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The European Parliament passes a written declaration on autism

The adoption of the [written declaration on autism](#), drafted in cooperation with Autism-Europe, was officially announced this week by the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, during the opening of the plenary session in Strasbourg. 418 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) signed the Written Declaration, which calls on the European Union and its Member States to adopt a European strategy for autism.

[MEP Nicola Caputo](#), first signatory of the written declaration, stressed the need to improve support for those affected by autism in the EU. "Despite the importance of early diagnosis to provide adequate support and education, early detection is still lacking across Europe. This is why I call upon the Commission and the Council to support accurate and early detection and diagnosis of children and adults with autism. Moreover we urgently need a European strategy which should aim at encouraging research on autism, prevalence studies and exchange of best practices regarding evidence-based interventions for children with autism, as well as habilitation services for adults", MEP Caputo said.

According to current data, one in every one hundred Europeans have autism, with prevalence rates on the rise. Autism often also has a profound effect on families, both emotionally and financially, due to the lack of support available across Europe. There is currently no cure for autism, but research has demonstrated that the best treatments are early and evidence-based therapies that aim to assist the person in developing skills to cope with their individual difficulties. This is why early detection and diagnosis are crucial to improve the lives of Europeans with autism, followed by access to adapted education and lifelong appropriate support services specifically designed for the complexity of their needs. Unfortunately, this is currently lacking in most of the countries across Europe.

A written declaration of the European Parliament is a principled document that gives direction to the institutions of the European Union and EU Member States. For example, in 1996, the European Parliament adopted a written declaration called the '[Charter for Persons with Autism](#)', which was drafted by Autism-Europe. Many Autism-Europe members have used this charter to advocate for improvements in support for people with autism at national level.

A conference in the European Parliament as a next step

Following the endorsement by 418 MEPs of the written declaration on autism, a conference will be held in the European Parliament. Autism Europe, with support from the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament, invites researchers, practitioners, autistic individuals and other interested parties to participate in the conference "Moving forward for the adoption of a European Strategy for autism in Europe".

The event will be hosted on 29 September 2015 from 09.00 to 12.00 in room ASP 5E2 of the EP in Brussels. It will be co-chaired by MEP Nicola Caputo and MEP Marek Plura (co-signatory and co-President of the disability intergroup). The panel will involve autism representatives and experts, as well as key representatives from the European commission.

Autism-Europe aisbl is an international association whose main objective is to advance the rights of people with autism and their families and to help them improve their quality of life. It ensures effective liaison among more than 80 member associations of parents of people with autism in more than 30 European countries, including more than 20 Member States of the European Union, governments and European and international institutions.

Autism is a complex disorder that affects the brain. It impairs an individual's social and communication abilities and often causes them to display unusual or repetitive behaviours. Currently, around one in every one hundred children in the European Union are diagnosed with autism.

For more information and interviews, please do not hesitate to contact Aurélie Baranger, Director of Autism-Europe, in Brussels. Tel: +32 (0)2 675 75 05 Email: aurelie.baranger@autismeurope.org . For more information on the conference and to register go to:

www.autismeurope.org

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