



**ASD-EAST**



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# ASD-EAST: Evaluation findings

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In this presentation I will talk about the feedback teachers gave us after the trainings.

## Teacher training sessions and evaluation process

### TRAINING OF SPECIALIST TEACHERS

- ASD-EAST trainings: October 2019 – January 2020
  - 2 trainings in Zagreb (1 special, 1 mainstream)
  - 2 trainings in Krakow (1 special, 1 mainstream)
  - 3 trainings in Skopje (2 special, 1 mainstream)
- Total number of teachers trained: 259

### EVALUATION OF TRAININGS and MATERIALS

- Pre- and post- training questionnaires
- Follow-up questionnaires and interviews taking place in January / February 2020



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After the ASD-EAST curriculum and training materials were developed and differentiated for mainstream and special school settings our local teams translated the materials and added local context and resources where needed. Trainings were then offered to specialist teachers in Croatia, Poland and the Republic of North Macedonia. In each country there was a training for teachers from mainstream schools and a training for special school settings, in Skopje, there were two trainings for special school teachers. Our colleagues trained a total of 259 teachers.

The purpose of these pilot trainings was not only to enhance skills of the participating teachers but also to evaluate the trainings and the materials. We collected feedback from the teachers in the form of questionnaires that they filled in before and immediately after the trainings. A couple of months later they filled in a follow-up questionnaire and some teachers agreed to be interviewed too.

## Piloting of trainings



	Special schools	Mainstream schools	Total
Croatia	32	25	57
North Macedonia	46	66	112
Poland	60	30	90
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>259</b>



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Here you can see the numbers of teachers that participated in the training and provided evaluation feedback. Overall, more teachers worked in special school settings. And I have to say this again, that also the teachers working in mainstream or inclusive settings were all specialist teachers, their role was to support students with autism in mainstream settings. The ASD-EAST materials are designed for specialist teachers. If you would like to use them to support teachers with general education background, you may need to add more information about autism, or special educational needs, depending on your audience.

## Evaluation of questionnaires

- Attending training significantly improved teachers' confidence with regard to:
  - communication
  - social interaction/relationships
  - emotions
  - sensory issues
  - understanding and managing behaviour
  - curriculum access
  - working with families.
- Training fulfilled expectations of 93% of attendees
- 95% felt there was the right amount of theoretical information to support practical strategies
- 91% felt they learned strategies that they could put into practice straight away



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From the questionnaires, we learned that attending the ASD-EAST training significantly improved teachers' confidence in the area of communication, social interaction/relationships, emotions, sensory issues, understanding and managing behaviour, curriculum access and working with families. The training fulfilled the expectations of 93% the teachers, 95% felt there was the right amount of theory to support the practical strategies they were learning about. 91% felt they learned strategies that they could put into practice straight away. We were quite happy that we were able to meet this requirement for hands-on practical training that teachers expressed they needed and wanted in the mapping study.

## Teachers' reflections of the training

- What did you like and dislike?
- What was most useful?
- What did you learn that you are now using in your classroom?
- What difference has the training made to you and your pupils?



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To understand how teachers perceived the training, we also collected qualitative data through interviews. We asked the participants to reflect on these questions:  
What did you like and dislike?  
What was most useful?  
What did you learn that you are now using in your classroom?  
What difference has the training made to you and your pupils?  
And I will present some of their answers in the next slides.

## What did you like and dislike?

### Positives

- The training met the teachers' expectations in terms of content and delivery
- They felt they gained new knowledge
- They appreciated that trainers were highly experienced in working with children with autism, shared this knowledge and provided support

### Negatives

- Some teachers from Poland felt the content was not applicable to their role or situation, or they were unsure how to apply it

"I especially liked that the trainers worked out the topics by sharing practical examples and personal experiences in working with children with ASD" (Special educator, MK).



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### What did you like and dislike?

The training met the teachers' expectations in terms of content and delivery. They felt they gained new knowledge. What they liked was that the trainers were highly experienced in working with children with autism, shared this knowledge and provided support.

There were some negatives identified. Some teachers from Poland felt the content was not applicable to their role or situation, or they were unsure how to apply it.

A special educator from Macedonia said: "I especially liked that the trainers worked out the topics by sharing practical examples and personal experiences in working with children with ASD".

## What was most useful?

- All modules except for “Supporting Communication” were mentioned
- Teachers gained new knowledge
- Their confidence improved
- They appreciated talking about collaboration

“After being reminded about useful strategies that I’d forgotten, I feel more confident about working with children with ASD”  
(Special educator, POL).

“The most important thing is cooperation with parents and inside the teaching staff”  
(Mainstream teacher, POL).

“I found the session about emotional regulation and social skills most useful. I immediately recognized where I can implement that, that work on socio-emotional skills” (SENCO in mainstream school, CRO).



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Teachers learned new things in the training and their confidence in teaching children with autism improved. So, our project is fulfilling its goal of empowering and supporting teachers. In the interviews all modules got mentioned the most useful, except for supporting communication, however, as you will see from next slides teachers said that they will be immediately using strategies from this module too. They appreciated talking about collaboration with other staff and parents, including the challenges as well as sharing positive experience.

## What did you learn that you are now using in your classroom?

- Teachers felt their understanding improved
- They felt successful in applying strategies learned
- They made connections between different modules and applied these principles in their teaching

“I used materials from the challenging behaviour session, and carried out a functional assessment, that was very useful for me” (Special teacher in special autism class, CRO).

“I use communication strategies the most, and this has produced some results” (Mainstream teacher, MK).

“I can better understand the challenging behaviour that also occurs in children who don't have ASD” (Mainstream teacher, POL).



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We were interested to see if the training provided teachers with something they are really using now. And it was nice to see that not only their understanding improved but they felt successful in applying the strategies they learned, and that the learning from different modules linked well together.

A special school teacher from Croatia said: “I used materials from the challenging behaviour session, and carried out a functional assessment, that was very useful for me”. A teacher from the Republic of North Macedonia commented: “I use communication strategies the most, and this has produced some results.” And this was the point of the training to give teachers the experience that these strategies actually work and can make their teaching and children’s learning more successful. In the last quote from Poland you can see that teachers identified that some of these strategies are useful for a wider range of students, not only students with autism.



## What difference has the training made to you and your pupils?

### Positive impact on

- Emotions and behaviour of teachers – calmer, more confident, empowered
- Emotions and behaviour of students – calmer, engaged
- Knowledge and practical skills – able to modify teaching

### Barriers in application of knowledge and skills

- Large classes in mainstream schools
- Working with parents

“I got to know how to adapt my behaviour to meet children’s specific individual needs” (Special educator, POL).

“I feel like I gained new knowledge about challenging behaviours and that I am more competent in working with it, in applying what I've learnt” (Special teacher in special autism class, CRO).



The changes teachers applied in their classrooms and lessons had positive impact on teachers themselves - their emotions and behaviour. As they feel more confident in the teaching strategies, there are calmed and feel empowered. This has an effect on the students too. They are calmer and more engaged. Teachers are more able to modify teaching according to the individual needs of their students with autism. However, we do not have a magic wand. There are still some barriers in applying the newly gained knowledge and skills, such as large classes or some challenges in communicating and working with parents.

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