per tipologia di problema, ripartizione e ordine scolastico. Anno scolastico 2009/2010 (valori percentuali)</b>				
<b>Tipo di problema</b>	<b>Nord</b>	<b>Centro</b>	<b>Mezzogiorno</b>	<b>Italia</b>
<b>Scuola primaria</b>				
Cecità	0,2	1,2	1,0	0,7
Ipovisione	5,1	3,8	4,5	4,6
Sordità acuta	2,0	1,3	1,9	1,8
Ipoacusia	4,3	4,2	4,3	4,3
Motoria	13,9	11,6	16,4	14,3
Disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento	18,3	29,1	34,7	26,4
Disturbo specifico del linguaggio	25,0	22,4	28,6	25,8
Disturbo generalizzato dello sviluppo	17,8	14,2	19,3	17,6
Ritardo mentale	43,1	33,0	40,3	40,1
Disturbi dell'attenzione	19,8	24,0	34,6	26,0
Disturbi affettivi relazionali	17,5	22,8	32,1	23,9
Disturbi comportamentali	15,8	14,4	21,3	17,5
Psichiatrica precoce	1,0	0,2	0,4	0,6
Altro	14,0	16,5	14,0	14,2
<b>Scuola secondaria di I grado</b>				
Cecità	0,5	0,5	1,3	0,8
Ipovisione	3,8	4,6	2,8	3,6
Sordità acuta	1,6	1,4	0,9	1,3
Ipoacusia	3,4	2,7	4,5	3,7
Motoria	9,5	9,6	14,2	11,2
Disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento	26,4	40,1	40,9	34,3
Disturbo specifico del linguaggio	15,0	16,3	22,3	17,9
Disturbo generalizzato dello sviluppo	10,2	12,5	13,8	12,0
Ritardo mentale	44,8	34,1	45,3	43,0
Disturbi dell'attenzione	17,5	22,8	32,1	23,9
Disturbi affettivi relazionali	18,1	15,8	24,6	20,0
Disturbi comportamentali	13,7	14,3	23,4	17,4
Psichiatrica precoce	1,5	0,5	1,3	1,3
Altro	16,4	15,4	14,3	15,4

Fonte: Istat

## **4.2 Italy's possibilities of offering teacher training activities**

CESIE, as a center for the development of social, educational, economic, and research initiatives, has managed to collect a lot of experience regarding the use of non-formal education in a variety of fields. In this way, regional schools, both primary and secondary education, have been involved in various projects coordinated by CESIE in the frame of Regional and European Projects.

The Italian educational system has achieved inclusive education, pairing 1-2 students to one support teacher per classroom. However, it is considered that the training provided to the support teachers does not always equip them with ready-to-be-used tools and materials, in particular ICT ones. Considering this, there is a target group of teachers that are in need of external training and knowledge. This is a gap that CESIE can fill in by firstly capitalizing in the existing network of schools and teachers of the Palermo city and province and then, using them as multipliers to reach out to more.

Italy could address these problems by focusing on the following training activities and goals:

- Sharing experience between teachers in working in an inclusive classroom, with students with disabilities.
- Support teachers in sharing and learning new teaching methods and pedagogical approaches for providing equal opportunities for learning to all students.
- Support teachers by providing access in essential materials and technological resources aligned for addressing all of their students' disabilities.

## **5. Spain teachers' training context**

### **5.1 Context**

**5.1.1. General regulations on educational inclusion.** In the Spanish context, the first legal reference to educational inclusion appears in the Article 27.5 of the Spanish Constitution (1978). This article recognizes the right of all Spanish citizens to receive an education with all the elements needed for individual and social development. Also, the Article 49, urges the public institutions to rehabilitate

and integrate all persons with physical, sensorial, and psychic disabilities, providing them the required specialized attention. Up to that moment, persons with disabilities were not considered susceptible to being educated. They were “attended” in specific centres for their more basic needs. From that moment on, the principal legal references to understand how diversity is attended in Spain are the following:

- In 1975 the National Institute of Special Education (Instituto Nacional de Educación Especial) was founded Decreto 1151/1975, de 23 de mayo.
- In 1978, the National Plan of Special Education (Plan Nacional de Educación Especial) is published, with the main principles of normalization, integration, sectorization and individualization.
- Law 13/1982 of Social Integration of the Disabled (*Ley de Integración Social del Minusválido (LISMI)*), introduces the aforementioned principles, setting the basic directives to guarantee that disabled students can be schooled in mainstream schools, and receive a multi-professional education to guide the educational response.
- The Royal Decree 334/1985, March, for the ordinance of special education, meant the starting point of school integration in Spain. It was posed as an experimental plan for those schools that wanted to participate on a voluntary basis. The concept of pedagogical support is established, with the regulation of the special education teacher, together with other specialists, like speech therapists, physiotherapists, and psychomotor specialists. This is the starting point of the “school integration” model.
- The order of March, 20<sup>th</sup>, 1985 on planning of special education and experimentation of integration. This order set, at least from a theoretical stance, that special education centres would only accept students that could not enter into mainstream schooling system due to the severity of their disability.
- The law that makes effective school integration in Spain is the Organic Law 1/1990 of General Ordering of the Educational System (*Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE)*), which promotes a schooling model based on diversity, promoting equity

and equality of opportunities. As a development of this Law, the Royal Decree 696/1995 of 28<sup>th</sup>, April, of Ordinance of students with disabilities, in force until November, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009, offers a definition of students with disabilities and sets the directives for the attention to these students.

- The Organic Law 2/2006, from May, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006 of Education (*Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOE)*) sets the principles of school inclusion and equity and introduces the term “specific needs of educational support” (*Necesidades Específicas de Apoyo Educativo, (NEAE)*). All this is based on the proposal of the International Convention of the Rights of the Persons with Disability.
- The current Spanish Educational Law, the Organic Law 8/2013, from December 9<sup>th</sup>, for the Improvement of the Educational Quality (LOMCE), has not included any meaningful change with regard to the measures of attention to diversity and inclusion considered in the previous legislation.

These national legal regulations are specified in a set of regional regulations. This way, the Autonomous Regions are the responsible to specify in their local regulations the plans for the attention to diversity and decide on the allocation of the resources oriented to inclusive education. Our Autonomous Region (Castilla y León), has set the Order EDU 1152/2010 of August, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, by which the region rules the educational response of educational school support to the specific disabilities of the students, at all compulsory levels in our educational system. In 2017, it was elaborated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan of Attention to Special Education Needs (*II Plan de Atención a la Diversidad en la Educación de Castilla y León 2017-2022*), with new lines of action. Within the strategic lines of this Plan were included the promotion of research and dissemination of inclusive practices in the schools.

**5.1.2 General regulation of teacher training.** In Spain, the professionals in charge of attention to diversity at the schools have a Degree on Early Studenthood and Primary Education. Initial teacher training underwent profound changes as a result of the gradual adaptation of the university system to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The academic qualifications required to teach are uniform throughout the entire nation, although they do vary according to the various levels of the education system.

Previous to the last reform of the Higher Education System in Spain, pre-service teacher training was specialized, with a concrete line of studies of School Teacher. After the last reform of the university system, the education of these professionals changed its structure (Gallego y Rodríguez, 2007; Sales, 2006). The basic training on special education for all students is one core subject and the specific training for the specialist is much wider.

With the purpose of supporting students with disabilities, the educational system offers teachers help through specialists in special education, speech therapy and qualified professionals. According to Order ECI/3857/2007, of December, 27<sup>th</sup> in Spain, the professionals with a Degree in Primary Education can receive a more specialized training in Therapeutic Pedagogy/Special Education and Language and Hearing, if they take a qualifying track of between 30 and 60 ECTS in one of the aforementioned areas. These formative itineraries include courses that cater for the capacitation of teachers to attend students with different disabilities, such as intellectual disability, high capacities, learning difficulties, visual disability, behavioral disorders, language difficulties, and other types of disorder. In spite of the possibility of specialization, this new formulation has been extensively criticized (Sánchez, Navarro & Jordán, 2007), as it does not attend the recommendation of the European Union of making closer the academic degrees with the professional profiles.

According to Spanish regulations (LOMCE, 2013), in-service teacher training is the right and obligation of all teachers and the responsibility of the education administrations and schools. In-service teacher training programmes should adapt knowledge and teaching methods to trends in the learning sciences and specific methodologies, as well as to all the aspects of coordination, guidance, tutoring, attention to diversity and organization which aim enhancing the quality of education and the performing of schools.

Four types of organizations participate in professional teacher training in Spain. The most important are the teacher training centres, whose organization and number depend on each autonomous region. Other providers are universities, private institutions, and non-governmental organizations can also offer courses and training activities. Providers of teacher training must be



accredited by the Ministry of Education. Teacher training is voluntary for the teachers but needed for promotion and salary increase.

The Autonomous Communities in Spain have freedom to set their priority lines for in-service training, taking into account the needs of the teachers, setting the content and decide upon the institutions in charge of providing it. Among the networks and organizations in charge of offering permanent training opportunities, we highlight the “resources and teacher training centres” as the most extended network. Their functions and competencies are to:

- Organize and develop training plans in their action scope,
- Promotion of inter-institutional teams to support the dissemination of knowledge,
- Facilitate resources to the teachers to improve their teaching practice,
- Improvement of educational innovation.

These institutions are affiliated to a variable number of Primary and Secondary School centres to which they provide support, both regarding teachers’ professional development and in giving resources of counselling to carry out innovations and improvement initiatives.

There exist other institutions connected to teachers’ professional development, such as the University Departments, the Educational Sciences Institutes, professional associations, trade-unions, and pedagogical renovation movements.

The National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (*Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y de Formación del Profesorado, INTEF*) is an agency under the Ministry of Education and Science in charge of providing in-service teacher training opportunities at a national level. Its scope and main guidelines is the following: (a) multiple literacies; (b) teacher digital competencies; (c) initiative mind-set and entrepreneurship; (d) foreign languages; (e) educational inclusion; (f) scientific culture; (g) leadership management and skills aimed to promote the students’ academic success; and (h) healthy lifestyle.

INTEF is also aimed to design and disseminate digital resources related to different disciplines of knowledge through the compulsory education. Furthermore, it develops specific training

programmes in collaboration with the Autonomous Regions with the aim of fostering teachers scientific and didactic professional updating.

Table 4

*Summary of the Main Characteristics of Spanish Teacher Training Policies*

<b>Overall structure of the training system</b>	<b>Agencies responsible for in-service teacher training</b>	<b>Providers of in-service teacher training activities</b>	<b>Mandatory/voluntary training</b>
Based on common national regulations, developed at the regional level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ministry of Education.</li> <li>-Regional Educational Departments (17).</li> <li>-Teacher training centres (pre-primary, primary and secondary).</li> <li>-Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF).</li> <li>- In-service Teacher Training Centres.</li> <li>-Institutions of Higher Education.</li> <li>-Private institutions.</li> <li>-Non-Governmental Organizations, Associations.</li> </ul>	Mandatory for promotion and salary increase.

**5.1.3 Basic information on students with disabilities.** In Spain, the students with disabilities are those that have permanent educational needs assessed as such by the Psych-pedagogical Teams. These students can be schooled in mainstream schools or in special education centres. These students are classified according to the disability type: hearing, motor, or physical impairment, severe personality disorder/autism, and multi-disability (DISMET, 2017).

Figure 6 shows the rate of students with disabilities enrolled in pre-University educational levels related to the total of students enrolled in the same levels, calculated by DISMET on the basis of the Statistics of pre-University educational levels.

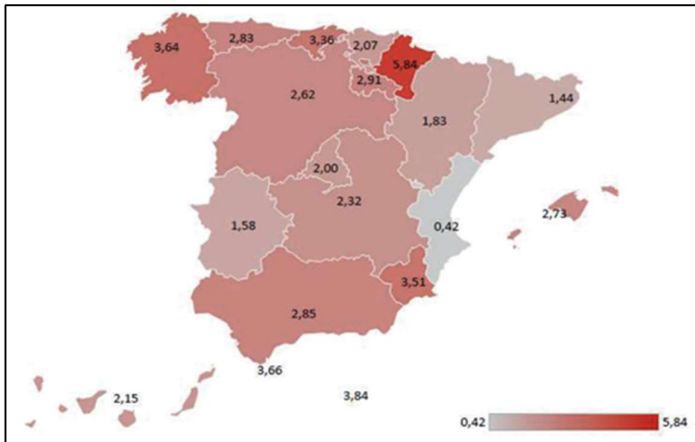


Figure 6. Rate of students with disabilities related to a disability enrolled in mainstream schools, by Autonomous Community (in Spain). Data from 2014-2015. (Source: DISMET, 2017, p.132)

Likewise, Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of percentages according to the types of disabilities in the Autonomous Region of Castilla y León. It is worth noting that in Castilla y León there is a high number of students with intellectual disabilities (n=2603), followed by students with physical disabilities (n=1007), multiple disabilities (n=706), auditory disabilities (n=376) and visual disabilities (n=149).

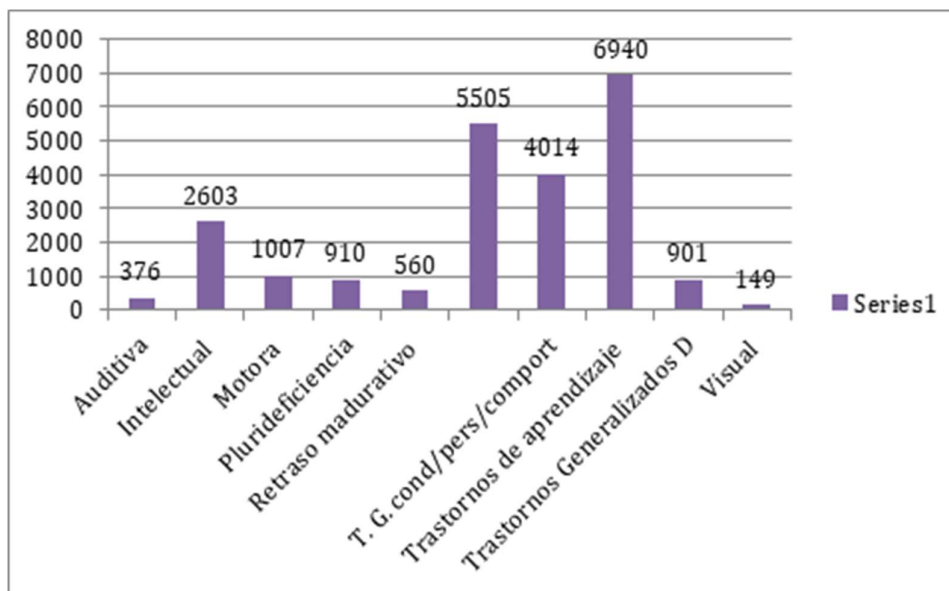
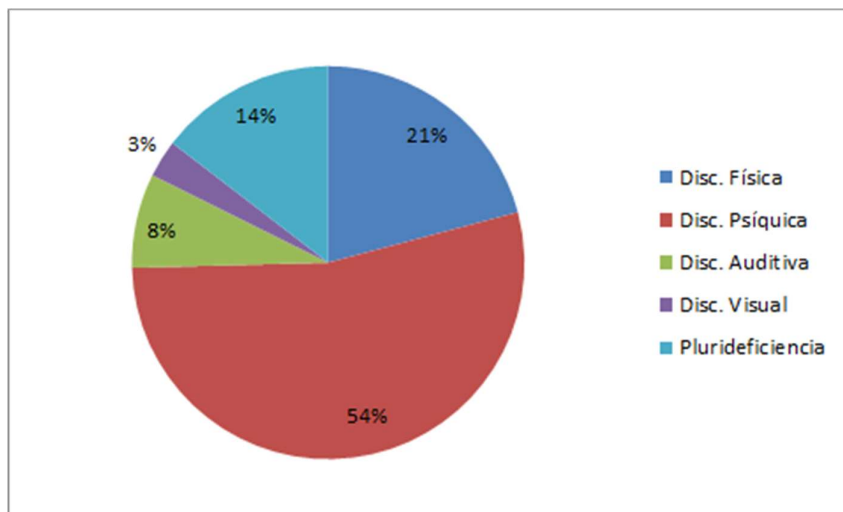


Figure 7. Distribution of students with disabilities in Castilla y León. 2015-2016. Adapted from Castilla y León School Board, p. 736.



*Figure 8.* Distribution of students with disabilities according to their types of disabilities in Castilla y León. 2015-2016. Public and private schools. Adapted from the Junta de Castilla y León school board (2017, p.737).

Following the classification of “students with specific needs of educational support”, the students with these types of disabilities: auditory, intellectual, motor, multiple disabilities, developmental delay, language and communication problems, serious behaviour/personality disorders, learning disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, and visual disabilities, are present in the educational system of Castilla y León according to the percentages shown in Figure 8.

## **5.2 Teacher training providers and activities**

The Order EDU/1057/2014 of 4<sup>th</sup> December, regulates the methods, the recognition, the certification and the registration of teacher training activities within the compulsory educational system in the Autonomous Region of Castilla y León.

Teacher training centers have specific denominations that vary among the Autonomous Regions. Concretely, in UVA’s region (Castilla y León), they are called CFIES (Centros de Formación e Innovación Educativa, Centres for training and Educational Innovation).

There are several centres of this type in each region, each one of them specialized on different areas (i.e., evaluation, use of ICT in the classroom, educational inclusion, foreign languages, etc.). Those teacher centres are able to design, plan, manage and monitor the training programmes according to the types showed in Table 4. In Castilla y León there are 32 centres for teachers training and educational innovation.

Table 4

*Types of In-service Teacher Training Programmes in Castilla y León (Spain).*

<b>Modality</b>	<b>Description</b>
Course	Development of scientific, pedagogic, didactic, technical, cultural, and/or pedagogical content, on the basis of the contribution of specialists.
Seminar	Training on a topic among peers. It can contain an external expert, with a maximum of 25% of the activity length.
Working Group	Group of teachers that come together to develop a working project, and to elaborate resources in an autonomous fashion. An external expert may participate for one talk.
Conference / Event	Conferences are extraordinary events. They serve to disseminate content, interchange experiences and good practices, discussion on scientific and didactic topics.
School's training project	Training at the School on issues that affect and have an impact in that centre, to put in practice processes of curricular, organizational or pedagogical improvement. They include an external expert, during a minimum of 10% of the project length and a maximum of 40%
Research project	Search and generation of new knowledge to answer problems posed systematically and with well-defined methodological criteria.
Self-training project	Motivational process in which the teacher has the initiative and manages his/her own knowledge.

In these centres, training is performed by *advisors*, who are schoolteachers that have previously participated in educational innovation projects and have left teaching temporarily to become involved in these training tasks. Higher Education Institutions are not formally involved in these teacher-training centres, which are managed by the teachers themselves.

At the beginning of the academic year, each training centre offers an annual programme, composed of several courses. Part of these courses are proposed by the training centre itself, according to its area of specialization. Other courses are included by demand of Primary or Secondary Schools, as part of their formative needs. In addition, these centres promote other training activities, like educational innovation projects, thematic groups, peer training, etc. Within this sort of

professional development, the teachers at the schools can decide on their training, according to their contextual needs.

On the other hand, the schools can apply for in-site annual teacher training projects. These projects define periodic training sessions at the schools and require the involvement of every teacher in the schools. They are approved and funded by the Regional Government.

Additionally, there exists a nationwide agreement between these training centres and the University. This agreement opens the possibility to offer courses taught by University teachers, which are normally linked to the formative plans of the schools.

The plan for in-service teacher training for this year (2017-2018) establishes as a priority line the “attention to specific collectives and situations”. Among the formative proposals oriented to improve inclusion, it proposes 32 formative proposals according to the following axes:

1. Knowledge and general understanding of disabilities and specific disorders (ADHD, ASD, etc.)
2. Specific methodologies and strategies to attend diversity.
3. Specific methodologies and strategies for students with disabilities.
4. ICT and educational inclusion.
5. Design of pedagogical resources to attend diversity.
6. Assessment and attention to diversity.

### **5.3 Spain’s possibilities of offering teacher training activities**

UVa can provide teacher training opportunities through most of the teacher training modalities previously mentioned (i.e., Teacher Training in School centres; Teacher training agreements with the Higher Education Institutions and specific centres for teacher training).

In our region (Castilla y León), teacher teams have different channels of participation in their training:

- School’s permanent training plans and Services of Educational Support: formative itineraries contextualized to the school and programmed for several courses.

- Teachers' teams training plans: formative itineraries for teacher teams with common interests in several centers and lasting several courses.
- Teachers' groups: Teachers that, under different modalities, (Working Group, Seminar, School Training Project, Innovative Education Project), carry out training in different themes, every year.
- Individual participation of the teachers in courses and conferences.

UVa, as a Higher Education institution, has an institutional relationship with the Regional Government. It hosts several activities that contribute to teachers' professional development at all educational levels, including their own personnel. It collaborates with the teacher training centres (CEFIEs), with whom the UVa team has proposed the organization of training events (with a particular format among the ones mentioned above, that is still to be negotiated). These events will allow CFIE and UVa the possibility to select the centres that show interest in this training and that have students with disabilities.

Spain could offer training activities that try to address the challenges of the project by:

- Providing teachers with a conceptualization of inclusive education.
- Providing means to master the use of the applications that will be used later with their students.
- Support teachers in developing teaching methods that involve the use of the multisensory techniques supported by technology.
- Support teachers in sharing experiences and learning from each other in a sustainable way.

## **6. Summary and final remarks**

This report has presented the state of the art in teacher training at an international level, describing the situation in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain. The analysis shows that all these countries have embraced inclusion in their educational laws, promoting the inclusion of special education students into mainstream classrooms. However, the practical implementation of inclusion differs among the countries analysed.

In all the countries analysed, students and young students with disabilities are diagnosed by specialized professionals. Depending on the severity of their disability, different degrees of inclusion are implemented depending on the country. Cyprus, Greece and Spain have established a dual system, where education may take place in mainstream schools, (either in normal classes with support teachers, or in special units within the schools), or in segregated special schools. On the other hand, Italy has a long-lasting tradition in inclusiveness, with most of the students enrolled in mainstream schools. However, in spite of the promotion of inclusion by the institutions, the different cases analyzed show that it exists a lack of conceptual and practical knowledge on how to make effective educational inclusion.

It is observed that one of the possible problems for the implementation of educational inclusion derives from the meaning assigned to the terminology of inclusive education. Recent literature on the subject recognizes its complexity (e.g. Ainscow et al., 2006) and suggests six conceptions about inclusion included in the report of the European Agency for the Development of the Education of Students with Special Educational Needs (2011) regarding the training of teachers for inclusive education in Europe:

- Inclusion as concern for students with disabilities
- Inclusion as a response to the curricular exclusion.
- Inclusion in relation to all vulnerable groups of exclusion.
- Inclusion as the development of the school for all.
- Inclusion as "Education for all".
- Inclusion as the basic principle of education and society.

The aforementioned report states that many countries are adapting to the notion of "School for All", while others still focus on students with disabilities. Thus, the European Agency proposes a vision of inclusion as an attempt to bring the ideas of education for all beyond schooling in ordinary schools, in which students can be present, that is, remains in the same location, but does not share educational experiences with their peers. Recognizes the existing consensus on the need to define inclusion within an approach based on the rights of individuals to develop greater equity and social



justice and support the development of a non-discriminatory society (European Agency, 2012). This leads us to conclude that the debate on inclusion goes beyond the re-location of students with disabilities in ordinary schools, to focus their objectives in providing a high quality education for all students, where diversity is recognized as something "natural" in any group of students. Inclusive education should be understood as a means to achieve success through presence (access to education), participation (quality of learning experience) and achievement and / or progress (learning processes and results) of all students (European Agency for Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014).

Therefore, it is recommended to agree a terminology among all countries linked to a common ideology that "banishes" the use of a language derived from a "charitable" conception of disability, towards an approach that is based on human rights.

On the other hand, teachers' training regarding special and inclusive education shows some differences among the analyzed countries. Teachers in Greece have specialized training, by means of graduate and post-graduate studies that lead to a diploma (Bachelor or Master) in Special Education. In Cyprus, Italy, and Spain, students of Education Degrees (pre-service mainstream teachers) take a compulsory course in special or inclusive education in while other disability-related courses are provided as optional, for all the students who want to obtain deeper knowledge in the subject and become teachers of special education. This approach has been criticized by some experts, as it does not help to align academic degrees with the professional profiles required by teachers dealing with students with disabilities. In this sense, the World Report on Disability (2011) points out that although the reforms in higher education of the Bologna Plan or Process generate greater uniformity, the initial teacher training courses are very diverse in terms of extension and content. Thus, it emphasizes that: "The adequate training of teachers is crucial when it comes to being competent teaching students with diverse needs" and emphasizes the need for such training to focus on attitudes and values, and not only on knowledge and skills (p.222). Once the educational context of the participants' countries has been presented, the main goal of this report is to identify the means and first guidelines for organizing in-service teacher training events related to the topic of the project. The review shows that all partners

are in contact with in-service teacher training institutions, or are themselves providers of this kind of training.

The report has identified a number of issues that should be included in these training events. This training should help teachers develop an informed conceptualization of inclusion; support them in developing teaching methods. Based on the analysis of the current situation, the partners have identified some initial guidelines to carry out the teacher training events. Generalizing from the partners' specific proposals, it can be seen that the following components should be considered when designing the training events at each country:

- Provide support for the teachers in the understanding and application of the principles of inclusive education.
- Help teachers become familiar with the technological and pedagogical resources available to implement course plans adapted to different kinds of disability.
- Provide the teachers with means to design their own course plans adapted to their context using the resources proposed by the project.
- Put in practice the course plans and share the experience in a Community of Practice (CoP).

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