



World Autism Awareness Day

Autism-Europe's
campaign 2020-2021

The basics

November 2019

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1. – Introduction

On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution 62/139, which declares that every **April 2 will mark World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)**. Each year, Autism-Europe (AE) works together with its member organisations to conduct campaigns that raise awareness of autism and the rights of autistic people across Europe.

The present document provides a **first overview of the principles, objectives and ideas for AE upcoming awareness-raising campaign 2020-2021**. It is based on an in-depth analysis of the lessons learned from the past campaigns' experiences.

2. - General context

In September 2019, AE finalised its **1-year awareness campaign “A New Dynamic for Autism. I ∞ autism”**. That year, the campaign theme and visual were also closely linked to AE's 12th International Congress, taking place in Nice, France, in September 2019 under the theme “A new dynamic for change and inclusion”. The theme of the congress used positive wording and reflected the fact that fostering interventions based on up-to-date scientific knowledge, as well as access to education and schools, employment, deinstitutionalisation or community living, are amongst key priorities in France, the host country, and beyond.

In January 2018, AE launched its Recommendations for a European Strategy for Autism in the framework of a high-level conference on the research results of the **ASDEU programme**. AE, as partner responsible for formulating recommendations for a public health plan for autism, presented the list of initial **key recommendations for a holistic EU autism strategy** (based on a mapping of existing policies in relation to autism conducted across the EU as well as an extensive consultation process).

In the framework of its **Strategy 2018-2021**, AE is promoting **access to quality inclusive education** (including to university and vocational training) and **access to employment**.

To this end, in early 2019 AE launched a EU-wide online survey to assess **the barriers to education faced by autistic people**. Following the analysis of the results of the state of play in Europe, AE formulated **recommendations for policy-makers and key stakeholders, and will highlight examples of good practices**. In 2020, a conference presenting AE report based on its European-wide survey will be held in Brussels.

Related to employment, in 2020 AE will launch a **publication to promote access to employment and fight discrimination in the workplace**. It will include an explanation of the legal framework regarding anti-discrimination in the field of employment, as well as examples of provision of reasonable accommodation for autism and good practices by featuring direct testimonies of people on the autism spectrum and employers.

Besides, in early November 2019, the state of play of employment of people on the autism spectrum in Europe was discussed at the **Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament**. A one-hour timeslot was dedicated to this issue, and AE was invited to make a presentation to share its expertise and make recommendations. Several Members of the Committee expressed their willingness to promote actions at the EU-level to address the discrimination faced by autistic people in employment, but also in other areas of life, including awareness raising actions around World Autism Awareness Day. The chair of the Employment committee was also interested in **hosting a conference on this topic for WAAD**. More generally awareness-raising of key stakeholders was deemed particularly important.

In the coming years, **AE will be involved in, at least, 8 different EU projects** fostering inclusion on education and employment. AE will be also advocating for the adoption of the **EU Disability Strategy 2020 2030**. In November 2019, AE issued a position paper on European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to inform the European Commission and other stakeholders about the priorities of autistic people and their families, and make recommendations for the next period, including access to education and employment.

3. – Consultation with AE members

During AE general assembly 2019, members analysed **the first results of the 2019 AE’s awareness campaign and discussed possible priority topics, strategies, and themes** for the next one.

A SWOT analysis in relation with the tops and flops of the previous campaign is included below, as well as some key success factors to take into consideration for the next campaign.

3.1- SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of the campaign • Toolkit explaining the visual and slogan • Use of multicolor visual • Use of an object to support the visual of the campaign • Rich variety of campaign materials, that can be easily shared, translated, and adapted • Possibility of adding the logo of the organization supporting the campaign on the official campaign materials • Campaign easy to be supported on different context (at work, at school, local events, pictures, etc.) • Align the campaign message with the one of the AE’s congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gesture and visual are not exactly the same • Unclear visual and logo • Not use of universal gestures (breaking the paper- 2017-2018 campaign- related with psychoanalysis in France). • Use of slogans too vague and/or too general, not centered on a concrete topic • Campaign newsletters just released in English • Organisations have their own ongoing (regional, national) campaigns
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches and strategies can be adapted to the national and local level • Choose of a concrete topic • Producing a film showing different testimonials from a European perspective • Representing the whole spectrum • Use of a universal gesture and visual • Run a 2-year campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The slogan and visual don’t reflect the reality of the region and/or country • Toolkit difficult to be adapted • Late delivery of campaign’s materials • Not getting the whole autism community represented/ involved • Difficulty of running the campaign in parallel with other some other regional and/or national campaigns

3.2- Key success factors

Strategies for gaining visibility:

- Get ambassadors and (national and international) famous people involved;
- Increase visibility on TV and social media channels;
- Run a biannual campaign (not just focused on WAAD);
- Run the campaign from the organization point of view plus having some sponsors to spread the message at an international level;
- Use emotional messages;
- Get the autistic community together;

About the campaign topic and slogan:

- Run a campaign on a more concrete topic;
- Choose a simplified slogan focused on a crucial issue that can be understood by the general public;
- Provide a common visual and let the supported organisations have their own slogan and theme (though try to convey a common message);
- Some priority topics (sorted from the most repeated to the least repeated):
 - (Different, complex) support needs of autistic people, diversity
 - Education, school experiences
 - Acceptance, inclusive society
 - Invisible disability
 - Quality of life
 - Understanding
 - UNCRPD
 - Autism and health issues

4. – Basics of the next campaign

In November 2019, AE's Secretariat proposed to the AE's Council of Administration to conduct a coherent campaign articulating several aspects of its work programme to **raise awareness of the general population and develop understanding of autism**, notably regarding **how to best develop access to education and employment for people on the autism spectrum**. This 2-year campaign would be implemented in several phases from early 2020 and until the end of 2021.

The campaign will be **based on common needs across Europe** and will also highlight the importance of:

- Having a holistic approach to autism as access to education and employment are linked;
- supporting the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020;
- Advocating for a strong European Disability beyond 2020 that supports access to employment and quality education;
- Supporting the implementation of the Work Life Balance directive at national level;
- Advocating for a EU legislation on reasonable accommodation;
- Advocating for adequate support from EU funds; etc.

To **effectively address a wide range of stakeholders in society** – general population, professionals, employers, policy-makers (both at national and EU-level) etc. – each phase will have a specific target and different key communication tools that can be perfectly adapted by all our members when they need.

4.1- Campaign theme

In line with the objectives of its quadrennial strategy 2018-2021 and in order to support the objectives of the EU strategy EU2020, AE is initiating a two-year multi-pronged awareness-raising campaign to inform the general population about the needs of autistic people in relation to **access to education and employment**. The campaign is based on common needs across Europe and will also highlight the importance of the EU antidiscrimination legislation at work.

4.2- Campaign goals

1. **Raise awareness** and develop **understanding of autism amongst all key stakeholders**;
2. How to best develop **access to education and employment** for people on the autism spectrum, with adequate support and accommodation for their needs.
3. Develop awareness and trust in autistic people's skills to foster access to education and employment

4.3- Campaign objectives

1. **Having a holistic approach to autism** as access to education and employment are linked;
2. Supporting the **implementation** of the **European Disability Strategy 2010-20**;
3. **Advocating for a strong European Disability beyond 2020** that support access to employment and quality education;
4. Supporting the **implementation of the Work Life Balance directive at national level**;
5. Advocating for a EU legislation on **reasonable accommodation**.

4.4- AE's milestones for the campaign in its first year (2020)

- **Share campaign materials** with members (by early February)
- **Adapt them in the national languages** (by the end of February)
- **Official launch** of the campaign (by the end of March)
- Possible **event at the European Parliament** on April 2
- Presentation of the **results of the online survey on education**
- Release a **publication on employment**
- **2 final conferences in Brussels** of EU projects on education ([ASD-EAST](#)) and on employment ([IVEA](#))
- Release of a **video with testimonies and best practices from across Europe**

4.5- Campaign slogan, visual and gesture

Members of AE's Council of Administration voted on their preferred option for the slogan, visual and gesture out of several options proposed by the Secretariat to support and disseminate our key messages.

Before making a choice, AE reminded its Council of Administration of the **key success factors raised by AE members regarding the visual and the slogan for the campaign:**

1. Use of a universal, multicolor visual (or adaptable in different colours);
2. Choose a concrete topic;
3. Provide a common visual and let organisations have their own slogan and theme if appropriate (while still conveying a common message);
4. Choose a slogan easy to translate;
5. Choose a simplified slogan focused on a crucial issue that can be understood by the general public;
6. Use an object and a gesture to support the visual and the message

Slogan:

“I can learn, I can work”

Visual: Pocket from which different tools and devices of different colours can be poked out



NB: The proposed visuals are NOT THE FINAL VERSION. The chosen final visual will look slightly different

Gesture: Hold a tool that represents one of your skills



5. – Next steps

Following the vote of the Council of Administration on November 17th 2019, AE’s Secretariat is now preparing campaign materials and toolkit by the beginning of next year.

6. – Frequently Asked Questions- FAQ

1. Why do we use a multicolored logo instead of blue as the main color of AE campaign?

Autism is a stereotypically male condition, and blue is often associated with this gender. For some time, there has been a widely accepted belief that there are five times as many males on the autism spectrum than females. The blue puzzle piece became the logo of Autism Speaks, which promotes the initiative “Light it up in blue” each World Autism Awareness Day, making the blue colour widely used to represent the autistic community.

However, [recent research](#) suggests that there are many more girls and women on the autism spectrum than previously thought.

The [rainbow-colored infinity symbol represents the diversity of the autism spectrum](#) as well as the greater neurodiversity movement. It follows the social model of disability which focuses on removing access barriers in society so that disabled people can be included. It is consistent with the rights-based approach to disability.

For this reason, many AE members prefer the use of multicolored logos that can represent the diversity of the autism spectrum.

2. Why does AE adopt regularly new visual strategies to convey its campaigns’ messages and does not keep the same logo, such as the infinity symbol, to celebrate WAAD?

The infinity logo is of course a powerful symbol a for the autistic community. In 2019, both the AE congress’ logo and the AE campaign’s logo featured the infinity symbol to represent the diversity of the autism spectrum. This visual is also used by some members of the autism community to represent themselves.

However, unlike for other causes, there is not necessarily just one symbol that is endorsed unanimously by the whole community. Therefore, AE prefers to adopt specific visual strategies to support its thematic campaigns.

A **visual strategy** can be described as prioritizing what the most suitable visual choice is for your community at a very specific moment or for achieving a specific objective, as well as measurable results. These kind of visuals look at their target audience and the goal they want to achieve for a particular campaign or project.

However, for our campaign 2020-2021, our visual strategy focuses on the key topics of employment and education and we have therefore chosen a visual strategy that reflects these core issues.

3. Why we are running a two-year campaign for 2020- 2021 and we do not continue anymore with the 2019 one?

AE Council of Administration decided in November 2017 to run a one-year campaign in parallel with the objectives and theme of its triannual congress, followed by a two-year in 2020-2021. The 2019 campaign ended with AE’s XII International Congress in September 2019, and the next campaign will be a two-year one finishing at the end of 2021.