

ASDEU – mid-programme news

Autism policies in the European Union

Update on activities:

Autism-Europe completed a comprehensive literature review of autism-specific and autism-related policies and legislation in place throughout the EU. A related survey was made available in 15 languages, with responses from over 900 people, representing every EU member state. The findings of the survey were also explored through stakeholder consultation in May 2016, with 50 representatives from European autism associations.

Progress and learning:

Some of the key tendencies observed in autism-related policies were:

- An uneven response to the needs of autistic people throughout Europe
- Considerable policy change in different member states in preparation for or after ratification in 2010 of the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.
- Slow but gradual deinstitutionalisation.
- Slowly increasing inclusion of autistic children in mainstream education.
- Measures for employment taking shape, although implementation is still unsatisfactory

Through the literature review, survey and consultation, several common challenges were identified across the European Union, such as:

- Late or inadequate diagnosis
- Poor access to interventions
- The need for better training for professionals
- The lack of proper lifelong education
- The lack of support for developing social skills
- Poor access to the labour market
- Social exclusion and lack of awareness
- Lack of implementation of existing legislation

Over the last decade, some countries and regions have adopted autism-specific policies, which vary from single policies to all-encompassing national autism plans or strategies. Research and consultation showed that successful autism strategies have the following characteristics:

- A practical approach
- They are designed in close partnership with autism organisations, and generally after public consultation
- They have the flexibility to allow for revision without resorting to formal processes

Next steps:

The survey will be formally closed and results analysed to be presented alongside the literature review and consultation findings. The results of this mapping exercise will feed into draft recommendations for a European public health plan for autism.

Autism-Europe will then carry out further consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders, to establish final recommendations to present to the European Commission and national decision makers at the final ASDEU conference.

[You can find out more about progress about autism policies on the ASDEU website here.](#)