



Games for Improving Affectivity in Youngsters with Intellectual Disabilities

Work package 2 - Activity 2.2

Desk Research and Interviews for Youngsters with Intellectual Disabilities



National Report

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1. Introduction

GIAff4ID- **Games for Improving Affectivity in Youngsters with Intellectual Disabilities** aims at enlarging sensibility and awareness around sexuality and affectivity in Young People With Intellectual Disabilities (YPWID). It is inspired by the need to shift the discourse from negative to positive freedom, to positive actions that allow the enjoyment of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. In fact, sexuality for YPWID is.

.mostly discussed in terms of protection from abuse and violence, to which they are more vulnerable. It is certainly an important discussion to have, although it is as relevant to ensure that YPWID are equipped with the same sexual education as their peers, because it allows integration in society and independence over this part of their life.

GIAff4ID wants to break stereotypes around sexual education and affectivity of YPWID, demonstrating that disability is a union of a physical or mental impairment and a barrier. The project seeks to develop **game-based activities** while, at the same time, produce materials for youth workers on how to use them and adapt them to the context they work in. Training youth workers will contribute to building networks and increasing sharing of good practices among youth associations active in this field.

The workload is divided in the following 2 main Work Packages:

- WP2 - Guidance Toolkit for youth workers and caregivers on teaching Sexual Education to Young Persons with Disabilities;

WP3 - Games' Compendium on Sexual Education for Young Persons with Disabilities and Instructional Materials for youth workers and caregivers.

The results produced within will be relevant for YPWID's needs and expectations, and will be suitable for different learning abilities. For WP2, the specific objective is to equip youth workers with materials and contents tailored to the necessities that emerged during a first Desk Research around the topics of sexuality and affectivity. While in Wp3 Game Based Learning Activities are going to be created suiting different backgrounds, contexts and abilities.



2a. Methodology

In the context of Activity A2.2 Desk research and Interviews with YPWID in relation to Sexual Education and Affectivity themes, Partners conducted desk research in order to investigate different aspects of sex education, and to engage in a preliminary inquiry on the issues that will be further examined at a later stage during interviews. In particular, the desk research phase focuses on selecting and analyzing the most relevant themes on Sexual Education and affectivity for YPWID and on how to conduct youth work towards YPWID's independence and awareness of their own needs.

In order to explore these different topics and collect information, Partners relied on: online open resources, websites, e-books, national, European, and international projects connected to the issue, and studies and researches on Sexual Education and affectivity for YPWID.

The materials collected comes from:

- Existing training programs and courses;
- Projects' results or activities;
- Research papers or essays;
- Websites or online resources;
- Audiovisual contents;
- E-books;
- Any other item considered relevant for WP2's objective.

This preliminary desk research phase was followed by interviews, Each Partner organization identified and selected youth workers to conduct interviews to 6 YPWID in total. The objective of these interviews was to gather more detailed information on the level of knowledge on the topic of Sexuality and Affectivity by YPWID, including their needs, and expectations. The interview's results served as support materials to develop other deliverables of the project such as the National and European reports to fine-tune WP2, and the Compendium (WP3).

- Each partner selects two youth workers to conduct the interviews. They have demonstrated their interest and motivation to participate in the project and they are familiar with the themes and general objectives of the project. Each partner is responsible for informing the youth workers about the project in general but even more about the main purpose and achievement of these interviews
- In total 6 YPWIDs aged 12-17 years old are interviewed.
- Each partner monitors the results of the interviews and ensures that the [Interview template](#) is properly completed.
- The interviews are conducted either face-to-face or online.



- The interviews are composed of 57 questions, divided into two macro-subjects: relations and sexuality. The former in fact, stems from very general questions in which participants are asked to reveal their subjective point of view about friendship, affection and relations in general. The latter instead targets the main focus of the project, addressing the topic of sexuality and sex education.
- Interviewers are also asked to reply to some specific questions regarding their knowledge of the context, their preparation about it and, as experts, their main findings in terms of obstacles and difficulties encountered in order to pursue the objectives of the activity.

The background of the interviewee is indicative of what is his/her experience and expertise and what contribution can be relevant for the development of the project's activities. The approach for conducting such interviews was very flexible, allowing the use of different methods in order to accommodate the interlocutor's needs.

To sum up, the present Report (A2.4) is deemed to analyze the main findings of the desk research in order to obtain sensitive information to combine with the relevant data emerged from the Interviews (A2.2). CRES Association will be finally responsible to elaborate a **European Report**, gathering data from the other consortium countries.

3a. Results

As above mentioned, Desk research provides a comprehensive summary of information at national level. The present section relies on data previously collected, outlining the main finding of the activity.

The tables proposed here below are divided into different sections, in order to provide a detailed analysis of the topics concerned. Partners are therefore requested to discuss their responses and to report the most significant data that were gathered during the Desk Research.

Provide relevant findings of national definitions (if any)	According to the Italian Ministry of Health "Sex education is something more than a health-medical information transfer being closely connected with education on affectivity and relationships, respect for human rights and gender equality". Sexual education must be "age-appropriate and take a holistic approach, based on the
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	<p>concept of affectivity and sexuality as an area of human potential, which helps children and adolescents mature the skills that will enable them to independently determine their own sexuality and relationships at various stages of development”.</p>
<p>According to data, do you believe that sexual education is sufficiently covered in your country? Briefly explain.</p>	<p>As far as YPWID sexual and affective education in Italy is concerned, it still represents a taboo, hindering a serious scientific and political debate geared toward defining the issue from a legislative point of view.</p> <p>Due to the presence of the State of the Vatican and other reasons connected therewith, sex and affective education in Italy has always had to face opposition from the Catholic Church and some political groups. Indeed, there is still no national law that provides for a territorially homogeneous sex and affective education to be done at school, that also take into account various sexual identities and orientations of pre-teens and adolescents. In fact, in Italian schools, sex education related contents are taught formally by Biology teachers who only address the issue (of sex) from a strictly “biological” point of view. Nevertheless, the school headmaster has the decision-making power on the school policy about sexuality education, and can decide to implement other programs and activities related to the topic.</p>
<p>Provide main findings of sexual education on the national level. Briefly explain.</p>	<p>- Historically, sexual education in Italy has been limited in scope and content. The focus has often been on reproductive biology and the prevention of sexually transmitted</p>



	<p>infections (STIs), with less emphasis on broader topics such as relationships, consent, gender identity, and sexual diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The approach to sexual education in Italy varies across regions and schools. Some regions have implemented comprehensive sexual education programs that cover a wide range of topics, including contraception, relationships, and respect. However, others still rely on abstinence-based or minimalistic approaches that provide limited information.- Some schools involve parents in the design and implementation of sexual education programs, while others require parental consent for students to participate. This involvement can influence the content and delivery of sexual education.- Sexual education in Italy faces challenges and controversies, often driven by societal and cultural factors. Some conservative groups argue against comprehensive sexual education, citing concerns about moral values and age appropriateness. These debates can hinder the progress and effectiveness of sexual education initiatives.- Actually, there is a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive sexual education in Italy. Efforts are being made to update curricula and provide evidence-based information on a broader range of topics, including consent, LGBTQ+ issues, and healthy relationships. Organizations and advocacy groups are working to promote more inclusive and comprehensive sexual education practices.
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<p>According to data, do you believe that your country provides a sufficient legal framework for YPWID sexuality? Briefly explain.</p>	<p>During the last ten years, three main bills – still considered to be under review or not approved by the Commission – were made in the Italian Parliament, namely: the Costantino bill (2013) <i>Introduzione dell'insegnamento dell'educazione sessuale nelle scuole del primo e del secondo ciclo dell'istruzione</i> ("Introduction to the teaching of sex education in primary and low secondary schools"), the Chimienti bill (2015) <i>Istituzione di percorsi didattici e programmi di educazione alla parità di genere, all'affettività e alla sessualità consapevole nelle scuole secondarie di primo grado e nei primi due anni delle scuole secondarie di secondo grado, nonché integrazione dei corsi di studio universitari</i> ("Establishment of educational pathways and programs on gender equality, affectivity and conscious sexuality in secondary schools and the first two years of secondary schools, as well as integration of university curricula"), and the reform "La Buona Scuola" (Law 107/2015) paragraph 16 reads, "The three-year plan of educational offerings ensures the implementation of the principles of equal opportunities, promoting in schools of all levels and grades education for gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence and all discrimination."</p>
<p>According to data, do you believe that your country provides YPWID with a satisfying level of sex education? Briefly explain.</p>	<p>In Italy, the provision of sex education for young people with intellectual disabilities may vary. While efforts have been made to address the needs of this population, there might still be gaps in the availability and quality of sex education programs. Some organizations and educational institutions in Italy have developed resources and initiatives to provide inclusive sex education for young people with intellectual disabilities. These programs focus on promoting body autonomy, healthy</p>



	<p>relationships, consent, and understanding personal boundaries.</p> <p>However, it is important to acknowledge that there may be barriers to accessing adequate sex education for individuals with intellectual disabilities, including lack of trained educators, limited availability of appropriate materials, and social stigma surrounding sexuality and disability.</p>
1) Please list the most relevant themes on Sexual Education & Affectivity for YPWID, according to data collected in your country	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sex education courses in Italian schools2. Teaching of sexual and affective education in Italian schools3. State of development of sexual and affective education of different regions in Italy
2) Please provide some challenges or issues with regards to Sexual Education & Affectivity for YPWID and with regards to teaching Sexual Education & Affectivity to YPWID in your country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- YPWID face barriers in accessing comprehensive sexual education due to a lack of inclusive curricula and appropriate teaching materials. The existing educational resources is not tailored to their specific cognitive abilities, leading to gaps in their understanding of sexual health, relationships, and consent.- Stigma surrounding both disability and sexuality can hinder open discussions about sexual education. Societal attitudes and misconceptions may contribute to the exclusion of this topic from educational programs or a reluctance to address the specific needs of YPWID.- Educators may lack the necessary training and expertise to effectively teach sexual education to YPWID. They may feel uncomfortable or ill-prepared to discuss sensitive topics related to sexuality and



	<p>affectivity, resulting in a reluctance to provide comprehensive education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- YPWDI have limited access to support networks that address their sexual health and affective needs. This lack of support can further contribute to their limited understanding of relationships, consent, and sexual health.- The absence of a comprehensive policy framework specifically addressing sexual education for YPWDI in Italy can create inconsistencies in educational practices. The lack of clear guidelines may result in variations across schools and regions, with some YPWDI receiving inadequate or incomplete sexual education.- There are challenges in empowering YPWDI to make informed decisions about their sexuality and relationships. Promoting self-advocacy, self-determination, and the right to express their sexuality in a safe and consensual manner requires targeted support and inclusive education.
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- Relevant themes for Desk Research

Theme	Source	Short summary
Sex education courses in Italian schools	https://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/684095/educazione-allaffettivita-alla-sessualita-e-alla-salute-riproduttiva-nella-scuola	AIED conference providing an overview of the experience of sex education courses in Italian schools.



Teaching of sexual and affective education in Italian schools	https://www.sispse.it/educazione-sessuale-a-scuolaperche/	This article provides a brief overview of the situation of the teaching of sexual and affective education in Italian schools
State of the art of sexual and affective education of different regions in Italy	https://www.iltascabile.com/societa/educazione-sessuale/	This article deals with the state of the art of sexual and affective education of different regions in Italy, and analyses how different programs are implemented
	https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/379045/Sexuality_education_Policy_brief_No_2.pdf	The policy brief n2 of the WHO provides an overview of the impact of good quality sexuality education on the health and well-being



		of children and young people.
National survey	https://www.ars.toscana.it/2-articoli/4845-educazione-sessuale-nelle-scuole-italiane,-i-risultati-dell-indagine-nazionale-condotta-tra-il-2016-e-il-2020.html	The study Sex Education in Italy 2016-2020: a national survey investigating coverage, content and evaluation of school-based sex education activities was conducted with the aim of developing an inventory of school-based sex education activities (SBSE) carried out by external stakeholders and implemented in Italy between 2016 and 2020.
State of the art of sexual and affective education in	https://it.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/06/14/un-italia-senza-educazione-sessuale-non-ho-mai-ricevuto-un-corso-ma-ne-sento-il-bisogno	This article analyses the state of the art of sexual and



Italy in general		affective education in Italy in general, and also mentions what the situation is like for people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities
National survey	https://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_notizie_3649_listaFile_itemName_1_file.pdf	National survey on sexual and reproductive health of adolescents
Project for affectivity and sexuality education	https://www.wlamore.it/	Emilia Romagna Region project for affectivity and sexuality education aimed at different targets
Affective and sexual education for people with intellectual and Neurodevel	http://www.anffas.net/dld/files/F_%20Dorigatti.pdf	Understanding and Supporting affective and sexual education for people with intellectual



opmental disabilities		and Neurodevel opmental disabilities
Sex education for disabled people	https://culturaemotiva.it/2017/sexo-diversamente-abile-educazione-sessuale/	Sex education for disabled people
Sexuality and intellectual disabilities	https://static.erickson.it/prod/files/ItemVariant/itemvariant_sfogliolibro/5030_9788859010678_x561_sessualita-e-disabilita-intellettiva.pdf	Sexuality and intellectual disabilities
Activities for primary and secondary schools	https://static.erickson.it/Products/LIBRO_978-88-590-0334-2_Z911_Laboratorio-educazione-sessuale/Pdf/SFO_978-88-590-0334-2_Laboratorio-di-educazione-sessuale-e-affettiva.pdf	Workshop of sexual and affective education: Activities for primary and secondary schools
Definition of sex and affective education	https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/fertility/dettaglioContenutiFertility.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=4554&area=fertilita&menu=vuoto	Ministry of Health's definition of sex and affective education
School project for disabled children	https://www.ilmillepiedi.it/area-scuola-ed-extra-scuola/scuola/progetto-educare-allaffettivita-e-alla-sessualita-nellhandicap/	Disabled children are be guided to observe emotions, feelings, their own ways of expressing affection and relating to others; the project aims to do



		this by addressing children and young people in their entirety without neglecting any aspect of personality and involving the entire class group in the activity.
Different projects implemented in schools in Treviso city	https://www.bestatreviso.edu.it/attachments/article/2352/Superiori%20progetti%2017-18%20(1).pdf	Description of different projects implemented in schools in Treviso city (Veneto region)

3b. Results

The present section is divided into two separate parts in order to assure a better understanding of the activity and to preserve the fundamental findings of the research from all sides. The first part regards the interviewees, their general information and their replies to the questions; the other The second part instead, refers to interviewers which had additional questions related to the development of the work.



The tables below - parted into macro topics - summarize the main findings from the interviews, one by one. The first column refers to a numeric indicator, an average between all the questions-replies. Partners are asked to give a number between 1-5 (where 1 is Very low, 2 is Low, 3 is Average, 4 is High and 5 is Very High). The second column instead, provides a more detailed and discursive argumentation.

The section “Further findings” is a free panel for including information such as: some specific quotes reported from the interviews, topics that popped out during the interviews that were not automatically related, main difficulties of that part of the interview.

Finally, as already mentioned above, the present National Report will be further analyzed into the European Report and it is important to focus on the most important topics and results addressed during the interviews phase. Therefore, in this present section data collected is going to be categorized and then processed by Partners in the following section.

3.1 Key findings regarding the different kind of relations

CRES organized a series of interviews with 6 young people with different Intellectual Disabilities. They are between 15 and 23 years old and present different kind of disabilities. There are 4 people identifying themselves as females and 2 identifying themselves as males.

This section concerns questions 1 to 17 of the [interview template](#) (see Annexes Interview template). It includes very generic questions related to all kinds of relationships.

	On a scale from 1 to 5	Argumentative response
Do Interviewees show general understanding of relationships ? How much? Please explain briefly.	4	Interviewees show comprehension of the meaning of relationship. respondents answered in a very different way, some were pragmatic and scientific in defining a relationship while others gave more general answers highlighting the concept of “feeling connected” to others.
Do Interviewees show general understanding of	3	Here the interviewees are parted into those that have a



	On a scale from 1 to 5	Argumentative response
friendships? How much? Please explain briefly.		lot of friends and feel safe and sound in making new ones and those that are socially excluded and show many difficulties in getting to know someone new. Differently, almost everyone showed a great connection and empathy with their families.
Do Interviewees show general understanding of sentimental/romantic relationships? How much? Please explain briefly.	1	It is without doubt difficult for young people interviewed to explain what “romantic relationship” stands for. Most of them have never experienced it and show doubts and unfamiliarity with the meaning of words such as “love” and healthy relationship.. Notwithstanding, there is a shared perception that it is supposed to make you feel good. The only person that affirmed to be engaged in a romantic relationship answered in a very detailed way.
Do Interviewees show understanding of problems or obstacles related to relationships? How much? Please explain briefly.	1	The prevalent answers when it comes to the obstacles that people with intellectual disabilities show when addressing others and trying to establish a relationship of all kind is “I don’t know” or “I suppose...”. In addition to that, some interviewees responded in a very childish manner demonstrating that



	On a scale from 1 to 5	Argumentative response
		they don't really know how to handle difficult or sensitive situations. It is observable that Youngsters with Intellectual disabilities encounter problems and difficulties in addressing obstacles related to relationships.
Further findings (if any)	In general, it emerged that wording is tricking people with Intellectual Disabilities, especially when it comes to address non-tangible issues. Interviewees showed difficulties in understanding the topic of the questions. It is harsh for them to depict the meaning of such generic words as "relationship" or "love". They tend to describe specific situations, with which they are familiar or in which they had already been involved before, or they answer with a sort of scientific approach giving for example definitions and logical solutions. Especially when addressing feelings and emotions, they can't really grab the meaning of words and they don't know how to answer.	

3.2 Key findings regarding sexuality and sex education

This section refers to questions 17 to 54. Here the core topics of the interview are addressed.



	On a scale from 1 to 5	Argumentative response
Are Interviewees familiar with sex education ? To what extent? Please explain briefly.	1	Sex education is mostly unknown by the young people interviewed. They either heard something about it once in school or elsewhere . It is noticeable that there is a major lack of knowledge in this field which is seriously compounded by the fact that most of the interviewees affirmed that they did not even have the opportunity to discuss it with friends, relatives or other close supporting figures.
Do Interviewees show general understanding of sex ? How much? Please explain briefly.	3	There is an overall comprehension of what is sex, at least from a generic point of view. People interviewed can describe the activity of sex from the physical point of view.
Do Interviewees have the occasion and a safe space to talk about sex? How much? Please explain briefly.	1	It is evident that people interviewed have no occasion or space to discuss about sex if not exceptionally with their parents.
Do Interviewees show understanding of the difference between friendship, sex and love ? How much? Please explain briefly.	4	They can all describe the difference between the 3 kinds of relationships, albeit in a very naive way. The average response is “friendship is love without sex”.



	On a scale from 1 to 5	Argumentative response
Do Interviewees show understanding of their body , its changing and how to keep it clean ? How much? Please explain briefly.	5	No particular problems relating to hygiene care were highlighted, everyone seems to know what habits to have to be clean and take care of their bodies. Their body changing is also something familiar for them.
Do Interviewees show understanding of sexual orientation and gender ? How much? Please explain briefly.	5	The perception is that both sexual orientation and gender issues are topics of interest for young people. Everyone positively answered to be able to understand when dealing with them.
Do Interviewees show understanding of sexual pleasure and autoerotism ? How much? Please explain briefly.	3	Most of the interviewees answered affirmatively. Nevertheless, the feeling is that the deep meaning behind these two words is scarce.
Do Interviewees show understanding of consent ? How much? Please explain briefly.	5	Yes, consent is a well-known topic. Every person who was interviewed showed awareness of consent.
Do Interviewees show understanding of how to behave in relation to sexual desire ? How much? Please explain briefly. How much? Please explain briefly.	3	In general, sexual desire is something too abstract for interviewees to grasp. A lot of them showed no sympathy or familiarity while the rest just explained scientifically what pleasure is.



To what extent do Interviewees show familiarity with the following topics ? (On a scale from 1 to 5)	
i. Safe Sex	5
ii. Birth control	5
iii. Pregnancy	5
iv. Gynecologist, Urologist or Sexologist	4
v. STDs	4
vi. Menstruation	5
vii. Sexting	2

3.3 Key findings regarding the degree of knowledge in this context

The second section is related to the **Interviewers** in order to better understand their professional background.

The interviewers that took part in this project are:

- **Anna Di Santantonio**, Senior psychologist, employed at Integrated Disability and Health Program, Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale - AUSL of Bologna, 23 years of professional experience in the field.



-Marta Ventura, professional trainee, Integrated Disability and Health Program in Bologna, 6 years of experience in the field.

What is the perception of the Project's objectives and potential positive impact for the Interviewers?	The perception of both objectives and impact of the project is beyond positive . The topics addressed are in fact of a major interest by both the professionals that conducted the interviews: they usually work on affectivity and sexual inclusion. Specifically, both of them are engaged in a program of support for young people with Intellectual disabilities and have a direct contact (e.g., planned meetings) with all of the interviewees. For these reasons, there are shared objectives and a great interest in this project. Moreover, according to the interviewers this topic is central to all the therapeutic path for people with Intellectual Disabilities and the material produced could be of great help for them and other research centers.
Summarize interviewers' inputs on what can help YPIWID speak up for their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- information gathering and direct opinions, outreach and active involvement,- specific questions,- basic activities with school-based workshops,- dissemination of books,- board games,- Increased information promotion within health and care settings, in cultural contexts and schools,- cultural and artistic projects
Do Interviewers have sufficient training, information and material on sexual education and affectivity of YPWID to support them?	Here the interviewers gave two answers in contrast with one another. Anna claimed there are no doubts over the formation and preparation that they received for training; however, she claims that there are no useful materials to properly support them to address the issue of sex education with YPWID. Consideration should be given to the mode and channel by which information is provided. On the other hand, Marta stated that more training events are needed along with specific and appropriate materials/tools to address this issue within facilitative and educational activities.
Do Interviewers feel satisfied with the development of materials , based on information	Yes, they declared themselves satisfied about the developed materials. And believe that the material that will follow can be even more interesting and useful. Not only for what concerns the YPWID but also for trainees and psychologists



reported during this interview?	working closely with them. In fact, they share the idea that such types of initiatives would allow them to discover and investigate more also thanks to a more participative support and cooperation of young people.
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3.4 Key findings regarding the degree of knowledge of YPWID in this context

List and explain the main difficulties encountered during the interview:	Accordingly to the interviewers the length and complexity of the questions is an obstacle for people with intellectual disabilities, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In addition, it is necessary to ask questions clearly, concisely, and if possible with multiple choices or true/false options (rather than open-ended questions), which can be supported by graphic stimulation (drawings, comics, etc.). In addition to that, the interview questions are very broad and general, too abstract for a person with an intellectual disability.
Which topics do interviewers think the respondent lacks in terms of knowledge/support ?	<p>With respect to the topics, Interviewers feel that the most important ones have been covered but that a lot of knowledge is taken for granted. In the case of people with ASD for instance, often they don't have any knowledge in these contexts.</p> <p>In addition to that they'd include a set of questions about emotions and the ability to distinguish them (which is struggling in many cases) and better explain the implications related to consent. Interviewers stressed the following: in the case of girls diagnosed with ASD, it is not uncommon to be physically as well as psychologically abused, in boys the role of the abusers and stalkers even if unconscious is frequent.</p>

4. Final Considerations

4.1 Analysis, interpretation and comments of the key findings



The data gathered on sexual education and affectivity in Italy reveals several important findings. In the present section, a deep analysis is going to be carried out in order to tackle understanding and interpretation of the relevant information collected.

Firstly, according to the Italian Ministry of Health, officially sex education is considered more than a mere transfer of health-medical information. It is viewed as an integral part of education on affectivity, relationships, human rights, and gender equality. Generally speaking, it is considered fundamental to provide age-appropriate, sex education that empowers children and adolescents to independently navigate their own sexuality and relationships at different stages of development. However, the analysis indicates that sexual education in Italy is not sufficiently covered, especially for young people with intellectual disabilities (YPWID).

In fact, historically sexual education has focused primarily on reproductive biology and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, with less attention given to broader topics such as relationships, consent, gender identity, and sexual diversity. Furthermore, the approach to sexual education varies across regions and educational systems, with some implementing comprehensive programs while others still rely on minimalistic information.

One of the key challenges faced by sexual education in Italy is the opposition from the Catholic Church and certain political groups, often due to cultural and societal factors. As a result, there is no national law mandating territorially homogeneous sex and affective education in schools that addresses various sexual identities and orientations of pre-teens and adolescents. The decision-making power regarding sexual education lies with school headmasters, who may choose to implement additional programs and extra-curricular activities related to the topic.

Regarding **YPWID**, the analysis reveals that the provision of sex education may differ. Efforts have been made to address their needs, with some organizations and educational institutions developing inclusive resources and initiatives. These programs focus on promoting body autonomy, healthy relationships, consent, and understanding personal boundaries. However, there are still barriers to accessing adequate information and training, such as a lack of well-trained educators, limited availability of appropriate resources and materials, and social stigma surrounding disability and sexuality.

Regarding the **interviews**, the analysis indicates that the majority of the interviewees have **limited familiarity with sex education**. Most of them either briefly heard about it in school or even never heard of the subject. Furthermore, they have not had the opportunity to discuss sex education with their friends, parents, or other family members or supportive people close to them (i.e. professionals). This lack of knowledge is a significant issue, highlighting the need for comprehensive sex education programs specifically tailored to young people with intellectual disabilities. In terms of general understanding of sex, the interviewees demonstrate a moderate level of comprehension.

The investigation led to the following relevant findings:



- YPWID can describe the activity of sex in a generic manner and often from a purely physical perspective, but their understanding may be limited to a superficial level. The lack of proper sex education contributes to enlarge gaps in their knowledge.
- When it comes to discussing about sex, the interviewees argue that they do not have a safe space or occasion to do so, except occasionally with their parents. This lack of opportunities for an open dialogue holds them back to ask questions and seek guidance regarding sexual matters, thus having a passive attitude.
- differently, there is a relatively good understanding of the difference between friendship, sex, and love, although the provided explanations may be simplistic and naive. They perceive friendship as a love relationship but without the sex component, being only able to indicate a basic understanding of these relationship dynamics.
- other relevant topics were: one's own body, hygiene, and bodily changes; interviewees are familiar with keeping their bodies clean and have a good grasp of the physical changes that occur during adolescence,
- Also, they exhibit a good understanding of sexual orientation and gender, expressing interest and positive attitude when questioned about these topics. This indicates a level of awareness and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities,
- In terms of sexual pleasure and autoerotism, the interviewees show that they have limited knowledge on these topics. Therefore ,further education and support in this area could be a valuable support,
- The interviewees seem to have a strong understanding of consent, with all of them demonstrating awareness of this important aspect of a sexual relationship. This conveys the importance and value that the consent component has within sexual education and outreach.
- When it comes to sexual desire, the interviewees generally struggle to grasp the concept, with some showing unfamiliarity or lack of inclination. Others provide scientific explanations of pleasure (i.e. physical pleasure) but may not fully comprehend the emotional and personal aspects associated to it,
- in terms of familiarity with specific topics related to sex education, the interviewees display a high level of understanding and familiarity with safe sex, birth control, pregnancy, gynecologists, urologists or sexologists, sexually transmissible diseases - STDs, menstruation, and consent. However, they show limited familiarity with sexting, indicating a need for further education and awareness on the potential risks and consequences associated with this behavior.



As far as **interviewers' inputs** are concerned, great insights were provided. The materials collected English professionals' perceptions, experiences, and difficulties encountered during the interviews with young people with intellectual disabilities (YPWID).

Regarding the project's objectives and potential impact, both interviewers have a very **positive perception**. As professionals working directly with YPWID, they see the project's expected outcomes suiting their shared objectives and believe they can have a significant positive impact. They consider the project's objectives and especially the focus on affectivity and sexual inclusion to be of great interest and topicality.. They also emphasized that the topic of sexuality and relationships is central to the therapeutic path for people with intellectual disabilities, and the materials produced through this project are valuable for them and other research centers.

It is interesting to notice that, in order to help YPWID speak up for their needs, the interviewers suggest several strategies such as, **information gathering, direct opinions, outreach, and active involvement**. They propose the use of specific questionnaires, basic activities with school-based workshops, dissemination of books, board games, increased promotion of information within healthcare and care settings, cultural contexts, and educational, as well as cultural and artistic projects. These strategies aim to empower YPWID and provide them with space and sharing tools to express their needs and opinions.

It could be observed that the interviewers gave different responses about training, information, and material on sexual education and affectivity for YPWID. One interviewer, Anna, expresses confidence in their training and preparation but states that there are no useful and not enough materials available. She highlights the need to better analyze the modality and channel through which information is provided. On the other hand, Marta suggests that more training events are needed, along with specific and appropriate materials/tools, to effectively address this issue within facilitative and educational activities.

5. Conclusions

According to the present National report and the development of data gathered, there is still a comprehensive need for sexual education in Italy, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of YPWID. Challenges include the lack of inclusive curricula and tailored sex education programmes, also in the form of extra curricular activities, and teaching materials, stigma surrounding disability and sexuality, inadequate training of educators, limited support networks, and the absence of a comprehensive policy framework. The present analysis highlights a limited knowledge and understanding of sex education among young people with intellectual disabilities. The findings also stress the importance of creating safe spaces and opportunities for open dialogue and discussions about sexuality.

There is a great positive perception of the project's objectives and potential impact. There are valuable insights into the challenges faced during the interviews and possible strategies that could help YPWIDs meet their needs. The analysis also highlights the need for appropriate training, materials, and support for the interviewers in addressing sexuality and affectivity among YPWID.



6. Annexes

- [Interviews template](#)
- [National Report Template](#)