

Autism and Education

Recommendations for the European Union and its member states

June 2020
Brussels, Belgium

Aurélie Baranger
Director

aurelie.baranger@autismeurope.org

With the support of
the European Union



- 1. Autism and education**
- 2. Process of survey**
- 3. Results and Recommendations**

With the support of
the European Union



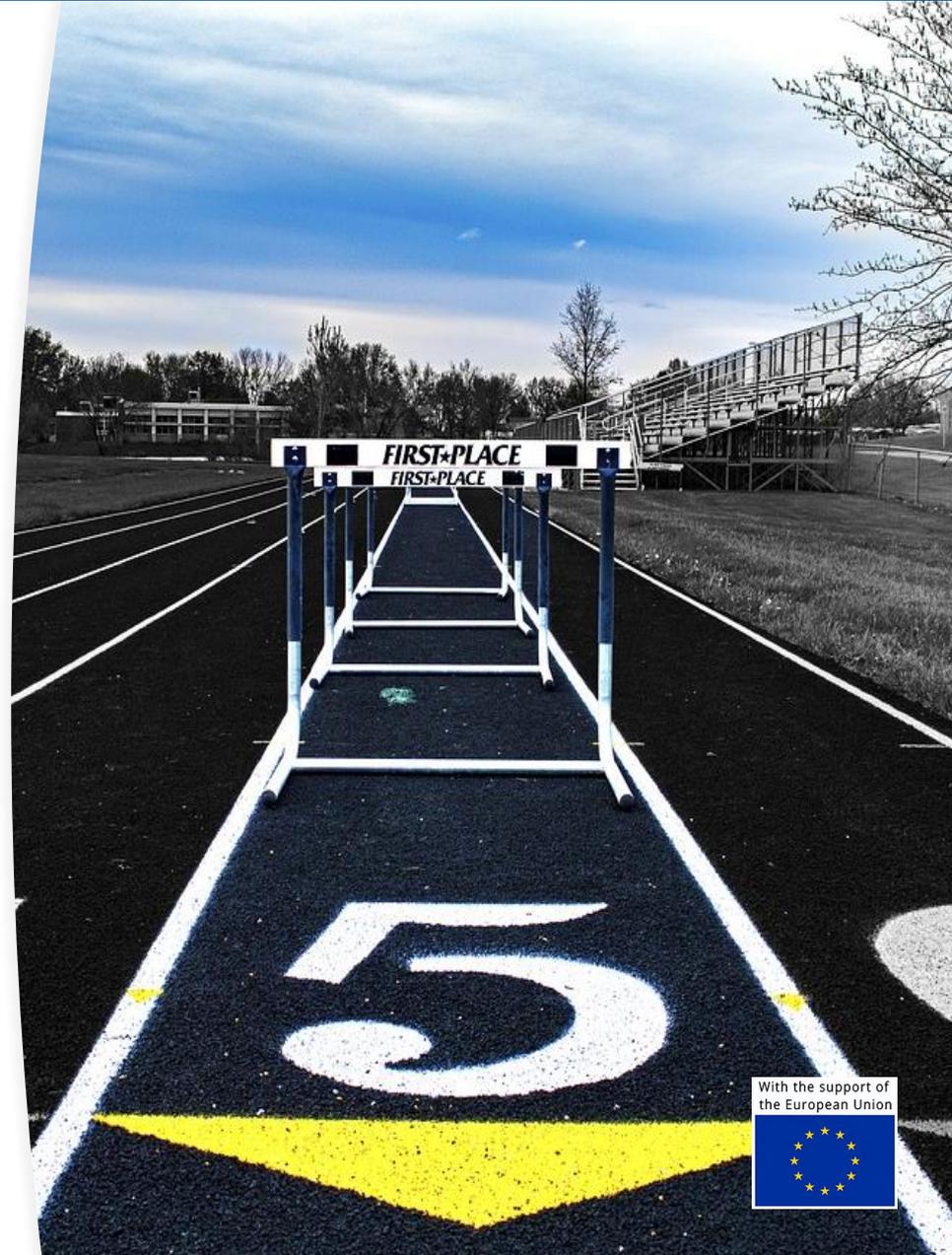
1. Autism and Education

With the support of
the European Union



Introduction

- There are around 5 million autistic people in the EU, around 1% of the population.
- Autistic people are more likely to face discrimination in accessing all levels of education across the EU which has a negative impact on their life outcomes.
- Autistic learners have educational support needs and must receive adequate support to fully benefit from inclusive education.



Access to education is a right

- **UN CRPD Art. 24:**

Disabled people are not excluded from the general education system and should be supported through : Reasonable accommodation, Appropriate support, and Effective individualized support measures

- **European Pillar of Social Rights:**

‘everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market’ (1.).



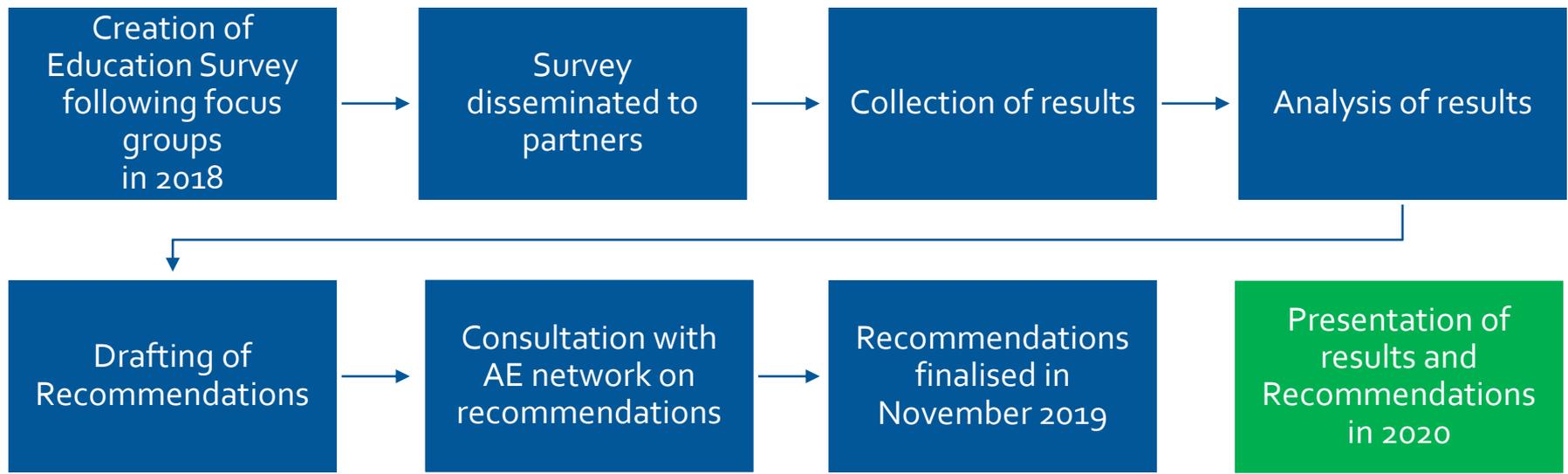
- Many countries have developed legislation and policy to implement the provisions of the **UNCRC** and the **UNCRPD**.
- Many European countries have transformed (or are in the process of transforming) their education systems to be more inclusive.



2. Process of the Survey

With the support of
the European Union





Important aspects in education for autistic learners addressed by the survey relate to access to:

- Individual educational plans
- Reasonable accommodation
- Flexibility of the curriculum
- Autism-specific teacher training
- Support in transition
- Access to lifelong learning

Overview of respondents

- Survey disseminated among Autism-Europe member organizations and across Europe
- **2,200 responses**
- These responses came from 25 EU member states (most answers from Germany, France, Spain, Poland)
- Also, responses came from 12 non-EU countries (most answers from Ukraine)



3. Results and Recommendations

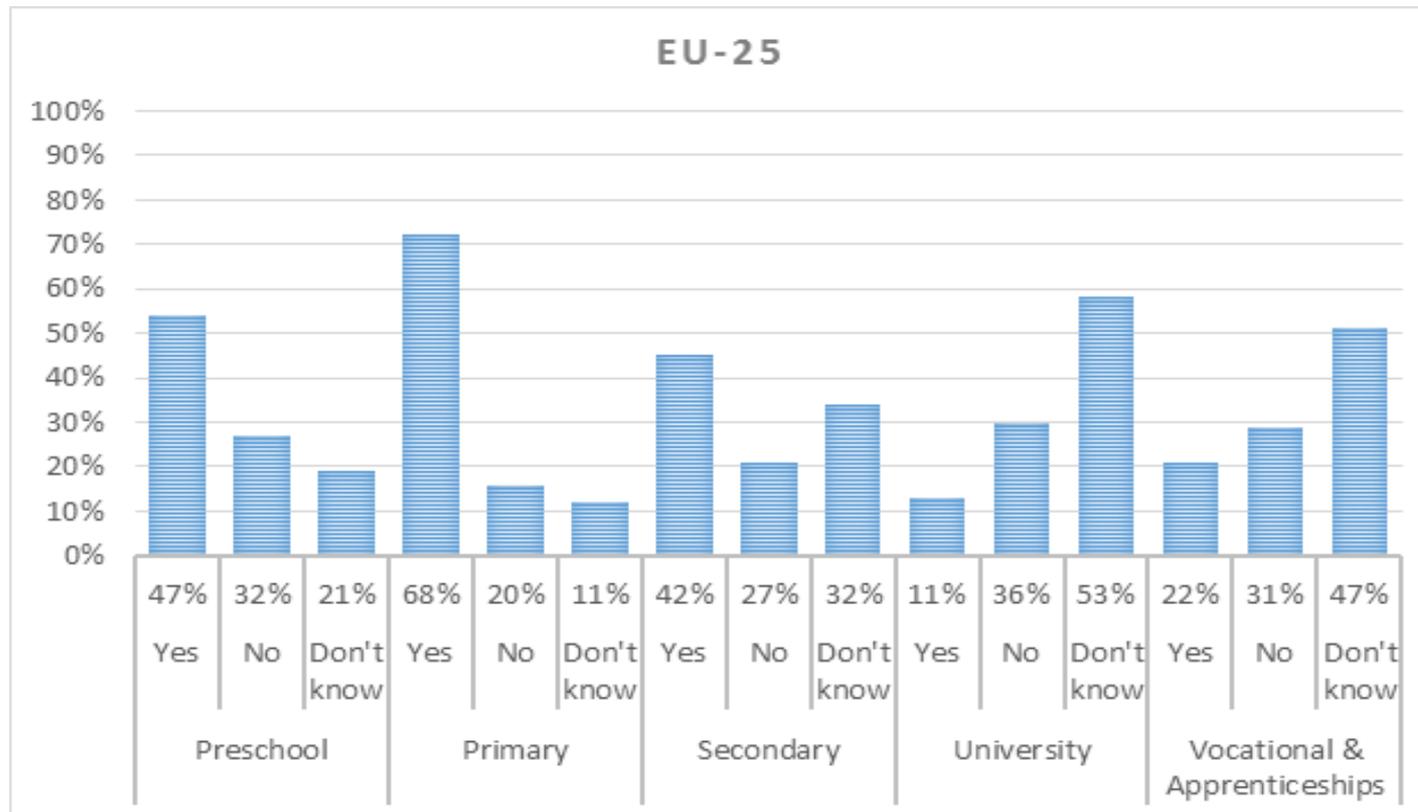
With the support of
the European Union



Results from the survey

Inclusion at different levels of education

“At this level of education, is there support for inclusion of autistic people?”



Access to individual educational plan involving key stakeholders, including parents

- In **France**, only 2 out of 5 (38%) of respondents knew of an individual educational plan (IEP) for autistic children.
- In **Italy**, some respondents noted that there were sporadic meetings with specialists for the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). On average, a lack of cooperation was reported between the school and the family of the autistic learner to evaluate progress.



Access to individual educational plan involving key stakeholders, including parents

- In **Belgium**, most respondents reported that there is no consistent use of IEP in Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders equally.
- In **Spain**, less than half (48%) of respondents knew of an IEP for each autistic child. With around 2 out of 5 (38%) respondents pointing out that autistic people are not consulted and involved in the design of their educational plan.



Access to individual educational plan involving key stakeholders, including parents

We recommend:

- Adopting a learner-centered approach systematically
- Providing better support for female autistic learners
- Adopting a multidisciplinary approach and having a holistic strategy with regular coordination between educational, health and rehabilitation staff (e.g. speech and language therapists).



Access to individual educational plan involving key stakeholders, including parents (2)

We recommend:

- Establishing specialised learning support team that can help support autistic learners
- Streamlining methods of communication between departments and between professionals, including at transition times, to keep parents continually informed on progress
- Supporting parents via adequate community-based support services, resources and training to help maintain their children in the family.



Access to reasonable accommodation

Here are a few cases in the EU:

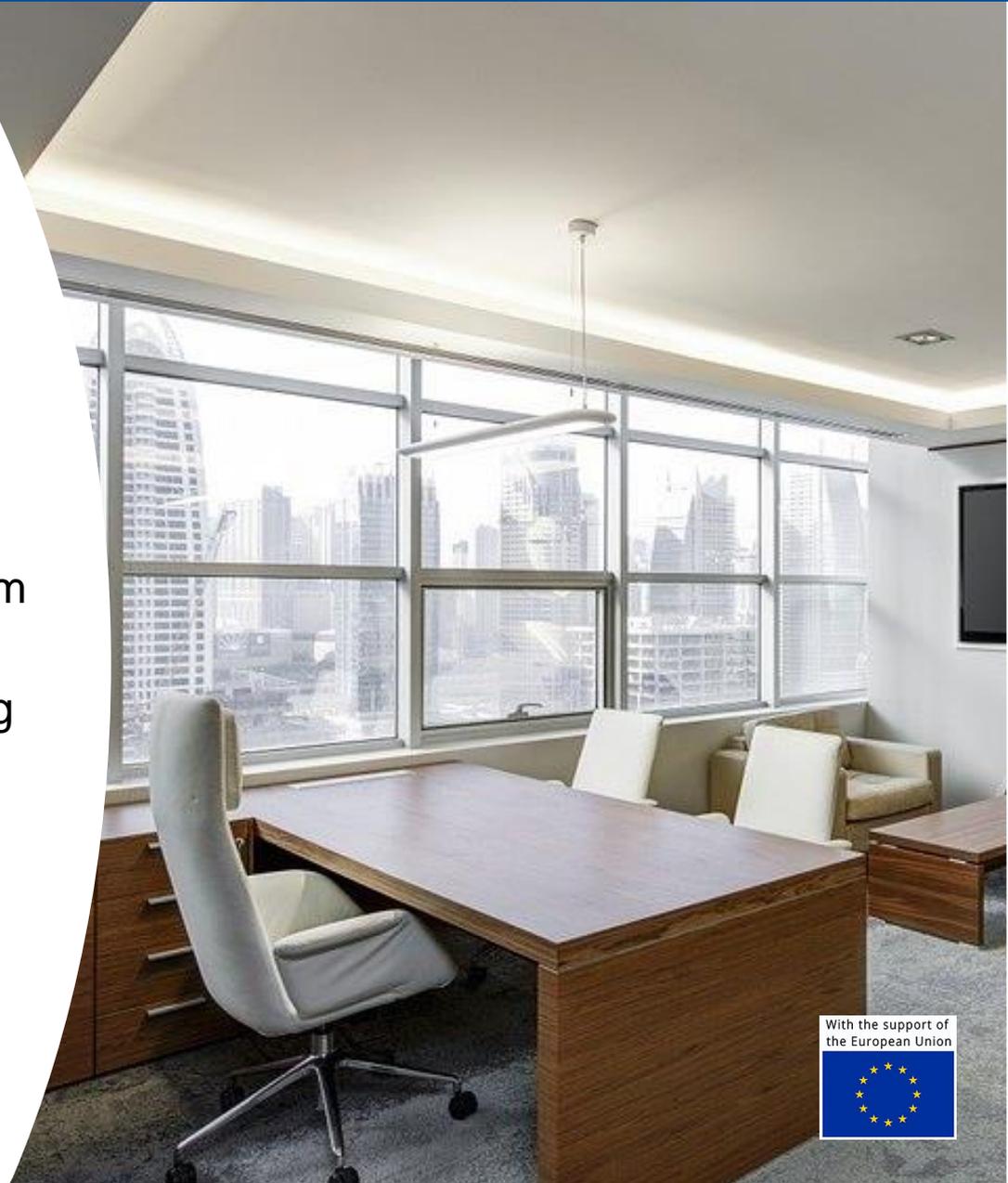
- When asked if trained assistants are working in classroom, only few respondents from **Malta** indicated one-to-one support was available.
- Only roughly 12% of respondents from **Germany** know from their experience that schools in their area provide any form of reasonable accommodations for sensory needs of autistic people.
- On schools supporting social communication of autistic children and their inclusion with neurotypical children during recreation and lunch times, trips, visits, sport activities, only 8% of respondents from **Netherlands** knew of such support



Reasonable accommodation

We recommend:

- Making one-to-one time available for professionals and autistic learners, to adequately assist them
- Improving the built environment, notably lighting and soundproofing aspects, to help autistic learners participate in education.
- More investment in visual support and assistive technology in classrooms, paired with adequate training of teachers.



Flexible curriculum

Here are a few cases in the EU:

- In most of the EU countries we looked at, there was hardly any possibility for a flexible curriculum for autistic learners.
- A very small minority of respondents from **France** and **Poland** indicated that education system in their area offers flexibility for autistic pupils and students to get their diploma.
- 9% of respondents from **Germany** and 15% from **Spain** indicated that education system in their country does offer flexibility for autistic pupils and students to get their diploma

Flexible curriculum

We recommend:

- Promoting a flexible curriculum so that autistic learners are not held back by certain topics.
- Providing opportunities in curriculum to develop social skills and life skills to enhance participation and independence in family, school, and community activities and foster inclusion.
- Offering support concerning organisational skills for autistic learners



Ensure access to autism-specific teacher training

We looked at the picture across the EU and here are a few cases:

- In **France**, on teachers having an adequate understanding of autism and needs of autistic pupils: almost half strongly disagreed that they had understanding,
- In **Germany**, 3% strongly agreed and around 1 in 3 strongly disagreed that they had an understanding
- In **Poland**, 13% strongly agreed and 16% strongly disagreed that they had an understanding



Supporting adequate training and working conditions for education professionals

We recommend:

- Develop autism-specific standardised training – with a strong practical dimension
- Mandatory autism-specific training and neurodiversity training for teachers
- Mandatory autism-specific training for all support staff working in educational environments



Supporting adequate training and working conditions for education professionals (2)

We recommend:

- Ensure closer management of newly qualified teachers – enhancing support for junior teachers from senior teaching staff through mentoring
- Teacher training and continuous professional development should be free and accessible to professionals



Facilitate better transition

Here are a few cases in the EU:

- In **Germany**, on support for autistic learners during transition between different levels of education: only 19% said they knew of any support with over half (53%) saying there was no support
- In **Italy**, only 35% said they knew of any support with over half (52%) saying there was no support

Facilitate better transition (2)

Here are a few cases in the EU:

- In **Spain**, on support for autistic learners during transition between different levels of education: only 13% said they knew of any support with nearly two thirds (62%) saying there was no support
- In **Poland**, only 5% of respondents knew of support offered to autistic learners during transition between different levels of education. While almost half of the respondents indicated there was no such support

Facilitate better transition (3)

We recommend:

- Creating systematic “Round tables” and efficient transition mechanisms, as successful transition requires coordinated, joint approach, which brings together all those involved in transition
- Helping learners to adapt, for example by giving the opportunity to visit the new vocational training center outside of lesson time as well as meeting the new teacher(s).

Facilitate better transition (4)

We recommend:

- Foster support and raise awareness of peers, for example by establishing buddy programmes
- Developing the necessary autism specific support services and systems to support the transition to employment to avoid people "falling through the cracks" after they complete their studies.

Ensure access to lifelong learning

Across the EU:

- Only 22% of all respondents know of any support for autistic learners for vocational trainings and apprenticeships
- 31% say there is no support available
- Almost half do not know of any support

Ensure access to lifelong learning (2)

- One respondent noted that there was only one specialist autistic college which covered urban area with population of greater than 1 million people
- One respondent from **Netherlands** pointed out that: *“Efforts are being made but too individual and too little. Depending on employer's commitment.”*
- One respondent from **Spain** said: *“according to educational administration support must be provided in compulsory education, which does not include support for post-obligatory stages.”*

Ensure access to lifelong learning (3)

We recommend:

- Ensuring access to vocational training and to run pilot programmes for apprenticeships to foster gold standards
- Encouraging employers to develop apprenticeship programmes for autistic learners by offering them financial incentives



Ensure access to lifelong learning (4)

We recommend:

- Uphold EU commitment to ‘make lifelong learning and mobility a reality’ for all by making relevant programmes, such as Erasmus+, accessible to autistic people
- Ensuring all universities and higher education establishments are accessible and have staff trained in autism at their disability support services.



Sponsors



Published with the support of the DG EMPL - Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission, under the the European Community Programme - Rights, Equality and Citizenship.

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or opinion of the European Commission.

Thanks for your attention

Aurélie Baranger
Director

aurelie.baranger@autismeurope.org

With the support of
the European Union

