

AActively in Aosta Valley:

An inclusive tourist guide for
children with complex
communication needs.



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La Casa di Sabbia Onlus, founded in 2017 in Valle d'Aosta, Italy to support families of children with severe disabilities.

Main areas:

- legal assistance,
- siblings,
- therapy through play,
- inclusive tourism,
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Our Mission

- Inclusion is a right, not a privilege.
- Remove barriers: physical, social, communicative.
- Create opportunities for participation in community life.



The First Step: “Go Higher with Wheels”

- Project “In alto con le ruote” (In 2021, the project received funding from Fondazione CRT in Turin)
- Accessible mountain trails in Valle d’Aosta, accessible services, family-friendly experiences
- Families can benefit from all-terrain strollers for mountain trails and a free educational support service.

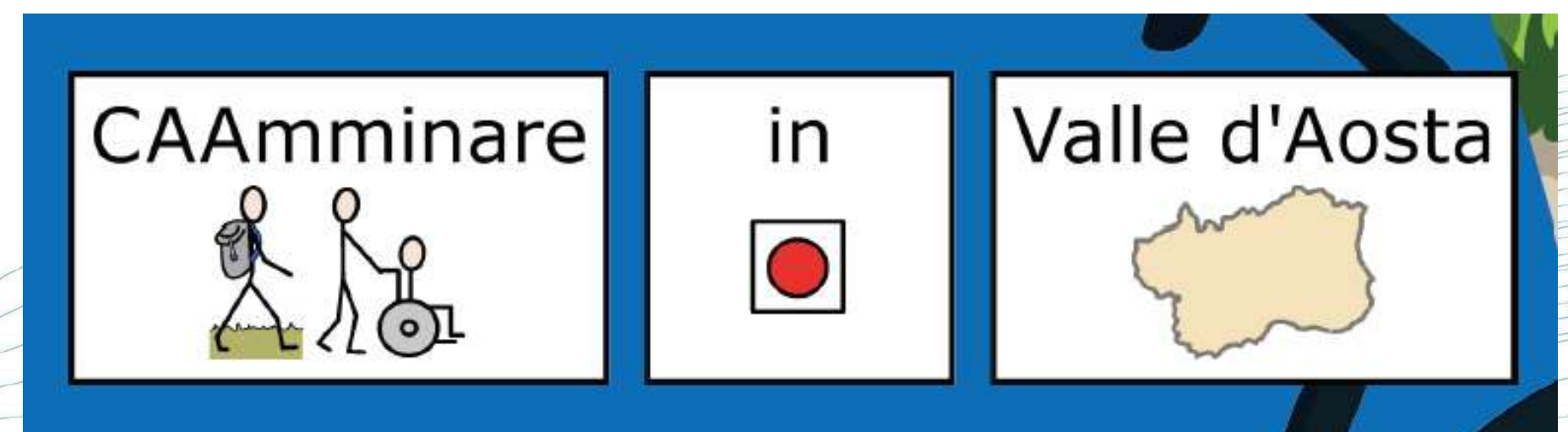


<https://inaltoconleruote.org>



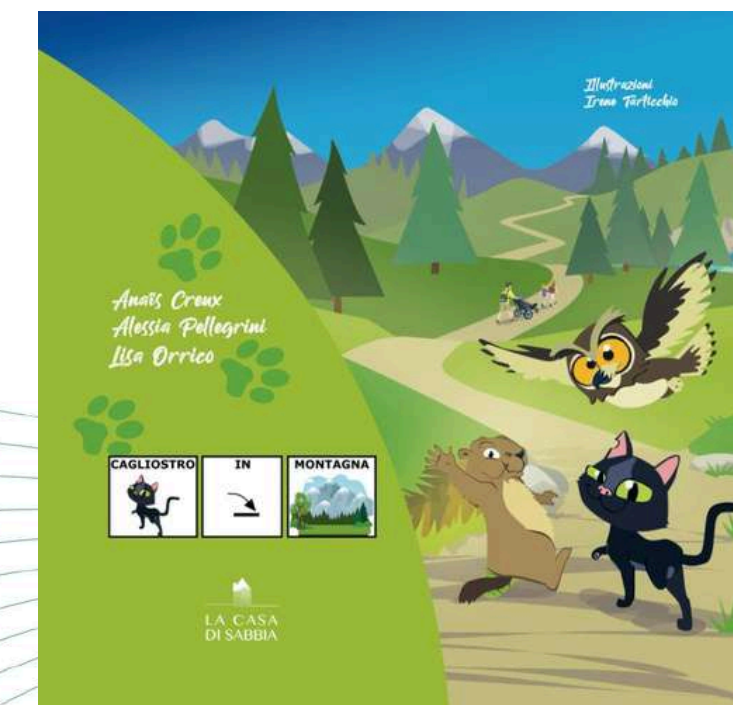
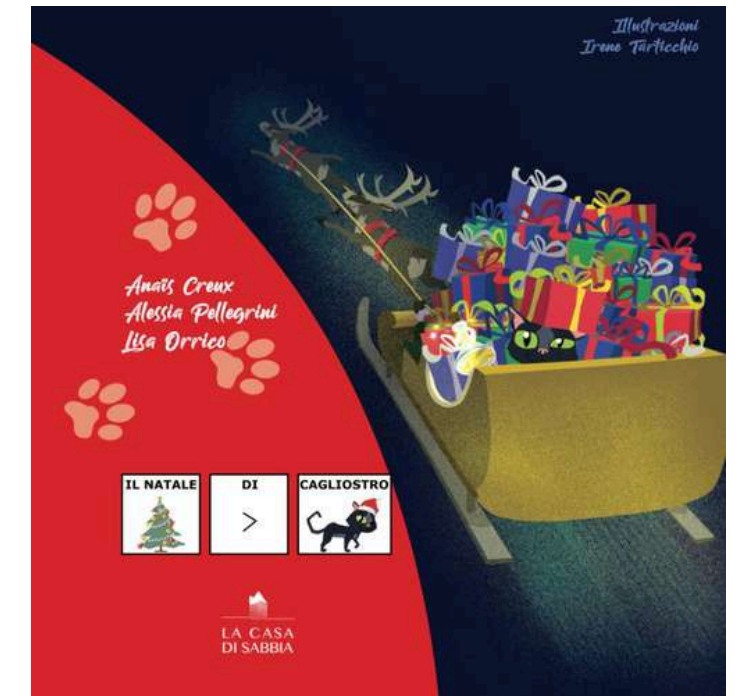
From Accessible Paths to Accessible Words

- Physical accessibility is not enough.
- Children with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) face an extra barrier.
- Need for tourism resources in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).



Our Previous AAC Publications

- Before the tourist guide, we had already published two AAC storybooks:
 - Cagliostro's Christmas (2022)
 - Cagliostro in the mountains (2023)
- Both books are fully written in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
- Designed to help children with complex communication needs enjoy storytelling and participate in shared reading moments.



What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication

- Tools: symbols, images, simplified texts, communication devices
- Goal: support understanding and participation for people with Complex Communication Needs (CCN)



Why an AAC Tourist Guide?

- Tourism resources for children with CCN are almost non-existent.
- Families often feel excluded from cultural and natural heritage.
- AAC makes visits understandable, enjoyable, shareable.

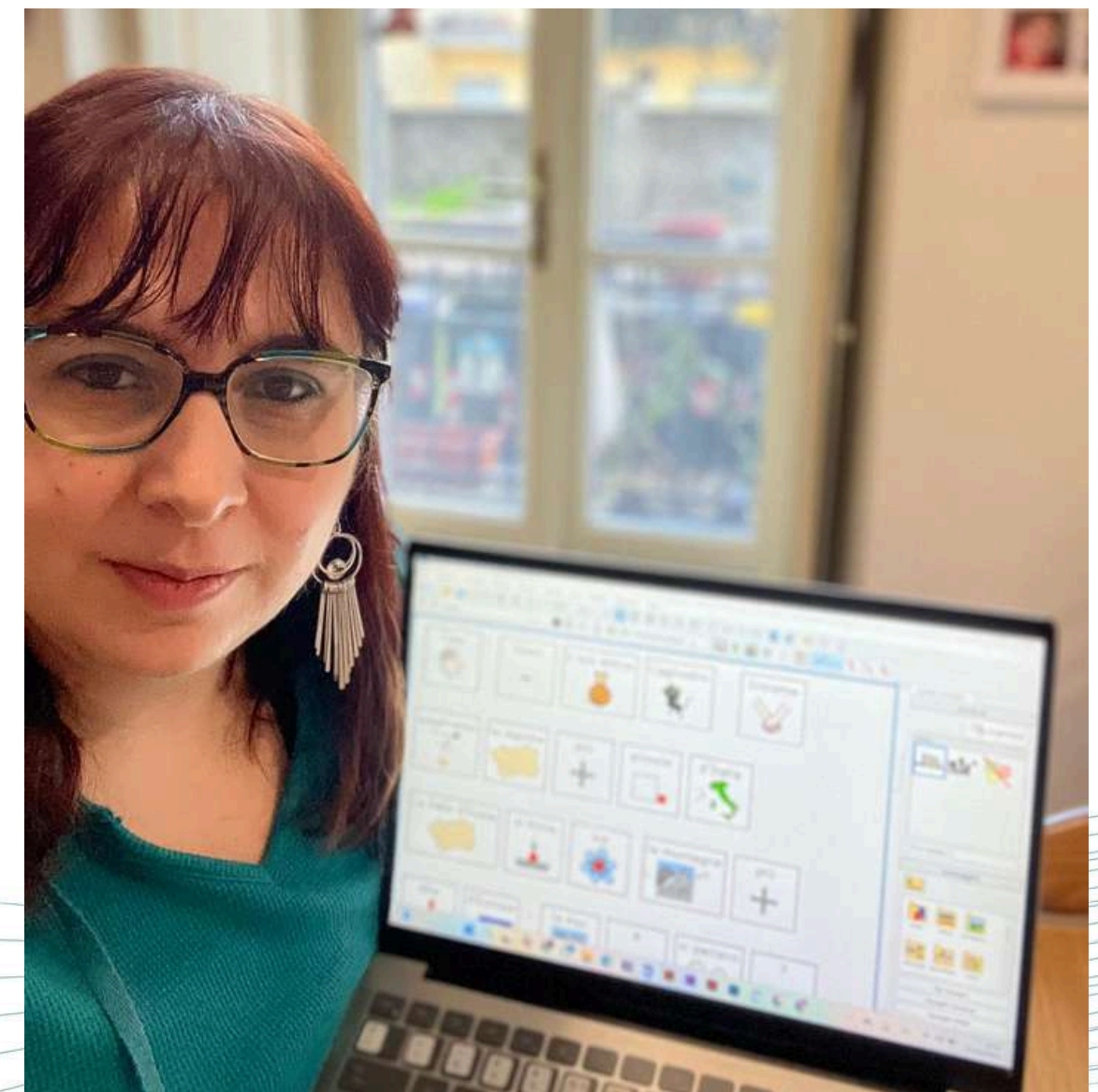
Recognition

- In 2024, the guide received an official recognition from the Regional Council of Aosta Valley, awarded within the Volunteer Action Prize (Premio del Volontariato).
- Acknowledged as an innovative tool for inclusion and accessibility.



Process

- Developed with families, AAC experts (Lisa Orrico) and illustrator (Irene Tarticchio)
- Based on children's experiences and needs
- Tested and improved with real users



The Guide is structured in thematic chapters:

- History of Aosta Valley
- Alpine nature and wildlife
- Highest mountain peaks
- Castles
- The legend of the Edelweiss
- Family-friendly accessible trails




Example Pages

- Symbols WLS + simplified text + illustrations

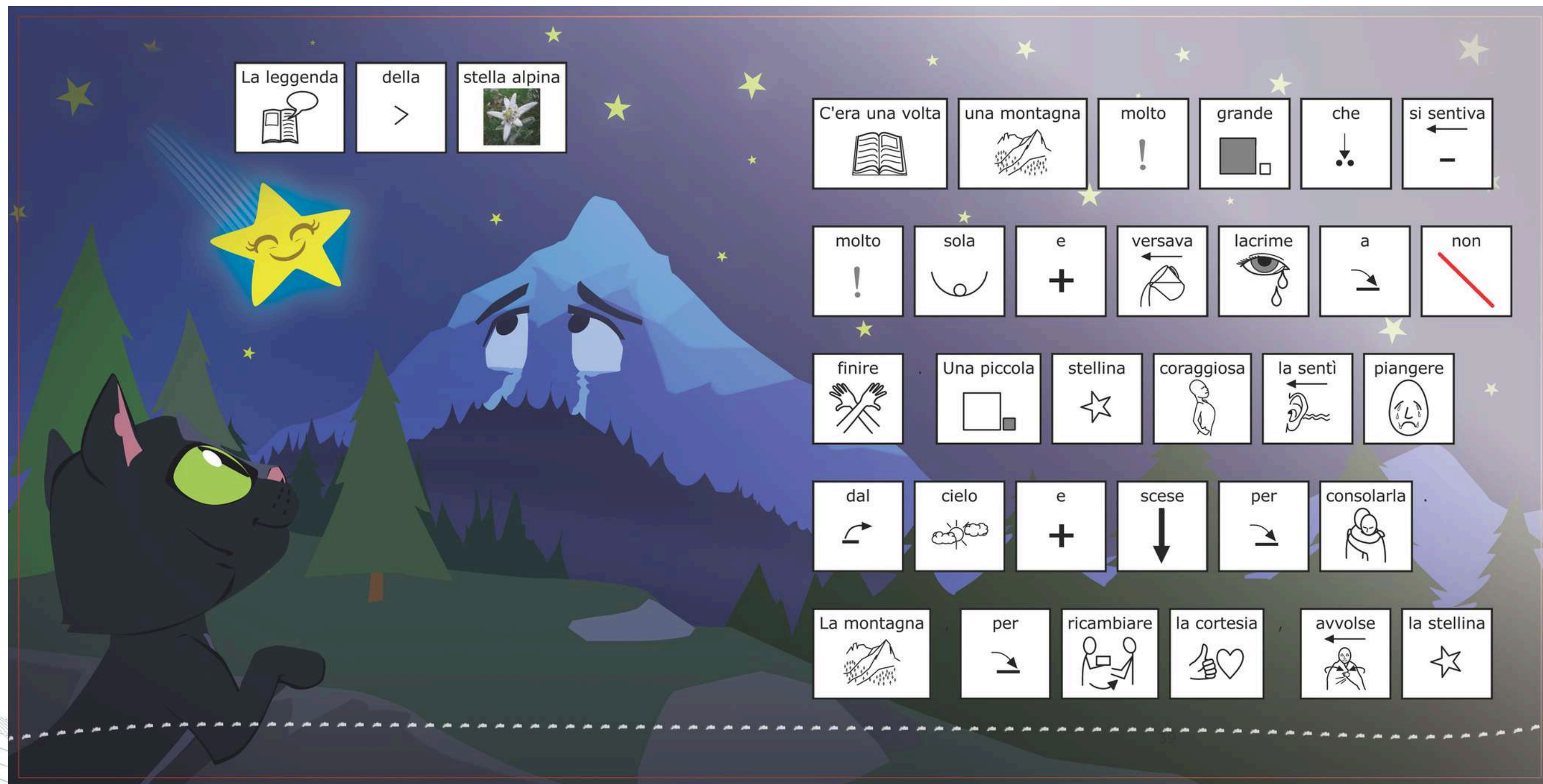
Clear, engaging, accessible to all.

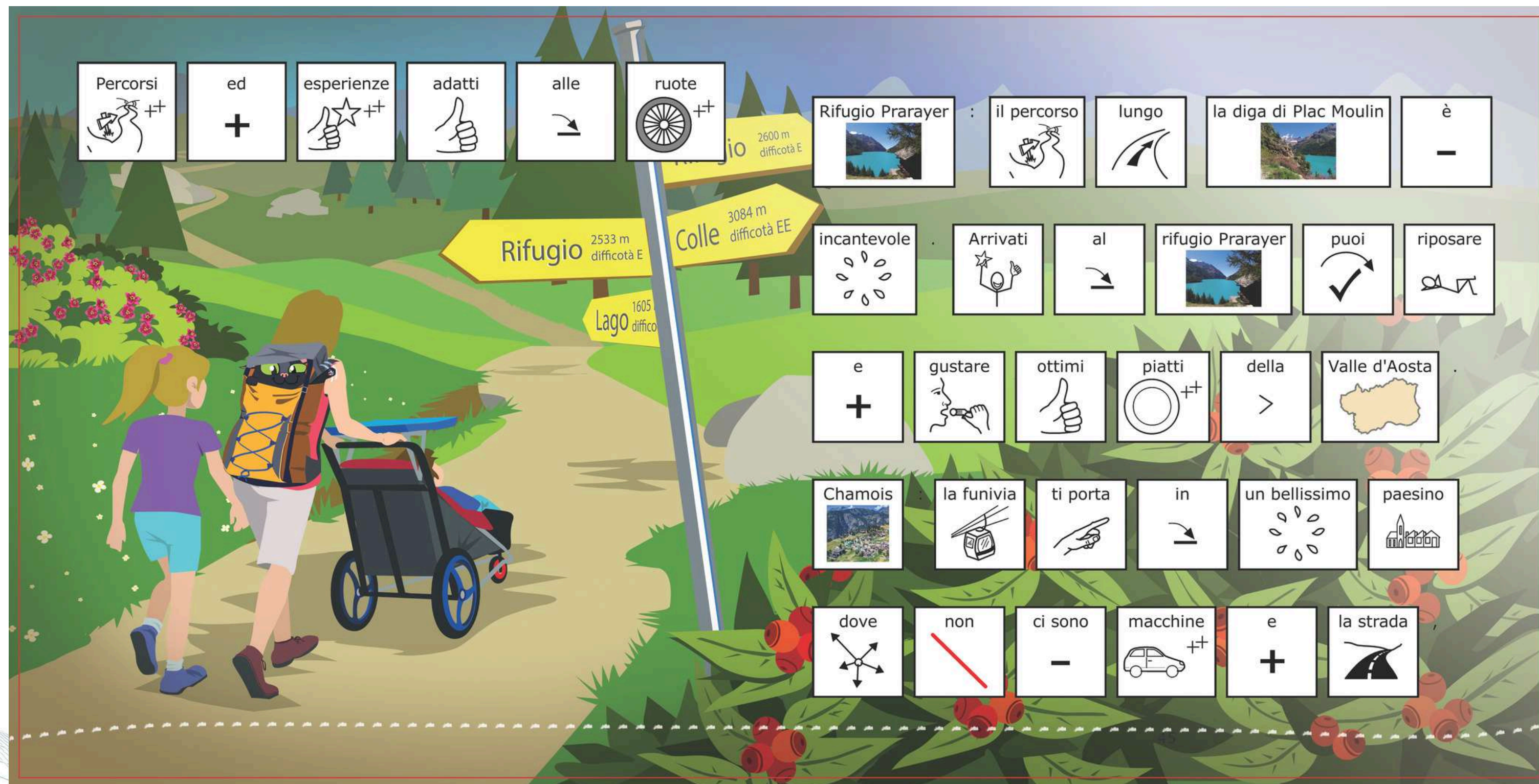
**The guide is distributed free of charge.
throughout the Aosta Valley.**



Aosta nel tempo

Aosta è il capoluogo della Valle d'Aosta. È stata fondata dall'Imperatore romano Augusto. Ancora oggi Aosta è piena di monumenti Romani: il Ponte Romano proprio come quelli che costruivano i Romani per attraversare i fiumi.





Key Outcomes

- Children with CCN more engaged and autonomous during travel.
- Families feel welcomed and included.
- Raised awareness among tourism providers about communication disabilities.
- Strong collaboration between families, professionals, institutions.

Accessibility means every child can
understand, explore, and enjoy the world

Thank You

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