

## Impact of Coronavirus emergency on people with intellectual disabilities, families in Italy

On Thursday 9 April 2020, Inclusion Europe held an online meeting with Daniela Cannistraci and Gianfranco de Robertis from Anffas Onlus Nazionale to learn about the situation of people with intellectual disabilities and families in Italy during the Coronavirus emergency.

The situation in Italy is not resolved at all, and at Anffas, they are fighting and continuing to work to support all the people with disabilities, especially intellectual, and their families, to resist and face up this emergency. Anffas is working in a lot of fields (political, health care, schools), and when it comes to policy, they are trying to advocate for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Schools are closed since the beginning of March and the classes are being held online. Students with disabilities face a challenge with lack of support, while the country is trying to implement the change the systems.

Q: What are your recommendations for operating during this emergency.

Anffas: Keeping the habits to make the situation easier. Switching the conversation online to have a continues communication and progress to decrease the stress levels. Implementing many easy to read materials so people can stay informed. The most important thing we did since the beginning is that we are not leaving the families and local organizations on their own. The director is calling every day to know what is happening in all the local organizations, to know of the problem, families, support person, operators, PWD are not feeling alone at this moment.

Q: Based on your description, it affects many areas of your work, from the end of your political side of things, what are the things you would like to highlight? during your advocacy work?

Anffas: One of the things we did was to ask to pay attention about the hospitalization because not easy for a PWD to be hospitalized and asked to find adequate assistance in hospital and to find a special person trained for that assistance. Support for PWD or autism to adapting in this new situation and to be a contact point for the person and the family, because once they are hospitalized it is hard for the family to be in contact.

Q: Has this changed? Did you succeed in convincing the authorities?

Anffas: 151 organization asked to have the support since the beginning. Not easy, we need time to make changes, also for the schools. The schools are closed since the first of march and now student is studying from aa ruing digital platforms. For teachers it has been difficult to adapt, and student's whit disabilities need more time than other (support teacher, support person etc.)

Q: one area severely impacted and not many examples of distance education reaching out to students with disability in many countries. Are there any examples of best practices for students with disabilities?

Anffas: Some situation where students with disability could go alone to the school in the same school where they have their assistants. One of the solutions would be to allow student w disabilities to allow to go to the school to have the assistants. Allow person with disability to go out with one relative because they don't understand the reason of confinement and need to go out. They have the permission to exit with a certificate. In one of our organizations in Pouilla the support person decided to remain in the organization with the PWD to maintain all their habits, activities etc in order not to stress them. Another thing is that support workers have created lots of WhatsApp groups to have a continuous exchange of information with the persons with disabilities to let them talk about their days, what they have been doing. Also, some guidelines to explain how to manage the stress in those kinds of situations have been created.

Q: How do the trained professionals maintain the contact with the families.

Anffas: Because we need to keep the spread of the virus as much as possible, we are using all the online platforms we can to make communication and share information. We are using social media and email to share all the information we can.

Q: How do we reach the older generations who don't use internet.

We are going back to using the phone every day to reach presidents of different organizations and families.

Q: How could we provide appropriate respite (support) for the families within the lockdown limits?

Anffas: Social workers listen to the needs and worries and trying to help on psychological level. We also have online resources and materials about how to cope with difficult situations. Also, it is possible for the social worker to visit the homes with all precautions taken.

Q: What are the expectations towards the European Institutions.

Anffas: Expecting some attention and support from the EU. Benefits for working parents of people with disabilities who must stay home during this time.

Letter to EU member states to ensure that vulnerable groups receive the needed support during the #COVID19 crisis: <https://twitter.com/helenadalli/status/1248207633896660997>

### **Inclusion Europe's material about the COVID-19**

Inclusion Europe created a webpage gathering the [materials relevant to the Coronavirus emergency](#). The webpage is updated daily with new content and can be accessed [here](#).

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) or [subscribe to our newsletters to know about them first](#).

[5 steps to prevent harm to people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Coronavirus emergency \(.pdf\)](#)

