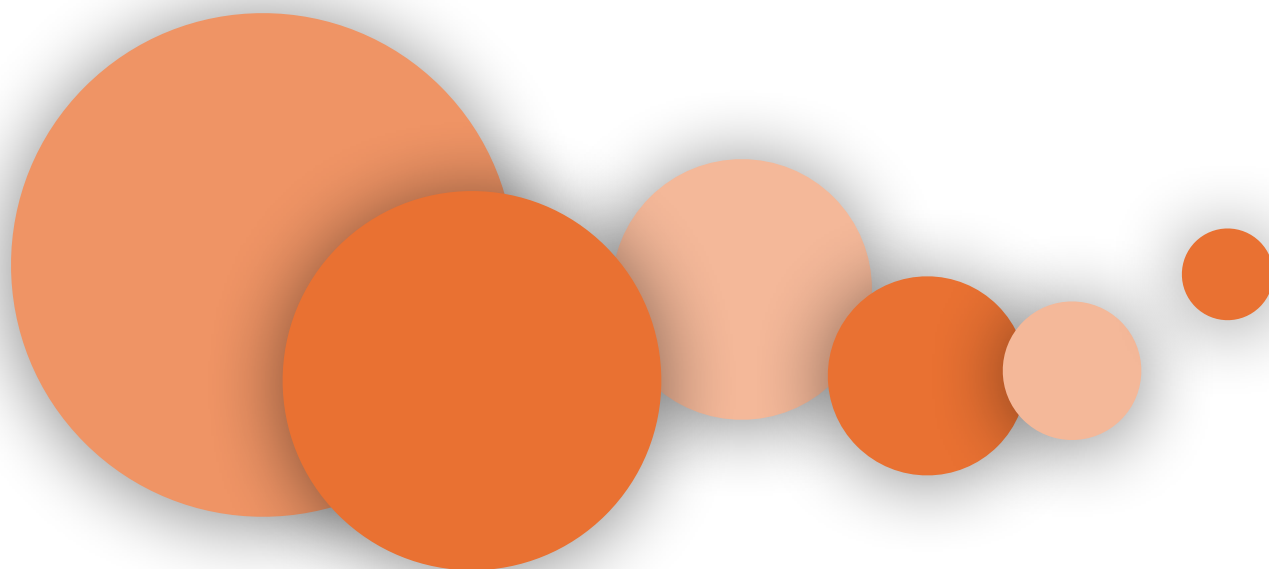


REPORT



Structuring of skills certification systems and training paths

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DRAFTING AND EDITING OF DOCUMENTATION REGARDING SKILLS CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS AND TRAINING PATHS

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1. Introduction

This report has the following objectives:

- to analyse the Italian situation regarding skills certification and training in the field of inclusion, with particular reference to the musical field and to the results of the FENIARCO survey;
- to analyse the specific competences required for leading inclusive choral activities;
- to outline a proposed structure for a skills certification system and training pathways adapted to the Italian context, starting from the objectives of the SWAN project.

The survey promoted by FENIARCO to identify and map good practices in inclusion highlighted a major gap between musical activities within the national school system and those implemented by associations. In the former case, the state system provides for the planning of inclusive pathways, supported by specialised teachers and strengthened through continuous training activities. In associations, however, this solid structure is often lacking, and actions are frequently the result of individual intuition and the goodwill of practitioners.

Starting from a concise analysis of what takes place in Italian public schools, this report will attempt to outline a model for skills certification and the identification of training pathways, so that associations too may be able to plan and implement inclusive projects for singers with Special Educational Needs.

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2. The Italian school framework for skills certification and training: guidance and counselling within a lifelong learning approach

Italy has developed a structured National Qualifications Framework (Quadro Nazionale delle Qualifiche – QNQ), aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The QNQ includes qualifications from school education, vocational education and training (Istruzione e Formazione Professionale – IeFP), and higher education, including universities and AFAM institutions (Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica – Higher Education in the Arts, Music and Dance).

In the field of inclusive education, the Italian system is based on:

- *national legislation on disability and inclusion, such as Law 104/1992 and subsequent decrees, and Law 170 concerning Specific Learning Disorders;*
- *school-based training for teachers, support teachers and support staff, such as 24 university credits in pedagogical and psychological disciplines, ECM courses and in-service training.*

In Italian schools, the planning of educational interventions for pupils with disabilities and the personalisation of teaching involve the drafting of an Individualised Education Plan (Piano Educativo Individualizzato – PEI). This document is prepared by the teaching team with the participation of the families of pupils with Special Educational Needs and of all professionals who, in various ways, work around the person with disabilities. At higher levels of education, and when the type of disability allows it, the pupil also participates in the drafting of their own educational project.

This planning is part of a broader life project, enabling the person to manage the transition from school to work and also to foster social inclusion.

Paragraph 11.8 of the QNQ states that the new 2014 “Guidelines for lifelong guidance” represent an important document that makes guidance no longer only a tool for managing the transition between school, training and work, but a lifelong value in every person’s life, ensuring development and support in choice-making and decision-making processes, with the aim of promoting active employment, economic growth and social inclusion.

It is within this perspective of social inclusion that musical activities promoted by associations, thanks to the benefits that singing in a choir naturally brings to everyone’s quality of life, can play a very important role, becoming fully part of the life project of people with disabilities.

3. Inclusive choral singing in Italy

Inclusive choral singing in Italy, as emerges from the results of the FENIARCO survey, is a powerful vehicle for social cohesion and personal growth, capable of breaking down physical and mental barriers.

The results achieved are tangible both in terms of psycho-physical wellbeing — improvement of mood, increased self-esteem and self-confidence, reduction of stress and enhancement of concentration — and in terms of social integration, such as strengthening the sense of belonging, reducing isolation and promoting a culture of mutual respect.

In one of the experiences reported in the survey, choral singing became a real work placement in the social sector: a singer with Down syndrome, particularly active in an intergenerational project in a residential care home, was later employed as a social worker in the same facility.

Inclusive choral activity mainly develops through two channels:

- **Adoption of international models:** many experiences, such as the Coro Manos Blancas, are inspired by the Venezuelan Abreu System, introducing gesture-semiography in LIS, Italian Sign Language, to allow deaf people or people with verbal difficulties to “sing” with their hands together with a vocal choir.
- **Integration of pedagogical methodologies:** choral practices combine classical approaches to music education, such as Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze and Goitre, with music therapy.

Projects often arise from the specific needs of a single association that finds itself organising and managing the inclusion of a person with Special Educational Needs. In some cases, these experiences have evolved from experimental activities into pathways monitored by experts, such as the MusicalMente SuperAbile project. Some associations organise workshops in sensitive contexts such as prisons and mental health centres.

In general, the survey revealed that in most cases the approach adopted by associations is informal and based on individualised support. It is generally not structured into formalised pathways and is not based on the sharing of good practices, because there is no organised system that collects successful experiences and makes them available to the choral community.



Based on the positive experiences collected and on the stories emerging from the FENIARCO survey, the fundamental characteristics of choral inclusion are:

- **Active involvement and protagonism:** *the aim is not passive reception, but making participants active subjects in the proposed activities, valuing each person's role regardless of ability.*
- **Adaptability and personalisation:** *activities are modified according to different vulnerabilities, such as specific vocal exercises, texts in capital letters, coloured notes or enlarged scores, and are supported by specialised figures such as LIS interpreters and music therapists.*
- **Multidisciplinary accessibility:** *multiple languages are used — music, dance, theatre, LIS and Augmentative and Alternative Communication — in order to reach every type of disability: motor, cognitive and sensory.*
- **Welcoming and non-judgemental atmosphere:** *the creation of a calm environment that values diversity is considered one of the main elements for successful inclusion.*
- **Networking and collaboration:** *synergy between institutions, families and associations is essential in order to share competences and resources, especially in associations, which often face greater challenges related to spaces and funding.*

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4. Competences required for the implementation of inclusive choral activities

The planning and leading of inclusive choral activities therefore require the ability to integrate musical, pedagogical and inclusive teaching competences. It is therefore necessary to define the main areas of competence required, in order to structure the relevant competence levels and propose training pathways.

Main areas of competence

AREA A – Inclusive pedagogy and awareness of Special Educational Needs

- understanding the different types of Special Educational Needs, learning disorders, sensory disabilities, neuropsychiatric disorders and psychosocial risks;
- knowing the main inclusive methodologies: Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, cooperative learning, peer tutoring and similar approaches.

AREA B – Adapted choral and vocal technique

- knowing how to adapt vocal exercises to different functional profiles;
- using different supports and compensatory tools, such as highlighted or coloured scores, enlarged texts and digital tools for inclusion.

AREA C – Group management

- knowing how to manage mixed groups, promoting peer support and cooperative activities;
- paying attention to emotional wellbeing, participation and empowerment.

AREA D – Digital and assistive tools

- using digital tools and additional software, such as simplified notation apps, audio scores and screen readers;
- creating and sharing databases of good practices.

AREA E – Collaboration and networking

- collaborating with teachers, therapists, caregivers, cooperatives and associations;
- knowing how to design inclusive interventions, including those integrated with social-health and educational services.

5. Certification of the levels of inclusiveness of a musical association and its practitioners

On the basis of the experiences emerging from the responses to the FENIARCO survey, a method is proposed for certifying levels of inclusiveness, structured into three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced.

The recipients of this certification are teachers, conductors, collaborators and social workers.

Area	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
A. Inclusive pedagogy and awareness of Special Educational Needs	Theoretical knowledge of the different types of Special Educational Needs and of the principles of a non-judgemental atmosphere. Ability to welcome diversity as a founding value of the group.	Practical application of established methodologies such as Orff, Kodály or Dalcroze, adapted to the inclusive context. Use of scaffolding to support the learning of students with cognitive difficulties.	Mastery of Universal Design for Learning to design accessible pathways from the outset. Ability to create highly personalised educational programmes, similar to school PEI/PDP plans, also in association-based contexts.
B. Adapted choral and vocal technique	Use of elementary compensatory tools such as texts in capital letters, enlarged or highlighted scores.	Integration of LIS gesture-semiography or chironomy to facilitate melodic and textual understanding. Use of audio supports, such as MP3 files, for adapted individual study.	Ability to provide differentiated vocal exercises according to functional profile, for example specific exercises for Down syndrome distinct from those for autism.
C. Group management	Ability to ensure the active involvement of all participants, preventing isolation.	Implementation of peer education and tutoring strategies, in which peers naturally support those with greater vulnerabilities.	Promotion of long-term empowerment and protagonism, assigning roles of responsibility that enhance unique abilities, such as Giacomo as presenter or the use of poetry for those with intonation difficulties.



D. Digital and assistive tools

Use of basic databases for sharing audio materials and texts among choir members.

Use of simplified notation software and Augmentative and Alternative Communication tools for producing accessible songbooks.

Integration of advanced assistive technologies, such as visual technologies like CyMagic, and management of digital platforms for the exchange of internationally certified good practices.

E. Collaboration and networking

Informal collaboration with families to monitor participants' wellbeing.

Formal collaboration with local disability associations and specialised professionals such as LIS interpreters and music therapists.

Design of integrated interventions with social-health services for rehabilitative purposes and participation in European cooperation networks, such as the Creative Europe programme.

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6. Proposal for training pathways

On the basis of the competence areas identified from the FENIARCO survey, three structured training pathways are proposed. Their aim is to provide practitioners in the choral sector with the tools needed to implement inclusion at various levels of complexity, and also to encourage positive practice in continuous training.

1. Basic level pathway: “Foundations of Welcoming and Inclusive Culture”

The aim of this module is to raise participants’ awareness and provide the foundations for creating a welcoming atmosphere, considered one of the three fundamental pillars of inclusion.

- **Pedagogical area (a):** introduction to types of disability — motor, cognitive and sensory — and to Special Educational Needs. Seminars on creating a non-judgemental environment that values diversity as a resource for the group.
- **Technical area (b):** workshop on the use of adapted teaching materials, such as enlarged scores, texts in capital letters and the use of audio files, such as MP3s, for individual study.
- **Group management (c):** basic techniques to ensure the active involvement of all singers, avoiding isolation and promoting emotional wellbeing.
- **Digital tools (d):** training in the use of social media and messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, for accessible communication and rapid sharing of audio materials.
- **Networking (e):** good communication practices with families, considered an integral part of the educational and inclusion pathway.

2. Intermediate level pathway: “Adaptive Methodologies and Peer Support”

This pathway focuses on the practical application of established pedagogical methodologies, adapting them to the context of the inclusive choir.

- **Pedagogical area (a):** workshop on integrating classical approaches such as Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze. Experimentation with educational scaffolding for students with mild cognitive difficulties or Specific Learning Disorders.
- **Technical area (b):** basic course in LIS gesture-semiography and chironomy, Kodály method, to facilitate the expression of those with verbal or hearing difficulties.



- **Group management (c):** development of peer education and peer tutoring strategies, in which choir members naturally support one another, for example through the “tutor” model for blind singers.
- **Digital tools (d):** introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication for the creation of accessible songbooks and facilitated signage.
- **Networking (e):** building formal collaborations with local disability associations and specialised professionals such as music therapists and LIS interpreters.

3. Advanced level pathway: “Specialization and Strategic Planning”

The advanced level aims to train figures capable of managing complex projects, including international projects, integrating social-health competences and professional expertise related to disability.

- **Pedagogical area (a):** masterclass on Universal Design for Learning applied to music, as envisaged as an advanced area in the certification model. Design of Individualised Education Plans also in association-based contexts, so that the process may move from the integration of the person with disabilities to genuine inclusion.
- **Technical area (b):** study both of different special teaching methodologies and of successfully implemented experiences — good practices, such as the “Diversamente Musical” method that emerged from the FENIARCO survey — involving differentiated vocal activities and exercises according to functional profile, for example Down syndrome, autism and brain injury.
- **Group management (c):** promotion of empowerment and protagonism through the assignment of roles of responsibility, such as singers with disabilities becoming presenters or tutors.
- **Digital tools (d):** use of advanced compensatory technologies, such as MuseScore to modify the size of notation and texts, and management of professional platforms for the exchange of good practices.
- **Networking (e):** design of integrated interventions with social-health services for rehabilitative purposes and participation in European cooperation calls.

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