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**PRESS RELEASE**

**April 2014**

**Autism and work. Together we can.**

**This World Autism Awareness Day, the organisation Autism-Europe is putting the spotlight on projects and initiatives to support employment for people with learning disabilities, including people with autism, the JoTradi project is one of them.**

Studies have shown that between 761 and 902 per cent of adults with autism are unemployed.

This is one of the many reasons why World Autism Awareness Day was declared by the United Nations General Assembly as an annual day to draw attention to the urgent needs of people with autism around the world.

Autism is a complex disorder that affects the brain. It impairs an individual’s social and communication abilities and often causes them to display unusual or repetitive behaviours.

Today between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1503 children are diagnosed with autism – totalling around 3.3 million people in the European Union. In most regions of Europe, these children grow up to face widespread unemployment and little or no support as adults.

Autism can certainly affect a person’s ability to interact in the workplace, yet the biggest barriers to employment that they face are a lack of support to find and maintain a job and social stigma about their autism.

Employment is essential to enhance the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in the society. It is also beneficial for companies that can use their skills. Research has also shown that companies that have employees with disabilities also report better staff retention rates, reducing the high cost of staff turnover4.

“It is not only that people with autism have the right to employment – as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – it’s also an investment that public and private organisations can benefit from making,” explains Ms Zsuzsanna Szilvàsy, the President of Autism-Europe.

For people with autism, employment is more than just a job; it enables them to live more fulfilling and independent lives.

Accross Europe, the innovative programme for supporting employment ’JOTradi’ is now fostering the development of better conditions for the employability of people with disabilities.

The JOTradi project (Job Trainers for People with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders) is a collaborative initiative among seven European organisations aimed at providing training for teachers, educators, and trainers through a specific pedagogical programme. They will become ‘Job Trainers’, and will be able to support the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders in the open labour market in Europe. JOTradi includes a job placement programme to provide people with disabilities with a concrete work experience, and eventually, to employ them in a company. In Italy, the training programme has already been successfully implemented in the Emilia Romagna Region.



**For more information and interviews, please do not hesitate to contact Aurélie Baranger, Director of Autism- Europe, in Brussels.** **Tel:** +32 (0)2 675 75 05 **Email:** aurelie.baranger@autismeurope.org

Information on autism and employment:

<http://www.autismeurope.org/campaigns/autism-and-employment/>

Events and activities throughout Europe for World Autism Awareness Day 2014:

<http://www.autismeurope.org/activities/world-autism-awareness-day/>

‘Light It Up Blue’ buildings lit up in blue at night to raise awareness about autism:

<http://lightitupblue.org/Markslist/waysToLight.do?pageId=361>

The United Nations Secretary-General’s message on World Autism Awareness Day:

<http://www.un.org/en/events/autismday/>

Sources:

 [The National Autistic Society](http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-for-change/learn-more/our-campaigns/current-campaigns/the-undiscovered-workforce/about-the-campaign.aspx) via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.

2 [Autism Speaks](http://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/12/06/jumpstarting-work-our-young-adults%28notreference%29); [Specialisterne](http://ie.specialisterne.com/2013/06/06/autism-as-an-advantage/); [Aspiritech](http://aspiritech.org/news/); United Kingdom Office for National Statistics (2001), *Census Report*

3 [Autism-Europe](http://www.autismeurope.org/files/files/persons-with-autism-spectrum-disorders-identification-understanding-intervention.pdf), 2010, *Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Identification, Understanding, Intervention.*

*4 Unger, D. D., 2002,‘Employer’s attitudes toward persons with disabilities in the workforce: myths or realities? Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities’.*

*5* [*Aspiritech*](http://aspiritech.org/first-business-summit-on-employing-adults-with-autism-convenes-january-27-29-in-north-carolina-with-focus-on-unique-role-for-small-businesses-in-closing-the-autism-employment-gap/)*,* [*Autism Speaks*](http://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/12/06/jumpstarting-work-our-young-adults%20%20%28not%20reference%29)*,* [*Specialisterne*](http://ie.specialisterne.com/2013/06/06/autism-as-an-advantage/) */* [*The National Autistic Society*](http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-for-change/learn-more/our-campaigns/current-campaigns/the-undiscovered-workforce/about-the-campaign.aspx) *(NAS) via the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services.*

[**www.autismeurope.org**](http://www.autismeurope.org)

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