



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## Autism-Europe advocates for a new dynamic for autism

- To mark World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD), April 2, Autism-Europe (AE) has launched a Europe-wide awareness raising campaign “A New Dynamic for Autism” to call for policies that support the urgent needs of people on the autism spectrum across the European Union, in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections.
- AE encourages all members of society to “make a gesture for autism” as a way of showing their commitment to promote a society inclusive of all and accepting of diversity.

It is estimated that 7 million people are on the autism spectrum in the European Union. Most of them experience widespread discrimination in many fields of life as well as social exclusion. In order to respond to the daily challenges autistic people face, AE is conducting a Europe-wide awareness raising campaign in 2019, together with its 90 member associations in 26 EU countries, with the motto “A New Dynamic for Autism. I ∞ autism”.

To raise awareness of the objectives of the campaign, AE encourages supporters to make the infinity symbol, which symbolizes neurodiversity, strength and unity. Making progress to improve life outcomes for autistic people and their families can only be achieved with mutual respect, and understanding. This year, the campaign is also closely linked to the objectives of [Autism-Europe’s 12th International Congress](#), taking place in Nice, France, in September 2019.

Autism is a lifelong disability and all member states face similar challenges across Europe, including providing timely access to diagnosis, education, employment, housing and support for life in the community. A holistic approach is needed to respond to the needs of autistic people, and some member states perform better than others. A EU approach would help reduce inequalities and exchange good practices. It would also provide support for autistic people and their families to exercise their right of free movement more easily.

## Paving the way for more action in the European Union

As the next European Parliament elections are approaching, AE hopes to continue counting with the support of, and cooperate with, future Members of the EP. It has therefore [released a manifesto](#) calling on candidates to support measures for the full inclusion of autistic people in society and promoting the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) at the EU-level and in all its member states. As the future European Disability Strategy is currently under consultation, it is crucial that invisible disabilities, such as autism are not forgotten and that no one is left behind.

The EU can for example play a leading role to foster inclusion and improve the quality of community support services across Europe and end segregation, notably through the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds, in line with the UNCRPD. It can also promote adequate training for professionals across sectors to develop understanding and effective support for autism. It can also support research and networks of experts with the aim to improve quality of life of autistic people – with their participation - across the EU.

## AE's side event at the UN in Geneva

On April 1st, AE organises a side event with members of the CRPD Committee at the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva, with the support of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta. This event aims at highlighting ways to tackle barriers faced by autistic people when implementing the UNCRPD in various fields of life.

[Click here for more information and to download the agenda](#)

## How can I support the campaign?

People willing to support the campaign can post pictures of them doing the infinity gesture or holding the [campaign visual](#) on social media using the hashtag [#AutismDay2019](#), together with an explanation of what kind of action they take to support an inclusive society for autistic people.

[The official video of the campaign](#) was created in partnership with *Autismo España* features actress Nadia de Santiago (Cable Girls). It encourages society to embrace diversity and highlights that we can all contribute to the inclusion of autistic people. AE has also released a [campaign toolkit](#) that explains the objectives of the campaign and includes communication materials and strategies in more than [14 different languages](#), as well as in [Easy-To-Read format](#).

## Notes to editors

**World Autism Awareness Day** was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 as an annual day to draw attention to the urgent needs of people with autism around the world.

**Autism-Europe** is an international association whose main objective is to advance the rights of autistic people and their families and to help them improve their quality of life. It ensures effective liaison among 90-member autism organisations in 38 European countries, including 26 Member States of the European Union, governments and European and international institutions.

**Acceptable language:** Autism-Europe operates on the principle of respect for diversity. AE feels that it is important to use language that people are comfortable with. However, there are some terms that are likely to cause offense and that it is advisable to avoid using.

For more information and interviews, please do not hesitate to contact:

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