

CALL for " ILLITERACY : PARALYSIS AND CARE FOR ITALY "

To:

- the Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ms Stefania Giannini –
- the Italian and European authorities responsible for adult literacy
- all individuals, communities and organizations interested in human rights

The international survey PIAAC - OECD (10/08/2013) realized in 24 countries puts Italy in the last place in the ranking of literacy of the population between 16 and 65 years. 5.6% of Italians (about 3,000,000 people) is below the level 1, that is to say that it does not reach or does not exceed the reading and understanding of the single word.

In addition to those who are Italian and children of Italians, among the foreigners (both adolescents and adults), there are

- some who are not able to read and write their mother tongue or the language of the country in which they emigrated,
- others who are weakly literate in a language with an alphabet that often has characters other than Latin
- others who are able to recognize letters, words, and more rarely simple sentences in Italian (i.e., they are at different stages of seeds illiteracy),

but these skills are not sufficient to perform the tasks of reading and writing that daily life requires, even when the oral proficiency is moderate or even fairly good.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe , 2001) considers the acquisition of literacy skills already possessed as a prerequisite, it therefore requires a substantial integration below the level A1 with regard to the reading and writing instrumental skills.

At the institutional level, which are the resources assigned to Italy as for the "illiterate adults" item in terms of number of teachers, learning paths, number of hours, classes, research, training or teaching materials? And yet, there is a shortage of literature on levels, on deadlines and on the problems of those who have to learn Italian as L2 starting from a situation of illiteracy, including the serious lack of schools, teachers and learning paths. In several cities situations of real institutional exclusion have occurred, and sometimes, even the access to training courses was denied to illiterate people. Besides, also where there is no explicit hostility, sometimes "parking" situations are recorded and as a consequence, when appropriate tools are not provided, this leads people to abandon courses.

Those who have received little or no education chances should be offered more opportunities and resources in accordance with the Article 3 of the Constitution. Not being able to read and write means having to depend on others for many daily operations, and this causes to lose one's own independence as adults, necessary for the fulfilment of basic needs which can be indicated as follows:

- to enrol children in a school and follow their learning path,
- to pay the ticket of a medical check and understand the instructions regarding medicines ,
- to get a ticket for public transport from a vending machine.

Living in a community, assessing their choices, electing those who govern, reading and writing for one's own growth and well-being and other actions are just as essential to the life of an adult. Not promptly dealing with this emergency means endangering the entire country.

Australia and the United States have estimated that adult illiteracy not only affects the social well-being, but also brings about a very high cost especially in the health care and

employment.

Two situations of adult education that are in conflict with the Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights can be outlined: the first relates to the acquisition of a basic qualification. In fact, the DPR 4.10.2012 considers as the first step of adult schooling the "Licenza media", and ignores almost completely the path of literacy that leads to obtain it.

The second situation relates to the achievement of the A2 level of knowledge of the Italian language (required for the stay of a migrant).

In the new guidelines to the CPIA (Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti), the starting situation of the students is not considered and both illiterate and graduates are given 200 hours to learn Italian. We must admit that "nothing is more unjust than sharing equal parts among heterogeneous individuals".

In the light of what we have so far highlighted, we then press the Italian government and in particular the Minister of Education, University and Research, Ms Stefania Giannini, to act urgently in order to:

- 1 . **disseminate** all over the country, at a capillary level, learning opportunities for adults , including literacy and L2 Italian courses within a lifelong learning system in accordance with the recommendations of the European for lifelong learning
- 2 . **increase** the number of literacy courses and Italian L2 teachers (enhancing training) so that they could meet those literacy needs, currently without institutional responses, and take care, permanently, of those training needs nowadays mainly satisfied by voluntary service. Volunteering should be positively employed as a support and not as an alternative to institutional offers.
3. **define**, nationally, literacy levels below the level A1 of the Common European Framework with descriptors allowing :
 - the identification of the entire gradual path of skills and competences needed to move from a situation of total illiteracy to the mastery of a literary competence, first instrumental and then functional;
 - the creation of institutional paths for those alphanumeric skills needed to get the middle school certificate;
 - the provision of appropriate resources, schedules and teacher training packages;
 - the Certification of the literacy levels achieved;
 - transparency and effectiveness of the training bodies.
4. **review** the currently in force interdepartmental legislation on integration (Decree of 04.06.2010 , 14.09.2011 DPR 179), by developing regulatory proposals finalized to increase the communicative competence of migrants in the Italian language and to promote cross-cultural interaction in order to enrich the welfare of life and relationships for the entire national community, in the perspective of a full citizenship.
5. **strengthen** the connections between universities and centres for adult learning by promoting research on the topic and the sharing of good practice, also through national and regional online seminars to explore, compare and exchange experiences.
6. **create** opportunities complementary to the school system to help the illiterate population (both migrant and autochthonous) out of the disabling condition of illiteracy: libraries with specific support for the weak literate, dedicated television programmes, websites and apps specifically created for adult literacy.

Reggio Emilia, 17.10.2013

You can sign the petition at <http://chn.ge/19LWMnl>

The full text in Italian is available on the website at www.italianoperme.it

Among the first signers:

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