

## NOTES

# Fondazione CRT and Accessibility

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of accessibility doesn't only apply to people with disabilities. It is about everyone, as real people, with different skills and needs, in a permanent or in a temporary way. Talking about accessibility means celebrating human diversity. Talking about accessibility means facing with social role of museums in our society. Accessibility means more beauty, more comfort, more autonomy, more wealth for everyone. Since 2012 Fondazione CRT has been working with Fondazione Paideia on the initiative Museum operators and disabilities where museum staff are trained to welcome visitors with disabilities and special needs in the best possible way, in the awareness that "breaking down cultural barriers is an important step to really open up places of art to everyone".

## KEYWORDS

*Accessibility; Diversity; Art; Museums; Cultural Enjoyment.*

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## 1. Who is Fondazione CRT?

Fondazione CRT<sup>1</sup> is a private non-profit organization founded in 1991. For 29 years, it has been one of the “engines” of development and growth in the north of Italy in three main areas: Art and Culture, Research & Education, Welfare and Territory. It implements projects and resources in the promotion of the arts and cultural activities, the promotion of scientific research and training for young people, support for innovation and social entrepreneurship, assistance to people in need, preservation of the environment, and civil protection and first response systems. Fondazione CRT also embraces the so-called active philanthropy approach, including venture philanthropy and impact investing.

## 2. Fondazione CRT and the theme of accessibility

At the forefront of supporting the values of full accessibility and social inclusion - since 2006 when the Winter Paralympic Games were held in Turin -, Fondazione CRT has supported initiatives and implemented projects linked by a single thread: that of preserving the dignity of disabled people, protecting their equality and respecting their right to lead an independent life as much as possible. Various initiatives have been launched with this in mind; first, *Vivomeglia*: a call for proposals for projects that improve the quality of life and autonomy of people with disabilities. Fondazione CRT has supported more than 2,300 interventions since 2005, for a total investment of over 25 million euros.

In 2019 the *Vivomeglia* initiative was enriched by a free training course, called *Kick Off: the challenge starts now*, aimed at supporting non-profit organizations in the delicate phase of planning and monitoring projects. The latter is an operation through which Fondazione CRT combines granting with an approach that favours the creation of skills and capacity building to enhance the effectiveness of financial support to the Third Sector. About 180 organizations from the Piedmont and the Valle d’Aosta Regions were involved with over 200 participants.

In 2020, Fondazione CRT launched the project *WeNet: more skills for networking*, confirming its role as a “development agent” and knowledge aggregator at the service of communities. With this initiative, Fondazione CRT proposes a new calendar of training events able to provide organizations with useful theoretical content and valuable operational tools to support them during the delicate phase of planning an initiative in the social field, and help them communicate their identity and work. About 140 organizations from the Piedmont and the Valle d’Aosta Regions were involved.

The point of arrival, but at the same time the start, of the training process

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1 <http://www.fondazioneCRT.it>, accessed 28 December 2020.

that Fondazione CRT has put in place in recent years on the disability front will be the definition of the first *Disability Agenda* in Italy: a plan of concrete actions “signed” by the institutions and civil society on the basis of the proposals and needs - changed also in light of the health emergency - of the non-profit organizations that daily work for people with disabilities, their families and communities. The *Disability Agenda* will be presented in December 2021 on the occasion of the *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*.

In addition, since 2012 Fondazione CRT has been working with Fondazione Paideia on the initiative *Museum operators and disabilities* where museum staff are trained to welcome visitors with disabilities and special needs in the best possible way, in the awareness that “breaking down cultural barriers is an important step to really open up places of art to everyone”.

### 3. Museum Operators and Disability

#### 3.1. The origins of the project

In 2006, an extraordinary grant from Fondazione CRT enabled the ninth Paralympic Games to take place in Turin. This, in conjunction with the 20th Winter Olympics, meant that the city acquired a good level of accessible infrastructure and developed a marked improvement in awareness of the need for the inclusion of disabled people within society that has continued until today. This was where the various interested parties of the region came together to share their resources with a view to participatory and joint planning, beginning with their own cultural endeavors. The role of promoter of the *Museum Operators and Disability* project has been assigned to Palazzo Madama, the Civic Museum of Ancient Art,<sup>2</sup> which in 2011 directly expressed the need to train its own staff on accessibility. From this call for training, a study was commissioned which investigated the existing level of accessibility training of museum operators in the Turin area, as well as the level of willingness to improve it. The outcome of this process of listening to and comparison amongst the area’s cultural operators is *Museum Operators and Disability*, a project that Fondazione CRT and Fondazione Paideia have been developing since 2012. Fondazione Paideia<sup>3</sup> develops initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing child distress. Through the work of qualified and passionate professionals, it carries out projects on the territory, proposes cultural initiatives and supports each year over 300 families with disabled or sick children.

#### 3.2. The types of training

The types of training are:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.palazzomadamarino.it/it>, accessed 28 December 2020.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fondazionepaideia.it/>, accessed 28 December 2020.

- Basic courses about the different types of disabilities and the basic techniques of communication and accommodation;
- In depth seminars on the themes covered in the basic courses;
- Beginner courses in Italian Sign Language for the museum context;
- Workshops in the production of social history.<sup>4</sup>

Initially developed on a local dimension, addressing the museums of Turin, the project has gradually expanded to the provincial, regional and national territory, involving almost 200 museums and cultural institutions in the national territory and over 1000 operators. Since the start of the first edition of the basic course in January 2012, there have been 39 editions of the basic course, 28 in-depth seminars, 7 courses on the first literacy of Italian Sign Language applied to the museum context and 5 workshops on the production of social stories.

### 3.3. Objectives

The general objective of the project is to increase awareness, implementation and sharing of professional skills through specific training aimed at museum operators to foster a culture of inclusion and reception of visitors with disabilities and special needs.

The specific objectives are:

Adapt the customer service, communication and reception skills of the museum to the “special” needs of users;

Train the museum structure to be inclusive and integrated;

Qualify the operators who work there;

Improve the knowledge of the different disabilities and the “special needs” connected to them;

Qualify the perception of the visit experience in the museum and, consequently, also in the city where the experience took place.

### 3.4. Strengths

1. It's a joint project resulting from teamwork between a philanthropic foundation (FCRT) and an operational foundation in the field of disability (Fondazione Paideia) and constant collaboration between the promoters and the recipients of the intervention.

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<sup>4</sup> *Social Stories* represent the most widely used “targeted intervention strategy” with people with autism spectrum disorders. Social Stories are particular texts, written according to specific criteria, that describe clearly, concisely and precisely a situation, a skill, a result or a concept. Their aim is to help people with autism to better understand the social situations and events they encounter in their lives, thus supporting their ability to be active subjects in daily routines and activities.

2. It's a transversal project that involves every member of staff at a museum, from the cloakroom staff to the head curator.
3. It's a flexible project that develops and adapts to the needs expressed by the participants at the end of the courses.
4. Participation in the project has acquired over time a strong motivational value based on the voluntary involvement of staff who – on their only free day (Museums are closed on Monday's) – decide independently to take part in a personal and professional growth path.
5. The project is evidence of the virtuous process that can be triggered in every city if there is a subject that stimulates flexible collaboration between museums, organizations that deal with disabilities and foundations that have in their mission the social and economic development of the territory.

### 3.5. Beyond training

The project *Museum Operators and Disability* is not just training.

#### 3.5.1. Published works

In 2017 the project *Museum Operators and disability* was the object of the publication of the homonymous volume.<sup>5</sup> It explores the values that support the design experience, its methodological assumptions and the contents that represent the consolidated backbone of the basic courses. Created by the project professors, the book intends to open or consolidate in its readers an innovative definition of accessibility and stimulate similar educational experiences in other areas [Fig. 1].

#### 3.5.2. Experiences of replicability

Thanks to an important consultation in terms of content, methodology and organization by Fondazione CRT and Fondazione Paideia, the format of the project *Museum operators and disability* has been exported to the national territory. Adapted to the needs of the museums involved, it has given important contributions to training courses in the following regions: Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Lazio.

#### 3.5.3. Events

The project *Museum Operators and Disability* has been the driving force for the organization of national public events for comparison and reflection

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<sup>5</sup> Fabrizio Serra, Franco Tartaglia, and Silvio Venuti, *Operatori museali e disabilità. Come favorire una cultura dell'accoglienza* (Roma: Carocci, 2017).



FIG. 1 The cover of the publication *Operatori museali e disabilità. Come favorire una cultura dell'accoglienza*

dedicated to the world of culture around the concept of accessibility, understood from a human and communicative point of view, even before starting the structural changes.

In March 2017, Fondazione CRT hosted the conference entitled *Museums towards a culture of hospitality*, a training day dedicated to national museum directors aimed at highlighting the right mix of ingredients required to make a cultural visit fully satisfying for all visitors. Reception, attention to communication, dedication to building and maintaining relationships are the key factors at the center of new organizational and management models to make culture an all-inclusive experience. Accessibility is not just the removal of structural barriers but also the removal of relational barriers. The person is the center. His or her condition comes after,

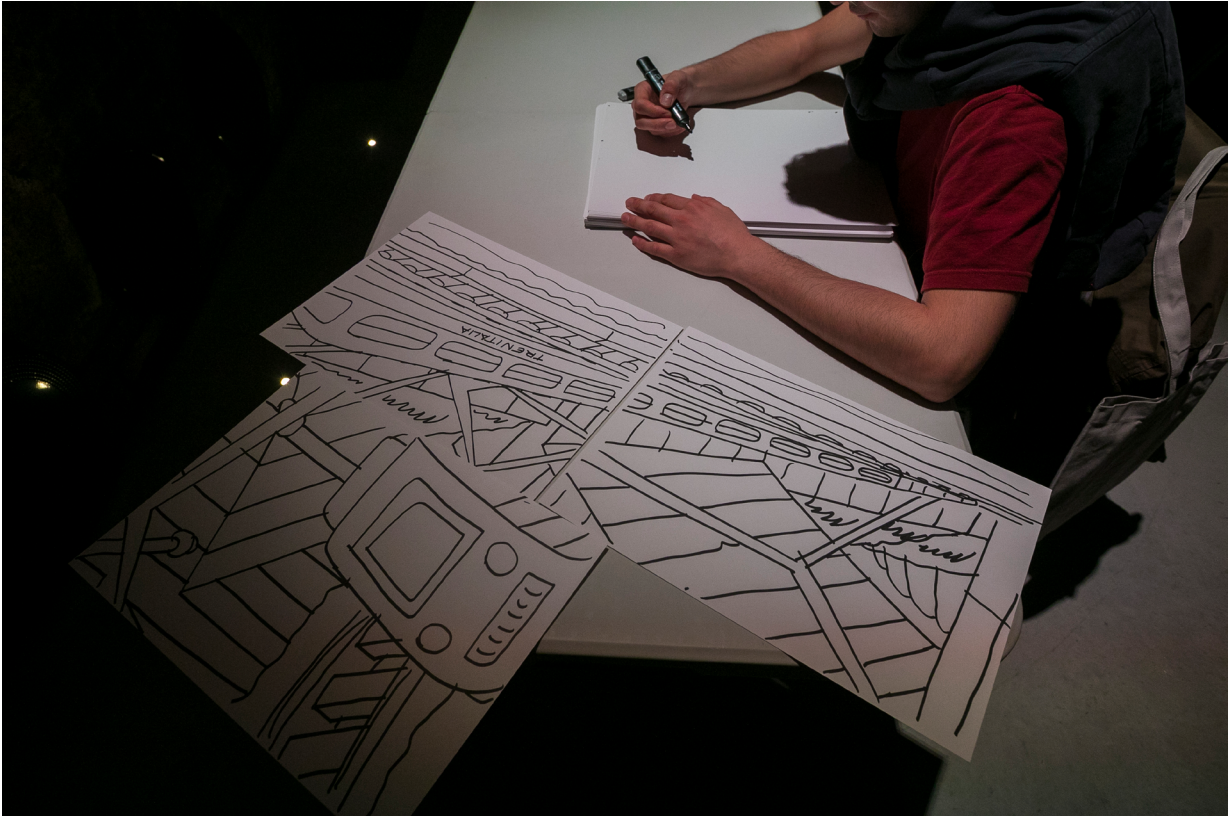


FIG. 2 Lorenzo Filardi, Trenitalia, 2018

if necessary. The role of the museum has evolved over time. Today a museum is no longer a passive destination, object of visits and studies. Today a museum is like a “square”, a place to meet and share stories... A museum transmits contents, but it can also create live positive cultural and relational experiences. This is the right to cultural enjoyment. However, we can still go further.

In December 2018, thanks to the European dimension that the theme of accessibility acquired during the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, Fondazione CRT organized at the OGR – Officine Grandi Riparazioni a conference entitled *From art for all, to everyone’s art. Towards a new perspective of accessibility*. On this occasion, the concept of accessibility of culture for all was proposed as a tool to promote community welfare actions through diversity during the process of planning and cultural production. Assuming that accessibility is not just the removal of structural barriers, but also the removal of relational barriers, it is possible to make the transition from the right to cultural enjoyment to the right to cultural production. Art cannot only be enjoyed by everyone, but Art can also be created by everyone. Accessibility is a guarantee of everyone’s right to culture. Accessibility is democracy, but it also opens up to a new concept of art and a new way of proposing it. These are some artworks, produced during the conference by artists with disabilities. But, as always, the person is at the center. His or her condition comes after, if necessary, which in this case it is not [Figs. 2-3].



FIG. 3 Lorenzo Filardi, *Trenitalia*, 2018

### 3.5.4. Beyond museum boundaries

The extent of potential impact of *Museum Operators and Disability* has allowed the project to reach out to cultural centers that are not strictly museums. This is the case of the OGR – Officine Grandi Riparazioni. With a budget of 100 million Euros, Fondazione CRT completely restored the OGR (a former large industrial building in the heart of Turin) and reconverted it into an innovative and experimental center for contemporary culture, art, research and business acceleration with an international vocation, covering over 35.000 square meters.

### 3.5.5. From theory into practice

In the 2019 edition of the project *Museum operators and disability* has been tested for the first time the itinerant workshop: a training experience with a laboratory character and highly innovative content, aimed at the development of operational tools and organizational designs that can be implemented in museums willing to connote a truly inclusive perspective. Through an “itinerant” training, both with respect to the places of training and to the timing of the same, participants have had the opportunity to approach some good practices of the territory of Turin presented through experiential evidence. In addition, they were able to confront the point of view of people with disabilities and their needs in the context of a museum visit, to decline in operational terms the core themes underlying the basic course of the project *Museum operators and disability*, to measure their



ability to develop project work really implementable in the museum reality of belonging.

All this has been achieved thanks to the professional competence of selected teachers who have been delivering the courses of the project *Museum operators and disabilities* for years, to the advice of expert trainers in the museum sector, to the comparison with non-profit organizations that deal with disabilities, through an interactive and dynamic teaching method, which has made peer coaching the privileged working tool.

The workshop was hosted by the following museums, emblematic cases of accessibility in the Turin area:

- Museo A come Ambiente;<sup>6</sup>
- OGR – Officine Grandi Riparazioni;<sup>7</sup>
- Museo Nazionale del Cinema.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.6 Future goals

With the 2019 edition, the project *Museum Operators and Disability* broadened its boundaries, extending our training out to the operators of a variety of cultural services. Everyone has the right to participate in every part of cultural life and all museum activities. The ambition of the project has always been that the approach and model will garner interest for those who, in their own territory, intend to give life to similar training and training initiatives. For this reason, the project structure is flexible and open to incorporate inputs and proposals from the museums and cultural services themselves. The ambition of the project has always been to develop and replicate the model, and export the approach and format of the Turin experience.

Why take such a challenge? Why make museums an open space for dialogue and meeting? Which objectives need to be set? Talking about accessibility means embracing the social role of museums in our society. Accessibility means more autonomy, more comfort and more wealth for everyone. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the position and the responsibility of cultural heritage about building our future are extremely important. The eleventh Goal of the Agenda 2030 is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. A community is sustainable if it is accessible.

So can we move from the right to cultural enjoyment, to the right to cultural production and to the right of citizenship? The answer is probably yes.

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6 <http://www.acomeambiente.org/>, accessed 28 December 2020.

7 <http://www.ogrtorino.it/>, accessed 28 December 2020.

8 <http://www.museocinema.it/>, accessed 28 December 2020.

## 4. OGR – Officine Grandi Riparazioni

For over a hundred years the OGR - Officine Grandi Riparazioni, an imposing late XIX century industrial complex drove the growth of the city of Turin. Abandonment and dereliction ensuing the early 1990s closure, led to their planned demolition, luckily averted. In 2013, Fondazione CRT purchased the 20,000 square H-shaped building, the offices and the yards and, through OGR-CRT Society, their redevelopment began. One thousand days were required to return them to Turin, converted into a new heart beating on creativity, culture and shows, projected towards the world. One hundred million euros invested by Fondazione CRT to bring back to life the OGR, the “cathedral” of Turin’s industrial history. Hi-tech solutions, environmental sustainability, historical preservation, versatility of spaces and accessibility for all: these were the specifications behind the radical refurbishment and conversion of the OGR: from former train repairs Workshops to new Workshops for contemporary culture, innovation and business acceleration, with a marked international stance. OGR are the first cultural center in Italy to be equipped in 2017 with the Decalogue of accessibility of “for all” events. It was there, that in 2018, a training course on the accessibility of art sites involved the employees and the staff of all the sectors in which the activities of OGR are organized (ticketing, security, reception, catering, etc.).

### 4.1. OGR Cult: where visual and performing arts meet

*OGR Cult*’s multifunctional spaces cover an area of about 9,000 square metres and host, alternating all sorts of exhibitions, shows, concerts - from classical to electronic music - theatre and dance events.

The names of the areas reflect the history of the places: the *3Binari* (tracks) situated in the west area host exhibitions and display projects, as well as the *Team Lab Kids Future Park* installation.

The area dedicated to performing arts and music shows has kept the original name of *Sala Fucine* (the forges), *Duomo* (the Dome) is the heart of *OGR Cult* spaces: this imposing hall, 19 metres high to allow maintenance emissions to be released from the workshops, is now dedicated to symposiums, workshops and conferences. The redevelopment of the areas pursued a rigorous restoration project that, while adapting the building to its new purpose, left intact the sediments of the past: for instance, on its walls, in a game of cross-references and fusion between memory and the present day – one of the concepts behind the reborn Workshops – the traces of the building’s past have been preserved for the visitors.

In 2020 *OGR Cult* was temporarily converted into a healthcare area for Coronavirus patients.

OGR Cult in numbers:

- 9,000 m<sup>2</sup> in total;
- 2,700 m<sup>2</sup> for exhibitions;
- Up to 2,750 seating capacity;
- 350 m<sup>2</sup> in the Duomo Area;
- 500,000 visitors since opening.

## 4.2. OGR Tech: 12.000 m<sup>2</sup> of future

OGR Tech, which relies on international partnerships, is the new innovation hub for scientific, technological and industrial research that – over the next twenty years – intends to catalyse half a billion euros of investments and accelerate 1,000 new startups. Techstars, global leader fostering startups growth, Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo and Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center all teamed up to create the first Startup Accelerator Programme in Europe dedicated to smart mobility. Together with Microsoft, Tech Revolution Factory was founded at OGR Tech: it is the first digital innovation platform characterised by three distinctive axes of development: acceleration of disruptive startups on Artificial Intelligence, tech training for any type of audience, events and contests for the growth and development of entrepreneurial ecosystems.

OGR Tech in numbers:

- 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> in total;
- 499 work stations;
- 15 meeting rooms;
- 8 soundproof phone booths;
- 38 chat sofa;
- 50 led wall and video wall;
- 1 Certified data center Tier III Certification Uptime Institute .

**Giovanni Quaglia**, Professor of Economics and Business Administration at the Department of Management at the University of Turin, is President of Fondazione CRT, of the Association of Piedmontese Foundations of banking origins, of REAM Sgr SpA, of the Support Committee of Cassa Depositi e Prestiti and is a Member of the Board of Directors of ACRI. He was Mayor of Genola (CN), Regional Councilor for Piedmont, and President of the Province of Cuneo. He is Chairman, director and statutory auditor of companies and cultural and territorial promotion associations.

He is also the author of numerous publications.