

Link



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Autism - Europe



World Autism Awareness Day 2014

Employment – Innovative approaches
for people with autism

EU Structural Funds
and disability organisations

Bringing visibility to **women with autism**

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Dear friends,

Once again in 2014, April 2 has been marked by a multitude of events for World Autism Awareness Day. On this day, we remind the world of the difficulties and barriers faced by people with autism and their families. Among these, the lack of access to education and employment are critical issues to be addressed. As the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, reminded us all in his World Autism Awareness Day message this year: "Education and employment are key. Schools connect children to their communities. Jobs connect adults to their societies." His words echoed the work on this theme led by Autism-Europe this year, in cooperation with an international legal research centre, concerning the implementation of the right to education and employment throughout Europe.



People with autism require specific forms of support to assist them to overcome their difficulties in communication and social interaction at work. At the same time,

however, people with autism can have traits and tendencies that can be valuable assets for employers, such as paying strong attention to detail, a preference for repetitive tasks and perseverance. It is this potential that we seek to celebrate through our campaign 'Autism and work. Together we can.' Throughout the pages of this magazine, you will find examples of innovative approaches to employing people with autism. These initiatives take many diverse forms, from small family businesses to projects within multinational companies – and they are rapidly multiplying across Europe and around the world.

We hope this edition will inspire you, and finally, we would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all of those who have worked tirelessly towards greater inclusion of people with autism through actions on World Autism Awareness Day and throughout the rest of the year.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

Yours sincerely,

Zsuzsanna Szilvásy
President

Aurélie Baranger
Director

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March in blue for autism awareness in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain, to mark World Autism Awareness Day 2014.
Photo from GAUTENA.

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Against Discrimination



The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or opinion of the European Commission.

World Autism Awareness Day 2014

Now in its eighth year, this day was declared by the United Nations to raise global awareness of autism on April 2 each year.

Autism-Europe members were active all over Europe and in other parts of the world, making this day a success through our campaign on autism and employment, flash mobs, balloon releases, public marches, film screenings, conferences, football matches, bell-ringing ceremonies at stock exchanges and buildings lit up in blue. On the following pages we highlight some of the creative ways that Autism-Europe and our members drew public attention to autism.

Campaigning for employment for people with autism

On World Autism Awareness Day this year, Autism-Europe members conducted a common campaign to raise awareness across Europe about the potential and needs of adults with autism in the fields of employment and education.

The key points of our campaign:

- **Education** – People with autism need access to lifelong education, adapted to their needs, including higher education and vocational training;
- **Jobs** – Studies show that between 76 and 90 per cent¹ of adults with autism are currently unemployed;
- **Unique skills** – People with autism can have unique skills that may be harnessed to produce a high quality of work, making them a valuable asset to their employers;
- **Investment** – Education, training and employment initiatives for adults with autism are investments that require both public and private support;
- **Social inclusion** – People with autism often suffer from social exclusion. Education and employment can enable them to take more active roles in their communities, rather than being dependent on family and social support.

At least 17 of Autism-Europe’s member organisations from 13 countries participated in the campaign, using campaign materials prepared by Autism-Europe, such as press releases, feature articles, graphic banners, posters, images and social media content.

For more information on the campaign:

www.autismeurope.org/activities/world-autism-awareness-day/

¹ Aspirtch, Autism Speaks, Specialisterne / The National Autistic Society (NAS) via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.



Images (from top to bottom) :

Images from the awareness-raising campaign by Autism-Europe and our members, 'Autism and work. Together we can.' and a campaign banner that was hung from the Town Hall in La Garriga, Spain (Autisme la Garriga).

World Autism Awareness

United Nations echoes Autism-Europe's call for employment opportunities for adults with autism

This year's World Autism Awareness Day is a chance to celebrate the creative minds of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and to renew our pledge to help them realize their great potential.

I treasure my meetings with individuals affected by autism – parents, children, teachers and friends. Their strength is inspiring. They deserve all possible opportunities for education, employment and integration.

To measure the success of our societies, we should examine how well those with different abilities, including persons with autism, are integrated as full and valued members.

Education and employment are key. Schools connect children to their communities. Jobs connect adults to their societies. Persons with autism deserve to walk the same path. By including children with different learning abilities in mainstream and specialized schools, we can change attitudes and promote respect. By creating suitable jobs for adults with autism, we integrate them into society.

At this time of economic constraint, governments should continue to invest in services that benefit persons with autism. When we empower them, we benefit current and future generations.

Tragically, in many parts of the world, these individuals are denied their fundamental human rights. They battle discrimination and exclusion. Even in places where their rights are secured, too often they still have to fight for basic services.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides a strong framework for action to create a better world for all.

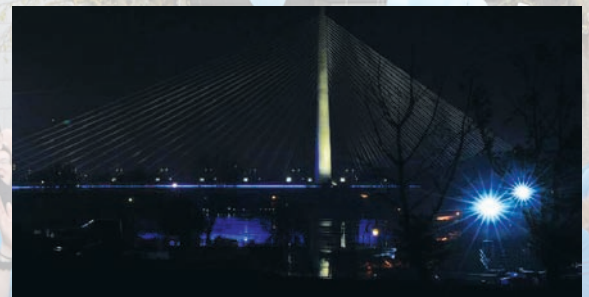
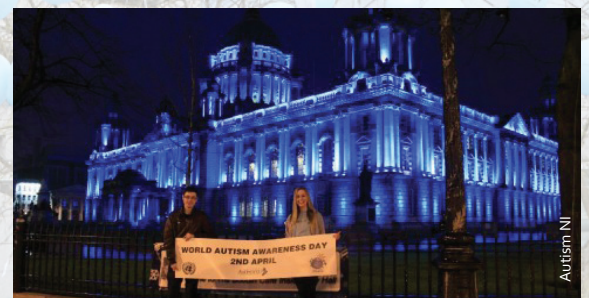
World Autism Awareness Day is about more than generating understanding; it is a call to action. I urge all concerned to take part in fostering progress by supporting education programmes, employment opportunities and other measures that help realize our shared vision of a more inclusive world.

Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General

Read the full text at:
www.un.org/en/events/autismday/2014/sgmessage.shtml



*Images (from top to bottom):
Bastione di Saint Remy in Cagliari, Italy
(Associazione Diversamente Onlus);
Château de Bragança, Portugal
(Federação Portuguesa de Autismo);
Pelourinho in Vila Real de Santo António,
Portugal (Federação Portuguesa de Autismo);
Belfast City Hall, Northern Ireland (Autism NI);
Ada Bridge in Belgrade, Serbia
(Serbian Society of Autism);
The Town Hall in Torricella, Switzerland
(ARES Foundation).*

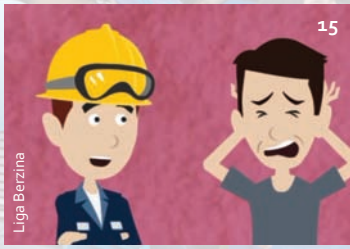


Autism NI

Torricella Council

Day 2014

Europe



Images:
 1 - Flash mob at the Capitoline Hill in Rome, Italy (Gruppo Asperger and other autism organisations).
 2 - A march in blue for autism awareness in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain (GAUTENA).
 3 - An awareness-raising football match in Rome, Italy (Gruppo Asperger and other autism organisations).
 4 - Musical activities in Burgos, Spain (Autismo Burgos).
 5 - The 'HugBike' initiative (a tandem bicycle designed to enable a person with autism to safely enjoy riding a bicycle with another person) was presented to the Pope in Vatican City (Fondazione Oltre il Labirinto ONLUS, Italy).
 6 - Her Royal Highness Princess Marie of Denmark joined people with autism and representatives of Autism Denmark during an awareness-raising running race in Taastруп, Denmark.

7 - The Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw, Poland (SYNAPSIS Foundation).
 8 - Representatives of the Federação Portuguesa de Autismo rang the stock exchange's closing bell to raise awareness of autism in Lisbon, Portugal.
 9 - Conference on autism in Athens, Greece (Greek Society for the Protection of Autistic People).
 10 - Activities held as part of a meeting for the Together We Can Manage project to promote employment opportunities for people with autism in the Czech Republic (APLA Prague).
 11 - Autism-Europe Director, Aurélie Baranger, joined representatives from government and Belgian autism organisations at a bell-ringing ceremony to open the day's trading at the stock exchange in Brussels, Belgium.
 12 - Autism-Europe's Vice President, Evelyn Friedel, joined representatives of French autism organisations in a ceremony in which a young man with autism rang the bell to close the day's trading at the Euronext stock exchange in Paris, France.
 13 - An interactive cube enabled people who walked inside it to experience some of the sensory challenges of people with autism through multimedia simulations in Warsaw, Poland (SYNAPSIS Foundation).
 14 - Palace of Arts in Budapest, Hungary (The International Cseperedő Foundation).
 15 - An animated film on the topic of autism and employment was created in Riga, Latvia (Latvian Autism Association).
 Background image - Blue balloons were released in Luxembourg (Fondation Autisme Luxembourg).

World Autism Awareness Day 2014

European Parliament tweets across Europe about autism and employment

On April 2, the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, expressed his support for Autism-Europe's campaign through Twitter, calling for innovative employment opportunities for people with autism.

His support was followed by tweets in 21 languages from the European Parliament, helping us to raise awareness throughout Europe.

Share the latest updates on autism with us via Twitter: www.twitter.com/AutismEurope and/or Facebook: www.facebook.com/autismeurope.AE



Europski parlament @Europarl_HR
Svjetski je dan osvještanja problema autizma. Autizam zahvaća jedno od 150 djece @AutismEurope @ autismeurope.org

Evropský parlament @Europarl_CZ
Dneska je Světový den porozumění autismu: poruchy autistického spektra postihují +/- 1 ze 150 dětí. Více autismus.cz @AutismEurope

Europa-Parlamentet @Europarl_DA
Verdens #AutismAwareness-dag. Lidelser på #autisme-spektrret berører 1 ud af 150 børn. Mere info @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

Europees Parlement @Europarl_BE
2 april #Wereldautismedag. Ongeveer 1 op 150 mensen heeft een autismespectrumstoornis Meer info @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

European Parliament @Europarl_EN
World #Autism Awareness Day. #Autism Spectrum Disorders affects around 1 in 150 children. More info @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

EP President @EP_President
On World #Autism Awareness Day, I support the @AutismEurope and @UN call for innovative employment opportunities for people with autism
11:57 AM - 2 Apr 2014

Euroopan parlamentti @Europarl_FI
Tänään maailman autismpäivä. Lue lisää @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

EuroParlement @EP_Belgium
Journée mondiale de sensibilisation à l'autisme. Il affecte près d'1 enfant sur 150. Plus d'infos @AutismEurope bit.ly/1e8xscw

Parlaimint na hEorpa @Europarl_GA
Inniu = Lá Idirnáisiúnta um Fheasacht Uathachais. Neamhord ar speictream an uathachais ag páiste amháin as 150 @IrishAutism @AutismEurope

Europaparlament @Europarl_DE
Heute ist #Weltautismustag. 1 von 150 Kindern ist autistisch. Mehr Informationen @AutismEurope:ow.ly/vk9Bq

Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο @Europarl_EL
Παγκόσμια ημέρα παιδιών με αυτισμό. 1 στα 150 παιδιά με αυτιστικό πρόβλημα @AutismEurope autismeurope.org #EK

Európal Parliament @Europarl_HU
Ma van az autisták világnapja. @AutismEurope ow.ly/vkaj3

Parlamento europeo @Europarl_IT
È la giornata mondiale dell'autismo. I disordini a spettro autistico toccano 1 bambino su 150 @AutismEurope ow.ly/vivS9

Europos Parlamentas @Europarl_LT
04/02 minima Pasaulinė #Autism diena: pasaulyje 1 iš 150 vaikų turi autizmo spektro sutrikimą: @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

Parlament Evropew @Europarl_MT
Il-Jum Dinji tal-Awtizmu. L-ispettru tad-dizordnijiet tal-awtizmu jaffettwa 1 minn kull 150 tifel/tifa @AutismEurope ow.ly/viiYe

PE Biuro w Polsce @PE_Polska
Światowy Dzień Wiedzy o #Autyzm - Choroba dotyka 1 na 150 dzieci. Dowiedz się więcej @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

Parlamento Europeu @Europarl_PT
Dia Mundial Consciencialização #Autismo. Doenças espectro autismo afetam 1 em 150 crianças. + info @AutismEurope ow.ly/vk9cL

Parlamentul European @Europarl_RO
Ziua internațională de conștientizare a autismului: boala afectează un copil din 150. Info @AutismEurope ow.ly/vi9ko

EP Bratislava @EP_Bratislava
Dnes si pripomíname Svetový deň povedomia o autizme, ktorým trpí každé jedno zo 150 detí. @AutismEurope Viac info: autismeurope.org

Evropski parlament @Europarl_SL
Svetovni dan avtizma: motnja prizadene enega izmed 150 otrok @AutismEurope ow.ly/vi65y

Parlamento Europeo @Europarl_ES
#DiaMundial para concienciar sobre el #Autismo, que afecta a 1 de cada 150 niños. Infórmate en ow.ly/vhhCJ @AutismEurope

Europaparlamentet @Europarl_SV
#Världsautismdagen: #Autismspektrumstörningar påverkar ungefär vart 150:e barn. Mer information på @AutismEurope autismeurope.org

Working with autism works

Throughout Europe and around the world, companies large and small are discovering the mutual benefits of hiring people with autism. This article explores some of their diverse and innovative approaches.

Once thought to be a rare disorder, today between 1 in 100 and 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism¹. These children are growing up to become an increasing number of adults with autism – around 3.3 million in the European Union. While access to diagnosis and therapies for children with autism is improving across Europe, in most regions, they grow up to face widespread unemployment and little or no support as adults.

Studies have shown that between 76² and 90³ per cent of adults with autism are unemployed. Perhaps these statistics are not surprising, given that people with autism commonly experience difficulties with the social and communication aspects of work, including job interviews, understanding managers' instructions, managing their time and interaction with colleagues. Yet, the barriers to employment that people with autism face are not only caused by their autism. They also face much stigma and discrimination when trying to get or maintain a job. In fact, despite the barriers they face, adults with autism often really want to work and can be exceptionally capable of doing particular jobs. A study in the United Kingdom showed that 79 per cent of people with autism who receive unemployment payments from the government say they would like to work, with the right support.⁴ They simply need assistance to overcome the barriers they face.

Providing the right support to enable people with autism to work is exactly what a growing number of companies around the world are now doing. A well-known pioneer among them is Danish IT organisation, Specialisterne. Started in 2004 by the father of a young man with autism, the company employs a majority of people with autism. The employees with autism work on tasks such as software testing, programming and data-entry for corporate clients. Specialisterne sees the unique traits of people with autism such as attention to detail, enjoying repetitive tasks, lack of tolerance for errors, persistence and loyalty, as skills that may be harnessed to produce a high quality of work, making them a valuable asset to their employers. Now operating in 10 countries around the world, Specialisterne has already helped several hundred people with autism to find jobs and has a grand vision: to enable the creation of one million jobs around the world for people with autism.

To achieve this vision, the company also works with external companies including Nokia, Deloitte, Cisco, Microsoft and Oracle, to create jobs for people with autism and provide recruitment, training and support services for these employees. For example, Specialisterne is currently working with multinational German software company, SAP, to create jobs around the world for people with autism.



Autisme La Garriga



Starting in India and Ireland, the company has hired employees with autism to work on software testing and similar tasks. SAP sees a potential competitive advantage to leveraging the unique talents of people with autism, while also helping them to secure meaningful employment. Based on the success of the programme so far, the company has now decided to increase the proportion of its employees with autism to around one per cent by 2020.

In almost every workplace, social and communication skills among employees are necessary to enable everyday problems to be solved and unforeseen tasks to get done. When employees with autism have difficulties to handle these tasks due to the limitations of their condition, there must be a way to deal with this. A small software testing company in Belgium, called Passwerk, has strategies to handle these situations in the workplace. Inspired by Specialisterne, Passwerk employs people who have autism and provides training and coaching for its employees not only in professional development, but also in social skills development, tailored to each employee's individual needs. In addition, when an employee is unable to carry out a particular task, due to the limitations of their autism, a 'job coach' will step in to assist. Passwerk has one job coach for every seven employees with autism. The job coaches work closely with the employees who have autism, acting as a first point of contact for both employees and customers. As in most workplaces, each employee's skills are put to use in the most appropriate and efficient way possible, so that together the team gets the job done well.

Although the stereotype of people with autism being good at working with computers seems to ring true to some extent, this is certainly not the only field in which people with autism can work. In the United States, a small farming business called Green Bridge Growers, was founded by the parents of a young man with autism who had graduated from university but found the social challenges of the workplace too difficult. The small company is succeeding to grow produce all year-round, primarily using a method called 'aquaponics' in which fish and vegetables grow in harmony. The company now employs a number of individuals on the autism spectrum and finds that the scheduling, precision and monitoring required in aquaponics is a terrific match for their skills.

Green Bridge Growers was founded to deal with a problem that highly intelligent adults with autism often face. After finishing secondary school, there are often few educational and employment opportunities suited to people with autism. A survey launched by Autism-Europe showed that only 37 per cent of adults with autism across Europe were able to receive professional and/or continuous training.⁵ For those who do manage to complete secondary school or even university, the social and communication challenges and lack of support and understanding of their condition, often lead them to be unable to get or maintain a job in the mainstream workforce. A study in the United Kingdom showed

that graduates with autism are twice as likely to be unemployed as any other disability group.⁶

With so many adults with autism who are willing and available to work, initiatives to employ people with autism are succeeding, and the idea is spreading around the world. This phenomenon is not only a result of initiatives specifically designed to employ people with autism, it is also a result of large international companies who want to achieve social as well as business goals and create a more diverse workforce. In 2007, Walgreens, a chain of pharmacies in the United States, opened a new distribution centre where more than 40 per cent of its staff are people with disabilities, including some with autism. An on-site training facility helps those with special needs become prepared for the job and all employees, with and without disabilities, meet the same productivity goals. Walgreens aims to fill 10 per cent of its distribution centre production jobs with people with disabilities, and is already more than halfway towards reaching this goal.

In Italy, cosmetic company L'Oréal has begun a long-term project to facilitate the employment of people with autism throughout their company. Aiming to integrate young adults in particular into their workforce, L'Oréal is working with Fondazione TEDA (an association for autism) to develop the project. Activities proposed to people with autism include administration tasks such as working with databases, updating files, data entry and archiving, as well as packaging cosmetics, quality checking, security and other tasks. The company has created training for employees with autism, other staff and managers and designated specific staff members to act as coaches for employees with autism. L'Oréal also has a policy to ensure they employ people with disabilities in at least two per cent of positions within the company. The company has found that strong cooperation with people with autism and the autism association, Fondazione TEDA, have been critical to the success of the project so far.

L'Oréal's long-term approach to employing people with autism reflects both a long-term commitment to people with autism as well as a smart business strategy. Research has shown that companies that have employees with disabilities report better staff retention rates, reducing the high cost of staff turnover. Other studies reveal that after one year of employment, the retention rate of people with disabilities is 85 per cent⁷.



Another inspiring example of employing people with autism is a group of people with autism who are creating jobs for themselves. The Laboratory of Exploratory Multimedia (LEM) Cooperative in Italy was founded in 2007 by a group of adults with Asperger syndrome who discovered through their conversations on an email list that they had a common difficulty of finding a satisfying job despite their technical and professional skills. The cooperative they formed now offers comprehensive services in web design, graphic design, desktop publishing and translation. They have also completed a project to train a small group of people with autism in digital archiving. Not only focused on work, the cooperative also organises social and cultural activities for people with autism.

While all people with autism have lifelong difficulties in communicating with, and relating to, other people, autism is a spectrum condition, which means that it affects each person differently. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives, going to university and developing professional skills, while others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support, 24 hours per day. But despite the level of their disability, that doesn't mean these people are unable to work at all.

Fondazione Oltre Labirinto onlus in Italy is developing 'Godega4Autism', a residence and social enterprise for adults with autism in the Italian province of Veneto. With a focus on local tourism, residents will be able to engage in employment activities including a working farm, food store, market, bakery, restaurant, bicycle hire and a campervan parking area. Some adults with autism will be able to fully earn their own living, while others (due to the severity of their autism) will make a modest contribution to their personal needs. As well as providing employment for the residents, these activities aim to enable the residents to interact with, and play a meaningful role in, their local community, and make the village financially sustainable. The development of Godega4Autism began in 2008 and continues today.

The social interaction provided by work at Godega4Autism and other workplaces provides a way to overcome a barrier that many adults with autism face: social isolation. A survey by Autism-Europe⁸ found that across Europe, social life for people with autism remains difficult, if not non-existent, in the majority of cases. Without employment, many adults with autism are socially isolated and largely dependent on family and social support.

Employment is more than just a job for people with autism – it enables them to live more fulfilling and independent lives. Companies around the world are also realising that employing people with autism goes beyond philanthropy and corporate social responsibility; utilising their skills and creating a more diverse workforce can help companies succeed, benefiting everyone involved.

More information:

www.autismeurope.org/campaigns/autism-and-employment/



Sesame Autisme

¹ Autism-Europe, 2009, Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Identification, Understanding, Intervention.
² The National Autistic Society via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.
³ Autism Speaks; Specialisterne; Aspiretech; United Kingdom Office for National Statistics (2001), Census Report.
⁴ The National Autistic Society via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.
⁵ Survey launched by Autism-Europe in 2001-02 among its members and any interested European organisations via the European Disability Forum and the Platform of European Social NGOs.
⁶ The National Autistic Society via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.
⁷ Unger, D. D., 2002, 'Employer's attitudes toward persons with disabilities in the workforce: myths or realities? Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities'.
⁸ Survey launched by Autism-Europe in 2001-02 among its members and any interested European organisations via the European Disability Forum and the Platform of European Social NGOs.



Autisme La Garriga



A report on Autism-Europe's Annual General Assembly and related events, 2014 Focusing on autism and employment

In May, 57 representatives of autism organisations from 24 countries met in Luxembourg City for Autism-Europe's 2014 Annual General Assembly. The annual meeting was combined with a study visit and a Council of Administration meeting. Some highlights from the meetings are outlined below.

Policy development on autism and employment

A workshop was held in which Autism-Europe members raised their concerns and discussed their experiences in developing solutions in the field of employment for people with autism. Members' contributions to this discussion will be used in the development of the report on autism and employment that Autism-Europe will produce this year.

New international employment initiative

A representative of German company, SAP, presented the company's initiative to promote employment opportunities for people with autism around the world.

Training session on education and employment rights of people with autism under the UNCRPD

A training session on the topic of education and employment rights of people with autism under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was held by a representative of the International Institute for Legal Studies of the Italian National Research Council.

De-brief session following common European campaign on World Autism Awareness Day 2014

A workshop session was held to discuss the outcomes of the common campaign by Autism-Europe and our member organisations on World Autism Awareness Day in 2014, on the theme 'Autism and work. Together we can.'

Elections for Autism-Europe's Council of Administration

At the Annual General Assembly, 22 members were elected (or re-elected) to join Autism-Europe's Council of Administration. According to Autism-Europe's statutes, elections are held every two years to select candidates for half of the positions on Autism-Europe's Council of Administration. Details of all current members of the Council of Administration can be found on the Autism-Europe website.

Report on the activities of Autism-Europe in 2013

Autism-Europe's activities in 2013 including our international congress, 30th anniversary publication and cooperation with the European Disability Forum on policy and advocacy for people with autism and other disabilities at the European level were presented.

Meeting for adults who have Asperger syndrome

A meeting was held for participants with Asperger syndrome from Luxembourg and other parts of Europe, in which they shared their experiences.

Study visit to a residential service of Fondation Autisme Luxembourg

Autism-Europe members also attended a study visit to a residential service of Fondation Autisme Luxembourg, located in Munshausen, Luxembourg. At the residence, tours of the facilities were provided to Autism-Europe members, with the opportunity to ask questions to facilitate sharing of knowledge. Presentations were also given by Fondation Autisme Luxembourg. The study visit gave participants an opportunity to learn about the Luxembourgish organisation and the general situation of people with autism in Luxembourg.



Thank you to our Luxembourgish hosts

The meetings were generously hosted by Autism-Europe's Luxembourgish member, Fondation Autisme Luxembourg, (www.fal.lu) and we extend our kindest thanks for all your efforts to make the meetings successful and enjoyable for everyone involved.

The presentations from these meetings are available under the 'Members' section of Autism-Europe's website.



Ensuring support for people with disabilities under the EU Structural Funds 2014-2020

A brief overview for autism organisations

During the European Union's new budget period from 2014 to 2020, Structural Funds will be allocated to all regions within each Member State. There are new rules governing the Structural Funds and these include objectives related to social inclusion of people with disabilities, as well as obligations to involve organisations of people with disabilities in designing and monitoring how the funds are spent at national and regional levels. The following article provides a brief overview of how autism organisations can ensure that the rights of people with autism are upheld by participating in the decision-making processes related to Structural Funds in their own countries.

The EU Structural Funds

The European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund are together referred to as the 'Structural Funds'. These funds are provided by the European Union to Member States' regions with the aim of reducing the differences in the level of economic and social development across the diverse regions of Europe. The funds are available to all EU regions proportionally according to each region's level of gross domestic product (GDP).

Regulations and procedures

The rules covering the Structural Funds are set out in new regulations adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union*.



Each EU Member State will have a 'Partnership Agreement' which outlines its strategies and priorities for how the funding from the European Structural Funds will be used between 2014 and 2020. These agreements are decided between each Member State and the European Commission.

The partnership agreements are implemented in each Member State through 'Operational Programmes' which are set out by the relevant national and regional authorities. Operational Programmes determine the needs, priorities, objectives and allocation of the Structural Funds.

Support for people with disabilities

The regulations regarding the use of Structural Funds require Member States and regions to take actions aimed at combating social exclusion and poverty among people with disabilities,[#] and facilitating their integration into the labour market.

The Partnership Agreements must prioritise increasing the social inclusion of people from disadvantaged groups, in particular people with disabilities.

The Operational Programmes and the projects that are funded by the Structural

Funds must now meet specific requirements, called 'ex-ante conditionalities' to be eligible for EU Structural Funds. These include ensuring the involvement of organisations of people with disabilities in drafting the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes, as well as in the Monitoring Committees for the projects funded by the Structural Funds. The implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be promoted and supported "with regard inter alia to education, work, employment and accessibility. The ESF should also promote the transition from institutional to community-based care. The ESF should not support any action that contributes to segregation or to social exclusion."^{*}

Structural Funds can be used to fund many initiatives for people with disabilities, for example, transition from large residential institutions to community-based living services, accessibility, vocational training to assist disadvantaged populations (including people with disabilities) to get a job, training for professionals and staff in organisations of people with disabilities and services, as well as technical support for reforming legislative and financial frameworks related to disability.

Applying for Structural Funds

Once the Partnership Agreements have been agreed upon and the Operational Programmes have been approved by the European Commission, national governments will receive Structural Funds from the European Union (by the end of 2014).

The majority of the Structural Funds will then be distributed by regional level authorities according to the regional Operational Programmes, with a small amount also distributed by national authorities. Organisations of people with disabilities are eligible for Structural Funds which will be allocated by the relevant authorities in their own countries through public calls for projects.

Funding grants from the Structural Funds also require some co-funding. The amount of co-funding required is set according to the specific challenges a country needs to address in employment, social inclusion, education, and governance*.

Involvement of disability organisations

At the national level, the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes must take into account the needs and inclusion of people with disabilities. In order to do this, they must be developed in coordination with non-governmental organisations responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination; including disability organisations.

The implementation of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes

must be monitored at national and regional levels and civil society representatives must be included in the Monitoring Committees, with each member of the Monitoring Committee having a voting right.

Take action now for a better tomorrow

The European Commission is currently analysing the official Partnership Agreements received from 28 Member States. Operational Programmes outlining their investment plans for European Structural and Investment Funds for the 2014-2020 programming period are being finalised and will be soon submitted to the European Commission for approval. Regional Operational Programmes will be drafted according to the approved National Operational Programme of each country.

To ensure that Structural Funds will provide the best possible support for people with disabilities, it is important for autism organisations to be involved in the process of establishing the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes at the national and regional level through their national representative organisations of people with disabilities.

Avoiding and reporting violations

Another important reason for autism organisations and other disability organisations to be involved in the management and monitoring of the Structural Funds is the fact that in previous years, Structural Funds have not always been used in the best interests of people with disabilities. In some countries, especially in Eastern Europe, Structural Funds have been invested in large residential institutions for people with disabilities instead of services for community-based living. While the new regulations* dictate that the Structural Funds cannot be used to fund residential institutions for people with disabilities, the risk remains that some of these problems could be repeated if the Structural Funds are not carefully administered at the national level. Therefore it is necessary for disability organisations to be involved in each step of the planning, management and monitoring of the Structural Funds. All of these forms of participation by or-

How can autism organisations apply for EU Structural Funds?

The Structural Funds are distributed by each Member State. The relevant authorities in each Member State will make public calls for applications.

To ensure that these calls for applications prioritise projects that support people with disabilities, organisations of people with disabilities have the right to be involved in national processes to determine the priorities for spending, and monitoring the use of, the Structural Funds. Read the rest of this article for details on how to participate in these processes.

organisations of people with disabilities are mandatory under the new regulations.

In cases where EU regulations governing the use of the Structural Funds and involvement of disability organisations are not followed by national governments, it is possible to make complaints. If a complaint is valid and well documented, it is also possible for the European Union to take Structural Funds back from national governments. Complaints from organisations that are members of Autism-Europe can be sent to the Autism-Europe Secretariat. These may be forwarded to the European Disability Forum and then to the European Commission.

More information:

www.autismeurope.org/publications/european-funding-for-autism-organisations/

* Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and

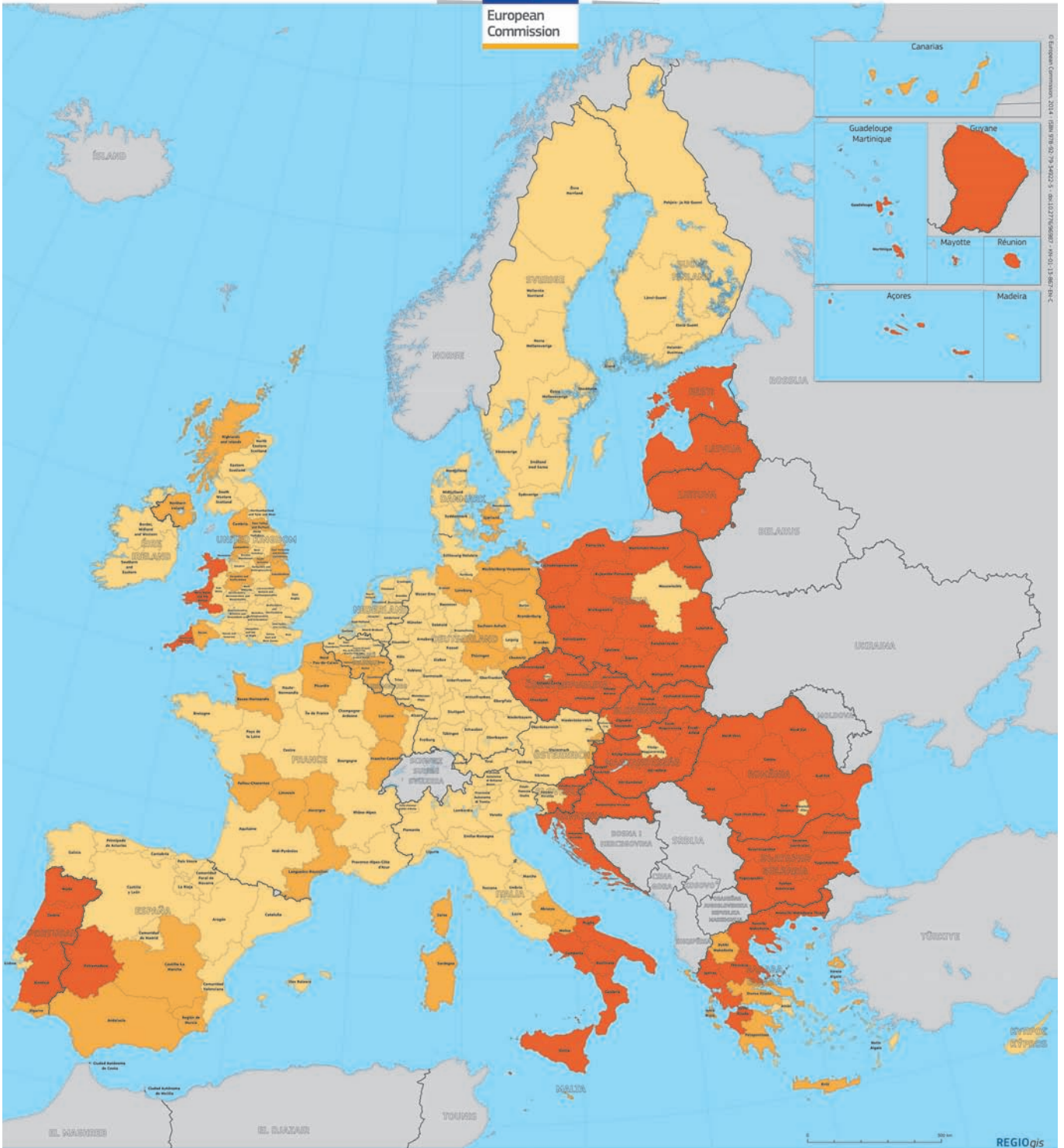
Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006.

* European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Guidance on Ex Ante Conditionalities Part II

* European Commission (2014), ESF: measures for success in 2014-2020.



Image: Discussion over Structural Funds at the European Parliament.



Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) eligibility 2014-2020

Category

- Less developed regions (GDP/head < 75% of EU-27 average)
- Transition regions (GDP/head between 75% and 90% of EU-27 average)
- More developed regions (GDP/head >= 90% of EU-27 average)

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REGIOgis



Interactive computer games to teach children with autism

The ASC-Inclusion project is developing interactive computer games that will help children with autism to understand and express emotions through facial expressions, tone-of-voice and body gestures. After three years in development, these games for children aged 5 to 10 years will soon be available. This article explores how the games will work and how they have been designed to meet the needs of children with autism.

Using the strengths of people with autism to overcome their difficulties

As a result of their condition, people who have autism often have difficulty in understanding emotions. This includes understanding and expressing their own emotions as well as recognising, understanding and responding appropriately to other people's facial expressions, tone-of-voice and body gestures.

While it might sound unusual to learn about emotions from a computer, research indicates that this is likely to be quite effective. Studies have shown that people with autism are hyper-attentive to detail and prefer predictable, rule-based environments and systems. Within such environments, individuals with autism show good, and sometimes even superior, systemising skills compared to the general population². Therefore, if children with autism are provided with a systematic method of learning about emotions, such as a structured, rule-based computer program, their systemising skills could be harnessed to help them learn to understand emotions. Based on this understanding, Autism-Europe and eight other organisations are developing state-of-the-art games to help children to understand emotions.

How the interactive emotion games will work

Upon opening the program, each child creates their own character within the game, choosing his or her characteristics such as hairstyle, clothing and facial features.

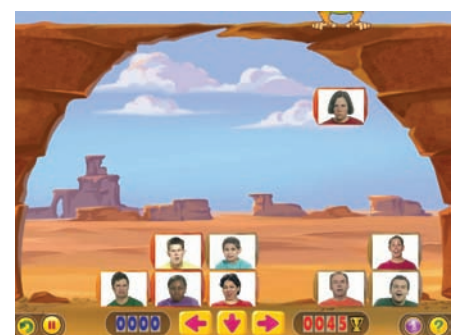
The character arrives on an animated island to work in an 'emotion research station'. Inside the research station, children are guided through interactive lessons about 12 basic emotions, featuring both human actors and animated characters. The children are then able to play games in which they must apply the knowledge they have gained about emotions through the lessons.

The program is designed so that when children play, they begin with relatively easy lessons and games, and as they successfully complete these, more difficult lessons and games are 'unlocked'. To motivate children to learn about emotions, the program contains a reward system in which the children gain coins for correct responses. The higher the level of difficulty of each lesson and game, the more coins they earn. The coins can be spent in the island's store, in which the children can buy clothing and toys for their characters.

As children progress through the levels of difficulty, interactive components are introduced to the lessons and games in which children are asked to express emotions using their own facial expressions, vocal intonation and body gestures. Using a standard microphone, web camera and Microsoft Kinect, the program's state-of-the-art technologies will analyse the children's expression of each emotion and provide them with corrective feedback.

The program will also include suggested activities for parents to do with their children who have autism in order to assist them to apply what they have learned in the games to their real world experiences. When children succeed at these real-world exercises, parents and carers can add coins for the child within the program's rewards system.

In addition, they will provide professionals, parents and carers with information, reports on children's progress and discussion forums.





about emotions

Meeting the needs of diverse children with autism

Children with autism can have a wide range of abilities in understanding emotions, so the games will enable players and their parents to personalise settings to meet their own needs.

The games will initially be available in nine languages (English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish) and additional language versions may be developed in future.

Developed through research with children who have autism

The software is being developed through a process of clinical research with 240 children who have autism in Sweden, Israel and the United Kingdom. The research aims to ensure that the software is effective through a process of determining the children's learning needs and repeated development and testing.

Increasing social inclusion

Difficulties in understanding emotions can put children with autism at risk of social exclusion. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 9) states that: "To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas." In accordance with the Convention, the games aim to assist children with autism to understand and interact with other people, and as a result, increase their quality of life and inclusion in society.

Developed by the ASC-Inclusion project

The interactive emotion games are being produced by the ASC-Inclusion project; a collaborative research project which brings together experts who specialise in human-computer interaction, educational computer games and autism research. The team comes from universities, companies and non-profit organisations across Europe.

The project partners include:

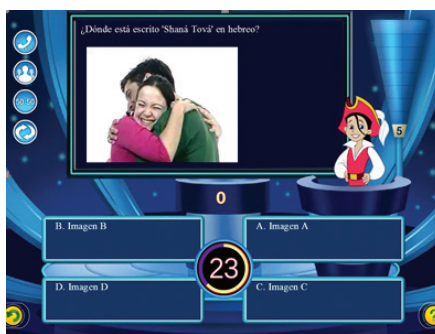
- University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
- Technische Universität München, Germany
- Bar Ilan University, Israel
- Compedia, Israel
- Università degli Studi di Genova, Italy
- Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
- Koç University, Turkey
- Spectrum ASC-Med, Poland
- Autism-Europe, Belgium

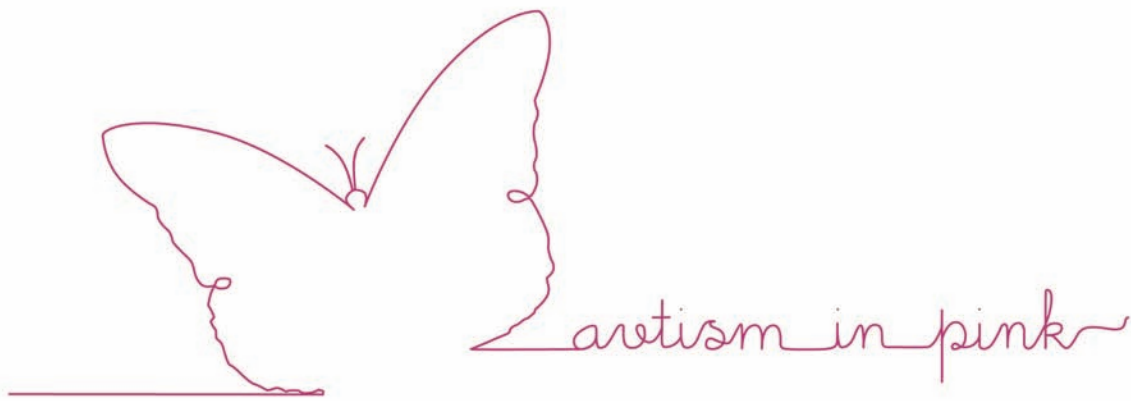
More information

By the beginning of 2015, the ASC-Inclusion interactive emotion games will be available in English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. For more information, news the releases of the program, events, launches and training, sign up for our online newsletter: www.asc-inclusion.eu or contact nikki.sullings@autismeurope.org

¹ Baron-Cohen, 2003.

The project leading to this software product is partially funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7-2007-2013) for Research and Technological Development under grant agreement n° 289021. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.





Bringing visibility to the needs of women and girls with autism

Miren Hurtado

For many years it has been widely understood that autism affects more males than females. A recent project, 'Autism in Pink', has called for further investigation into this topic.

Studies over many decades have shown that autism is around four times more frequent in males than in females¹. Researchers have theorised several possible reasons, including that it could be due to biological differences between genders or because the criteria used to diagnose autism are based on the behaviours of boys with autism, therefore many women with autism are not diagnosed and therefore not included in the statistics. However, there is currently no conclusive scientific evidence to explain why autism appears to be less common among girls.

The Autism in Pink project worked on identifying and raising awareness of the unique symptoms, difficulties and needs of women and girls with autism, in order to improve knowledge among professionals and improve diagnostic practices and support services.

Diagnosis

The difficulties faced by girls and women with autism begin with getting a diagnosis of autism – or more accurately, not getting a diagnosis. Currently, between 1 in 100 and 1 in 150 people are being diagnosed with autism in Europe – totalling around 3.3 million people in the European Union². Many experience difficulty getting a diagnosis, but for women in particular, autism is often overlooked or diagnosed late.

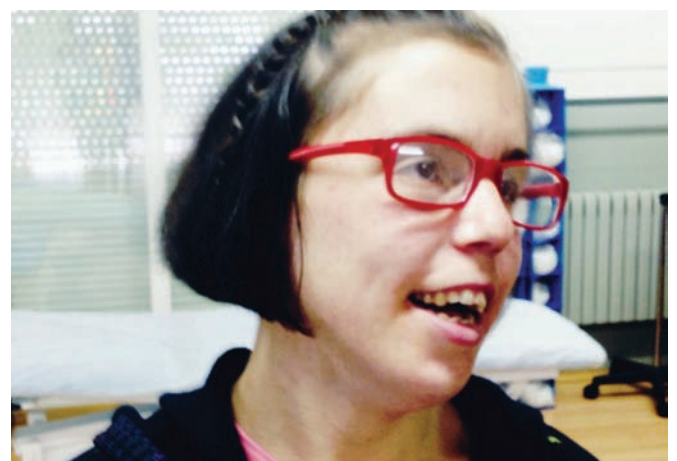
The ways in which women and girls display symptoms of autism tend to be less obvious than for men and boys. For example, studies have shown that girls with autism tend to carefully imitate

social behaviours of others more than boys do, perhaps masking the symptoms of autism³. This can lead healthcare professionals to evaluate their difficulties in the context of other mental health issues instead, possibly leading to incorrect diagnoses.

Studies have shown that the average age of diagnosis in women is around 20 years of age – much older than for the male population⁴. As many girls on the spectrum do not receive an accurate diagnosis as early in life as boys, it is likely that they are underrepresented in the statistics.

Support

Another consequence of not receiving a diagnosis until later in life is not being referred to appropriate healthcare and education until later in life. It is widely acknowledged that early diagnosis and intervention can assist people with autism to develop skills to overcome many of their difficulties throughout their lives. It seems that many girls and women with autism are missing out on the assistance they need early in life. When women with autism seek assistance later in life, they often encounter a lack of appropriate services; a problem faced by many adults with autism. In cases where women are fortunate enough to access services for adults, education and healthcare professionals are often not aware of the specific needs of women with autism. Ultimately, delayed and inadequate support leads women – even more than men – with autism to experience difficulties in fulfilling their own potential later in life.



Employment

Between 76 and 90 per cent of adults with autism in Europe are unemployed⁵. The difficulties in communication and social interaction experienced by all adults with autism make job interviews and interactions with managers and colleagues very challenging. The lack of understanding of autism and lack of support from employers also creates many barriers to employment for adults with autism. Women with autism who are employed not only face these difficulties, but also the discrimination faced by neurotypical women at work, including lower average pay levels and the 'glass ceiling' effect which favours men for promotions and higher level jobs. Therefore, women with autism are often unemployed or underpaid, under-supported and working in jobs that do not necessarily reflect their abilities⁶.

The Autism in Pink project

The Autism in Pink project was conceived as a collaborative project among several Autism-Europe members to increase the visibility of girls and women with autism, and to raise awareness of their specific needs.

The project's outcomes included:

- Training modules to highlight some of the obstacles faced by women with autism in their daily lives and to provide practical suggestions for solutions;
- A study on the prevalence and symptoms of autism among women and girls, their specific needs, issues in relation to diagnosis and other mental disorders;
- A documentary film, featuring the women with autism who took part in the project in each partner country;
- An online book with a collection of personal writings and drawings by women with autism;
- A qualitative research report about the lives of the women with autism who participated in the project;
- A study visit to raise their concerns with Members of the European Parliament in Brussels (see inset box);
- An international event held in Lisbon in May 2014, presenting the project's outcomes and featuring presentations, individual testimonies and discussion on the issues for women and girls with autism.

More information: www.autisminpink.net

¹ Kanner, 1943; Ehlers and Gillberg, 1993.

² Autism-Europe, 2010, Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Identification, Understanding, Intervention.

³ Atwood, 2007; Yauill-Smith, 2008; Gould & Ashton Smith, 2011.

⁴ Gomez de la Cuesta & Mason, 2010

⁵ Aspiritech; Autism Speaks; Specialisterne; The National Autistic Society (NAS) the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.

⁶ Research from Autism in Pink project, 2014

Autism in Pink was developed with the financial support of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme. Autism-Europe members, the National Autistic Society (United Kingdom), Autismo Burgos (Spain) and Federação Portuguesa de Autismo (Portugal), were partners in this project.

Images:

(left) Teresa and Celia at the day centre of Autismo Burgos, one of the partners in the project.

(above) Delegates from the 'Autism in Pink' project with the MEP Richard Howitt during the study visit at the European Parliament.



Calling for action from Members of the European Parliament

In March 2014, a group of women with autism, their families and delegates from the Autism in Pink project participated in a study visit organised in partnership with Autism-Europe to raise their concerns with Members of the European Parliament in Brussels.

The participants called for specific actions, including:

- Monitoring and implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities;
- Ensuring the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is harnessed to raise awareness of autism and autism in women;
- Ensuring the review of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 that is expected to be conducted in 2016 addresses the gender dimension in disability and autism in particular;
- Raising a question in the European Parliament on how the issue of under-diagnosis of autism among women and girls can be addressed (as a result, two parliamentary questions on women and autism were subsequently raised by MEPs);
- Calling on MEPs to take action on the European Parliament resolution of December 11, 2013 on women with disabilities (S2013/2065(INI)).

While in Brussels, the group of women also met with representatives from Autism-Europe, the European Disability Forum and the European Women's Lobby to raise broad awareness of the concerns of girls and women with autism.

After *Rain Man*:

Recent films about diverse adults with autism

Twenty five years ago, the film *Rain Man* raised millions of dollars at the box office and brought international attention to autism. For some in the autism community, this film also led to frustration with the growing public perception that people with autism are all extremely intelligent yet socially challenged individuals like Raymond, *Rain Man*'s main character. In recent years, many other films about autism have been released featuring more diverse portrayals of teenagers and adults with autism as they confront the challenges of adult life such as puberty, friendships, intimate relationships, work, bullying and the death of significant family members. Here, Autism-Europe brings you details of eight of these lesser-known films that you may find interesting to watch and show to others to raise awareness of autism – in all of its diverse forms.



The Black Balloon

(Australia, 2008)

Thomas is about to turn 16 and he just wants to have a normal adolescence. Yet, he is often called upon to take care of his brother Charlie, who has autism and is in need of a high level of support. When their family moves to a new town, Thomas is often embarrassed by Charlie's behaviour in public. When Thomas starts dating Jackie, a girl from his swimming class, he faces many obstacles as he confronts both his own desires and his sense of care and responsibility for his brother.

Original language: English
Available on DVD
Drama / Romance

More information:
www.aso.gov.au/titles/features/black-balloon



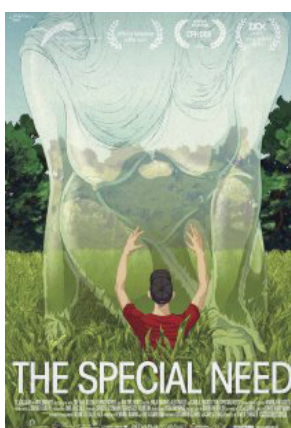
Ben X

(Belgium, 2007)

Ben is an adolescent with autism who is far more intelligent than his high school classmates, but also extremely shy and introverted. His life at school is hell as he is the daily target of cruel bullying. He finds refuge in his bedroom, where he plays his favourite online computer game, 'Archlord', in an attempt to train himself for the real world he lives in. As the horror of being bullied grows, he devises a plan in which he will stop being a victim and become a hero.

Original language: Dutch
Available on DVD
Drama / Thriller

More information:
www.benx.be



The Special Need

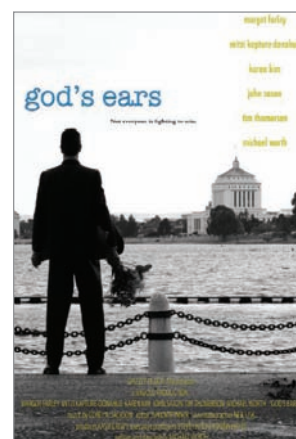
(Italy, 2013)

Enea is a 29 year-old Italian man with autism who really wants to have sex. Together with his friends, Carlo and Alex, he embarks on a road trip to Northern Europe. What begins as a search for a physical relationship becomes more complicated, raising questions about sex, love, emotions and friendship – and finds unexpected answers.

Original language: Italian
Documentary

More information:
www.thespecialneed.com

This film has been released in festivals across Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Italy and Greece, but is not yet available on DVD.



God's Ears

(United States, 2008)

Noah is an aspiring boxer who has autism. He spends most of his days cleaning the floors at his local gym, waiting for the perfect moment when he will finally step into the boxing ring. One day, he crosses paths with pole dancer, Alexia. The two become friends but when their friendship begins to show signs of turning into something more serious, they must both face their fears and challenge their perceptions of love.

Original language: English
Available on DVD
Drama

More information:
www.godsears.com



Temple Grandin

(United States, 2010)

University professor and autism self-advocate, Temple Grandin, is a top scientist in humane methods of handling livestock. This film portrays her early diagnosis of autism, her challenging childhood, the support she received from her family and science teacher, and her innate sensitivity to, and understanding of, animal behaviour. The film highlights her perseverance and determination while struggling with the challenges of autism at a time when the condition was still quite unknown.

Original language: English
Available on DVD
Biography / Drama

More information :
www.hbo.com/movies/temple-grandin



The Story of Luke

(United States, 2012)

Luke is a young man with autism who embarks on a mission to find a job and a girlfriend. After being raised by his grandparents in a loving and protective family environment, his world changes suddenly when his grandmother dies and he is forced to live with relatives. Luke must confront the challenges of leaving his previously sheltered existence behind to find a job and survive as an adult.

Original language: English
Available on DVD
Comedy / Drama

More information :
www.thestoryofluke.com



Snow Cake

(Canada, 2006)

When Alex picks up young hitchhiker, Vivienne, he has no idea that his life is about to change completely. A terrible accident occurs on the road and Vivienne dies on the spot. When Alex, who is traumatised by the accident, decides to visit Vivienne's mother, Linda, he discovers a woman with autism who is unable to show any emotion. When Linda convinces Alex to stay for a few days after the funeral, friendships evolve as Alex struggles to come to terms with what has happened.

Original language: English
Available on DVD
Drama / Romance

More information :
www.imdb.com/title/tt0448124



Mary and Max

(Australia, 2009)

Max is a forty-four year old, severely obese Jewish man with autism living in New York. Mary is a lonely, eight-year-old girl living in the suburbs of Melbourne. This animated film tells the story of a 20-year pen-friendship between two unlikely characters. Despite their differences, and the fact that they have never met in person, the bond between them grows. But when Mary goes to university and studies mental disorders and uses Max as a case study, their friendship is put to the test.

Original Languages:
English and Yiddish
Available on DVD,
iTunes and Netflix
Animation / Comedy / Drama

More information :
www.maryandmax.com



CinemAutismo film festival

CinemAutismo is an annual film festival in Turin, Italy, featuring films related to autism. The festival is held around World Autism Awareness Day each year since 2009, by the Associazione Museo Nazionale del Cinema. It aims to use cinema as an engaging and visual platform to raise public awareness of autism, provide new insights into the condition, and to stimulate discussion and debate. Several of the films above were screened at CinemAutismo in 2014.

More information : www.cinemautismo.it

Danish collaborative project to raise awareness about autism in Nepal

In Nepal, autism awareness among the population is increasing as a result of a co-operative project between autism organisations in Denmark and Nepal.

The 'Autism Awareness in Nepal' project is an initiative of the Danish Autism Society and AutismCare Nepal. The project aims to raise awareness of autism among parents, professionals and the public in Nepal.

Autism awareness in Nepal

In Nepal, autism awareness is a new phenomenon. The government does not recognise the needs of people with autism and there is no public support for them and their families. Knowledge about autism among parents, teachers, professionals, and the public is practically non-existent.

Currently, AutismCare Nepal is the only organisation in the country which raises awareness about autism. Based in the capital city, Kathmandu, it was founded in 2008 by a doctor who recognised that his son had symptoms of autism after reading an international medical journal. After his son was diagnosed in India, he founded AutismCare Nepal as well as a school which provides education for eight children with autism.

Making autism visible through the media

The 'Autism Awareness in Nepal' project organises media campaigns and events, including radio and television advertisements and articles for print media to raise awareness of autism among the population.

As part of the project's activities, AutismCare Nepal filmed a television advertisement to help parents of children with autism identify early signs of the condition. The advertisement has been broadcasted by Nepalese media in Nepali and five major regional languages including Maithili, Tamang, Newari, Tharu and Gurung.



Awareness-raising activities across Nepal

The project has also distributed information in schools and organised other awareness-raising activities such as street theatre performances. Street theatre performances have been carried out across the country in the districts of Damauli, Kaski, Syangja, Palp and Rupandehi. During the events, information materials about autism have been distributed among the audience.

These events provide parents who believe their children might have autism, but have not yet been diagnosed, an opportunity to learn about autism and discuss their concerns and experiences. Since the project has started, the number of parents who believe their children might have autism and want to learn more about it is increasing, and so is the membership of AutismCare Nepal.

Denmark and Nepal partnership

The two-year project will be completed in December 2014. It is funded by Danish disability organisations with government funding to assist people with disabilities in other countries. The Danish Autism Society plays a monitoring role in the project. It also shares knowledge in the field of diagnosis, intervention, and autism and ageing among parents of children with autism in Nepal.

The organisation's staff are also learning from their experiences with the Nepalese organisation, including gaining insight into autism symptoms present among those who have not benefited from receiving any form of therapy. Currently, both organisations are exploring future collaborations to continue improving the quality of life of people with autism in Nepal.

Images: The project carrying out education and awareness-raising activities in Nepal.



Autism strategy and action plan launched in Northern Ireland



Image: Members of Autism NI at an autism strategy meeting in Stormont.

The 'Autism NI Strategy (2013-2020)' and 'Action Plan (2013-2016)' were officially launched by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Minister for Health in early 2014.

The strategy and action plan aim to ensure that Northern Ireland meets the commitments it has made to people with autism under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The strategy and action plan set out how the needs of people with autism and their families and carers will be supported throughout their whole lives. Improvements in existing services will be achieved through service redesign, rather than new investment, and delivery of services at the community level.

The strategy is the result of years of campaigning by Autism-Europe member, Autism NI, and collaborative work among government departments, the voluntary and community sector, and people with autism, their families and carers.

More information: www.autismni.org/autism-strategy.html

European Commission publishes report on pilot projects to employ people with autism



The European Commission has published a new report, titled 'Results of four pilot projects on employment of persons with autism'.

The projects, conducted between 2011 and 2013 in Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Poland and Italy, aimed to improve the employment situation of people with autism, mainly through placing them in paid jobs.

The report highlights training (both for employees with autism and their colleagues), individualised approaches and ongoing support as key elements for the successful inclusion of people with autism at work.

More information: www.autismeurope.org/campaigns/autism-and-employment

New project to include people with disabilities in the open labour market in Europe



The JoTraDi project (Job Trainers for people with intellectual Disabilities and autism spectrum disorders) is a collaborative initiative for social inclusion in the open labour market in Europe.

The project will develop 'job trainers'; teachers and other relevant professionals who will be able to assist people with autism to gain employment in the open labour market.

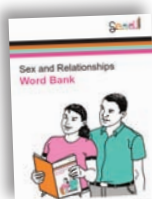
The project will also include a job placement programme to enable people with disabilities to gain work experience.

Autism-Europe is a partner in this project, among other European organisations.

The JoTraDi project has received funding from the European Commission, under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

For more information, contact rossellabrindani@cspmi.it

Online 'Sex and Relationships Word Bank' for people with learning disabilities



The 'Sex and Relationships Word Bank' is an easy-to-read document about sex and relationships, designed for people with learning disabilities, including people with autism.

It includes words and definitions related to friendships and relationships, body parts, sexuality, masturbation, safe sex, contraception and sexual abuse.

It has been produced as part of the SEAD project, in which Autism-Europe is a partner. The SEAD project aims to address the lack of information and knowledge in the field of sex education among adults with learning disabilities, their parents and staff of relevant organisations.

More information: www.sead-project.eu/words-to-use

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XI Autism-Europe International Congress



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