



ASD-EAST Project- Press Release

For immediate release: June 2020

ASD-EAST calls on policy-makers to foster specialist teacher education to improve the social inclusion of autistic learners

In June 2020, the ASD-EAST project (Autism Spectrum Disorder – Empowering and Supporting Teachers) released recommendations for policy-makers, together with a short video, to highlight the need to improve the social inclusion of people on the autism spectrum in classrooms through specialist teacher education.

Meaningful access to effective education is crucial for autistic learners. Due to the diverse nature of the autism spectrum, no single educational intervention is appropriate for all. Teachers across Europe therefore need a range of skills and strategies to address autistic learners' needs. To empower educators and support inclusion, the ASD-EAST project was established in 2018. Its purpose is to provide teachers from Poland, Croatia and the Republic of North Macedonia with skills, knowledge, strategies and locally-appropriate training to support the effective inclusion of children on the autism spectrum in education.

ASD-EAST recommendations for policy-makers and other key decision-makers within the partner countries

Ensuring equal access to education is of paramount importance and is also a legal obligation, under the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) - ratified by the European Union and all its member states.

ASD-EAST strongly recommends that European countries ensure the development of effective specialist teacher trainings to respond to the support needs of autistic learners. In line with the project's findings, this will contribute to the full implementation of the UNCRPD.

Specialist teacher training is an effective way to contribute to better outcomes for learners as well as to improve their quality of life, and inclusion in society. Surveys conducted with teachers who took part in ASD-EAST highlighted their key training needs in relation to:

- Managing behaviours that challenge
- Adapting lessons and the school environment
- Supporting the inclusion of autistic children.

These gaps were addressed in the ASD-EAST pilot training where the vast majority of participants gained useful methods and strategies and would recommend the training to colleagues.

It is important to note that the recommendations are based on empirical evidence. They take account of Central/Eastern European/Balkan contextual issues and also have general relevance across Europe.



NOTES TO EDITORS

Background

Autism is a lifelong condition. It impacts on an individual's social and communication abilities and often causes them to display unusual or repetitive behaviours and interests. Currently, it is estimated that just over 1% of the population is on the autism spectrum (around 7.5 million people in Europe). Including their families, autism touches the lives of over 30 million Europeans.

The ASD-EAST project, led by the [University of Northampton](#), aims to empower specialist teachers in Croatia, Poland and the Republic of North Macedonia to support the effective inclusion of children on the autism spectrum in education, by providing them with appropriate skills, knowledge, effective strategies and locally-appropriate training. Running from September 2018 to August 2020, the project is funded by the European Commission's Erasmus + Programme.

Erasmus+ Programme's objectives are to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Its budget of €14.7 billion will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad. In the UK the Erasmus+ programme is delivered by the UK National Agency. The UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

Links to download the ASD-EAST Recommendation for policy-makers in full:

[English version](#)

[Macedonian version](#)

[Croatian version](#)

[Polish version](#)

[French version](#)

Links to download the video of the ASD-EAST Recommendations:

[English](#) version with subtitles available in French, Macedonian, Croatian, Polish

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