

Autism-Europe's Manifesto

Foster the respect, acceptance and inclusion of all people with autism in Europe

On the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day 2016, Autism-Europe is reinforcing its call for EU and Member State policy-makers to strengthen their commitment to ensuring that persons with autism are guaranteed their fundamental human rights, and to fostering neurodiverse societies that benefit from the human potential of all citizens. As recalled by Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, in his 2016 message: "This year marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On this World Autism Awareness Day, I call for advancing the rights of individuals with autism and ensuring their full participation and inclusion as valued members of our diverse human family who can contribute to a future of dignity and opportunity for all."

Autism affects one in every one hundred people, meaning that in Europe there are currently around five million people on the autism spectrum. Despite a general awareness of what autism is, far too many autistic people and their families consider that the condition is not understood. Throughout Europe, they continue to suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, which impede their inclusion within society.

It is time that society gained a better understanding of autism and removed the isolating barriers hampering the inclusion of autistic individuals. As such, Autism-Europe and its members call on policy-makers at the EU, national and local level to commit to the following actions:

1) Ensure full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The rights of persons with autism in all areas of life are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, despite the fact that this legally binding convention has been ratified by the EU and almost all Member States, we are still far from seeing a Europe in which people with disabilities are ensured the same opportunities as those without. For people with autism, this often translates into severe difficulties in accessing education, the labour market, lifelong-support, public services, and healthcare, as well as inadequate access to information and lack of accommodation for sensory sensitivity, etc. It prevents them from fully participating in all areas of life. **We therefore call on policy makers to fulfil the obligations outlined in the Convention, and to fully guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities.**

Respect,
Acceptance,
Inclusion



World Autism
Awareness Day
2 April

#AutismDay2016



2) Move ahead with a European Strategy for Autism

The Written Declaration on Autism was officially adopted by the European Parliament in September 2015 and co-signed by 418 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The document calls on the European Union and its Member States to adopt a European strategy for autism that will support accurate detection and diagnosis across Europe, promote evidence-based intervention and support for all ages, foster research and prevalence studies across Europe, and encourage the exchange of best practices. **Autism-Europe calls on policy-makers to revive our call for action and proceed in supporting these key elements, as outlined below.**

3) Ensure persons with autism and their families get the life-long support they need from an early age, to allow them to partake fully in all areas of life

Early diagnosis and professional support from an early age allow children with autism to develop to their full potential. They should be provided in cooperation with families who need to receive adequate support. It is therefore essential that investment be made to ensure autism is diagnosed as early as possible, using internationally recognised criteria, without long waiting times preventing those who need it from accessing support. Diagnosis should also be available for adults. **It is essential that an autism diagnosis be followed by individualised and multidisciplinary support from public services, and that information be readily available for parents to understand how to progress going forward. Support should be available at all ages, and gradually evolve in accordance with one's life-cycle.**

4) Ensure access to adapted education in inclusive settings

Education is about more than following a curriculum, it is also about gaining a better understanding of the world and acquiring life-skills. It allows children to come into contact with people who are different from themselves and explore the diversity of the world around them. Ensuring that mainstream educational settings welcome children with autism is therefore essential not only for those with autism, but also for neurotypical children who will come to better understand and accept the human diversity. **We therefore urge that children and young people with autism be included in mainstream educational settings, while receiving the adequate support and accommodation they need to thrive¹.**

5) Foster access to employment for persons with autism

Persons with autism are far more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population. As the Secretary General to the UN underlines in his message for World Autism Awareness Day 2016, this is a waste of human potential, especially in light of

¹ Please also see : Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education and social inclusion of children and young people with autism spectrum disorders



the commitment and skills of many autistic people. **More needs to be done to ensure that accommodation is made to enable persons with autism to access employment, and to sustain it once they have found a job. Employers must be guided in making the recruitment process accessible to autistic job-seekers. Employees with autism should have access to mentoring and support, and particular efforts should be made to adapt the physical working environment to their sensory needs.**

6) Move away from institutional care in favour of community-based support services

As set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons requiring care should have a say in where they receive it. Care in large institutions is isolating and limits individuals' autonomy, as well as hampering personal development and self-determination. **We call on policy-makers to embark proactively upon the transition away from institutional care towards community support services, and to divest any funding that goes towards the building of new institutions.**

7) Fight discrimination and promote a positive image of autistic people

As a largely invisible condition, awareness needs to be raised around what it means to live with autism. Beyond this, as outlined in article 8 of the UNCRPD, greater efforts need to be made at all levels to promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards people with disabilities. **It is imperative that greater efforts be made to combat harmful stereotypes by promoting awareness of the competences and capabilities of persons with autism, and the contributions they can make to the work place and to their communities as a whole.**

8) Promote research that has a positive impact on the quality of life of autistic people, including adults.

More investment needs to be made into researching how we can improve the quality of life of persons with autism of all ages, rather than simply trying to understand the causes of autism in children. **We call on decision-makers to push for greater funds to be dedicated to research that seeks to have a positive impact on the everyday lives of people with autism, and to ensure that the human-rights approach to understanding autism is not overshadowed by the medical approach.**

For more information on this manifesto, contact our Director at:
[aurelie.baranger\[at\]autismeurope.org](mailto:aurelie.baranger[at]autismeurope.org)



Respect, Acceptance, Inclusion: Autism-Europe's 2016 campaign

In order to foster the inclusion of autistic people, society as a whole needs to have a better understanding of autism. However, the process of inclusion cannot stop at greater awareness alone. Instead it must extend to accepting autistic people for who they are, and showing them the respect they deserve as members of society. This is the notion forming the basis of our 2016 campaign, '**Respect, Acceptance, Inclusion**'

To get involved in the campaign, contact our communications officer at: communication[at]autismeurope.org or call us at +32 2 675 75 05

About Autism: Autism is a lifelong disability. Autism affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.

The main areas of difficulty are:

- Deficits in social communication and social interaction;
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities.

People with autism often also experience sensory difficulties, such as increased or reduced sensitivity to light, sound, colour, smell, taste or touch.

About Autism-Europe: we are 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.

Autism-Europe ensures effective liaison among more than 80 member autism organisations in more than 30 European countries, including 25 Member States of the European Union, governments and European and international institutions.

