



October 2008

EUROPEAN DAYS OF AUTISM 2008

At the occasion of the European Day of Autism 2008, Autism-Europe – in cooperation with the Hungarian Autistic Society – will host a conference on adapted care for persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Budapest on October 4th.

Over 150 international stakeholders (both parents and professionals) will meet to exchange experiences on adapted care under a right-based approach to disability. Best practices to promote inclusion and life-long learning of persons with ASD will also be shared.

The purpose of this event is to raise awareness of the specific needs of persons with ASD across Europe and the active measures to be implemented to allow them to develop their unique potential. It also intends to bring together actors from across the EU in order to promote partnerships and cooperation.

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND EUROPEAN DAYS OF AUTISM,
AUTISM EUROPE RECALLS THE FOLLOWING TO THE MEMBER STATES
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe should pay a particular attention to autism considering the high prevalence of this disability.

On the basis of evidenced scientific data, we know today that autism is not a rare condition and if the whole spectrum of autistic disorders is considered, the disability can affect 0.6% of the population. This means that **Europe (including all members of the Council of Europe) counts around 5 million people with autism.**

Autism is a significant lifelong disability, due to multiple medical causes, interfering with the normal development and functioning of the brain, sometimes identifiable in very early childhood. Autism deeply affects the way the person communicates and relates with his or her environment. This disability affects the vital areas of psychological and behavioural development, generally through the life span.

Autism can affect any family, regardless of ethnic or social class, and it is four times more frequent in males than in females.

The Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe should pay a particular attention to the respect of their dignity and their human rights

For guaranteeing their full dignity, people with autism should not be considered nor treated as a population that is not able to achieve goals such as independence and self-determination.

People with autism have of course the same human value as anyone else and as such, have the same human rights. In particular, people with autism must benefit from all same rights as those which must be preserved and defended for all people with disabilities.

But, because of the complexity of their needs, they form an especially vulnerable group even among disabled persons. As underlined by the Council of Europe, people with autism are often the subject of more serious discriminations.

Indeed, and in spite of the availability of good models, most persons with autism do not benefit from scientific, medical, educational and social progress made during the last decades in reference to this disability.

As a consequence, people with autism are still, in great majority, deprived from personalised specialised education and treatment which would permit them to truly improve.

This deprivation generates much suffering and additional difficulties, and constitutes a form of discrimination that Autism-Europe is strongly committed to fight against.

Autism-Europe requests that the Member States pay a particular attention to adapted care and education for people with autism under this rights-based approach.

No person with autism should be deprived of the freedom to develop his or her own way of life in a way as independent a way as possible.

The development of their unique potential depends more on the availability of suitable, early, comprehensive and lifelong support than on the degree of individual impairment.

- **Suitable, early, comprehensive and lifelong support requests positive actions and active measures to be put in place by the national systems.**
 - Member States must ensure that persons with autism have access to appropriate and early diagnosis and treatment, “in accordance with internationally accepted medical standards”. People with autism must also have access to the ordinary healthcare services and receive the care that is appropriate to their health needs, in accordance with the same standards afforded to other persons.
 - Member States must ensure that persons with autism receive appropriate education all life long. For people with autism, education represents a lot more than a basic right. Education is indispensable to compensate for the great difficulties that people with autism have in extracting meaning from simple experiences, something most other people are capable of without specific educational support. Children with autism should be referred for free appropriate education from pre-school age. A specialized educational approach should engage the pupil in developmentally appropriate educational activities, on the sole basis of the child’s best interest, strengths and needs. The priorities of the family should always be taken into account. Adults with autism should benefit from a continuing education to reach as far as possible an independent way of life and to be included in work.

Autism-Europe considers that in Europe - but also outside Europe - there is an urgent need for sharing knowledge and best practices between countries for achieving these goals. Autism-Europe requests that the Member share and adopt these best practices.

Autism-Europe is an international association whose main objective is to advance the rights of persons with autism and their families and to help them improve their quality of life.

Autism-Europe's overarching mission is indeed to improve the quality of life of all persons with autism and their families by promoting and defending their rights. This is achieved through:

- Representing persons with autism towards all European institutions
- Promoting awareness on the appropriate care, education, and well-being of persons with autism
- Promoting the exchange of information, good practices and experience.

Autism-Europe constitutes a European network which ensures effective liaison between approximately 80 member associations of parents of persons with autism in 30 European countries, governments and European and international institutions.

In order to implement its objectives, Autism Europe has built strategic alliances with social partners to maximise its impact on EU policies. Autism-Europe is a founding member of and strictly collaborates with the European Disability Forum and the Platform of European Social NGOs.

Autism-Europe has also established a structured dialogue with the European Institutions of the European Union, and of the Council of Europe, as well as with the World Health Organisation.

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