

■ Activities



Ms. Marta Macedoni-Luksic

EUROPEAN DAYS OF AUTISM 2008 - 4 OCTOBER 2008, BUDAPEST

On 4th October, Autism-Europe and the Hungarian Autistic Society celebrated the European Days of Autism 2008 and the 20th anniversary of the Hungarian Autistic Society (HAS) with two conferences devoted, respectively, to the themes of adapted care for persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and to the "New Bridges to Autism" project. These events were held in Budapest (Hungary) and supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs. Over 260 stakeholders (both parents and professionals) - approximately 190 participants from Hungary and 70 from European countries and 4 participants from overseas countries (Canada, USA) were also present - met 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 were shared. The purpose of this event

was 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 intended to bring together actors from across the EU in order to promote partnerships and cooperation.

CONFERENCE ON "ADAPTED CARE"

The conference on Adapted Care was supported by Mr. Péter Kemény, Ministry of Social Affairs (Hungary) who opened the conference with Ms. Evelyne Friedel, President of Autism-Europe and Ms. Erika Erdőcs, President of the Hungarian Autistic Society.

The Hungarian Autistic Society presented the achievements made over the past 20 years of work to promote "Adapted Care" in the country. The Hungarian Autistic Society was founded in 1988 as the Association

for the Welfare and Interests of persons with Autism. It is the only umbrella body in the field of autism in Hungary. Since 1998, The Hungarian Autistic Society has the statute of public benefit organization. It has 53 affiliated organizations and over 1300 individual members.

It provides a comprehensive information service by the means of its Information Centre, its website (www.esoember.hu), with the autista.info.hu webpage, which is the biggest on-line database in Hungary, its regular or occasional publications and its Forum. It is also particularly active as regard advocacy for persons with ASD. A constant contact is maintained with government departments and authorities. A specialist team has been organized to tackle a given task whenever necessary. Dr. Judit Simó, childpsychiatrist, from the Hungarian Early

Development Centre, made an address on the present situation and developed the facts and challenges in the field of autism spectrum disorders in 2008 in Hungary. The future was illustrated by the presentation of the National Strategy for Autism in Hungary.

The Hungarian strategy for autism was presented by an official of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Mr Péter Kemény. The 5-years Strategy was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and drafted by experts as a recommendation under the supervision of Hungarian Autistic Society. It aims at improving care for persons with ASD notably by developing specific services for persons with ASD, improving diagnosis, as well as access to education (including training for adults). One of the objectives is also to train staff to care for persons with ASD and to provide support for families. Another target is to develop employment opportunities for persons with ASD.

Mrs Evelyne Friedel, Mrs Donata Vivanti and Mrs Zsuzsanna Szilvasy, from Autism-Europe, focused on the European perspective and the rights of people with ASD.

The position paper on "Care for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders", drafted by Autism-Europe, the International Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions and the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, adopted during the last international Congress of AE, was also presented on the occasion. It encompasses various dimensions: access to rehabilitation and healthcare, as well as to life-long education and social inclusion, while stressing the importance of adopting a participation-based and quality approach to care. Evelyne Friedel also

presented the concept of "lifestreaming", which has been developed for persons with complex needs. That concept - that goes beyond the concept of "mainstreaming" - foresees positive measures and adequate compensation to enforce their fundamental rights. It takes into account the specific needs of each individual.

The second conference held presented the results of the "New Bridges to Autism" project (Grundtvig; Accompanying Measures) included in the European Lifelong Learning Programme, and which will end in December 2008. The aims of the project were to contribute to the inclusion of adults with autism. The activities realized and presented during the conference included: a festival, exhibition, conferences, and the production of methodologies to foster good practice, as well as teaching and learning materials. For more information see the article of Mrs Isabel Cottinelli Telmo. Besides members of Autism-Europe, international participants were representatives, parents, professionals and authorities/policy makers from Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania, and Czech Republic.

Among the opinions recorded, the participants welcomed the practical and legal information and the practical ideas provided during the discussions. They appreciated the films of the young ASD people and the exhibition of the artwork of the ASD people which were showed. Also, they underlined the interest of the presentation of the Grundtvig project "New Bridges to Autism".

Most generally, they welcomed the short and interesting presentations and the professionalism of all the speakers. They also appreciated the opportunity of the conference to find new contacts.



Ms. Erika Erdős dr., president of HAS, Zsuzsanna Zsilvasy and Evelyne Friedel

During the European Day of Autism, a Declaration of Intent for cooperation between Eastern European countries has been signed. It aims at creating a network in order to improve the quality of life of persons with ASD in the region.



THE HUNGARIAN AUTISTIC SOCIETY

The Hungarian Autistic Society, established as the Association for the Welfare and Interests of Autistics in 1988, is the only umbrella body in the field of autism in Hungary, with 53 affiliated organizations and over 1300 individual members.

In case you have further questions about our work don't hesitate to contact us at info@esoember.hu.

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