

World Autism Awareness Day 2012



As the number of people diagnosed with autism continues to grow every year, so does the number of events and activities held on World Autism Awareness Day. This day, declared by the United Nations in 2007, is held on April 2 each year. In 2012, Autism-Europe members held a wide range of activities, from concerts, film festivals and photo competitions to balloon releases, flash mobs, swimming the length of the English channel, and even a Guinness World Record attempt. Read on to find out more about all the creative and colourful ways that our members drew public attention to autism.

Actions around Europe

Croatia



Members of the Croatian Association for Autism organised events around the country. In Zagreb, a public event was held, with the Mayor of Zagreb and representatives of government ministries. In Kaštela, a special photo event was organised in which people created the shape of a puzzle piece as a symbol for autism on a beach.

Czech Republic



In Prague, APLA held a photo competition. They received 88 entries from across the country, all incorporating the colour blue and reflecting the world of people with autism. One of the winning photos appears above..

Finland



The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome (FAAAS) held an event in Helsinki with music and rhythm workshops, video screenings and an information stall. The event attracted around 100 participants.

France



Many events were held across the country, where autism is the 'national cause of the year'.

United Nations Secretary-General's message

Autism is not limited to a single region or a country; it is a worldwide challenge that requires global action.

Although developmental disabilities such as autism begin in childhood, they persist throughout a person's life. Our work with and for people with autism should not be limited to early identification and treatment; it should include therapies, educational plans and other steps that lead us towards sustained, lifelong engagement.

Reaching out to people with autism spectrum disorders requires global political commitment and better international cooperation, especially in sharing good practices. Greater investments in the social, education and labour sectors are crucially important, since developed and developing countries alike still need to improve their capacities to address the unique needs of people with autism and cultivate their talents. We also need to promote further research, train non-specialized care providers, and enable the autism community to more easily navigate care systems to obtain services that can support and mainstream individuals with autism.

The annual observance of World Autism Awareness Day is meant to spur such action and draw attention to the unacceptable discrimination, abuse and isolation experienced by people with autism and their loved ones. As highlighted by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, people with autism are equal citizens who should enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

[Read the full text at: www.un.org/en/]

Ban Ki-moon



Ringing the bell for autism

For the third year in a row, Autism-Europe members cooperated with US organisation, Autism Speaks, and NYSE Euronext to raise awareness of autism through bell-ringing ceremonies at stock exchanges across Europe. The ceremonies have become a tradition since the inception of World Autism Awareness Day in 2008. Duncan Niederauer, CEO and Director of NYSE Euronext, and parent of a child with autism, has generously given the honour of ringing the opening or closing bells at NYSE Euronext stock exchanges to autism organisations each year.



Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Yoshi de Nijs (a young man with autism who is also the son of Dutch author Belinda Meuldijk) sounded the opening gong of the NYSE Euronext Stock Exchange in Amsterdam. Yoshi was accompanied by Fred Stekelenburg, director of the Dutch Autism Association (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Autisme), Anne Louise van Lynden van Sandenburg (Head of Listings, Netherlands at NYSE Euronext) and her son Teddy, and Erik Jan Harmens (Head of Corporate Storytelling at Citigate First Financial) and his wife and child.



Brussels, Belgium

Representatives of Autism-Europe, the Wallonian Autism Association (Association de Parents pour l'Epanouissement des Personnes avec Autisme) and the Flemish Autism Association (Vlaamse Vereniging Autisme), with Professor Ghislain Magerotte of the Specialised University Service for People with Autism and Mr Nicolas Bodson, the head of cabinet for the Belgian Secretary of State for people with disabilities (Mr Philippe Courard), who rang the NYSE Euronext Stock Exchange opening bell.



Lisbon, Portugal

Representative of the Portuguese Autism Federation (Federação Portuguesa de Autismo), Isabel Cottinelli-Telmo, and people with autism ringing the NYSE Euronext Stock Exchange bell at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, before a large audience of people with autism.



New York, USA

Suzanne and Bob Wright, co-founders of US organisation, Autism Speaks, rang the opening bell at the NYSE Euronext Stock Exchange, joined by iconic American fashion designer, Tommy Hilfiger, CEO of NYSE Euronext, Duncan Niederauer, and other special guests.



Paris, France

Vice President of Autism-Europe, Evelyne Friedel, with André Masin, President of the French Association for the Management of Services for People with Autism, and his adult son who has autism, Guillaume Masin. Guillaume rang the NYSE Euronext Stock Exchange opening bell, and the group were joined by Albert Algoud (well-known French journalist, writer and humorist who is also the father of an adult son with autism).



Warsaw, Poland

Vice President of SYNAPSIS Foundation, Joanna Grochowska & President of Warsaw Stock Exchange's Management Board and Ludwíg Sobolewski ringing the opening bell at the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

Greece



GSPAP and its members celebrated in cities across Greece. In Athens, a seminar with talks from professionals was followed by a musical performance by people with autism and a documentary film screening. Famous football players also held a special match for autism which gained much media attention. In Thessaloniki, a discussion meeting on the topic of autism and bullying was held, and a celebration was also held in Ioannina.

Hungary



Members of the Hungarian Autistic Society held events across the country. In Budapest, there was an awareness raising walk through the city, a flash mob in a shopping centre with well-known Hungarian comedian, Kovacs Andras Peter, a press conference and film screenings. In other cities, there were many more awareness-raising walks/runs, meetings, balloon releases, concerts, and open days at autism organisations.

Iceland



The Icelandic Autistic Society (Umsjónarfélag einhverfa) launched their renewed website, www.einhverfa.is, with more information about autism, the education system from kindergarten to college and services available in the community. They also released a new brochure about autism with illustrations by a young artist with Asperger's syndrome.

Ireland



The Irish Society for Autism launched a book titled 'Reflections and Personal Experience on the Charter of Rights for People with Autism' (this European charter was drafted by Autism-Europe and adopted by the European Parliament in 1996). The book includes chapters written by medical experts in the field, individuals with autism, advocates and family members

Italy



ANGSA, Gruppo Asperger and other organisations held events in Rome that included sports events, games, information stalls, film screenings and a dj set, in which people with autism were able to share their passions and sensory experiences with 1000 people who attended. In Turin, they also organised a free film festival called 'CinemAutismo' which was attended by 450 people. Gruppo Asperger also gave a presentation about autism to a meeting of the United Nations Women's Group in Rome. In Novara, ANGSA organised a conference on the topic of guidelines and best practices in the field of autism and an exhibition of art by children who have a friend who has autism. The exhibition was attended by the students of 15 local schools and a book of all the artworks was produced.

Luxembourg



The Autism Foundation of Luxembourg organised a balloon release event and asked some restaurants to create an 'Autism Menu'. The restaurants donated at least 1 euro per sale to the Foundation. A Portuguese organisation based in Luxembourg also held an event for World Autism Awareness Day, with Portuguese music, dancing and a card game.

Macedonia



The Macedonian Scientific Association for Autism co-organised a futsal (indoor football) tournament in Skopje that attracted over 300 people. The event was opened by a child with autism and featured well-known football players, as well as musical performances and speeches by professionals and government representatives. A press conference was also held, with the event's media patron, Sportsko Radio.

Poland



SYNOPSIS Foundation organised a cycling fundraiser called 'Rally for Autism' in Warsaw. This event has been held annually for the past eight years, attracting a total of 6,900 participants and raising more than €130,000. This year's event was sponsored by Foundation Orange, who gave money for each kilometre ridden by each participant, and involved more than 100 volunteers. The event also featured a big blue heart sculpture to express that 'The Rally for Autism is first of all driven by the human heart'. A meeting for families of people with autism and volunteers was also held in the evening.

Portugal



Members of the Portuguese Autism Federation organised a seminar on the rights of people with autism in Lisbon, as well as a round table discussion event featuring people with autism. In Leiria, a tent was set up in the city centre with information and activities designed to raise awareness about autism among the public. The Portuguese Government also voted unanimously on a statement of support for people with autism.

Scotland



Scottish Autism held a fundraising event in which people with autism and their supporters swam the length of the English Channel. In teams, participants swam a combined total of 1,363 laps of a pool; equalling the length of the English Channel. The organisation also raised money and awareness by packing shopping bags for customers in a supermarket who gave donations. (For more activities in Scotland, see United Kingdom below).

Slovakia



The Society for the Help of People with Autism, Slovakia (SPOSA) held a cultural event at Bratislava Castle under the patronage of the Slovakian First Lady, Mrs. Silvia Gasparovicova. The event was attended by a large group of families affected by autism and the public. At the end of the program, the Bratislava Castle was lit up in blue.

Spain



Autismo Burgos held an exhibition of pictures made by adults who have autism. During the exhibition opening, a set of policy proposals for autism were read to the crowd. In Barcelona, more than 100 people participated in creating a mural as part of a project by Autism la Garriga and Foundation Congost Autism. The Foundation's services were also featured in a special television report.



In the United Kingdom, the National Autistic Society launched its 'Awesome for autism' awards in which individuals who have helped a person with autism can be nominated for a prize. In Scotland, Inverness Castle was lit up in pink and purple – the National Autistic Society's colours.

Actions around the world

Our non-European members also organised a range of interesting events for World Autism Awareness Day 2012.

Kuwait



The Kuwait Center for Autism organised a range of events including a Guinness World Record attempt, for a new record entitled 'Largest flaming image using candles' in which the word 'AUTISM' was created using 40 thousand candles. They also organised an awareness-raising campaign with signs on public buses and posters for pharmacies, a film screening, a sports day, lectures in schools, an autism awareness competition, concerts, a lecture for parents and open days at the Kuwait Center for Autism and the Gulf University. The events gained much media attention including appearances by autism specialists on television programs and articles in newspapers.

Lebanon

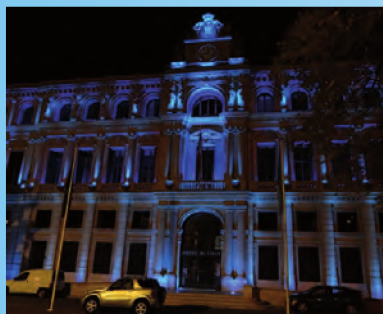


The Lebanese Autism Society held a 'Walk for autism' in Beirut and a meeting titled 'Autism – Care and Creativity', at the Grand Serail under the high patronage of the Prime Minister of Lebanon.

All lit up in blue for autism awareness



This year, all around Europe, and all around the globe, over 100 buildings were lit up in blue to mark World Autism Awareness Day. From Lisbon to Budapest, prominent buildings and landmarks were lit up blue for the night. These include the Chateau de Versailles near Paris, Wester Tower in Amsterdam, the Bourse in Brussels, the City Hall in Lisbon and the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. In 2013, we hope there will be even more.



France - Cannes



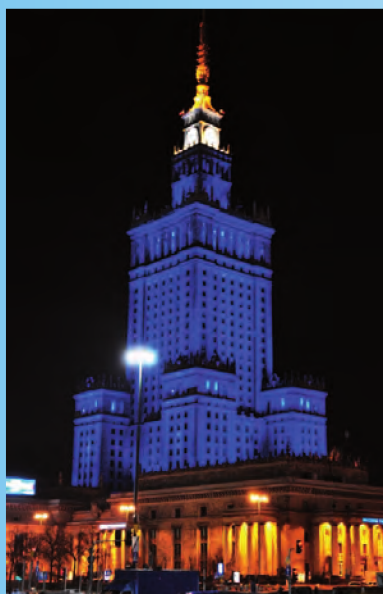
France - Cannes



Slovakia - Martin



The Netherlands - Amsterdam



Poland - Warsaw



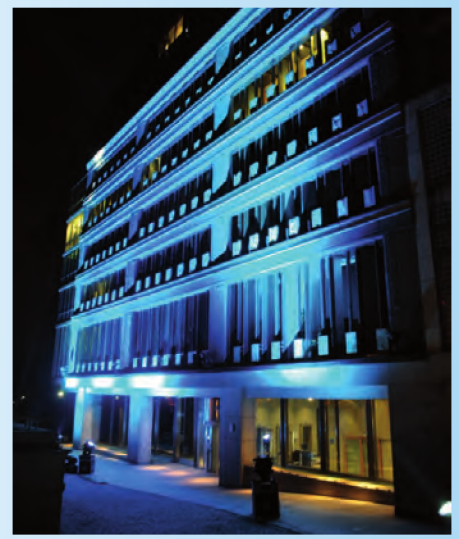
The Netherlands - Amsterdam



Belgium - Brussels



Hungary - Budapest



Poland - Warsaw



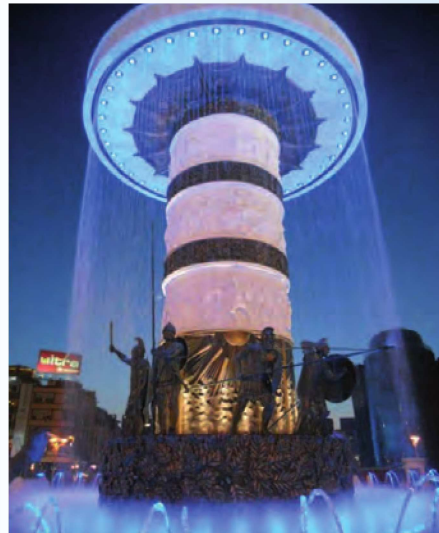
Spain - Tarragona



Hungary - Kecskemét



Poland - Warsaw



Macedonia - Skopje



Poland - Warsaw



Portugal - Coimbra



Slovakia - Bratislava



The Netherlands - De Bilt

Will your city be next?

