



The European way(s) back to work

International Conference, 28 – 29 June 2007, Lucerne

La persona disabile da obbligo a risorsa. Politiche e strategie dell'INAIL per la riabilitazione ed il reiserimento lavorativo

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**People with disabilities
from an obligation to a resource.
Policy and strategies of INAIL for
rehabilitation and return to work**

by Piero GIORGINI

As you may be aware of, in recent years the European Union (EU) has set a specific action plan in favour of people with disabilities based on the recognition of their right to participate in the society with full independence and without discrimination.

In this context Italy as a member State of the European Union and INAIL (Italian Workers Compensation Authority), in particular, as far as workers compensation is concerned, have pursued a policy and a strategy in line with EU's principles, which are based on three main pillars:

- Starting up initiatives aimed at assuring the individual rights of every person, overcoming their isolation and discrimination (through the update of pieces of legislation and of other regulations to their real needs);
- Eliminating the environmental obstacles preventing people with disabilities from making good use of their talents (through the funding of projects aimed at removing architectural barriers within both homes and workplaces);
- Promoting the active inclusion of people with disabilities in the society and in the labour market (through the supply of personal computers and vocational training courses, etc).

In order to support this policy and this strategy, the Italian legislation has let INAIL's mission evolve in recent years through the *Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2000* by transforming it from an organization delivering mere financial compensation to a pro-active organisation within the social security system.

INAIL offers nowadays to its insured workers a global and integrated protection system which consists of, along with the traditional financial compensation, a broad range of differentiated actions, such as:

- prevention at workplaces before an accident may occur;
- medical treatment;
- rehabilitation and prostheses;
- return to work programmes.

The core of these actions is the injured worker considered to be a person as a whole, i.e. a person not only with his/her impairment but also with his/her new capacities and needs referred to the specific environmental context in which he/she lives (in other words, we take into account both the working and the social life of each worker injured at work).

As far as the return to work is concerned, I would like to highlight that the development of a positive culture of disability means that nowadays a person with disabilities wants to live fully each and every social aspect of his/her life and to strive for returning back to the labour market with a kind of an employment that could meet:

- his/her functional capacity;

- his/her professional skills;
- his/her expectations.

As a result, people with disabilities are for the labour market not anymore an obligation, a burden, but rather a resource to be accurately employed, i.e. through a specific project implying relational dynamics and problem solving skills. Targeted employment programmes have been introduced by the *People with disability (Right to work) Act 1999*.

To this regard Italian legislation has given INAIL the new role of “facilitator” of the mechanisms of return to work programmes for people injured at work. To achieve this goal INAIL promotes and funds:

- vocational training projects aimed at people injured at work;
- projects aimed at removing architectural barriers within SMEs (small and medium enterprises), agricultural enterprises/farms and in the cottage industry, which are bound by law to maintain the employment or to take on people injured at work.

The budget allocated to fund these projects is of 77,500,000.00 euros.

In order to carry out this new task INAIL has activated the required synergies with other bodies or organisations responsible for the targeted employment programmes, i.e. in Italy the local Authorities and the Job Centres.

INAIL has also set up a working methodology carried out through multidisciplinary teams within each INAIL’s local office and Regional Directorate. Each team is made of a physician, a welfare consultant, the person responsible for the benefit section of the local office, and any other professional that may be required, such as a training expert, a communication expert, an architect or a civil engineer, a psychologist, etc).

The team prepares a project for each and every person with disabilities to be included in a return to work programme. This project consists of a series of actions in different fields(health, rehabilitation, welfare and well-being, vocational training), whose aim is to “support and assist” the injured worker up to his/her return to the social, and possibly, working environment.

The outcome of this initiative shows that 239 vocational training projects had been submitted by 31st December 2006. These projects have involved 1,313 people with disabilities and more than 500 people among them have successfully returned to work. As far as the removal of architectural barriers is concerned, 49 projects have been awarded grants and 44 out of them have already been completely carried out.

Every vocational training course, which is held by training agencies specialised in training people with disabilities, has been designed taking into account the worker’s personal skills, his/her previous professional experience, his/her residual functional capacity (for people whose disability is higher than 33%) and also the needs of the local labour market.

To this extent the relationship with Job Centres has been essential to identify the tasks expressly required by businesses which will take on people with disabilities after training. To this day, 40 agreements have been signed.

The effectiveness of the courses has been strengthened through periods of unpaid work experience often carried out with the support of a tutor.

The projects concern the following sectors:

- hotel industry;
- cottage industry;
- informatics;
- clerical tasks;
- high specialisation tasks.

As far as the projects related to the removal of architectural barriers at workplaces are concerned, INAIL awards grants up to 50% of the expenses to projects aimed at removing such barriers within SMEs, agricultural enterprises/farms and in the cottage industry. These are enterprises that are bound by law to maintain the employment or to take on people injured at work.

These initiatives are based on the principle that return to work of people with disabilities is directly linked to the possibility that they get access to the working environment – without obstacles – and make use of working places adjusted to their needs.

Projects submitted up to 31st December 2006 concerned, in particular, initiatives aimed at:

- realisation/adjustment of accessible bathrooms/toilets;
- realisation of lifts, platform lifts, stairlifts;
- adjustment of workplaces and equipment;
- accessibility of workplaces;
- realisation of ramps;
- adjustment of doors.

The outcome of the initiatives carried out up to now shows that unfortunately there is a high level of money that has not been spent: about 60 million euros. This is due to a series of joint causes, such as:

- scarce knowledge of the new opportunities made available by INAIL to the workers injured at work and to the enterprises;
- organisational difficulties both of INAIL's offices and of the agencies responsible by law for changing from the unemployment lists to the targeted employment programme;
- difficulties of identifying people with disabilities who are really motivated to return to work.

In spite of these difficulties, INAIL pursues its policy and aims at achieving three strategic goals of improvement:

- strengthening its role as “facilitator” of the mechanisms of return to work programmes for people injured at work through the targeted employment programme;
- increase in the number of projects submitted and of people back to work
- full use of the financial resources available.

On 22nd January 2007 INAIL’s Board of Directors passed a regulation which has amended INAIL’s previous regulation enforcing Section 24 of *Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2000*. The amendments concern both the vocational training projects and the removal of architectural barriers ones.

In the former, the amendments are aimed at increasing the number of training actions and in the latter at increasing the percentage of the money that INAIL can award as a grant.

- a) projects aimed at providing vocational training to people injured at work
Grants for vocational training can be awarded not only to unemployed people with work-related disabilities whose disability percentage is higher than 33% but also to injured workers still employed, regardless the percentage of their disability.
This amendment allows INAIL to anticipate its action in order to prevent the worker from losing his/her job.
It has also been given prominence to the possibility of submitting training projects aimed at encouraging people with disability to start up their own business, the so-called “self-entrepreneurship”.

- b) projects aimed at removing architectural barriers
The amendments are aimed at stimulating the financial advantage of grants in order to increase the number of people back to work.
Today it exists a gradual redemption of the costs borne (from 60% to 100%).

I believe the time is ripe to develop a “network” of synergies among the partners already identified by law, i.e. local Authorities and Job Centres, by involving also other key stakeholders, such as:

- employers’ associations;
- trade unions;
- other organisations interested in the targeted employment programmes.

In order to achieve this goal and also in order to make uniform the different agreements signed at local level, INAIL has drawn up a specific framework-protocol, which has been approved by INAIL’s Board of Directors on 8th March 2006.

According to this protocol the system of synergies set up consists of two levels:

- a regional level: to set a strategic framework according to which the public and private organisations involved will agree on the kind and level of commitment and of their participation;
- a local level: to turn the strategies into operational agreements. This agreements will contain a number of tangible and sustainable initiatives to be carried out at sub-regional level.

I would like to end this paper by attracting your attention to the motivations which have to call all the stakeholders of workfare involved in return to work programmes for people with disabilities to work together in order to increase the number of initiatives carried out at local level.

As far as INAIL is concerned, networking will allow it to strengthen its role and mission within the Italian social security system and, as a result, it can better characterise the public nature of the protection it offers to the insured workers. INAIL's Stakeholder Council, in which representatives of both employers and workers sit, has set the development of return to work programmes as a strategic priority of INAIL.

Vocational training is a sector where traditionally social partners (i.e. employers' and workers' associations) are involved. INAIL, as I said earlier, can invest in this sector 60 million euros.

On the one hand, employers' associations have the opportunity to offer support to the enterprises, helping them to comply with the obligation of recruitment laid down in *The People with disabilities (Right to work) Act 1999*. By doing this they could help in transforming people with disabilities from an obligation to an opportunity to recruit a specially-trained worker at INAIL's expenses.

On the other hand, Trade Unions will be able to offer the maximum level of protection to their members, taking care of them also in the process of return to work.

Thank you for your attention.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
FROM AN OBLIGATION TO A RESOURCE.

POLICY AND STRATEGIES OF INAIL FOR
REHABILITATION AND RETURN TO WORK

Lucerne, 28th June 2007



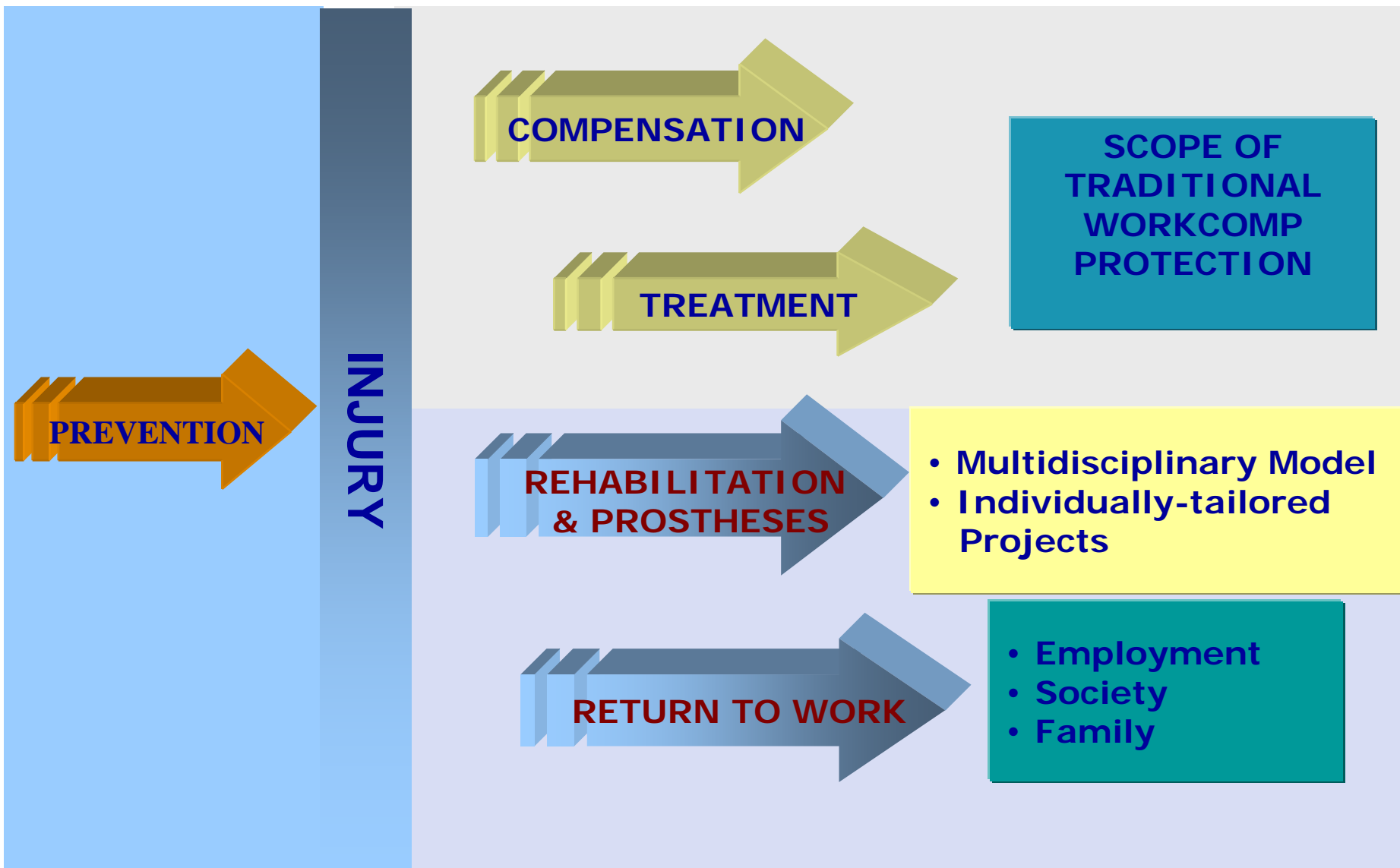
POLICY AND STRATEGY OF INAIL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (meeting EU requirements)

STARTING UP initiatives aimed at assuring the individual rights of every person, overcoming their isolation and discrimination

ELIMINATING the environmental obstacles preventing people with disabilities from making good use of their talents

PROMOTING the active inclusion of people with disabilities in the society and in the labour market

INAIL FROM AN ORGANISATION
DELIVERING MERE FINANCIAL COMPENSATION
TO
A **PRO-ACTIVE** ORGANISATION WITHIN
THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM



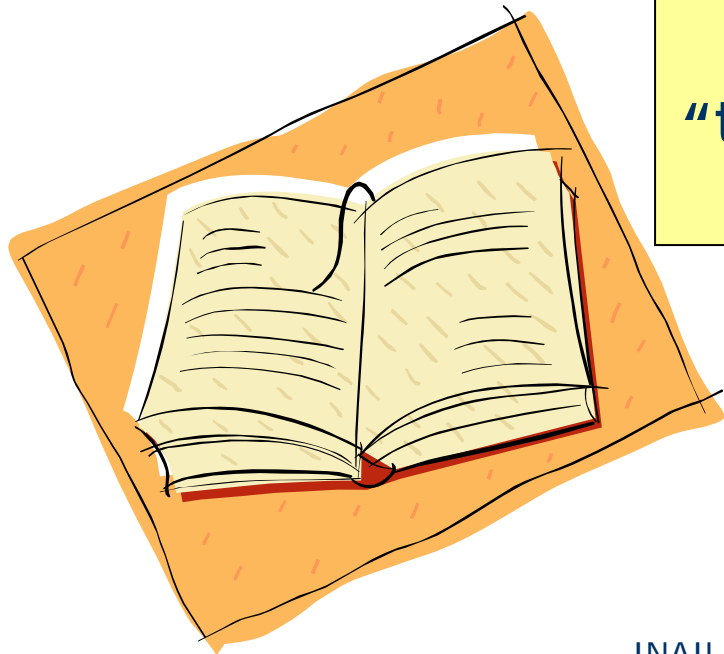


RIGHT TO
NORMALITY

POSITIVE CULTURE
OF DISABILITY

FROM
UNEMPLOYMENT
LISTS
TO A TARGETED
EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAMME

*The People with disabilities
(Right to work) Act 1999* introduces
the concept of
“targeted employment programme”
for the people with disabilities



i.e.
**the entitlement to a job
coming up to their expectations,
professional skills
and functional capacity**



INAAIL as a “facilitator”

of the mechanisms of return to work programmes for people injured at work through the promotion and funding of:

- Vocational training projects
- Projects aimed at removing architectural barriers within the workplaces of SMEs, agricultural enterprises/farms and cottage industry, which are bound by law to maintain the employment or to take on people injured at work

Budget allocated 77,500,000.00 euros

according to Section 24 of the *Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2000*



Actions

- Comprehensive and synergic evaluation of the personal and socio-environmental situation of the person with disabilities
- Individually-tailored rehabilitation project
- Vocational training/return to work

Multidisciplinary teams

in each and every INAIL's
local office

(a physician, a welfare consultant,
the person responsible for the benefit
area of the local office, and any other
professional that may be required)



VOCATIONAL TRAINING

239 Projects

1313 people with disabilities involved

510 people with disabilities back to work

REMOVAL OF ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS

49 Projects (**44** out of them completed)



% of resources used:

NORTHERN ITALY	35
CENTRAL ITALY	9
SOUTH AND ISLANDS	5

Vocational training project (up to 31/12/2006)

cook,
pastry cook,
waiter



packaging staff,
electrician,
warehouseman,
assembler, etc.



green houses
staff,
beekeeper,
gardener



**Injured at work
unemployed people,
with incapacity
degree higher than
33%**

IT staff,
CAD designer,
web designer,
computer user, etc

project manager,
specialised
employee, etc.



call centre operator,
switchboard operator





INITIATIVES aimed at:

REALISATION/ADJUSTMENT of accessible bathrooms/toilets

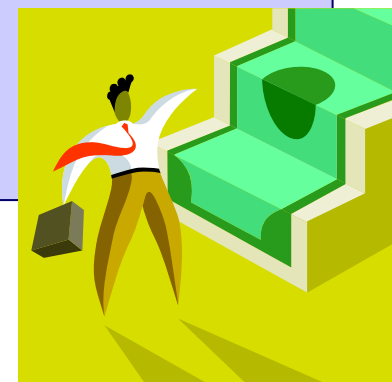
REALISATION of lifts, platform lifts, stairlifts

ADJUSTMENT of workplaces and equipment

ACCESSIBILITY of workplaces

REALISATION of ramps

ADJUSTMENT of doors





Present situation

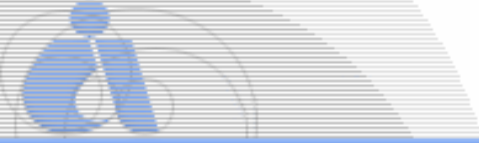
- 1) High level of non spent money: (more than 60,000,000.00 euros)
(scarce use of available resources)

Possible causes

- 1) Scarce knowledge of the new opportunities made available by INAIL to the workers injured at work and to the enterprises
- 2) Difficulties of changing from the unemployment lists to the targeted employment programme
- 3) Difficulties of identifying people with disabilities who are really motivated to return to work

Goals

- 1) Strengthening the facilitator role
- 2) Increase in the number of projects submitted and of people back to work
- 3) Full use of the financial resources available



Section 24 is enforced through
a Regulation passed by INAIL's Board of Directors

2007 AMENDMENTS TO INAIL'S REGULATION:

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

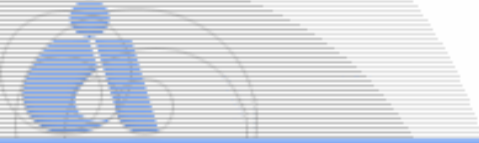
- Grants also to workers injured at work still employed and regardless of their disability degree
- Self-entrepreneurship

REMOVAL OF ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS

Gradual redemption

- **60%** (little adjustments to the legislation – people with disabilities employed)
- **80%** (innovative, comprehensive and transferable projects – people with disabilities employed)
- **100%** (actions linked to the new recruitment of people with disabilities)





REGIONAL DIRECTORATES OF INAIL



EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATIONS



TRADE UNIONS

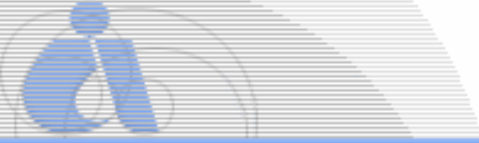


EVERY PERSON INTERESTED IN
THE TARGETED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME



TURNING THE STRATEGIES INTO
OPERATIONAL AGREEMENTS





BUILDING A SERVICES NETWORK

INAAIL

Strengthening its role and its mission within the national welfare system, characterising the public nature of the protection

Employers' Associations

Offering support to the enterprises, helping them to comply with the obligation of recruitment laid down in *The People with disabilities (Right to work) Act 1999*.
From an obligation to an opportunity to recruit a specially-trained worker

Trade Unions

Offering the maximum level of protection to their members, taking care of them also in the process of return to work