

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE



#AutismDay2023

TOOLKIT

2023

**EUROPE-WIDE
AWARENESS
RAISING
CAMPAIGN**



Co-funded by
the European Union

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1. Introduction

- **Autism-Europe's long-running awareness campaigns**

Autism-Europe (AE) is an international organisation based in Brussels focused on advancing the rights of autistic people and their families as well as helping them improve their quality of life. It ensures effective cooperation among almost 90 member autism organisations from 40 European countries, including 26 Member States of the European Union, governments and European and international institutions.

AE plays a key role in raising public awareness and in influencing European decision-makers on all issues relating to the rights of autistic people. Every year, around World Autism Awareness Day (2 April), AE works alongside its member organisations to carry out a campaign raising awareness about autism and the rights of autistic people across Europe.

This campaign toolkit brings together materials, strategies and recommendations on how you too can contribute to build momentum by conducting a successful awareness raising campaign.

We hope that this year you will join us in spreading the word, and that together we will foster positive and inclusive actions to build an inclusive society for autistic people.

- **What is World Autism Awareness Day?**

On 18 December 2007, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 62/139, which declares that every **2 April** will mark World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD). The aim of this Day is to highlight the need to help improve the quality of life of autistic people, so they can lead full and meaningful lives as an integral part of society.

[More information here.](#)

- **General background**

Autism is a lifelong neurological condition that manifests during early childhood, irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status. The term “autism spectrum” refers to a range of characteristics. Autistic people experience persistent difficulties with social communication and social interaction, and might display restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests. Autistic people often also experience sensory difficulties, such as increased or reduced sensitivity to light, sound, colour, smell, taste or touch. Autism is a complex lifelong developmental disability experienced differently by each individual.

Although autism was once believed to be rare, epidemiological studies have now demonstrated that autism affects around 1 in 100 people – meaning that an estimated 7 million people in Europe are autistic. The rate of autism in all regions of the world is high and the lack of understanding has a tremendous impact on the individuals, their families and communities. Appropriate support, accommodation and acceptance of this neurological variation allow those on the spectrum to enjoy equal opportunity and full and effective participation in society.

The **stigmatisation** and **discrimination** associated with neurological differences remain substantial obstacles to access diagnosis and support, an issue that must be addressed by public policy-makers. Autistic people face many different barriers to their full inclusion into society throughout their lives.

Forty years ago, Autism-Europe was founded to promote the rights of autistic people and their families across Europe. This year, AE will be celebrating its 40th anniversary under the WAAD campaign motto 'Building an inclusive society for autistic people'.

2. The campaign

- The theme ‘Building an inclusive society for autistic people’

This year’s WAAD campaign ‘**Building an inclusive society for autistic people**’, which is being carried out alongside AE members, is an opportunity to reflect on the advances made so far for the autism community and the work that remains to improve the lives of autistic people.

To create a society that is really inclusive for autistic people and their families, we would like to call on European, national and regional policymakers and other stakeholders to ensure the full enjoyment of the rights and needs of autistic people in Europe, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The **UNCRPD** has been ratified by 45 out of the 46 member countries of the Council of Europe (CoE), including by all EU member states and by the European Union itself in 2010.

To implement the UNCRPD at EU level, the European Commission launched in March 2021 its second Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which will run until 2030. Autistic people’s needs should be adequately addressed when implementing it in all areas.

[#AutismDay2023](#)

- Aim of the campaign

This WAAD 2023 campaign aims at sharing the key policy messages contained in our [campaign manifesto](#) through different communications channels to point out the work we need to carry on to improving the lives of autistic people.

The campaign also aims to show what a society that is truly inclusive of the autism community looks like, by showcasing autistic voices and perspectives at the forefront of our actions. We launched a [photo competition](#) to illustrate the reality of autistic people’s life and experiences. We received many inspiring contributions, from which a selection of photos was chosen to be displayed at a 1-week exhibition at the European Parliament in Brussels at the end of March 2023. The different pictures - and their different stories and messages - will be shared on AE’s social media throughout our WAAD 2023 campaign.

We would like to amplify the voice of our members and partners, encouraging them to share with us by **video-testimonies** their experiences, as well as their vision to continue building a more autism friendly society. We would particularly like to highlight the day-to-day experiences of autistic people and their family members/supporter network. Video contributions will be shared on AE’s social media channels.

Together with **MEP Rosa Estaràs** (EPP, Spain), AE is co-organising a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels to bring forward the discussion between EU policy-makers and the autism community on the theme ‘Building an inclusive society for autistic people’.

The WAAD 2023 campaign is also an occasion to celebrate **AE’s 40th anniversary**, after its foundation in 1983.

Go through this toolkit to learn how you can engage in AE’s #AutismDay2023 campaign!

- **Key activities at the EU level**

To mark World Autism Awareness Day 2023, AE is co-organising **two events at the European Parliament in Brussels** on the theme ‘Building an inclusive society for autistic people’.

Photo exhibition at the European Parliament in Brussels

With the support of MEP Rosa Estaràs (EPP, Spain), Autism-Europe is organising the photo exhibition ‘Building an inclusive society for autistic people’ at the European Parliament in Brussels to show the perspectives of autistic people and their lived experiences, as well as ways in which society could work better for them.

The exhibition is a selection of twenty-five pictures sent by ten talented photographers to participate in the WAAD 2023 photo competition. It will last one week, from 27 to 31 March 2023, and it will be inaugurated by an opening event on 28 March 2023 (11-12 AM).

Conference at the European Parliament in Brussels

In the same context, Autism-Europe is co-organising with MEP Rosa Estaràs (EPP, Spain) the conference “Building an inclusive society for autistic people”. Participants will have the chance to hear first-hand experiences from autistic people and, therefore, learn more on how to foster a more inclusive society, as well as key policy-developments to address their challenges.

AE invites EU policy-makers to join the campaign for #AutismDay2023 and show their support for a more inclusive society for autistic people.

The conference will take place on 30 March 2023 (9 – 11 AM) at the European Parliament in Brussels, allowing remote access via Webex.

- **Press release**

We prepared a press release on our WAAD 2023 campaign, detailing our actions and activities offline and online. This document is ready to be shared to promote the

campaign among your network and local media outlets. If you support our campaign, feel free to use it as a sample and adapt it for your organisation's own needs.

[**DOWNLOAD THE PRESS RELEASE HERE**](#)

3. Engage with the campaign online

For this **#AutismDay2023** campaign, we encourage the autism community and its stakeholders to join us online to celebrate April as the Autism Month 2023. From 2 April on, we are organising a range of online activities that you can support in different ways.

- **Video-testimonies**

AE wants to amplify the voice of our members and partners to share their experiences, as well as their vision to continue building a more autism-friendly society. We would particularly like to highlight the day-to-day experiences of autistic people and their families/support network. So, we invite the autism community to share with us video-testimonies that we will post on our social media channels throughout April 2023.

We have prepared guidelines available in French and English where you will find suggested questions and technical tips to record your video-testimonies. The deadline to contribute with your video is **7 April 2023**. Please share your video-testimony with Carmen Clemente, Communications and Campaigns Manager, at communication@autismeurope.org.

[DOWNLOAD THE GUIDELINES HERE](#)

- **Social media**

AE prepared social media messages and visuals about our policy priorities to be shared on your social media channels **from 2 April (World Autism Awareness Day) throughout the month of April 2023**, adapted in different formats for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

[DOWNLOAD SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES HERE](#)

Feel free to adapt the texts to your needs and translate the messages in your language – if you need, you can also ask us to adapt the visuals in your language by providing us your own translation, as indicated in the WAAD 2023 campaign toolkit. There are many useful online tools that can help you with the translations – one of these is [DeepL Translator](#), which works particularly well and allow the uploading of Word documents for translation.

[DOWNLOAD THE TRANSLATION REQUEST FORM FOR VISUALS](#)

The **visuals for the policy messages** are divided in two different folders, since they're in two different formats.

[DOWNLOAD VISUALS FOR FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM/LINKEDIN](#)

[DOWNLOAD VISUALS FOR TWITTER](#)

We also prepared some **general visuals** with the campaign slogan 'Building an inclusive society for autistic people' and AE's 40th anniversary logo, in different formats, in English and French – for translation in other languages, please contact Carmen Clemente, Communications and Campaigns Manager, at communication@autismeurope.org .

[DOWNLOAD GENERAL VISUALS IN ENGLISH](#)

[DOWNLOAD GENERAL VISUALS IN FRENCH](#)

Here you can find also two general visuals in English and French to be shared as **Instagram stories**, ready to be filled with your own messages.

[DOWNLOAD THE INSTAGRAM STORY VISUAL IN ENGLISH](#)

[DOWNLOAD THE INSTAGRAM STORY VISUAL IN FRENCH](#)

Here is some general information about our main social media channels.

[Twitter](#)

Please keep in mind that on Twitter users share their thoughts in maximum 280 characters. Start by following our Twitter account @AutismEurope and search for #AutismDay2023 to have an overview of our WAAD 2023 campaign's tweets. In this way, you may also want to interact with those people who have tweeted messages about the campaign.

Please remember to use #AutismDay2023 in your tweets and tag @AutismEurope so we can retweet!

[Facebook](#)

The campaign will be also available on Autism-Europe's Facebook page @autismeurope.AE . We encourage you to: follow our Facebook page and reshare our #AutismDay2023 messages and tag our Facebook page when you publish something related to the campaign.

Please don't forget to use the hashtag #AutismDay2023 in your own posts!

[Instagram](#)

Please follow our @autismeurope account and post your photos, videos, stories and messages of support for the WAAD 2023 campaign, always using the hashtag #AutismDay2023.

[Linkedin](#)

Follow our LinkedIn page @Autism-Europe aisbl, reshare our posts and create your own content by using the hashtag #AutismDay2023 .

- **Pictures from the autism community**

Throughout April 2023, AE is going to share on its social media channels the selection of 25 pictures we received from the autism community all across Europe chosen to be displayed at the exhibition at the European Parliament in Brussels.

AE is also preparing a booklet about the exhibition, with more information on the pictures and their authors that is going to be available on the [AE's website](#) from the end of March 2023 onwards.

We invite you to keep an eye on our social media ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) and share our content in support of this #AutismDay2023 campaign!

- **Visual identity**

The WAAD 2023 campaign visual identity was developed mainly with [Canva](#), a free online design platform. In order to maintain consistency, we suggest to our members and supporters willing to create their own visuals to use something similar to the following features.

In the visuals for the policy messages, we used the font ‘**Oswald**’.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789



The visuals main colours are **blue** and **orange** – on Canva, we used the tones: #0B55A3 and #FF982D.

Other colours we used, for example to create this toolkit cover, were **violet**, **yellow** and different shades of **orange**: #A641E5, #EFD83D, #F67F5D and #FF982D.



- **Autism-Europe's 40th anniversary logos**

Forty years ago, AE was founded to promote the rights of autistic people and their families across Europe. Even though much remains to be done, we have come a long way together!

To celebrate this milestone, we invite our members to use our anniversary logo. Translations of the visuals are available upon request.

[DOWNLOAD AE'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY LOGOS](#)

For any questions, please feel free to contact Carmen Clemente, Communications and Campaigns Manager, at communication@autismeurope.org .

4. Engage with policy-makers across Europe

- [Campaign manifesto](#)

AE drafted a manifesto to outline the priorities, **key policy aspects and requests** of this WAAD 2023 campaign. For now, the manifesto is available in English.

[DOWNLOAD THE MANIFESTO HERE](#)

- [Engage with public figures](#)

To raise awareness why not reach out to politicians? In many countries it is easy to organise an information day/event at the national, federal or local level.

You can involve a range of autism stakeholders in your country – and create a photo opportunity where national policy-makers could show their support for the WAAD 2023 campaign. Photos could then be sent to media outlets in your country (or region) and shared on online communications channels.

A similar approach could be taken with well-known public figures to spread the campaign messages.

5. Acceptable language

Autism-Europe operates on the principle of respect for diversity. We feel 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.

In 2016 the National Autistic Society (NAS), the Royal College of GPs and the UCL Institute of Education conducted a survey within the UK of people connected to autism, to enquire about preferences regarding the use of language. Amongst British autistic adults, **the term ‘autistic person/people’ was the most commonly preferred term.** The most preferred term amongst autistic adults, families and professionals was ‘people on the autism spectrum’.

Within AE itself, to reflect this feedback from the UK and cater for a preference among native speakers of other European languages towards the person-first approach of the term ‘person with autism’, which is also used throughout the UNCRPD, all three of the above terms are used interchangeably within our communications.

Some people refer to themselves and one another as an autist / autie / aspie. Whilst we accept that people may wish to refer to themselves and each other in this way, it is often less acceptable when used by a ‘neurotypical’ person.

Autism-Europe urges all who are considering using the campaign materials to think about what language is acceptable and appropriate to use within their own context and geographical area, particularly from the perspective of people with autism, and to adapt the materials accordingly.

Here, some terms or expressions that are likely to cause offence:

1. ‘Suffers from autism’ or ‘victim of autism’

Consider using the following terms instead:

- ‘Autistic’
- ‘On the autism spectrum’
- ‘Has autism’ / ‘an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)’* / ‘an autism spectrum condition (ASC)’

**Note: The term ‘ASD’ is widely used by many professionals, you may prefer to use the term ‘autism spectrum condition’ or ‘on the autism spectrum’ because it avoids the negative connotations of ‘disorder’.*

2. ‘Kanner’s autism’

3. 'Asperger's syndrome is a rare / mild form of autism.'

4. 'Autism is a disease / illness.'

Consider using the following instead:

- 'Autism is a disability.'
- 'Autism is a condition.'

5. 'Retarded' / 'mentally handicapped' / 'backward'

These terms are considered to be derogatory and offensive. Consider using the following terms instead (where it is appropriate to do so):

- 'People with a learning disability.'
- 'People with a developmental disability.'
- 'People with an intellectual disability.'

6. 'Normally developing children' / 'adults'

Consider using the following terms instead:

- 'Neurotypical'*

**Note: This term is only used within the autism community so may not be applicable in, for example, the popular press.*

- 'Typically developing children' / 'adults'

6. Downloadable resources & checklist

Now that you have read the WAAD 2023 campaign toolkit, we hope you are ready to engage with us and make this year's campaign a great success!

Here's the list of all the downloadable resources enclosed in this toolkit:

[PRESS RELEASE \(EN\)](#)

[CAMPAIGN MANIFESTO \(EN\)](#)

[VIDEO-TESTIMONIES GUIDELINES \(EN/FR\)](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA MATERIAL](#)

[TRANSLATION FORM FOR VISUALS \(EN\)](#)

- **Checklist**

- ✓ Translate the WAAD 2023 campaign resources (including the visuals) you want to use, or contact communication@autismeurope.org if you need support to adapt them.
- ✓ Translate or adapt the press release and the manifesto to your local context.
- ✓ Disseminate the WAAD 2023 campaign toolkit among your network and spread the word about the campaign.
- ✓ Send us your video-testimony by **7 April 2023**.
- ✓ Identify your areas of priority in the topics covered by the WAAD 2023 campaign through the key messages in our WAAD 2023 manifesto.
- ✓ Share the WAAD 2023 social media messages and visuals (enclosed in this toolkit) on your social media channels using the hashtag #AutismDay2023 from 2 April 2023 onwards.
- ✓ Organise your own events in line with the WAAD 2023 campaign.