

Recommendations for an Autism Strategy at the EU level

An EU Autism Strategy to Leave No One Behind

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With the support of
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Autism and policy

- In the framework of ASDEU, Autism-Europe's objectives were to:



- Assess **health, education and existing social policies in Member States** to support people with autism from all ages, communities and concerned families.

To do this Autism-Europe produced a **mapping through a literature review and a stakeholders consultation.**

- Make **recommendations for a public health plan for autism**

Objectives of the mapping

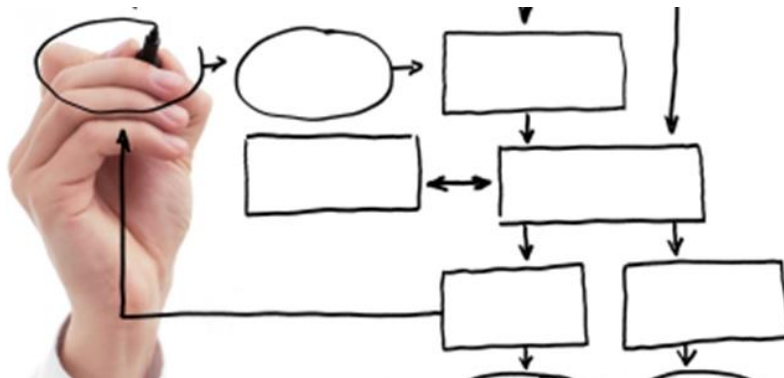
- Identification of **existing policies and the level of support** in the European Union **to respond to issues faced by autistic people** and their families
- Identification of **gaps and challenges by surveying interested stakeholders**
- The core areas covered are: **healthcare, education, access to employment and to lifelong support.**



Methodology of the mapping

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** – ratified by the EU and 28 EU member States - served as a benchmark to assess the respect of the rights of people with autism.

- Countries reports submitted to the **UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability** and alternative reports from civil society groups feeding into the UN monitoring process is part of the documents reviewed.
- At a later stage, **UNCRPD focal points** in the ministries of the member states were also contacted to provide feedback on the data reported



Current response to autism needs

- The **current response** to the needs of people with autism and their families across the **European Union** is **very diverse**
- The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has had an impact on policy and autism service provision at national levels.
- One of the main impacts of the UNCRPD is the **gradual deinstitutionalisation** taking place across the region, in line with Article 19.



Current response to autism needs

- In most Member States, there is evidence of **increasing inclusion** of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings, as well as measures to assist disabled people in accessing the labour market.
- But **people on the autism spectrum tend to remain amongst the most excluded group**, notably due to a lack of awareness and of adequate services to respond to their support needs.



Autism strategies across the EU

- Over the last decade, to tackle existing challenges, some countries and regions have adopted **autism-specific policies**. It varies from **single policies** to all-encompassing **national autism plans or strategies**;
- Currently **several Member States have national autism plan or strategies** and some have **autism-specific strategy or legislations**
- In other countries, autism-recommendations are implemented via more mainstreamed instruments.



Research and consultation show that autism strategies having a positive impact notably have the following characteristics:

- **Practical approach: identification of the specific needs** of people concerned (children, young people, adults on the autism spectrum, but also families and carers).
- Thus designed **in close partnership with autistic people, their families and autism organisations**, and generally after public consultation.
- **Flexibility** to allow for revision without recurring to formal procedures
- **Direction and co-ordination of services** at national and regional levels
- Requirements for **on-going monitoring**
- **Adequate public funding** for their implementation.



Why an EU strategy for autism?

- **A strategy ensures an holistic and coherent approach** to addressing a public health concern
- Action is taken in the **EU's areas of competence** to complement what is being done on a national level
- It enables the **branching into other policy areas, beyond health** to cover important fields of life
- Emphasis can be put on **funding joint research** and sharing **results across borders**.



Why an EU strategy?



- **Common challenges** have been identified across Europe in relation to autism
- By working at the European level we can **foster cooperation and share good practices** to overcome these challenges.
- **Harmonisation accross Member states in various fields** would help autistic people and their families to more easily exercise right to **free movement**.
- **Help set minimum standards** for support and protection

Why an EU strategy?

- **Avoiding duplication** of projects and actions in relation to autism and **better use of existing resources**
- EU strategies can help assist Member States in developing their **own, complementary, national strategies**



Why an EU strategy?



It would be **consistent with EU priorities** and help deliver on some of its key principles, such as :

- The principles of the **Pillar of Social rights** and
- **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**

It is also supported by the members of the European parliament, with the adoption of the **Written declaration on autism in 2015.**

Why an EU strategy?



- **Examples of areas of actions that would benefit from cooperation:**
 - Screening and diagnosis (harmonisation of instruments and criteria)
 - Post diagnosis support (EU guidelines on intervention, training of professionals)
 - Access to education (training, common standards)
 - Lifelong support (quality standards and exchange of good practices)
 - Fostering employment and independent living (structural funds)
 - Data collection and prevalence studies

Actions for autism at the EU level might therefore include:

- (1) **Encouraging Member States to adopt cross-sectoral national strategies** or action plans to respond to the needs of autistic people, in line with the UNCRPD and international recommendations;
- (2) **Promoting the coordination between Member States** of all relevant policies in the field of autism;
- (3) **Producing guidelines to harmonise practices** and promote quality of support care and inclusion across Europe;



Actions at the EU level might therefore include:

- (4) **Adopting principles of best practices** and fostering exchange between Member States;
- (5) **Promoting training of professionals** across sectors;
- (6) **Supporting research and networks of experts** and partnering for progress across the EU;
- (7) **Supporting and involving autistic people and their representative NGOs** throughout the process.





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Thanks for your listening

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