

**NO MATTER WHICH COUNTRY –
NO MATTER WHICH LANGUAGE –
DYSLEXIA IS EVERYWHERE**

By SR Michael Kalmár

*President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the European Dyslexia Association – International Organisation for
Specific Learning Disabilities (AISBL)*

Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to the EDA Community Summer Week in cooperation with the University of San Marino, in this beautiful Republic of San Marino. Please allow me to introduce myself to you. So those of you, who do not know me, get an idea about who is addressing you - My name is Michael Kalmár.

It is not possible to name all of the necessary helping hands to make this event possible, but I want to express strongly my gratitude to the Local Organizing Team headed by Tina Meloni and Dr. Claudia Ciccioni. Thank you Tina, thank you, Claudia.

Also, it is a strong personal wish of mine to articulate the appreciation of the Board of Directors of the EDA towards our partner, the University of San Marino, who made it possible to use these premises here.

May I introduce to you my colleagues in the Board of Directors as well as the Volunteering Assistant to the EDA:
Karin Brüniger, Vice-President
Brigitte Kalmár, Volunteering Assistant
Raymond Claes, Vice-President

Prof. Giacomo Stella, Administrator and to say the father of this regular activity from the side of the EDA - He together with Tina Meloni is the brain behind the EDA Community Summer School since its start in July 2010.

Lars Sander, Administrator

I am very sorry that the EDA-Treasurer Rudy Vandevoorde cannot attend due to a serious family problem.

Apologies also from the EDA Secretary, Dr. Anne-Marie Montarnal, who can not attend because she celebrates a round anniversary of her in the circle of her big family; Anne-Marie was one of the co-founders of the EDA 21 years ago

On behalf of European people with dyslexia I appreciate very much the readiness of our guest speakers, the panel speakers and of course of you, who have come to San Marino, to share knowledge about dyslexia between us and to be ready to exchange academic information and best practice in this forum for people with dyslexia, their parents and their teachers and other professionals.

Many things have changed since the European Dyslexia Association was founded and legally established under Belgian law in 1987 in Brussels as an international non-profit association; it has developed as the European platform and the Voice of the People with dyslexia and other specific learning differences, children's parents, professionals and researchers alike.

Let me give some short information about the EDA today:

The EDA currently has 34 regional and national Members in 21 EU countries plus Switzerland, Norway and Northern Cyprus.

The EDA is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in official relation with UNESCO; a Full Member of the European Disability Forum (EDF); and has Consultative Status with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

According to substantiated scientific estimates, the group of European Citizens with dyslexia and specific learning differences encompasses between 5 and 12 percent of the population, navigating through life in a largely non-"DYS" friendly world. Dyslexia is the most widespread specific learning difference, making the acquiring and using of reading, spelling and writing skills and other communication-related cultural abilities difficult.

It is generally (and indisputably) known and documented that the cultural abilities of reading and writing are among the most important prerequisites in our society for individual cultural, social and economic development and success. Furthermore, across Europe, the diversity of languages and the multilingual demands, socio-cultural backgrounds as well as educational opportunity, have a significant influence on the manifestation of difficulties and life-chances for children, adolescents and adults with DYS differences.

Without sufficient knowledge in this area, failure in school, employment, general communication impairments and social segregation are common threats, with well-known consequences in the lives of those affected, their family members and society.

How does a Summer School fit in the needs of those who are persons with dyslexia?

Many of us here in this room see each other regularly at meetings, conferences and projects. But then, very often, there is no time to go into important and multi-dimensional subjects that need deeper discussion, reflection and openness in communication. In the end, it is a problem of enough time, relaxed communication and having a hassle between the different workshops and keynotes.

The Board is convinced that this kind of event is able to bypass these problems.

The success of the summer School depends on all of us. Let's go to work to ensure that every child and adult with Dyslexia has the right to access and to receive appropriate identification, support and opportunity to achieve their full potential in education, training, employment and in all aspects of life.

The EDA Community Summer School will be a big step towards this goal.