

ITALY, October 2003

Associazione "Facciamo un Nido"

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LETTER FROM ITALY presented at the Dublin Conference

To the Montessori friends who meet in Dublin on October 17-19 2003.

The situation of the Montessori movement in Italy is at present very serious:

1) Montessori schools - either public or private - are fewer and fewer because of costs, because of laws in force, because of shortage of prepared teachers and educators.

2) We count on the fingers of one only hand the schools with a Montessorian educational course which is continuous from two and a half-three to eleven years (Como, Cortina, Foggia, Milano, Roma)

3) Case dei Bambini are the most numerous in Italy, nevertheless they are spread on the national territory as spots on a leopard skin and are much isolated.

4) Secondary Montessori schools do not exist.

5) To make up for it, thank to the engagement of Centro Nascita Montessori (Montessori Birth Center) of Roma, which has been leading the way since the '50ies, municipal and private Montessorian crèches (from 3 months to 3 years) are rather numerous and are present in different regions.

6) The Centro Nascita Montessori has been supporting for years the quarterly "Il Quaderno Montessori" (Montessori Notebook), which is today on its 20th year. Essentially practical, it is addressed to both educators and parents. The Centro and "Quaderno" together published some books in English and in Italian, with a substantial help by Gonzagarredi, a firm heir to the first builders of Montessori material who started under the direct guide of Maria Montessori herself and are still active today.

7) Two training centers with annual courses (one in Perugia for Casa dei Bambini; and the "Centro Internazionale Studi Montessori" (International Montessori Research Center) AMI Institution in Bergamo for 6-12 years). They mainly work with foreign students and give diplomas which are not recognized by the Italian Public Education Ministry.

8) An Opera Nazionale Montessori (Montessori National Organization) exists in Italy. The majority of the persons signing this document do not identify themselves with it, thinking that the activity of this body is not fitting the Italian situation. Not joined to AMI, it publishes a review ("Vita dell'Infanzia" = Life of Infancy) and mainly carries on an editorial activity.

9) At present, a Montessorian group in Lombardia (northern Italian region of Milano) is willing to open in Milano a 0 to 12 *Permanent Training Center* which could enable Italian teachers to work in private and public schools. The group is therefore interested into a European recognition of diplomas which could overcome the limits of the Italian ministerial recognition.

10) Given this situation, we are deeply interested into joining the ME project, **a project which should promote research and comparison of experiences, which should reconsider the training methods, influence the different nations' and Community's decisions in the field of education from birth to adolescence**, which should promote a culture of the child in the respect of its individuality and of its potentialities.

11) One of the tasks of this association could be, paradoxically, not to be an association like all the others, but to work in order to make all the Montessorians agree with each other, looking for what they have in common, and **to work therefore for the unification of Montessori in Europe and in the world**. The task could be to make them converge, trying to reduce internal conflict since the Montessori movement already faces many difficulties on the external front. It would be nice to get to a co-operation among all the various organizations, and to get to their specialization and differentiation of functions.

In order to overcome the many prejudices on Montessori and on infancy itself, we think it is essential that one of the fundamental principles of the Montessori thinking is propagated and emphasized, that is *the preparation of environment, the material and the way to present it are as many answers to the needs of children, and at the same time it should be refused the present fashion to "stimulate" and quicken learning at ones' command*.

As to point n. 5 of "Tasks and goals" approved by the General Meeting in November 2002, **our urgent questions** concern the importance of defining some commune parameters such as:

* *When a project can be defined Montessorian?*

* *When a teacher can be defined Montessorian? and when can a school?*

(Many have the label, but then they lead the work with children in an authoritarian and pre-arranged way)

* *How can a national section of ME be organized?*

* *How can connections be assured?*

* *How ME thinks to unify the various Montessori movements and associations present in Europe and in the world?*

* *ME wants to be an energy catalyst, or a kind of umbrella under which it is possible to find supports and recognitions on a European level, or still a forum where to make people meet, exchange experiences and ideas?*

* *How can ME contribute to the recognition, in the various states of the Union, of a diploma gained after a training for which ME can be a warranty of quality? And what should be the relationship between this diploma and other existing diplomas? Is it possible to work to get equipollency?*

We entrust our message to our friends of the "Facciamo un Nido" Association of Cortina d'Ampezzo with our most vivid participation, asking, for the next time, to organize a plurilingual or bilingual (English and French) meeting in order to make the presence of participants wider.

Sign personally

prof. Raniero Regni, Gubbio (Umbria), LUMSA University of Roma

Grazia Honegger Fresco, pedagogue in charge of Casa dei Bambini in Cartabbia (Varese)

Costanza Buttafava Maggi (Milano)

and also

Centro Nascita Montessori, Roma

Il Quaderno Montessori, Castellanza di Varese (Lombardia)

Montessori School of Cortina d'Ampezzo (Veneto)

Montessori School in via Bartolini, Milano (Lombardia)

Montessori School in via Porpora, Milano (Lombardia)

Associazione M.Montessori of Trapani (Sicily)

Montessori Chêches, Casa dei Bambini and Primary School of Foggia (Puglia)