BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE

Conference at the European Parliament for World Autism Awareness Day

30 March 2023
Key Building Blocks for an Inclusive Society for Autistic People

Zsuzsanna Szilvásy

- Autism-Europe vice president
- Director of Mars Autism Foundation
Autism-Europe’s congress ‘Hope is not a dream’ in 1996 (Barcelona, Spain)

- Autism-Europe celebrates its 40th anniversary (1983-2023)
- AE has 90 member organisations in 40 countries
- AE represents ~ 7 million autistic people across Europe
In 1996, the EP adopts Autism-Europe’s **Charter for Persons with Autism** as a Written Declaration.

The EP adopts in 2015 the **Written Declaration on Autism**.
Current challenges preventing full enjoyment of rights & inclusion

Autistic people face:

• Generalised lack of support
• Discrimination in all areas of life (ex: insufficient and delayed access to diagnosis and support)
• Exclusion from the education system
• High rates of unemployment across Europe (up to 90%)
• Denied access to healthcare
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Evelyne Friedel (Autism-Europe’s former president and vice president) speaking at a United Nations briefing session on behalf of autistic people (2009)

The rights of autistic people protected by the UN CRPD are not being effectively translated into practice across the EU
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE MEANS ...

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM AND VALUING AUTISTIC PEOPLE

• Fighting harmful prejudices and discrimination
• Increasing understanding of autism in society
• Addressing biases: (delayed) diagnosis for girls, women and minorities
• Promoting public awareness campaigns
• Providing systematic training on autism

‘Maja’ from the ‘You don’t look autistic’ series, Joanna Musial (Poland)
Autism-Europe’s WAAD 2023 photo competition, European Parliament
EMPOWERING AUTISTIC PEOPLE

- Empowering autistic people to make daily choices about their own life
- Ensuring autistic people are able to enjoy their legal capacity (art. 12 UN CRPD)
- Replacing substituted decision-making by supported decision-making
- Ensuring the upcoming European and national elections are fully accessible to autistic people
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GUARANTEEING THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

• Ensuring autistic people have access to different types and levels of support depending on needs and strengths
• Ensuring principles for autism are translated into practice
• Adopting ambitious policies and sufficient funding to develop and sustain quality community-based services

‘Matei’ from the ‘Through the Looking Glass’ series, Florin Popa (Romania) Autism-Europe’s WAAD 2023 photo competition, European Parliament
ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE ACROSS ALL SECTORS (art. 9 UN CRPD)

• Creating an environment and communication style that accommodates and is sensitive to the needs of autistic people
• Designing autism inclusive spaces and services
• Rolling-out the EU Disability Card
• Ensuring freedom of movement across the EU for autistic people

‘Yannis’ from the ‘Through the Looking Glass’ series, Florin Popa (Romania) Autism-Europe’s WAAD 2023 photo competition, European Parliament
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE MEANS ...

FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

- Adopting strategic and integrated European approaches to address the needs of autistic people across Europe
- Encouraging Member States to adopt cross-sectoral national strategies or action plans in line with the UN CRPD

‘You’ve got this’, Maxence Caillaud-Houël (France)
Autism-Europe’s WAAD 2023 photo competition, European Parliament

#Autismday2023
Thank you!

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