

# **EDUCATION FOR ALL**

## **Thematic Study of Policies in Life Long Learning for Children and Adults with Dyslexia in six EU Member States**

*“Current systems of education are based on the manufacturing principles of linearity, conformity and standardization. The evidence is everywhere that they are failing too many students and teachers alike. A primary reason is that human development is not linear and standardized, it is organic and diverse. People, as opposed to products, have hopes and aspirations, feelings and purposes. Education is a personal process. What and how young people are taught have to engage their energies, imaginations and their different ways of learning.”*

Sir Ken Robinson

## Introduction

This study, conducted within the framework of *Embedding Dyslexia-Responsive Practices in Lifelong Learning* project, explores the existing policies in six countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK) with regards to education for children and adults with dyslexia with the aim of identifying specific areas for improvement and suggesting actions for change.

The aim of the study is to present a review of policies and practices regarding dyslexia, to identify good practices that others can learn from and to suggest priorities for action in the short term to improve existing systems for education and services for dyslexic citizens. The report outlines areas of problems and weaknesses. The emphasis of the study is to urge a more effective implementation of real and tangible change in provision of education for dyslexic people and provide suggestions for exchange of experience between partner countries.

Why dyslexia? Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which affects up to 10% of the population across Europe.<sup>1</sup> This difficulty with the acquisition of reading and writing does not mean that dyslexic children cannot be high achievers. Children can learn if appropriate help is provided by persons trained in the techniques known to help these individuals using well established principles within pedagogic models of education practice from European countries with long-standing experience in the field. The partners in this project have recognised the need to address the still perpetuating problems in delivering access to and quality education for people with dyslexia by creating an environment where they may develop to their full potential.

A series of dyslexia-specific projects and actions have taken place in recent years across Europe. Several professional and dedicated partnerships have featured, each collaborating with a special emphasis on one key area of dyslexia or on general dyslexia issues to a specific target group. However, despite all the resources and freely available advice resulting from these actions, there is still considerable room for improvement in the support of the dyslexic individual in all partner countries in order to provide for the necessary conditions for the development of their capacities to the full.

The report provides a synthesis of official documents of EU institutions, materials and lessons learned from previous EU projects on the subject, as well as information from interviews with stakeholders in all six states related to the existing policies.

Early in the project a desktop study of official documents and research of secondary sources revealed a lack of up-to-date data for some of the countries and few comparative analysis materials on the situation and existing policies with regards to dyslexia. Despite these limitations, sufficient information was gathered to provide a broad overview of the situation in the six countries. The field research and the feedback provided by all project parties and local experts and partners proved to be invaluable for the analysis. They also served as a measure for validating information as different actors offered their perspective based on their practice.

While the recommendations and main findings of this study are aimed primarily at policy makers, they will also be disseminated to relevant stakeholders and the broader public in order to achieve involvement and support of society in the efforts to provide quality education and training for dyslexic children and adults in the EU.

We hope that this study will add up to the first steps already taken towards building a more supportive education and training systems for dyslexic people across the EU - systems that not only state their support but also demonstrate respect for their abilities and rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Dyslexia Project from <http://www.welshdyslexia.info>

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this study combined the following mechanisms.

### ***Desk review of available documents***

A large set of documents and secondary sources (legislative acts, official and alternative reports and other materials and publications) publicly available both printed and online, were reviewed and analyzed as a first step towards understanding the current situation in the six project countries and planning the questionnaires. The desk review provided the initial information for the report and helped identify the main issues and aspects to be studied later on in the process of field research.

The review and individual interviews helped identify both the achievements and the challenges for improving the education and training systems for dyslexic children and adults in the six project partner countries outlined in the report.

### ***Review of previous research on the topic***

A limited number of previous documents deliberating on the education and training systems in the six countries were identified.

A number of initiatives in the EU studied by the research team have tackled the problem of policies for people with dyslexia in several Member States. Although those projects have achieved commendable results, no specific material that focuses and discusses in a comparative perspective exclusively the policies towards life long learning for dyslexic people in the six countries has been identified.

### ***Field research – questionnaires and regular feedback from partners***

As part of the study CIE developed a questionnaire for collecting information and feedback from partners. The questionnaires were used by each organisation to collect up-to-date data on existing policies in each of the six countries through verifying the information with a number of respondents representing various service providers and institutions. The questionnaire available in all six languages was also uploaded on the project website.

Additionally, the Centre for Inclusive Education presented and discussed the findings of the desk and field research with partners and received feedback. This process provided for accuracy as well as a consensus ground for identifying the main recommendations for steps to be taken for improving the existing policies for dyslexia.

## **Definitions**

### **Definitions guiding the research and used throughout the document**

There is a growing debate about the use of terminology related to the issue of special needs in education, in particular on the use of the term *dyslexia*. Often, definitions used in legislation and other normative acts do not necessarily adequately or comprehensively reflect the nature of such complex conditions.

The following guiding definitions were used throughout the research.

### **Special educational needs and Specific learning difficulties**

There are no accepted definitions of disability and/or special needs available to use comparatively across European countries. The EU views a disabled person as someone with a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. There is no common agreement between policy makers, researchers and practitioners on the scope and definition of special needs in education. *Special educational needs* is a broader term than disability as it covers more types of educational need — for example social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and is a context-bound definition. *Special educational needs* is a construct that countries define within their legislation and then go on to identify, assess and make provision for in different ways. EU countries do not use specific externally generated definitions within their educational legislation or policymaking. The education systems (in terms of policy and practice) in this area have evolved over time, within very specific contexts, and are therefore highly individual. For most countries, policies have a clear focus on special needs provision rather than solely in-learner factors, and whilst there is a movement in all countries away from medically based models of definition, assessment and provision and towards educational and integration approaches, there is no agreement on who should receive what provision.

The common *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* draws a distinction between three broad cross-national categories based on perceived causes of educational failure:

1. the “disabilities” category: pupils who have clear organic reasons for their difficulties in education;
2. the “difficulties” category: pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties or specific difficulties in learning, and the educational need arises from problems in interaction between the pupil or student and the educational context;
3. the “disadvantages” category: pupils in need of additional educational resources to compensate for problems due to aspects of their socioeconomic, cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.

### **Common policy goals in education**

There are only few main EU policy documents, relevant to our study, which set the main principles, values and goals in regard of achieving the full adherence to the child right to quality education in Europe. The first is the European Social Charter, revised in 1996 and ratified by Italy (July 1999), Bulgaria (June 2000) and Hungary (April 2009). Poland, Spain and United Kingdom so far had only signed it. Thus, its Article 17 regulates the right of children and young adults to social, legal and economic protection, specifying the obligation of the Member States "to ensure that children and young persons ... have the care, the assistance, the education and the training they need...". Further, Article 30 requires the Parties "to take measures within the framework of an overall and coordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion,... to training, education,...".

The second, Lisbon Strategy (2000) sets up the common goals in education as a prerequisite for economic growth and prosperity. It states that governments should provide equal access to high quality education for all social groups.

In the past two decades, the European Union has achieved notable development in the areas of mainstreaming and inclusion of students with special educational needs into regular classroom settings. All European countries have ratified the 1994 UNESCO ***Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education***. This collective statement is still a guiding principle in the conceptual framework of national and EU policies. It stresses that the key principles in the Salamanca Statement of equal opportunities in terms of genuine access to learning experiences that takes into account individual differences and quality education for all focused on personal strengths rather than

weaknesses, are the same principles that should underpin all education policies — not just those dealing specifically with special needs education.

As one of the global leaders in economic, social, cultural and development issues, the EU has set out to be a model for promoting social inclusion, quality education and life-long learning for all people regardless of existing differences. While education is one of the least regulated spheres on the EU level as the responsibility for education and training lies with national governments, some challenges are common to all EU countries. For the areas in EU member states not covered by directives, EC applies the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a tool for exchange of good practices within agreed objectives and strategies. This helps to issuing the guidelines by the European Commission, which contributes to improving policies and practices within all member States. While taking into account the considerable differences in the starting points of Member States, the open method of coordination has supported progress towards a set of shared objectives measured against common indicators and benchmarks – among them indicators for SEN.

The aim of developing common objectives and indicators is not to impose policies but to support achieving set goals by promoting co-operation between countries and with the EC in order to support reforms in the Member States. This cooperation is not based only on provision of funding but on countries learning from each other and developing common tools, which can then be adapted to meet the specific needs of each country.

In March 2002 in Barcelona the European Council endorsed the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme which — in the context of the Lisbon Strategy — established the first framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training, based on common objectives and aimed primarily at supporting the improvement of national education and training systems through the development of complementary EU-level tools, mutual learning and the exchange of good practice via the open method of coordination. In 2009 under the Czech Presidency, the Education Council has adopted a new strategic framework for co-operation between EU Member States to reform their education and training systems. The framework looks at developments for policy until 2020 while also identifying immediate priorities for 2009-2011 as well as long-term challenges for the decade after. One of the priority themes to be highlighted in 2009-10 is to ***“Promote equity and active citizenship through the Member States”*** and the Commission focusing on developing the policy cooperation on supporting ***learners with special needs***. More specifically to ***“Promote personalised learning through timely support and well coordinated services. Integrate services within mainstream schooling and ensure pathways to further education and training.”***

The updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training states that Member States and the Commission should give priority to achieving better implementation in, among other priority themes, “basic skills in reading, mathematics and science”. The EU set itself the overall ambition of achieving 5 benchmarks by 2010, on literacy, reduction of early school-leaving, upper secondary attainment, maths, science and technology graduates and participation in adult learning. Only the benchmark on mathematics, science and technology graduates is likely to be exceeded. Indeed, low performance in reading literacy, which was benchmarked to decline by 20% by 2010, has actually increased by more than 10% between 2000 and 2006 and has reached 24.1 %.<sup>2</sup> The domain of Special Needs Education was stressed within the Framework on Indicators and Benchmarks and the Council Conclusions of May 2007. Special education needs is one of the core indicators which should be used for monitoring of progress in the field of education and training towards meeting the Lisbon objectives.

The information monitored by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education concerns percentages of pupils with SEN in mainstream settings, and pupils with learning difficulties receiving

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<sup>2</sup> Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training - Indicators and Benchmarks, 2008

additional support over compulsory education period. No quality indicators are employed, which makes only more obvious the need for this report to provide an overview of policies provision, even in only six of the EU countries.

The purpose of the national reports is to provide an overview of the current situation in each country with respect to the issues that are the concerns of this project. There has been no attempt to cover all aspects of national educational policies, but to focus on identifying components of policies pertinent to the lives of children and adults with dyslexia.

Brief description of policies in each country is below, following a similar structure, which was provided to each partner country for reporting.

## **BULGARIA**

### **Definition**

Dyslexia term is defined in Bulgaria as part of „special needs“ and in the case of children with dyslexia as a „special educational need“. While this is not explicitly clarified, dyslexia is not perceived as a „disability“ where as the later is defined as *every loss or impediment of the anatomic structure, of the physiology, or the mentality of an individual* according the Integration of the People with Disabilities Act, adopted in 2005. Dyslexia is rather included in the term “learning difficulties”, as in Ordinance 1/23.01.2009 for Education of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs and/or chronic diseases.

### **Regulation**

There is no overall governmental policy concerning dyslexia, nor obligatory legal acts, which are binding. While certain documents have been established and distributed (see below) the practice is still new and in the absence of a monitoring procedure implementation is left to individual initiative of employers, school principals and University administration.

The main dyslexia related regulation is the abovementioned Ordinance 1 for education of children and students with special educational needs, which regulates (among others) the number of teachers that should be responsible for a class, where there are children with learning difficulties as well as the number of children that should be in one class. That said, the word “dyslexia” itself cannot be met in any Bulgarian legislative document. The other ordinance is related to the requirements for carrying out medical specialists’ reports on the capability of a person to work as an employee. Both these legal acts cannot be considered as regulating governmental policies, concerning dyslexia.

### **Mechanism for implementation**

Not often employed, the mechanism for implementation of the above ordinances is currently limited to school and preschool level screening, where a general assessment is made from a qualified speech therapist, who in principle is also collecting signals for dyslexia related syndromes from school teachers. Parents are then directed to a speech therapist based on the screening results. Regarding other prescriptions included in the ordinance, implementation practices vary from school to school based on individual initiative and dyslexia awareness level, which is generally extremely low.

In principle, parents have the opportunity provided in the Ordinance 1 to contact and complain about Ordinance implementation in schools to Ministry of Education controlling bodies or the respective Inspectorate on Education (the regional structures of MoE). The low awareness level does represent a challenge also to using this opportunity in practice. There are currently no formally implemented processes of monitoring the ordinance implementation. If there are violations concerning the issues of discrimination – there are two opportunities: appeal to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which is an independent administrative tribunal, and may issue sanctions; direct complain to the court which decides on the sanctions.

In Universities and private sector implementation of prescriptions targeting dyslexic individuals is entirely up to individual initiative and there are only isolated good practices demonstrations (i.e. the New Bulgarian University is publishing and distributing among teachers and students a special informational brochure, which gives advices and support opportunities for students with dyslexic syndrome).

### **Support providers and agents**

Support providers for children and adults with dyslexia in Bulgaria as well as for teachers dealing with dyslexic children are currently limited to NGOs, private specialists' cabinets and academic groups in Universities. While there were several attempts for regulation (i.e. in privately provided services to children with dyslexia), the current situation can be described as quite chaotic.

Among NGOs, engaged with support for dyslexic children and adults the following could be pointed: Centre for Inclusive Education (working in cooperation with the LOGOS ABV private centre for specialists' provided support); Association Dyslexia - Bulgaria and First National Dyslexia Centre (two independent organisations are working in Rousse under close names); Dyslexia Association in Sofia.

### **Support**

Support, which is officially envisaged in the Ordinance, related to children with special education needs foresees opportunities for technical (software and computers) and non-technical (resource teachers assignment, adaptation of the material and individualisation of examination procedure) support in schools. Among them the opportunity to request assignment of a resource teacher, who could specially work with dyslexic children is the one most used. Still, the overall usage of support opportunities is depending on the school principal and teachers' private initiative and remains quite limited. In order to be eligible for support a student should undergo a special commission, called EKPO and to receive a status of a SEN student. Not many parents are willing to do this, firstly because the fear of their child being "labelled" and secondly, because the expertise of the people sitting in the EKPO remains unequal at best and same can be said for the support/resource teachers when it comes to dyslexia.

### **Support in schools**

Support, existing in schools is limited to resource teacher assignment and informational publications. During the last 2 years informational publications on dyslexia, which became accessible to parents and teachers have increased due to NGOs and private initiative. We could point as examples publication of the Centre for Inclusive education as well as publications produced through the „Leonardo atelier“ initiative.

Teachers in primary school are more empathic and supportive for children with dyslexic issues than their colleagues but there is an overall lack of knowledge about dyslexia as well as lack of initiative to acquire existing technical and other support opportunities.

### **Support in Universities**

As mentioned there is only one existing example (New Bulgarian University in Sofia), which has initiated an awareness rising and support campaign for students with dyslexia. The problem is basically unknown in other higher education institutions.

### **Path of a dyslexic individual**

Theoretically, a general screening for all children is made in the beginning of the school year in primary education course by a speech therapist. Within this process the assessing therapist is also collecting data for dyslexia related problems from school teachers.

Assessment can also be made by parents' initiative as a result of the screening or individually in a state speech therapists' centre, where children are assessed by speech therapists, psychologists, neurologists. The assessment consists of a neuro-psychology and cognitive appraisal of written and

speech presentation. Standardized diagnostics procedures and questionnaires are being used to evaluate coordination, short term and working memory, text understanding, Once dyslexia has been established through the evaluation, parents are invited in the speech therapy centre or an individual therapeutic program is being prepared for the child and coordinated with parents and school.

In reality, though, the low dyslexia awareness as well as the existing educational system in Bulgaria leads to isolation of children in school and to under-development of their real potential.

Nearly 18% of all school age children and youth in Bulgaria are dyslexic.

#### **Education specialists' qualifications requirements**

Primary teachers have only general knowledge and preliminary preparation for development problems and no additional qualification is required either from them or from resource teachers, which are expected to specifically work with dyslexic children.

Additional qualifications are obtained mainly through NGOs initiated trainings or certification procedures within the frames of temporary projects.

While teachers (and especially resource teachers) have a designated budget for qualifications, it is difficult to assess the quality of certification and additional knowledge courses, provided by different organisations.

Still school principals and teachers themselves have become increasingly active in the last years

While there are funds for additional training courses for teachers (and especially for resource teachers), it is difficult to assess the quality of certification programmes and trainings, provided by various organisations. However, despite the problems with the additional dyslexia-related teacher training, school principals and teachers themselves are becoming increasingly active in searching for training opportunities.

#### **Main conclusions**

Currently Bulgaria still does not have an integrated government policy in the area of dyslexia. Unlike the other new EU member states the country still lacks instruments and mechanisms to resolve the problems with the support for dyslexic individuals. There are no comprehensive legal and policy frameworks providing for the establishment of a system of support services for children and adults with dyslexia. The existing support services are very limited both in terms of variety and geographic distribution. At present, service providers for children and adults with dyslexia and for teachers working with dyslexic children are mainly NGOs, private specialists, academic groups in Universities and the State Speech Therapy Centre in Sofia.

At the same time, there is no reliable data about the number of people with dyslexia in Bulgaria. Although there are mechanisms and structures (such as the regional health centres, resource centres, municipalities, etc.) which could take part in the collection of such information, their resources are either not used or they lack people qualified to conduct such a research.

In general, dyslexia related information as well as academic and non-academic publications in Bulgarian are still few and they exist mainly because of the efforts of a small group of organisations, such as the Centre for Inclusive Education and the New Bulgarian University. There is a lack of technical aids and of educational materials, developed for children with and without dyslexia and providing information about the strengths and difficulties experienced by people with dyslexia.

In order to guarantee the right of dyslexic pupils to quality education and to full life in the society, mainstream teachers, principals and specialists (such as resource teachers, speech therapists and child psychologists) need additional training in techniques for working with dyslexic children. The recognition of dyslexic difficulties is hindered by the lack of understanding, experience and training opportunities,

which leads to late or wrong diagnoses. Dyslexic children are usually denounced as slow, lazy and unmotivated students who very often drop out of the educational system.

### **Recommendations**

The analysis of the situation in the country shows that the following measures would support the development of an effective and inclusive educational system:

#### ***Recommendations with regard to legislation***

- The Programme for Development of Education, Science and Youth Policies in Republic of Bulgaria and the related Action Plan should include goals and activities that take into account the children with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia. It is of high importance that all new measures are in harmony with the principles of inclusive education. The goals and activities should have clear deadlines and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. The necessary financial and human resources should also be guaranteed and subjected to public control and assessment.

- Development of a unified methodology, diagnostic procedures and standards for assessment of specific learning difficulties/dyslexia in Bulgaria.

- Introduction of standards for development of individual educational programs for children with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia in particular.

- The assessment of the educational needs should be performed by a multidisciplinary team whose main task would be to make a profile of the child's development. This profile will be the basis for the elaboration of an individual plan for learning and development. The focus should be on the child's strengths and learning style as well as on the required technical and non-technical support. The assessment should involve a thorough and precise examination of the difficulties experienced by the child in the following areas: reading and reading comprehension, writing and writing comprehension, mathematical skills and mathematical thinking, common and specific writing mistakes, language function, articulation, visual, audio and cross-modal perception, short-term and long-term memory, visual-motor coordination, meta-cognitive deficits.

- The institutions responsible for inclusive education – the Regional Teams for Complex Pedagogical Assessment (TCPA), the Teams for inclusive education (working at the educational institution) and the Resource centres have a wide range of functions. However, their specific responsibilities are not clearly defined and their representatives rarely work as a team in the development and the follow-up of the individual plans. The involvement of the TCPA in the development of the individual educational programmes and their control functions should be clearly and fully defined.

- Introduction of policies for early identification and prevention of specific learning difficulties in pre-school education and provision of early support – common practice in many countries.

- Municipalities should guarantee the access of every school to knowledge and skills necessary for meeting the needs of dyslexic children. At present the municipalities are excluded from the management of the inclusive education despite the fact that they are the local financing and coordinating authority. They should be involved in this process if they are to take responsibility for the development and management of the resources (financial, human, adapted infrastructure and environment).

#### ***Recommendations with regard to the education of dyslexic children***

- Development of a compulsory dyslexia related training course for teachers. There are various ways to organise this process – the course could be included in the programmes of the centres for training of teachers and school principals or in the universities curriculum, a special course for continuous professional education could be developed, and individual experts and NGOs could be

involved. The conclusions and recommendations present here could be used when outlining the parameters of such a course.

- The training of those working in the educational system should involve presentation, promotion and introduction of good practices from around the world and Bulgaria.
- The training of teachers to be based on the belief that every teacher should have knowledge and skills to work with children with special educational needs. The training could be organised at three levels – essential skills (for all teachers in all schools), advanced skills (for some teachers in some schools), and programmes for specialists (such as resource teachers). Thus, some of the teachers who have taken the course for advanced skills could further specialise in working with children with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia in particular.
- Development of educational software, methodological tools for teachers and parents, basic questionnaires for identification of dyslexia and other.
- Development of assistive computer-based technologies for school and university students, such as text-to-speech programs, mind maps, visual materials, multimedia lessons, terminological dictionaries, organisational software, etc. – easily accessible and free-of-charge.
- Introduction of specific procedures and strategies for examining and assessing children with learning difficulties. These procedures need to be supported by relevant legislative changes. Thus, the rights of children with learning difficulties will be ensured and they will not be underestimated because of their specific, and often invisible, difficulties.
- Parents have to receive adequate consultations and training and to be involved in the decisions made about their child. To begin with, all schools should inform the parents on regular bases about their child's development and the procedures followed by the school with regard to the education and support for dyslexic children.
- The support for dyslexic students at school should involve the development of an individual plan for learning and development with activities aimed at development of children's strengths, at professional orientation, and at improvement of their social and organisational skills through participation in support groups.
- Work with students without learning difficulties or special educational needs and the school community to develop an understanding, friendly and supportive environment.
- It might be beneficial to establish Centres for support of dyslexic children, where a comprehensive assessment of the children could be carried out together with consultations from various professionals – psychologists, speech therapists, special teachers, occupational therapists, resource teachers, etc. These functions could be implemented by the existing Resource centres, provided that their capacity is improved, i.e. the resource teachers and other professionals working there are better qualified.

***Recommendations for research and policy actions in support of the reforms in the field of inclusive education:***

- Carrying out a national research on 'Identification and Education of Children and Young People with Dyslexia'. It could serve as a basis for a) recommendations regarding primary and secondary education; b) recommendations regarding the training of teachers; c) changes in legislation and normative documents and development of new policies; d) development of policies promoting inclusion and access to quality education for all. The final research report should discuss the following topics:
  - What is dyslexia?
  - Identification of children with dyslexia

- Coping with reading and writing difficulties
- Supporting dyslexic children and their families
- Coping with other dyslexia-related problems (such as low self-esteem, dropping out from school, aggression, etc.).

Covering the following topics will bring additional value to the research:

- Contemporary teacher training
  - A review of the key characteristics of specialist dyslexia teaching
  - Additional information on training opportunities for specialist dyslexia teachers
  - Support services at local level
  - Statistical measures of the impact of interventions on child's progress
  - Identification and education of children and young people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties (including introduction of standardised control lists – easy to fill-in and follow-up by teachers and parents)
  - Practical guidance: “What works for children with dyslexic and literacy difficulties, who also experience wider difficulties?”
  - Flexibility of the curriculum for children with special educational needs;
  - Assessment of the efficiency and the sustainability of the Bulgarian good practices.
- Inclusive education policies and legislation dealing with dyslexia should be widely promoted through awareness raising campaigns stressing on the need for and the benefits of inclusive education. These campaigns, directed to parents, teachers and society as a whole, could provide information about the meaning of the terms ‘dyslexia’ and ‘specific learning difficulties’, the challenges that dyslexic people face but also about their strengths and abilities. The information materials should also explain how to get support and what are the available types and places for support and therapy.
  - Dyslexic children should be included in the database of children with specific learning difficulties, which is currently under development. The database should be at the disposal of the regional educational inspectorates, local child protection departments, all ministries and state agencies. It should contain information about the current address, gender, mother language, barriers to learning and the progress achieved by the child in each school year.
  - The link between the illiteracy and the antisocial behaviour of the juveniles has already been established. A number of researches show that children with dyslexia dropping out of school often become juvenile law offenders. A similar research should be carried out in Bulgaria with focus on the educational needs and difficulties experienced by children and young people in Educational Boarding Schools, Social Pedagogical Boarding Schools and those reported to the Local commissions for combating the juvenile antisocial behaviour

## HUNGARY

### Definition

Disability is defined as „a permanent condition in which persons' perceptual, motor, mental or communicative abilities are significantly restricted compared to other people, and thus their participation in social life is significantly restricted or impossible“. In corrective pedagogy disability is understood as difficulty with learning for people with mental, visual, hearing or motor deficiencies. According to the Hungarian legislation dyslexia is a Special Educational Need. It is not considered as a separate disability but is listed amongst other disabilities in the SEN category under the title “psychic development disturbances or serious hindrances in the learning process”.

### Regulation

Dyslexia is regulated through documents (laws and governmental decrees) dealing with SEN, adult education, higher education, rights and equality of disabled people as well as children's rights. While there is no uniform governmental policy regarding dyslexia, most of the aspects are officially regulated as it can be seen below. Those include primary, secondary and higher education as well as adult training.

The regulation which is most important and relevant to dyslexia is the Law on Public Education (1993/LXXIX). The equal right to education in accordance with the individual abilities lies in the Hungarian Constitution (Article 70/F (1 and 2)). Other Laws with references to SEN provision are: the Law on vocational training (1993/ LXXVI), the Law on higher education (1993/ LXXX), the Law on adult education (2001/ CI), the Law on the rights and equality of disabled persons (1998 / XXVI) and the Law on the ratification of the 1989 New York UN Convention on the Rights of Children (1991/ LXIV). Government Decrees referring to SEN and disabilities are: 243/2003. (XII. 17.) on National Curriculum, 277/1997. (XII. 22.) on the further education of teachers, 45/1997. (III. 12.) on accredited vocational education in universities and 168/200. (IX.29.) on the higher education in corrective pedagogy. Finally, Decrees of the Ministry of Education treating education and training of students with disabilities are: 2/2005. (III. 1.) on education of children with SEN, 29/2002 on the equal rights of students with disabilities with regard to the lifelong learning, 14/1994. (VI. 24.) on the functioning of the Pedagogical Professional services, 11/1994. (VI. 8.) MKM on the functioning of the educational institutions and 7/1998. (III. 25.) MKM on the vocational training for inclusive education of students with disabilities.

The process of legal provision allows for NGOs and experts in the area of education in Hungary not only to comment on legal texts and suggest changes but also to receive upon request legal texts concerning education policies and to provide their opinion.

### Implementation

The authority or the official body maintaining an educational institution is obliged to carry out reviews of its legal functioning, i.e. showing whether the institution is fulfilling its duties on SEN provision. The regulations provide the right to the Ministry of Education to order inspections of the implementation if necessary.

A process that should lead to increased self-control and regulation of professional pedagogical services (e.g. organisations working with psychologists, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, etc.) is currently going on.

## Support agents and providers

Direct support is provided mainly by specialists and NGOs. The following organisations should be pointed among the most visible and active ones:

Adult Dyslexia Center of the Sun Circle Association

<http://www.nap-kor.hu>

[Po\(S\)ítív Életútért Egyesület](http://www.pozitiv-osze.hu/) - Positive Life Association

<http://www.pozitiv-osze.hu/>

Demoszthenész Egyesület - Demosthenes Association

<http://demoszthenesz.hu/>

[Dyslexiás Gyermekekért Egyesület](http://www.diszlex.hu/) - For Dyslexic Children

<http://www.diszlex.hu/>

Magyar Diszlexia Oldalak - Hungarian Dyslexia Pages

<http://www.diszlexia.hu/>

Diszlexia lap - Dyslexia page

<http://diszlexia.lap.hu/>

Minden a diszlexiáról - Everything about dyslexia

<http://www.diszlexia.info/>

Tanulásmódszertan - Learning methods

<http://www.tanulasmodszertan.hu/diszlexia.htm>

Olvadási szoftverek - Softwares for reading

<http://www.varazsbetu.hu/>

Tanulási zavarok - Learning difficulties

<http://www.freeweb.hu/zenit/>

Diszlexia linkek - Links on dyslexia

<http://diszlexia.linkcenter.hu/>

Diszlexia lap - Dyslexia page

<http://diszlexia.web007.hu/>

[Esélyegyenlőség a nyelvtanulásban](http://esely.elte.hu/) - Learning second languages

<http://esely.elte.hu/>

[Betűvilág. Olvasásfejlesztő készlet](http://www.betuvilag.com/) - Letter World. Set for Reading Training

<http://www.betuvilag.com/>

Színes szemüveg - Coloured lenses

### **Support**

The estimated number of dyslexic students in primary schools is 5-7 % and there is no data on the higher education. Each educational institution can claim double quota for SEN students but in turn has to provide special education support. The student has the right to altered examination conditions, e.g. more time, use of calculator, no written exam. These are defined by the Schoolmaster. There is no unified level of support at primary, secondary or university levels. It varies significantly from school to school depending on the teachers, schoolmaster, support professionals available, resoluteness of the parent, etc.

### **Path of a dyslexic individual**

In general, the Hungarian legislation obliges the educational institutions (mainly schools) to carry out regular diagnostic process. If the school wants to refer a student to a diagnostic process, this should be coordinated with the parents. In practice, however, parents usually have to take the initiative and find information about the existing opportunities on their own.

The examination is carried out by the Pedagogical Service, or if an official paper (SEN certificate) is needed, by the Committee for Screening of Learning Abilities. The latter is comprised by the following experts: corrective pedagogue, speech and language therapist, and special education expert. Reading, writing, comprehension and spelling skills are tested through test materials created by the Academy of Corrective Pedagogy. The testing is taking place in the kindergarten or school and is executed by the Pedagogical Service, which also provides directions for further control testing to measure the progress of the therapy. After the testing individual therapy is supposed to start and certain adaptations are to be made in the school for the certified children. In practice, the further process is very individual, depending on teachers' readiness and willingness to adapt the educational process to the needs of the children with dyslexia.

### **Qualification of educational specialists**

Information / awareness rising on dyslexia is part of the general teacher training but teachers lack specialisation in the field. More detailed information is included in the curricula of speech therapists but the practical skills are acquired through accredited vocational training courses. A teacher working with dyslexic children needs to have a University degree of corrective pedagogy and certificates from accredited courses on specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Continuous and on-the-job training is provided to teachers and specialists through specialised vocational training courses in universities and accredited courses for teachers. Some of the topics include: learning skills development, SpLD provision, dyslexia, dysgraphia, acalculia, sensory-integration therapies, sonderpedagogy, drama pedagogy for inclusion, principles of project-pedagogy in inclusive education.

### **Areas of high achievement that can be transferred**

Pre-screening for dyslexia in all kindergartens for children at the age of 5 and provision of preventive therapy by speech therapists.

Hungary has the longest history in Europe in the field of dyslexia research and many of the findings are incorporated in the teaching of reading and writing.

## **Priority areas for improvement**

Raising awareness: neither parents, nor teachers are well informed. They do not know where to turn for support and information, although such opportunities exist – there are many civil society organisations and places for therapy and support.

Promotion of the social model of disability instead of the medical model: in Hungary dyslexia is considered by the general public as a severe mental underdevelopment; there is no positive approach, i.e. offering success stories with role models.

No reliable statistics are kept on the number of dyslexic individuals and the support they have received, which makes it difficult to have a clear overview on what is going on in the country in this area.

## **ITALY**

### **Definition**

The definition of disability is derived from the documents of the World Health Organisation and corresponds to the one valid throughout Europe. Although dyslexia is by all means a disability, it is often excluded from this category because of the emergence of different ideological positions regarding the concepts of 'normality' and 'pathology'.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2009 Italy adopted by ordinary Law the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This also led to the establishment of a National Observatory on disability. This institution consists of 40 members and it is under the control of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. This observatory has regional subdivisions and connections with other disability groups, lobbies and trade union representatives.

### **Regulation**

Directives, issued by the Ministry of Education of Italy, regulate some aspects of the life of dyslexic individuals since 2004. Thus, an Ordinance regulates state examination in schools and colleges. However, there is no mechanism yet that regulates the monitoring of its implementation. At the moment no other provision is available for dyslexic children who actually seem to be ignored by the legislation and by the school institutions.

The Ministry of Transport approved a binding circular regarding driving licence. There is also a specific draft bill concerning motor vehicle driving, which still needs to be approved by the same Ministry. The draft bill, which was approved in 2007, allows dyslexic individuals to use sound recorders during the car driving test upon presentation of medical certification.

### **Implementation**

Dyslexia is not included in any of the national registers of special educational needs that guide the provision of special support for learning. The authority or the official body maintaining an educational institution is obliged to carry out reviews showing whether the institution fulfils its duties on SEN provision. The normative documents also provide the right to the Ministry of Education (ME) to order inspection of the implementation if felt necessary.

If correctly applied, ministerial circulars cover the needs of dyslexic people. Still, a further effort is needed to tailor motorcycle driving licence tests to the specific needs of dyslexic individuals.

A process that should lead to increased self-control and regulation of professional pedagogical services (organisations working with psychologists, school psychologist, speech therapists, etc.) is currently going on.

### **Support agents and providers**

Direct support is provided mainly by individual specialists and NGOs as in other countries. The main two actors, which support dyslexic persons, are AID (Italian Dyslexia Association) and FID (Italian Dyslexia

Foundation). Both organisations are aiming to support dyslexic individuals and their families in education process and professional life. Their main activities are directed towards sensitising professionals, schools and general public to the issues of developmental dyslexia; promoting training and research in different action fields: schools, health sector, rehabilitation services; offering consultancy and support to dyslexic individuals in their social life. Their websites are respectively the most popular websites: [www.dislessia.it](http://www.dislessia.it) and [www.dislessia.org](http://www.dislessia.org).

In 2007, the Italian Dyslexia Association, together with scientific and professional associations organised a Consensus Conference on dyslexia where a shared definition of dyslexia was developed, accepted by all specialists and experts on dyslexia.

There are also many smaller associations dealing with dyslexia, some of which are OSD (Dyslexia Support Association – Genoa), APAV (Associazione Parole che Volano, Association “Flying Words” - Terni), AGIAD (Dyslexic individuals Parents and teachers association – Northern Italy).

The term dyslexia is commonly used among health sector professionals, teachers as well as among many parents who are directly involved in the issues of dyslexia. When it comes to broader audience, the meaning of the word "dyslexia" is not sufficiently known, not even by many school teachers who often do not realise that they have been dealing with dyslexic children in their school career.

### **Support**

Both parents and students themselves learn about their rights mainly from the information provided by the AID, the National Health Service (Child Neuropsychiatry Service), neuro-psychiatrists, psychologists, speech therapists and also from websites such as the Regional Bureau for Education ([www.istruzioneer.it](http://www.istruzioneer.it)). At the same time, some Italian University Departments have specific areas on their websites to discuss issues of dyslexia, see for reference [www.asd.unimore.it](http://www.asd.unimore.it).

Generally, different policies are applied in the different schools and regions. In most cases the families have to ask for the application of the regulations, and not always successfully. If parents are not sufficiently informed, secondary schools tend to disregard any support implementation. When correctly applied, regulations include all necessary provisions for the students' educational needs. For example, compensation and dispensation measures are implemented, as foreseen by the ministerial circulars. At the same time, at all levels of the educational system a special educationist is assigned to students with an official statement of their disability. Additionally, few institutions provide a special tutor at school and home and some Universities provide tutors for dyslexic students.

A report containing diagnostic data and information about the relationships with family and professionals (speech therapist, neuro-psychiatrist) supports and goes along with the child. At the final state examination at the end of each school term, a document summarising the educational programme and curricular of the student is given to the Exam Committee.

School programmes are quite rigid in most Italian schools. Setting an open class system can significantly support dyslexic students. In such a system some subjects can be substituted with others, less difficult for dyslexic individuals. At present no dispensation from foreign language classes is foreseen, which is a problem, especially at secondary school level where students have to study two foreign languages.

Exam provision for students, understandably, varies between school levels, but it exists. And while it allows no exams to be taken at Primary school level, at Secondary school level it depends on the

annual circulars of the Ministry of Education. Each year the Ministry issues an ordinance and a circular regulating the final state examinations and providing guidance about the means which can be adopted by the schools to support the SEN students. These include compensation and dispensation measures and tools (IT tools, human reader or vocal synthesis, longer times to complete the test, tailored exam tests) and evaluation criteria for all tests. Again, no dispensation from foreign language exams is foreseen. Finally, some Universities provide Information and assistance desks for SEN students where dyslexic students can get support for their courses (personal tutor) and exams (human reader). Among them Modena, Bologna and Milan Universities can be mentioned.

The use of IT is allowed but not fully implemented by the schools yet. Regional support centres were founded to help schools with the technical learning aids, but they are still not fully functioning. The software, most often used in schools, includes vocal synthesis, text editor, Interactive Whiteboards (still rare) and digital books. Voice recorders are used in both primary and secondary schools but only if allowed by the teacher. In addition, calculators and MP3 are used at secondary school and University levels.

Different institutions provide funding to support SEN students, in particular regional funds and European funds. The amount and aims of the regional funds vary depending on the regional administrations.

### **Path of a dyslexic individual**

In Italy there is no formally organised screening of all students. Some local schools take the initiative for the screening of their students. In addition, different scientific research centres, in particular the Italian Dyslexia Association, have elaborated criteria and recommendations for clinical practices. The National Institute of Health is also involved in various initiatives.

There is no national legislation regarding assessment. Different professionals – there is no requirement for specific qualifications - can perform the assessment: psychologist, speech therapist, child neuropsychiatrist. However, for the diagnosis to be official, it can only be performed either by a doctor or by a psychologist.

Generally, cognitive and school skills (reading, writing, and computing) are assessed. In the cases when the diagnosis would lead to either therapy or educational support, a strengths and weaknesses assessment is also performed. Usually the tools/tests that are used are word and non-word reading tests (recognition), reading comprehension, IQ tests, short memory tests and tests of other cognitive functions. There are some assessment tools (standardised tests) for diagnosis of dyslexia at different age stages. However, these tools, especially for teenage students and adults, are not commonly known. At school age the assessment is funded by the National Health Service upon the payment of a service charge. Adults pay for themselves. Testing usually takes place at the regional offices (Child Neuropsychiatry) of the National Health Service. The frequency of tests varies enormously according to the different local situations.

Test results can be used as a proof and an evidence to ask for financial and educational support at school. Although scarcely available, support such as compensation and dispensation tools, rehabilitation services, and psychological counselling do exist.

### **Qualification of educational specialists**

No special qualification is required from teachers or tutors with regard to the education of dyslexic students. Special courses are provided by NGOs, together with on-the-job training, but they are voluntary. Some institutions do require additional training for their teachers and they fund it. Sometimes the State funds dyslexia-specific training, delivered by the AID.

### **Areas of high achievement that can be transferred**

In school year 2008/2009 the Italian Ministry of Education issued a circular introducing new regulations for the final exams. This document envisaged the introduction of compensatory tools and exemption from some unnecessary activities for children with special educational needs. In particular, this circular invites each board of examiners to adopt special measures (including different test evaluation, which takes into account the needs of the children with SEN, exemption from written tests in foreign languages, use of support ICT, longer timing to complete written tests).

Some Italian Universities have already introduced a specific function in each faculty – teachers are appointed as spokespersons for SEN students. Their task is to facilitate/listen to SEN students, to be counsellors and supporters of students' activities. In addition to this tutor can be provided upon student's request. The role of the tutor involves continuous support throughout the student's life.

### **Priority areas for improvement**

The lack of a unified policy at a national level. Support initiatives for SEN children have either local or regional impact. Every educational institution (schools, universities) in Italy allows for support measures autonomously and they vary a lot from one school to another. Sometimes volunteer tutors are available but more often the parents have to take care and pay for private tutoring.

In Tuscany many secondary schools do not have personnel qualified to deal with the issues of dyslexia. Therefore they are unable to offer teaching methodologies appropriate for SEN children. Schools principals often do not promote dyslexia-related training initiatives for teachers. Even if such courses are available, they are not compulsory; therefore, not all teachers attend these trainings and continue to apply the traditional teaching methods with SEN students.

## **POLAND**

While the development and implementation of policies regarding dyslexia have received serious attention, particularly since Poland joined the EU in 2004, the current status of development in this area is still assessed as insufficient at its best. The available support, in terms of technical assistance, facilities and non-technical equipment, varies greatly and depends mainly on private and individual initiative. This situation was found to be typical and for other countries in the early stages of dyslexia awareness and development of supporting policies.

### **Definition**

In Poland dyslexia is considered as a kind of disorder rather than as a disability. In the official documents and publications the term „special educational needs“ refers to disabilities and, in fact, excludes dyslexia.

*Dyslexia – specific difficulties in reading and writing in children with normal mental development. They are caused by a disorder of cognitive and locomotive functions and their integration conditioned by impaired development of the nervous system. (the official definition used by the authority in Poland).*

### **Regulation**

Acts and regulations concerning dyslexia related issues could be of compulsory type (i.e. laws) or of advisory type (i.e. strategies). Attempts to regulate the support for dyslexic individuals and the special adaptations needed within the education system were made as early as 1991 within the Education System Act. A number of decrees of the Ministry of Education provide further regulations of the process of identification and support for dyslexic children and pupils in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2008. The regulations from 2004 represent an improvement of the documents from 2001 and 2002. They look at the special conditions for testing and promotion of children and adult learners with dyslexia, taking into account the changes in the examination process. They also contain obligations for teachers to adjust their teaching and assessment approaches to the needs and abilities of dyslexic pupils. The 2008 regulations give the basis for ‘individual pre-school preparation’ and individual teaching for children with statements from a pedagogical outpatient clinic. They oblige the headmasters to create conditions to fulfil these requirements.

### **Mechanism for implementation**

Current regulations presume that the initiative and the efforts for dyslexia recognition, assessment and support should come from the dyslexic individual herself/himself or, respectively, from the parents of the dyslexic child. As the level of public awareness of dyslexia is still quite low, this is a serious challenge for the people to actually obtain existing support mechanisms and equipment. In addition, most policies do not have explicit implementation procedures. None of them has an approved monitoring procedure.

Among the advisable and obligatory acts with more or less clear regulations is the process of identification and assessment of dyslexic children and the adaptation of the educational process and requirements following the acquisition of an official statement of dysfunction from a psycho-pedagogical outpatient clinic. Details on this are provided below under ‘Support’.

### **Support providers and agents**

While the process of assessment of dyslexic children and adults is state funded, the support provision relies on either individual (teachers, school principals, university administrators) or institutional (private companies, non-governmental organizations) initiative.

The main web portals providing information, publications, etc. are maintained by either NGOs or private companies:

- [www.ptd.edu.pl](http://www.ptd.edu.pl) – created and maintained by the Polish Dyslexia Association
- [www.ortograffiti.pl](http://www.ortograffiti.pl) – created and maintained by a private company – the Operon Publishing House
- [www.dysleksja-poradnik.org](http://www.dysleksja-poradnik.org) – created and maintained by Psycho-pedagogical Outpatient Clinic No 3 in Krakow
- [www.spet.info.pl](http://www.spet.info.pl)

Additionally, special courses for dyslexics are offered by private language schools (e.g. Sitrax).

Some not-for-profit organisations offer paid specialisation courses to teachers within the frameworks of different projects. Unfortunately, fees are rarely reimbursed by the schools, which is discouraging for potential participants.

The main NGOs providing support are the Polish Dyslexia Association with its 76 branches around Poland and the Foundation of Małgorzata Jabłońska 'Support for the development of children with dyslexia' with office in Kalisz.

### **Support**

The level of support available for both children and adults with dyslexia is assessed between “non-existent” and “insufficient”. However, even the little existent support is described as useful.

### **Support in schools**

Following the acquisition of an official statement of dysfunction, each child with dyslexic status has the right to be supported at school through individualisation of learning material, educational demands, assessment system and teaching methodology and through special treatment during the written exams. While teachers are obliged, under the regulations, to support children with official statement of dyslexia, initiative is still expected to come from parents.

The individualisation of learning material includes: providing opportunities for more exercises in class as well as at home; introducing corrective-compensatory exercises; dismissing the obligation of the student to learn second foreign language.

The individualisation of educational demands includes: assessing student's knowledge based on verbal rather than written exercises; assessing the content and composition of the essays (vocabulary, stylistics, own ideas, reasoning) rather than spelling; describing student's individual progress in orthography instead of marking the spelling.

The individualisation of teaching methodology includes: using multisensory methods, i.e. engaging many senses at the same time (vision, hearing, touch, moving); using interactive methods, like reading in pairs, group work and playing; focusing on methods based on the learning styles preferred by the student.

The opportunities for special treatment during exams include: writing the exam in a separate room where the instructions and the content of the task would be read aloud; 50% more time for writing;

opportunity to use capital letters only; requirement to use sans-serif font (size 14) in the printed test-sheets; opportunity to answer directly in the test-sheets. These measures are obligatory during the tests and exams. However, in the educational process their application depends on the teachers'/schools' initiative and they are not always observed.

### **Support in Universities**

There is no national regulation of the support that could be required and provided at the University level. It is decided by each institution individually.

Neither the technical aids nor the other materials needed to support dyslexic students have national regulation. The decisions are taken by each educational institution and depend on the demand and the individual initiative.

### **Path of a dyslexic individual**

As described above, dyslexia identification and assessment is entirely in the hands of the dyslexic child's parents or the dyslexic individual herself/himself.

If requested by the adult or the child's parents, the assessment should be commissioned to the pedagogical outpatient clinic. There is no formally organised screening of all students or children at a younger age. The specialists conducting the assessment are with psychological, speech-therapeutic or pedagogical qualification and fulfil the requirements for education degree and practice.

The assessment includes the following steps:

- assessment of the mental growth – development of intellectual capacities;
- assessment of the processes fundamental for reading and writing – how the child sees, hears, moves, what is the coordination of these functions, what is the language capacity;
- pedagogical assessment – test of orthography, examination of graphical aspect of writing, speed of reading, etc.

Additionally, the child can be examined by a psychiatrist and/or a speech therapist.

Assessment tools include interviews and tests, for example Wechsler, Edfeldt, Frostig, Spionek, Bender-Koppitz, Styczek, Racławicki, Muszyńska, Kostrzewski, Zazzo, Stambak, Granjon, Piaget examination systems.

### **Education specialists' qualifications requirements**

No particular qualifications are required from teachers and educators working with dyslexic children. Additional specialisations in the area are obtained through special courses rather than through general university curriculum.

### **Areas of high achievement that can be transferred**

1. Students with dyslexia have many rights, guaranteed with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and the Central Examination Commission concerning adjustment of requirements and assessment of the internal and external examination system. They were presented by Professor Marta Bogdanowicz on a number of events at the invitation of national dyslexia associations – e.g. from Italy, Germany and France. Recently she took

part in a conference of the French Federation, held in the building of the French Senate in Paris on 3.10.2009. The first book on this subject – Bogdanowicz, M. and Sayles, A. (2004) 'Rights of Dyslexic Children in Europe'. Gdańsk: Wyd. Harmonia – was published in Polish and English.

2. The unique book 'Portraits of not only famous people with dyslexia' (Bogdanowicz, M. (2008), 'Portraits of not only famous people with dyslexia'. Gdańsk: Wyd. Harmonia) contains material collected during the last 18 years. It not only tells about the learning problems of famous people but contains letters from parents and adult learners describing their difficult experiences and achievements, sharing good practices and giving psychological support.
3. International conference at Gdańsk University 'Dyslexia in adults' 28-29.11. 2009 ([www.dysleksja.edu.pl](http://www.dysleksja.edu.pl); [www.martabogdanowicz.pl](http://www.martabogdanowicz.pl))

### **Priority areas for improvement**

1. Application of the "model" for early and complex assistance to pupils with dyslexia and at risk of dyslexia. The Ministry of Education approved this model but its implementation requires financial and organisational resources. It is described in the following publication: Bogdanowicz M., Czabaj R., Bułko A. (2008) 'Model system of prevention and help for pupils with dyslexia'. Gdynia: Wyd. Operon. It can be downloaded from the website of the Polish Dyslexia Association – [www.dysleksja.edu.pl](http://www.dysleksja.edu.pl)).
2. Application of effective methods for early prevention: test screening of school readiness of 5years old (before starting school) and diagnosis of the risk from dyslexia ( multimedia diagnostic tool created by Young Digital Planet).
3. Provision of early, specialised help (logaoedic and corrective-compensatory exercises); use of effective methods supporting child development, such as 'Method of the Good Start' by M. Bogdanowicz and 'Children's Mathematics' by E.Gruszczuk – Kolczyńska.

## SPAIN

### Definition

There is no commonly accepted definition for dyslexia in Spain although most specialists now agree dyslexia could not be considered a disability whereas disability is perceived as „a physical or mental handicap caused by a congenital illness or injury“<sup>3</sup>.

Regarding dyslexia definitions differ among specialists and authors with the one provided by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is most frequently use. IDA states dyslexia to be „specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and / or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge“<sup>4</sup>.

### Regulation

There is no regulation for the process of identification and treatment of dyslexic individuals in Spain. While there are certain provisions for disability, which also treat pupil with special educational needs, dyslexia condition is not regulated as being perceived as a non-disability condition.

The act, regulating assistance and attitude to "pupil with the specific need of educational support" is the Spanish Act on Education (adopted 2006), which defines the term as applicable to these three types of pupils:

- Pupils with special educational needs (physical, development and sensory disabilities)
- Highly gifted pupils
- Pupils incorporated late into the Spanish education system.

Each school is then expected to arrange for professionals depending on the profile of the students with special educational needs in order to help them to develop correctly themselves. Some specialized services are provided outside the regular classroom, therefore, the student occasionally leaves the regular classroom to attend instructional sessions or to receive other related service. For example, deaf

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<sup>3</sup> The Law Social Integration of the Handicapped person (*Ley 13/1982 de 7 de abril, sobre la Integración Social del Minusválido*) adopts that definition (article 7)

<sup>4</sup> [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)

students: the school will have a sign language interpreter and special therapists (teachers specialized on Speech-Language and Hearing).

Thus children with disabilities are in a priority status regarding specialized support and assistance as compared with dyslexic children.

Dyslexia is also excluded from all special educational needs register.

It is worth mentioning that there is a non-governmental effort by “Dyslexia without barriers” association, which has initiated the development of a National Register of People with Dyslexia. This would not be accepted as an official register though.

Dyslexia assessment and support for students, adults, employees and employers is unregulated by official documents.

### **Mechanism for implementation**

As long as here is no formal regulation on dyslexia, relevant implementation procedures are non-existent. In general Spanish population recognize the term dyslexia, but its' content and implications are not widely known. The term is mostly known by young people.

### **Support providers and agents**

Support providers for dyslexic individuals are mostly targeting children in primary school and are either coming from academia and professional groups (who provide support through published researches, guides, books<sup>5</sup>) or represent not-for-profit organizations and/or advocacy groups targeting children rights and education. Main activities of these organizations deal with palliation of the phonological, spatial, perceptual and auditory consequences of dyslexia.

NGOs also deal with information provision, awareness - raising campaigns, dissemination, professional advice, libraries, use of didactic games, etc.

All organizations are related to Dyslexia Associations from the different Spanish regions. Below are some examples:

- FEDIS Federación Española de Dislexia [www.fedis.org](http://www.fedis.org) National Association.
- Dislexia sin Barreras (National) [www.dislexiasinbarreras.com](http://www.dislexiasinbarreras.com)

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<sup>5</sup> [www.ics.aragon.es/awgc/inicio.estaticas.do?app=centro-recursos/mapa-investigacion/grupos/&file=G097-interdisciplinar-de-neurofisiologia.html](http://www.ics.aragon.es/awgc/inicio.estaticas.do?app=centro-recursos/mapa-investigacion/grupos/&file=G097-interdisciplinar-de-neurofisiologia.html) (Research on the neurophysiology of the dyslexia. By the Neurophysiology Interdisciplinary group of the Aragonese Institute of Health Sciences); [www.fundacion-aprender.es/Docs.html](http://www.fundacion-aprender.es/Docs.html) (Guide to understand dyslexia); [www.dislexiasinbarreras.com/biblioteca.htm](http://www.dislexiasinbarreras.com/biblioteca.htm) (dyslexia related books). Links are subject to change and availability

- Dislexia al Norte
- DISLECAN Asociación de Canarias [www.dislecan.es](http://www.dislecan.es)
- DISLEBI Asociación de Vizcaya <http://comunidades.kzgunea.net/Dislebi/ES/default.htm>
- DISFAM Asociación en Palma de Mallorca [www.disfam.net](http://www.disfam.net)
- Blog Dislexia Jaén <http://dislexiajaen.myblog.es/>
- AVADIS Asociación Valenciana: <http://www.dixle.com/>
- Asociación en Barcelona: <http://www.acd.cat/ACD/>
- ASANDIS Asociación de Andalucía: <http://www.asandis.org/>
- ADIXMUR (Asociación Dislexia en Murcia) [www.fedis.org/murcia/mod/resource/view.php?id=](http://www.fedis.org/murcia/mod/resource/view.php?id=)
- Fundación Aprender: [www.fundacion-aprender.es/index.html](http://www.fundacion-aprender.es/index.html)

## Support

Support for dyslexic individuals is limited in schools, mostly primary schools. Assistance is perceived as part of school or extracurricular activities and as education in general is funded by state budget. The level of support though varies significantly among schools as long as education policies and relevant budget are defined on regional level following National Government guidelines region. This may lead to significant differences in tools and professional assistance made available to dyslexic children.

As far as known, there are no technical provisions for dyslexic children in Spain and software available. Specific, case-by-case support is also provided by private specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, etc).

Assistance for adults and University students is practically non-existent.

## Primary school level

Dyslexic students are not considered as students with special educational needs. At primary school level dyslexic children are mainly assisted through visual spatial and auditory tests. The precise support, provided is subject to results from individual evaluation, done by the school advisor and the tutor.

## Secondary school level

During the last two years of secondary school, a special mechanism is functioning called "*Diversificación curricular*" (Curricula diversification or inclusion). It provides a path to graduation for students with educational limitations and challenges. The mechanism makes it possible for students to share some subjects with other regular students and approach other subjects in a different way. The teaching is adapted to their needs as each group has a maximum of 15 students with two weekly tutorships (one with all the students, and other with the students from the curricula diversification).

While dyslexic students are not considered to be target students for the curricula diversification they could be included in groups due to study limitations caused by dyslexia.

### **University level**

There is no assistance provided at University level

### **Path of a dyslexic individual**

There is a standardized procedure of dyslexia identification at primary school level. It is expected that the tutor detects the dyslexia, and informs the school advisor or school counselor (Psychologist or Pedagogue) in order to study the case, diagnose dyslexia and rule out other possibilities. Then the school advisor refers the student with dyslexia to the pedagogue and/or to the speech therapist for individual work. No formal screening is foreseen and if a teacher detects or suspects dyslexia, he/she can inform the tutor. Assignments in class, quantitative observation and qualitative tests are usually used. Phonological awareness, perception, spatial orientation, lateralization, auditory discrimination, vocabulary, etc. are among specifics assessed within the process.

Following the assessment, support is provided through several activities and advices, both in the school and at home with the parents.

Should dyslexia demonstrations are first noticed in secondary school, the tutor refers the student to the school advisor and the student is provided with extra language support lessons (school reinforcement classes).

A procedure and assistance in University is basically non-existent. It is generally believed that if somebody has not been detected as dyslexic after finishing Secondary school, he/she will hardly finish its university studies. Therefore, if an university student has dyslexia, it is supposed to be almost corrected once at the University (or he/she has its own mechanisms to adapt him/herself to the University studies).

### **Education specialists qualifications requirements**

Testing and assistance for dyslexia almost always takes place in school centres. Parents can address to private practice centres - if they can afford them - if they consider this as a necessary complement for their children. In some cases, when parents suspect something and the school centre does not provide assistance (e.g. because they do not see anything wrong, or because they are not able to detect dyslexia), the family may ask for external advice. It is expected that

therapists and education specialists would have qualifications in: Pedagogy, Speech-Language and Hearing, Psycho pedagogy, Psychology. The whole of teacher training is taking place in Universities with further specialized training being quite limited. All pedagogues regardless of their specialisation receive extra information on dyslexia during their studies.

### **Priority areas for improvement**

- Development of new educational regulation that consider dyslexic students as students with special educational needs. At the same time, these new regulations must develop real and formal measures that force school centres to work properly and continuously with these students in a common and adequate way, according to their needs. That will imply more funding for materials, instruments, resources, etc. for school centres to work with dyslexic pupils.
- Improving the teachers training on dyslexic matters, because the one they receive is very general.
- More awareness-raising at educational community about dyslexia.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### On definitions

In the UK there is continued debate as to the terminology for those who find it difficult to learn to read and write, including questions about the definition and the very existence of what many refer to as “dyslexia”. Despite the publication of the Rose Report (see later), a national survey of issues relating to the identification and support of the dyslexic individual, the UK Science and Technology Parliamentary Committee launched an enquiry into:

- the Government's policy on literacy interventions for school children with reading difficulties;
- the evidence base for the Every Child a Reader and Making Good Progress programmes;
- the definition of dyslexia; and
- the evidence base for diagnosing dyslexia and teaching dyslexic children to read.

The enquiry closed on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009). At the time of write, their conclusions are still awaited. However, this author made the following submission to this committee: *“Dyslexia is a difficulty in the acquisition of fluent and accurate reading, writing and spelling that is neurological in origin.”*

### Legislation

“A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” Dyslexia is regarded as a disability in the UK.<sup>6</sup>

The process of bringing legislation can involve a number of different processes in the UK. With respect to dyslexia, it is an iterative process, dependent upon many things include upon prior legislation. Dyslexia first entered legislation nearly 30 years ago, and has had a sequence of processes to inform legislation, each of which had a different underlying factor. The earlier legislation was usually led by individuals who pressured Member of Parliament (MP) to take on an interest that would give them (the interested party and the MP) prominence in the legislative process. The legislation in the mid and late 1990s (e.g. The Education (Special Educational Needs) (Amendment) Regulations 1995 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 may be seen as a response to the Salamanca Declaration, which was about recognizing the abilities, characteristics, needs of the special needs child, as well as providing for them in teacher training. The Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) 2004 was a response to the combined activities of disability user groups, especially those of the blind and deaf communities. The primary legislation with respect to dyslexia has followed the social model of inclusion, and discussed individual differences, though reference to dyslexia do appear. The implementation of secondary legislation is about politicians succumbing to public and media pressure, either as a response to pressure groups or as there are more judicial challenges. However, the effects are minimal and usually short lived. For example, the government has recently claimed to have released money for training 4000 teachers as dyslexia specialists. But there are 25,000 primary schools. So the impact is small. SEN Code of Practice is among the most influential regulations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga\\_19950050\\_en\\_2#pt1-l1g1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_2#pt1-l1g1)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/3724/SENCodeOfPractice.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/3724/SENCodeOfPractice.pdf)

There are legal challenges possible if the legislation is not implemented. However, like all things, the criteria are difficult to define. The monitoring is implicit, explicitly covered in the OFSTED schools inspection.

Academics, NGOs and others are included in the process. This avoids the bad media coverage when they are excluded. The legislation is also usually in response to the NGOs insistence. Recent reviews, e.g. The Rose Report and The Scientific and Technical Parliamentary Committee were both open to public input.

### **Support organisation and providers**

The main advocacy group is the British Dyslexia Association<sup>8</sup>. There are also around 80 local groups affiliated to the BDA. There are others which are little more than one person websites.

The BDA works with the government lobbying for change. They also support parents, develop project, run a helpline for parents, provide a Quality Mark for schools and business as well as run a website and online shop.

### **Awareness, teacher training and qualifications**

According to centralized statistics there are around 25,000 students at University who receive a disability allowance due to their dyslexia. There are no centralized statistics for children. However, this will change in the near future.

The British Dyslexia Association has carried out two surveys of teachers, in 1991 and around 2002, in order to identify their level of awareness and needs. Both indicated that there was familiarity for most teachers, and most acknowledge they have seen dyslexic children. There was a request for most information, resources and training. BDA did not follow this up, but it should be noted that the BDA does have a qualification (AMBDA – Associate Member of the British Dyslexia Association) which is recognised by all, including the government, as a mark of proficiency in teaching dyslexic children.

There is no technical requirement for teachers to work with dyslexic pupils. However, if a child is given a “statement” of educational needs, this includes resources and qualifications. If the parents of a statemented child feel the support worker is not qualified, they may appeal against the decision. The child should be supported by a qualified person. But often they are given support by an unqualified teaching assistant. At university, there are support workers who have to have an AMBDA certification.

There has been considerable coverage of dyslexia in the media in recent years, to the point whereby most people accept it and have some knowledge of it. Parents of children with dyslexia get to know about their rights through media coverage, local and online support and guidance.

### **Assessment**

Unfortunately the regulation of who can do testing is less than optimal. In an ideal world, there would be a qualification for assessors, a list of tests, and criteria used for those tests. However, this is not the case in the UK, or elsewhere. Unfortunately, the title of “psychologist” (educational for younger children

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<sup>8</sup> [www.bdadyslexia.org](http://www.bdadyslexia.org)

or clinical for adults) is generally accepted as sufficient. However, no standard course will provide the specialist training required.

The one area where this has been partially addressed is in higher education, where a Working Party (2005) produced recommendations of how to assess a dyslexic student and how to make the report. Recommended tests were also provided. Since then a training course and registration has been implemented. However, with cut off criteria and the multidimensional nature of the problem, there is still considerable variation in quality of assessments.

Testing of children is usually as a result of a request by the teacher (or Special Educational Needs Coordinator – SENCO), which in turn has often been as a result of pressure from the parents. The assessment is normally carried out by an Educational Psychologist of the Local Education Authority (LEA) in the school. The assessment outcome varies from place to place with some authorities providing a confirmation of “dyslexia”, while others talk about “specific learning difficulties.” The assessment will include a recommendation of the implementation of support, and development of the Individual Education Plan. The tools used are diverse, but a report would be expected to include tests of literacy achievement (reading, spelling and writing), phonological skills (rhyme, alliteration, analysis and synthesis), memory, and orthographic skills. One of the most common batteries is the Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB). Reading comprehension and expressive vocabulary should also be evaluated.

Several local authorities are now trialling an online version of this testing, providing wider testing at lower costs (i.e. the Learner Profiler developed by Smythe and Kirby). This system is to also be piloted in other countries including Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Romania.

The provision for students is better than in most places. What is lacking is the prior identification, or the awareness amongst students. All too often they wait until they fail, and then try to find help. Some universities and colleges are now looking towards mass online screening to help identify early who may need support.

The support for adult is reasonable, but is not widely known. Unfortunately, there is often too much emphasis placed on technology, and not enough human support, due to financial implications and insufficient qualified people to offer support.

Where a statement of needs is given, the dyslexic individual is usually offered combination of technological and non-technological aids, depending upon the age and context. In principle, the most common form of support at primary level will be specialist tuition in phonics, which at secondary school the emphasis is more on study skills. At college and university, there may be extra direct tuition which is sometime given by those who know the subject of the student. There is a growing tendency to call the support working a Study Skills Support Officer, rather than a Dyslexia or Disability Tutor. If the student has a document to confirm their dyslexia, they can access the government system which gives them access to a laptop and all the necessary software, including text-to-speech, speech-to-text and concept mapping. In some cases additional software is provide which may include scanners, digital recorders, transcribing pens, and other software.

In examinations it is possible to have several types of support depending upon the context. For those doing national examinations at secondary level, there are concessions with respect to spelling as well as being allowed to have a reader/writer if the reading age is below a certain level.

### **Quality Mark**

The BDA has developed a Quality Mark which is aimed at schools, colleges, universities and businesses. This quality mark aims to set standards of service provision and support within institutions and includes a monitoring of all institutional aspects, from staff awareness and access to assessment through to providing support and guidance.

### **Adults and dyslexia**

The main specialist NGO that supports the dyslexia adult is the British Dyslexia Association. Through their helpline they offer advice and support, and point towards appropriate services. Although the Adult Dyslexia Organisation claims to support adults, it is a one-person organization with a website that is years out of date. There are, however, other NGOs taking an increasing interest in the area such as Rathbones and Remploy, both of which receive money from the government for helping people obtain employment.

For those in work, there is a scheme called “Access to Work”. This scheme allows employees to have an assessment (usually paid for by the employee) and then given software by the government to support them in their working environment. However, the service is not widely publicised<sup>9</sup>.

There is considerable variability since each school, college and institution has to implement their own interpretation of the law and related regulations.

Teachers seeking AMBDA status are usually privately funded, though some get 50% from their local education authority. Those seeking a support job in a university must arrive with an appropriate qualification.

### **Areas of high achievement that can be transferred**

Conducting a “Rose Report”, sponsored by the government. It can form a basis of a) Recommendations for primary and secondary legislation, b) recommendations for teacher training, and c) ensure change, since legislation alone does not create it.

The official name of the “Rose Report” is “Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties” and was published in June 2009.

The report covered the following topics:

- 1) What is dyslexia?
- 2) Identification of children with dyslexic difficulties
- 3) Tackling reading difficulties
- 4) Supporting children with dyslexia and their families
- 5) Tackling difficulties beyond reading that are also associated with dyslexia

The appendices covered the following topics:

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[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG\\_4000347](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347))

- a) Current teacher training developments
- b) A survey of the key features of specialist dyslexia teaching
- c) Further information on training for specialist dyslexia teachers
- d) Local Authority support services
- e) Statistical measures of the impact of interventions on children's progress
- f) Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties
- g) Practical guidance: 'What Works' for children with literacy and dyslexic difficulties who are also experiencing wider difficulties
- h) National Curriculum flexibilities for children with special educational needs

### **Priority areas for improvement**

Despite a lot of action and financial commitment over the past 40 years, there is still a long way before equality is achieved for the dyslexic individual. However, the following points may be considered to be those that would have the greatest impact.

- Computerised mass screening – to identify all those who may need intervention
- Make all aspects of education dyslexia-friendly, as an inclusive approach
- Offer good quality Open Source assistive technology software to all, thereby minimising costs to governments
- Create compulsory Continuing Professional Development courses
- Ensure value-added processes are used, to demonstrate the effectiveness of specialist teaching.
- Provide online teaching systems for simple download to be used freely by teachers.

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