1. Definition of “handicap”

Handicap and disability are used as synonym but they aren't. In 1980 the World Health Organization WHO/OMS in the “International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps – ICIDH” gave the following definitions:

- **Impairment:** any loss or deviation of physiological, neurological or anatomical structure or function of an organ or body part (organ and body dimension), a physiological disorder or injury;

- **Disability:** A disability reflects any limitation or lack of ability that a person experiences in performing an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a person, in other words, a limitation in learning, speaking, walking or some other activity (individual dimension);

- **Handicap:** loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others; encounter a person with disability and social, physical environment. Is an inability to accomplish something one might want to do. The term emphasize the focus on shortcomings in the environment and in many tasks and activities, ex. in education, occupation, information or communication (social dimension).
We have the following types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Impairment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disability</strong></th>
<th><strong>Handicap</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cognitive</td>
<td>Learning and applying knowledge</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological</td>
<td>General tasks and demands</td>
<td>self care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in language and communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensory</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical</td>
<td>Self-care</td>
<td>schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectual</td>
<td>Domestic life</td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dexterity</td>
<td>Interpersonal interactions and relationships</td>
<td>other handicap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major life areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community, social and civic life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The disabilities are classified in 4 categories\(^1\):

- **immobility**: people using wheelchairs, being in bed all day long
- **disability in self-care and functioning**: difficulties in self care, washing and drying oneself, dressing, eating and drinking
- **mobility**: problem in transferring from one place to another, by carrying, moving or manipulating objects, by walking, running or climbing, and by using various forms of transportation

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\(^1\) [Www.asphi.it](http://Www.asphi.it) – projects for handicap in relation to Information and Communication Technologies
- sensory: difficulties in earing, seeing and speaking
- cognitive: learning difficulties

In 1999 the World Health Organization published the “International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps” (ICDH²). In 2001 the World Health Assembly adopted the “International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) to describe health and disability. The classification puts the notion of “disability”, “impairment” and “handicap” in a new light, not describing a problem but shifting the focus from cause to impact. The following terms are used:

- body function and structure
- activity and activity restrictions
- participation and participation restrictions
- role of environmentals and personal factors: employment, social conditions

The WHO does not classify people but describes the health in according to the functioning in the environment, interpersonal interactions and relationship and barriers that can cause problems in living a normal life. For example: ICIDH described a problem in earing, the ICF use the following terms: Sensory function and pain-earing: moderate impairment.

2  www.w3c.org
The disability will be classified in relation to health conditions, personal, environmental and social factors. Everybody can have a difficulty in his activities and functioning and could be considered “dis-abled”. This depends also on the expectations of life of each person in relation to his/her own life style, the society in where he/she lives and the daily activities.

A handicap is therefore a reducible or increasable disadvantage according to the situation of every single person. The handicap must not be confused with the deficit that is irreversible; it depends on a series of barriers of architectural, social, psychological and educational character that with the due aids a person can reduce or eliminate.

A paraplegic can have an handicap in playing football but not in the using a PC, it should not therefore be defined handicapped in the classical meaning of the term.

**The italian law and rights of handicapped people**

In the last 50 years several project were promoted to improve the intergration of disabled people. A several number of disabled children, thanks to the elimination of architectural barriers and support-teaching, can take normal lessons and study with thier friends, but there are still subject to
some discrimination.

The rights of disabled people and their assistance and social integration are regulated by a special legislation. In Italy the law “Legge 104” created in 1992 introduces measures and services for equal treatment in rights, integration and assistance to disabled people and promotes scientific, social, technological research to improve integration.

Art. 8: “inserimento ed integrazione sociale” - social integration: describes the assistance to disabled people and their family

Art. 12: “diritto all’educazione e all’istruzione” - rights to education and teaching, integration in the normal schools when possible to develop learning and speaking abilities, relationship and socialisation for disabled children. The disabled that cannot for any time go to the normal school should have a special support-teaching.

Art. 13 “Integrazione scolastica” - Schools should collaborate with social associations to improve integration of disabled students. They should reduce the architectural barriers and use special strategies to help them fit into school and achieve academic success.

Art. 16: “Valutazione del rendimento e prove d’esame” The examinations to disabled students should need special strategies, the student should have more time, assistance and technological instruments to achieve examination.

2. Number of disabled people

3 Legge-quadro nr. 104, l’integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate, 1992
Number of disabled people – Italy

According to ISTAT data\(^4\) (‘‘Indagine sulle condizioni di salute e ricorso ai servizi sanitari’’ 1999-2000), 2'824.000 units are disabled persons, i.e. 5% of the total population. 40% of them are male and 60% women.

- < 6 years old: ca. 200.000
- 6-14 years old: ca. 188.000
- 16-64 years old: ca. 615.000
- > 65 years old: ca. 2'000'000

In Europe the disabled persons are ca. 37 Mio.

By typology (Italy):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Number of disabled over 6 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory disability (seeing and hearing)</td>
<td>Seeing: ca 350.000 Hearing: ca 800.000 (out of them are deaf-and-dumb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive disability</td>
<td>750.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability</td>
<td>1.100.000 (60.000 out of them live in wheel-chair)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School population data:

The data of the disabled population in schools are probably not exact, the inquiries are done from 6 years old, before the data are not complete. The following data are available for the period 2004-2005\(^5\), the disabled students in italian schools were 167'805:

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\(^4\) ISTAT – www.disabilitaicifre.it