



Evidence based report

on the status of supportive housing for
individuals with autism, needs analysis

National Reports

Prepared by
Houses4Autism project number 2023-1-IE01-KA220-ADU-000152794



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Co-funded by the
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of the European Union



About

The Houses4Autism project is a comprehensive research initiative that aims to explore the challenges and needs of young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as they transition to independent living. Funded by the European Union, the project investigates the barriers these individuals face and identifies support mechanisms that can facilitate a smoother transition into autonomous living. The study involved field research conducted across five European countries: Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, North Macedonia, and Ireland. Data collected through structured questionnaires provided insights into the participants' personal experiences with independent living, addressing key issues such as stress and anxiety management, sensory overload, and financial management.

This report offers an analysis of the gathered data, highlighting key areas where targeted support is necessary for individuals with high-functioning autism. These areas include mental health support, practical assistance with daily living tasks, and financial literacy. The research further outlines the correlation between sensory overload, daily stress, and anxiety levels, underscoring the need for tailored interventions to improve quality of life for those on the autism spectrum.

Through this analysis, the Houses4Autism project aims to develop best practices and strategies that will foster independence and self-confidence in autistic individuals, enabling them to thrive in their communities. The analysis of all data conducted with the use of SPSS software.



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1. Introduction

The Houses4Autism project is a comprehensive research initiative that aims to explore the challenges and needs of young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as they transition to independent living. Funded by the European Union, the project investigates the barriers these individuals face and identifies support mechanisms that can facilitate a smoother transition into autonomous living. The study involved field research conducted across five European countries: Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, North Macedonia, and Ireland. Data collected through structured questionnaires provided insights into the participants' personal experiences with independent living, addressing key issues such as stress and anxiety management, sensory overload, and financial management.

This report offers an analysis of the gathered data, highlighting key areas where targeted support is necessary for individuals with high-functioning autism. These areas include mental health support, practical assistance with daily living tasks, and financial literacy. The research further outlines the correlation between sensory overload, daily stress, and anxiety levels, underscoring the need for tailored interventions to improve quality of life for those on the autism spectrum.

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2. Desk Research

The desk research aimed to identify the current state of supportive housing for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) across partner countries, including Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, Ireland and North Macedonia. This research provides an analysis of how each country addresses the housing needs of people with ASD, focusing on both public and private sector involvement, existing gaps in service provision, and the innovative steps taken to promote independent living. By understanding the current practices and policies in place, the research highlights the disparities in available resources, the level of government and NGO participation, and the extent to which technological advancements and tailored housing models have been implemented to improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD.

2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.1 Cyprus

The total percentage of individuals with ASD:

In total, there are 7,032 individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Cyprus. It is calculated that roughly 1 child with autism is born out of every 57 births.

Number of organisations (public, NGOs, private) that host individuals with ASD within their accommodations:

In total, seven organisations in Cyprus are involved in hosting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within their accommodations. These organisations provide supported living settings for individuals with disabilities, including intellectual and visual disabilities. The Republic of Cyprus assessed 51 applications for the new Scheme for the Induction of Persons with Disabilities into Supported Living Programs, indicating the involvement of multiple organisations, both public and private, in accommodating individuals with disabilities, including ASD.

As a result of these actions, seven new community-based homes were developed through a public tender completed in 2019. Contracts for these projects were signed by NGOs and private sector companies. These homes were designed to accommodate individuals with intellectual and visual disabilities. Although the text does not explicitly mention ASD, individuals with ASD often benefit from similar accommodations and support services.

Number of social services/welfare centres that support individuals/groups with ASD:

In total there are approximately 5 social services and welfare centres operated in Cyprus under the protection and support of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance, which is responsible for the social protection system and the administration of most cash and in-kind benefits in Cyprus.



Besides the public sector, welfare services for persons with disabilities are also offered throughout the country by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parents' associations, charities, community volunteer councils, and the private sector. The Social Welfare Services and the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities are the Ministry's departments in charge of the welfare of persons with disabilities. The services provided by the Social Welfare Services are divided into three categories:

1. Public assistance, services for the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Services aim at ensuring a decent standard of living for vulnerable groups of people (for instance, persons with disabilities, and single-parent families), and strengthening the relationship between the elderly/disabled people and their families and the local community. These objectives are achieved through monetary assistance, employment incentives, and home care, day care, and residential care services for the elderly and disabled persons.
2. Community work. Services aim at helping local communities meet their social needs and promote social cohesion. Community Welfare Councils and Social Welfare Services run various social welfare programmes, such as day-care nurseries, after-school day care centres, and day-care centres for the elderly and people with disabilities.
3. Services for families and children. Services aim at helping families to perform their duties effectively and responsibly, resolving family disputes, and protecting family members from delinquent behaviour and domestic violence (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, n.d.).

Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD:

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Cyprus of 49.7% in 2018, compared to 75.2% for other persons and approximately; 1.1 points below the EU27 average; resulting in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 25 percentage points. The same data indicate unemployment rates of 24.7% and 11.3%, respectively in 2018 and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Cyprus was 66.0%, compared to 84.7% for other persons.

Number of public programmes that support individuals with ASD:

According to the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, there are several public programmes in Cyprus that support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). While the specific number of programmes may vary over time, we present an overview of some of the main types of public programmes available:

1. Early Intervention Programmes: These programs aim to provide support and intervention for children with ASD from a young age. They often include services such as early screening, diagnosis, and intervention therapies tailored to the needs of children with ASD and their families.



2. Educational Support Programmes: Cyprus offers special education services within the public school system to support students with ASD. These programmes may include individualised education plans (IEPs), classroom accommodations, specialised teaching methods, and support from special education professionals.

3. Therapy Services: Public programmes may offer access to various therapies for individuals with ASD, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioural therapy. These therapies help individuals with ASD develop communication skills, improve social interactions, and manage behaviours.

4. Social Support Programmes: Public programs often provide social support services to individuals with ASD and their families. This may include support groups, counselling services, and community activities designed to promote social inclusion and well-being.

5. Transition Programmes: Transition programmes help individuals with ASD transition from school to adulthood. These programmes may provide vocational training, job placement assistance, and support with independent living skills to help individuals with ASD become more self-sufficient.

Gender differences between individuals with ASD:

In Cyprus, as in many other parts of the world, there is a notable gender difference among individuals with ASD. Males are diagnosed more frequently than females. The ratio of males to females diagnosed with ASD in Cyprus is approximately 4:1. This means that for every female diagnosed with ASD, there are about four males diagnosed with the condition (Stavros Trakoshis et al., 2020).

Educational level of individuals with ASD:

Persons with disabilities (aged 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their neurotypical peers, and this trend is reinforced in the wider sample for the age group 30-39. In general terms, Cyprus performs slightly better than the EU average on these two measures, but there remains a significant gap between the outcomes for young disabled people and other young people. Additionally, in Cyprus, young people aged 25-29 represent about 41% of the population, while those aged 29 to 35 and above account for approximately 37%.

2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.2 Denmark

The total percentage of individuals with ASD:

In Denmark, the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been documented through various sources. According to data from Wisevoter (2023), the autism rate is estimated at 403.84 individuals per 100,000 people, translating to a total population of 23,434 individuals with ASD. However, more comprehensive national studies indicate a significantly higher estimate. According to Autisme Foreningen (2023), data from the Social and Housing Agency reveal that approximately 65,000 people, or 1.1% of Denmark's population, have an officially diagnosed autism condition. The percentage is notably higher among children and adolescents, with 2% of individuals between 0 and 17 years old diagnosed with autism, and up to 3.4% of 16-year-olds diagnosed by the end of 2018. These figures may underestimate the true prevalence of ASD, as they exclude diagnoses made by private specialists and fail to capture undiagnosed individuals, suggesting that the actual number of people with ASD in Denmark could be even higher.

Institutions that focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder

In Denmark, several institutions focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), providing diagnosis, treatment, support services, and research. Some prominent institutions include:

1. Center for Autism: A leading institution in Denmark specialising in the diagnosis and treatment of ASD. It offers comprehensive assessment services, therapeutic interventions, and support for individuals with ASD and their families.
2. The Autism Clinic at Aarhus University Hospital: This clinic provides specialised diagnostic evaluations and multidisciplinary interventions for individuals suspected of having ASD. It also conducts research to advance understanding and treatment of autism.
3. The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Center: Affiliated with hospitals such as Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, this centre offers psychiatric assessments, including evaluations for ASD, and provides support and treatment for children and adolescents with autism.
4. Specialized Educational Institutions: Several schools and educational centres across Denmark cater specifically to students with ASD, providing tailored educational programs, therapies, and support services to meet their unique needs.
5. Autism Society Denmark: While not a clinical institution, this organization plays a crucial role in advocating for individuals with ASD and their families. It provides information, resources, and support networks, and promotes awareness and understanding of autism in Danish society.

Number of organisations (public, NGOs, private) that host individuals with ASD within their accommodations

There are several organisations in Denmark, including public, NGOs, and private entities, providing accommodations and support for individuals with ASD. The Autism Society Denmark is one prominent example.



Public Organizations:

Kommunale Botilbud for Autisme (Municipal Housing Facilities for Autism)

Regionale Institutioner og Centre for Autisme (Regional Institutions and Centers for Autism)

NGOs:

Autism Denmark (Autisme Foreningen Danmark)

Local Autism Support Groups

Private Organizations:

Huset for Autisme (The House for Autism)

AutismeCenter Storstrøm (Autism Center Storstrøm)

Number of social services/welfare centres that support individuals/groups with ASD

Denmark has a network of social services and welfare centres that support individuals and groups with ASD, providing various forms of assistance tailored to their needs. There is no specific amount listed and therefore we list few of them here:

1. Center for Autism (Center for Autisme): Provides specialised services, including counselling, therapy, and support groups, for individuals with ASD and their families.
2. Local Municipal Social Services: Many municipalities in Denmark offer social services and support programs for individuals with disabilities, including ASD. These services may include assistance with housing, employment, education, and daily living skills.
3. Specialised Autism Clinics: Certain hospitals or healthcare facilities in Denmark may have specialised autism clinics that provide diagnostic assessments, therapy, and support services for individuals with ASD.
4. Autism Resource Centers: Some regions in Denmark may have autism resource centres or similar organisations that offer information, resources, and support for individuals with ASD and their families.
5. NGOs and Support Groups: Organisations such as Autism Denmark (Autisme Foreningen Danmark) and local autism support groups may offer social services, advocacy, and support for individuals with ASD in Denmark.

Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD

For adults with ASD, employment opportunities are varied but improving through vocational training and supported employment initiatives. Public welfare systems provide income support for individuals unable to work, with efforts focused on increasing employability through specialized training programs. Additional details on these initiatives are available in research such as the ASDEU DK report.



Number of public programmes that support individuals with ASD

Denmark offers public programs to support individuals with ASD, including educational and vocational training initiatives, as well as social services aimed at enhancing their quality of life.

1. **Special Education Programs:** Danish schools often provide special education programs and support services tailored to the needs of students with ASD. These programs may include individualized education plans, classroom accommodations, and support from special education teachers or aides.
2. **Vocational Training Programs:** Public vocational training programs may offer support and resources for individuals with ASD to develop job skills, pursue employment opportunities, and transition to the workforce.
3. **Social Service Programs:** Municipalities in Denmark may offer social service programs designed to support individuals with ASD in various aspects of daily living, such as housing, healthcare, and community integration.
4. **Government-funded Therapy Services:** Public healthcare services in Denmark may provide access to therapy services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral therapy, for individuals with ASD.
5. **Employment Support Initiatives:** Public employment agencies or programs may offer support and resources for individuals with ASD seeking employment, including job placement services, job coaching, and assistance with resume writing and interview skills.

Gender differences of individuals with ASD

ASD is diagnosed more frequently in males than females globally, and this trend is also observed in Denmark. However, recent research highlights the need for a deeper understanding of gender differences in ASD diagnosis and characteristics within the Danish context. Studies indicate that females may be underdiagnosed or diagnosed later due to differing symptom presentation. More detailed research on gender differences in ASD in Denmark can be found in Neuropsykologisk Praksis report and a study by Autism Society Denmark.

Educational level of individuals with ASD

Individuals with ASD in Denmark have access to a range of educational services, including special education programs within mainstream schools and specialised schools catering to their needs.

Educational outcomes for individuals with ASD in Denmark vary significantly when compared to the general population. Data indicates that while individuals with ASD show similar rates of ninth-grade completion compared to their neurotypical peers (96.9% vs 98.5%), their completion rates for upper secondary school (35.3% vs 78.2%) and tertiary education (8.6% vs 27.0%) are substantially lower. Employment rates are also lower among individuals with ASD, with only 27.2% employed by age 25, compared to 77.7% of the neurotypical population. A greater proportion of individuals with ASD (56.9%) rely on public assistance or disability pensions, compared to 13.5% of the neurotypical population.

These disparities are more pronounced among those diagnosed with childhood autism, who tend to have lower educational attainment and employment rates compared to individuals diagnosed with Asperger syndrome or pervasive developmental disorder. More detailed findings on the educational attainment and employment of individuals with ASD in Denmark are available in the JAMA Pediatrics study by Toft et al.



2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.3 Italy

The total percentage of individuals with ASD

The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Italy remains under-documented. Official data from Italian regions are sparse, often only identifying 3-4 children per 1,000, underestimating true figures due to underdiagnosis (ANGSA, 2017). Only one nationwide study led by Scattoni et al. (2023) sought to estimate ASD prevalence among children aged 7-9 across 198 Italian schools from 2016 to 2018. This study concluded that the **ASD prevalence rate among Italian children aged 7-9 is approximately 13.4 per 1,000**, with a **male-to-female ratio of 4.4:1**.

Institutions that focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder

The European Union's institutional framework comprises 7 principal institutions, 7 supplementary bodies, and over 30 decentralized agencies, all working together to serve the collective interests of the EU citizens. Instead, in Italy we have 4 key institutions that focus on autism:

1. Fondazione Italiana per l'Autismo (FIA).
2. ANGSA (Associazione Nazionale Genitori per Sone con Autismo): Founded in 1985, ANGSA defends the rights of people with autism and their families. They provide support and resources through a network of regional associations and focus on improving policies and services related to autism (ANGSA).
3. Sportelli Autismo Italia
4. Autismo Italia Onlus.

Number of organisations (public, NGOs, private) that host individuals with ASD within their accommodations

While a precise number is not available, in Italy there are several types of organizations, including public institutions, NGOs, and private entities, that host and support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within their accommodations. Some of the prominent ones include:

1. ANGSA (Associazione Nazionale Genitori per Sone con Autismo): this national association defends the rights of people with autism and their families, providing support and resources through a network of regional associations.
2. Fondazione Marino per l'Autismo ETS: Located in Reggio Calabria, this foundation provides comprehensive services for individuals with autism.

Number of social services/welfare centres that support individuals/groups with ASD

Several key organizations and initiatives provide support:

1. Autism-Europe: an umbrella organization representing almost 90 member associations from 38 European countries. These associations work on improving the quality of life for people with autism by providing various services and advocating for their rights (Autism Europe).
2. European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research: engages in projects that include the development and support of social services for vulnerable groups, including those with ASD, across several European countries (Euro Centre).



Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD

In Italy, the employment rate for individuals with autism is significantly lower compared to other groups. Unemployment disproportionately affects autistic individuals, even those with higher-than-average education levels. Their employment rate is less than 10%, which is considerably below the 47% employment rate for people with disabilities and the 72% for those without disabilities (National Autistic Society). These statistics highlight the urgent need to promote workplace inclusion for people with autism in Italy. However, it is important to note that there is a lack of updated specific research on this topic in Italy, which is a significant drawback.

Number of public programmes that support individuals with ASD

In Italy, several public programs support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Key initiatives and organizations include:

1. **Fondazione Italiana per l'Autismo (FIA):** This foundation funds numerous projects and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of individuals with autism, including research, support services, and awareness campaigns. FIA works closely with various stakeholders to enhance the quality of life for autistic individuals and their families.
2. **Associazione Nazionale Genitori per Sone con Autismo: ANGSA** is a national association that defends the rights of people with autism and their families. It provides support through a network of regional associations that offer resources, advocacy, and community services.
3. **Collaboration with European Initiatives:** Italy participates in broader European initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with ASD. These initiatives often involve collaborative projects that focus on research, best practices, and policy development to improve support services across Europe (Autism Europe & Autism Society).

Gender differences of individuals with ASD

In Italy, it is estimated that about 1 in 77 children (aged 7-9 years) have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with a higher prevalence in males, who are 4.4 times more likely to be affected than females. These gender differences in the incidence of autism are a subject of ongoing research. For example, researcher Valentina Gigliucci is investigating the role of oxytocin in explaining these differences. Oxytocin is a hormone involved in the development of emotional and social bonds, and it varies between males and females. Her research aims to identify new therapeutic targets and markers for the early diagnosis of ASD (Fondazione Veronesi, 2023).

Educational level of individuals with ASD

In Italy, students diagnosed with autism regularly attend school and are supported by special education teachers. In 2021-2022, neurodivergent students make up 3.8% of the total student population (Asperger Online, 2023). Despite the increase in specialized teachers, challenges in inclusion persist. Currently, there are over 26,000 special education teachers in Italy, but the proportion of teachers without specific training remains high at 32%. However, there are no reliable sources regarding the exact number of individuals with autism who continue their studies after high school in Italy (Asperger Online, 2023).

2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.4 The republic of North Macedonia

The total percentage of individuals with ASD

In North Macedonia, there is a lack of data that indicates the total number of people with disabilities and the data on the number of different types of disabilities. The latest information on the population from the last census in RN Macedonia in 2021 has yet to give an accurate picture of the situation. The results show that 94,412 persons with disabilities in Macedonia represent 5% of the total population in RN Macedonia. This number is significantly lower than the World Health Organisation's.

Institutions that focus on autism spectrum disorder

No specified Institutions have the target group, only those with autism spectrum disorders. All questions targeting the population with autism spectrum disorders are incorporated into the Institutions targeting the population with disabilities. The Government, the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry for Education, the Ministry for Health, and the Employment Agency are trying to improve the rights and opportunities of persons with ASD.

Number of organisations (public, NGOs, private) that host individuals with ASD within their accommodations

There are 29 public day-care centres for people with special needs, 13 from NGOs, and 3 clubs from NGOs.

Organised living with support for people with disabilities Skopski (Volkovo) Vardarski (Negotino). Services: independent and organised residing in a separate housing unit, constant or occasional help from professionals or other persons in realising basic life needs, social, work, cultural, recreational and other needs. Users: persons with mental or physical disabilities, children without parents and parental care and children with educational and social problems.

In RN Macedonia, several active organisations are making little but very significant steps in improving the education, employment, and quality of life of persons with autism spectrum disorder, as well as supporting the families and all professionals that relate to people with ASD:

1. Blue Firefly (Sina svetulka): The mission of the Organization is: "Improving the quality of life of persons with autism and their families, raising awareness about the potential of children and adults with autism spectrum disorders through education and direct support of children and adults with autism, their families, professionals, and the general public." The organisation is conducting various projects and organising individual treatment of children and persons with ASD, as well as supporting the families with a vision of "Inclusion of people with an autistic spectrum disorder in all spheres of society."
2. Macedonian Scientific Society for Autism (MSSA): Macedonian Scientific Society for Autism is an organisation that provides resources for helping people with autism spectrum disorder and their families, institutions and NGOs that work in this area, provides scientific research, educational and professional support in the inclusive society in which people with autism spectrum disorder and their families have a quality life.
3. In my World (Bo mojot svet): Citizens' Association for the Treatment of Persons with Autism, ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome. The Association advocates for improving and promoting better living standards for this category of citizens, improving social rights and freedoms, educating, conveying experiences and "best practices" from developed countries, the environment and ecology, fostering and supporting scientific research, etc.

Number of social services/welfare centres that support individuals/groups with ASD



In the Republic of North Macedonia, the process of deinstitutionalisation is being carried out, which, on the one hand, implies the exit of beneficiaries from social protection institutions and, on the other hand, the development of social services in the home, the community and non-family protection services, which support independence, independent living, inclusion and action of persons with disabilities in the community, as well as provision of help and support to their families.

The international and national legislation for children and persons with disabilities and the current processes of transformation and development of social services through the processes of decentralisation and deinstitutionalisation in the Republic of North Macedonia in the system of social protection as a service in the community for children and persons with disabilities, in continuity, the network of day-care centres has been developing since 2000.

The establishment of day-care centres is carried out by the provisions of the Law on Social Protection and the Rulebook on the method, scope, norms, and standards for providing social services for day-care, rehabilitation and reintegration, and resocialisation and space, funds, personnel determined according to the degree of qualifications and profiles according to the type of service and the number of users and the necessary documentation for a day-care centre, a rehabilitation centre, and a resocialisation centre. The opened day-care centres function as organisational units of the inter-municipal centres for social work and are fully financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The day-care service provides daily care, nutrition, maintenance of personal hygiene, individual activities for acquiring life and work skills, educational, social, cultural, and recreational activities, preventive activities, counselling, education, academic support, social support for persons and their families and other related activities, depending on the needs of the users. The day-care centres provide services for up to 24 users with disabilities in one facility, which enables quality care, the possibility of implementing an individual approach and treatments, and group work by special educators and rehabilitators, speech therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and other profiles. In the Republic of North Macedonia, day-care centres for people with disabilities are open and functioning in urban areas, enabling easy cooperation with all other institutions at the local level (educational, social, health institutions, etc.) and integration to users in the local community. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy opened daycare centres in Kriva Palanka, Berovo, Bitola, Gevgelija, Gostivar, Delchevo, Makedonski Brod, Kavadarci, Sveti Nikole, Kichevo, Kumanovo, Prilep (centre for persons with disabilities, centre for persons with cerebral palsy), Probishtip, Skopje (centre for people with disabilities, centre for people with cerebral palsy, centre for children with autism and centre for children and people with Down Syndrome), Tetovo, Veles, Shtip (centre for people with disabilities and centre for children with autism), Vinica, Resen, Kruševo, Debar, Kratovo, Strumica, Kočani, Makedonska Kamenica and Valandovo. Within the JU Institute for Rehabilitation of Children and Youth-Skopje, the day centre for persons with intellectual disabilities over the age of 26 functions as a separate department. Over 450 users are included in the day-care centres.



All day-care centres work five days a week for 8 hours a day, and the beginning and end of the working hours in each centre are adapted to the needs of the users and their parents. Users use the services of the day-care centres through organised arrival and return. One of the priority directions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is expanding the network of day-care centres in those municipalities where day-care services for people with disabilities have not yet been developed.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy also co-finances six day-care centres for youth and adults with mental disabilities, managed by the Republican and Regional Centre for Support of People with Intellectual Disabilities "PORAKA" from Skopje and Negotino.

Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD

The Data that shows the adult population with ASD in Macedonia is missing. No numbers indicate the employment status among adults with Autism, as well as their income. Most of them with high-functioning ASD are not diagnosed and are working in the open labour market. Most of the adults with ASD Diagnosis and challenging behaviour are part of protected companies or daycare centres. Unfortunately, there are no specified Data on the Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD in RN Macedonia. As an example, M. Miloschevska 2021 conducted research in 65 companies in Macedonia on the attitudes and opinions of Macedonian companies' employers and their employees regarding the employment of persons with autism and Down syndrome. The employers have not engaged persons with ASD in their companies, but they also have no Interest in employing one.

Number of public programmes that support individuals with ASD

The Draft Version of the National Strategy of the Rights of persons with disability 2023-2030 includes a lot of actions that should support various aspects of everyday life. There are not specific actions targeting individuals with ASD, but everything that concerns the populations with a disability includes individuals with autism as well. In the National Strategy there is one general strategic goal which should provide 2030 increased coverage and access to quality services to children and people with disabilities and their families, as a support for independent life and appropriate living standard. The Strategy have additional four specific goals:

- The first one aimed at improving the quality, access and services in preschool institutions for children with disability;
- The second one aimed at improvement of social services for children and people with disability in the society;
- The third one aimed at adequate social and financial compensations for adequate life standards;
- And the last one seeks to provide an independent life of the person with a disability in society.
-

Gender differences of individuals with ASD

In lack of National Register and official Data, it's estimated that in RN Macedonia, as in many other parts of the world, there is a notable gender difference among individuals with ASD. There are more males diagnosed with ASD than females.

The educational level of individuals with ASD



Most of the children with ASD and challenging behaviour are part of special schools, special units or in the last years with Inclusion Projects, they are part of regular classes. Most of the children with high-functioning ASD are not diagnosed and are part of regular classes. With appropriate support from parents and teachers, individuals with ASD are likely to complete tertiary education successfully. Unfortunately, the teachers are not well prepared to support the students with ASD. Because of inadequate support, the children finished only primary and secondary school—the Data on the number of students with ASD is not available.

2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.5 Ireland

Prevalence of Autism

The prevalence of autism in Ireland varies significantly according to region. According to the National Council for Special Education, roughly one in every 65 people in Ireland has an autism diagnosis (Togher, 2023). Additionally, the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Ireland estimated the incidence of autism within the population to be one in 65 (Doyle & Kenny, 2022). However, another study indicated an estimated prevalence of autism of 2.9% in school-aged children in Northern Ireland, which was significantly higher than the 1.5% estimated in Ireland in the same age group but several years earlier (A & Strunecký, 2019). This may suggest a greater prevalence of adults with ASD in Northern Ireland.

Employment and income

There is a surprising dearth of research on the employment and earning of individuals with ASD in Ireland, and searches across multiple academic journals and national reports were only able to reveal the following. Around 80% of people with autism in Ireland are unemployed (Tracey, 2020), and AslAm estimates that 85% of autistic people are underemployed, though no academic study could be found. While there is currently no concrete data on the earnings of autistic individuals in Ireland, the fact that a large portion may be underemployed suggests that autistic people are paid considerably less than non-autistic people and are more likely to be employed in roles that do not sufficiently make use of their potential or skills.

Educational Outcomes

Studies have indicated that rates of postsecondary educational participation for youth with ASD are notably lower than the general population, with previous research suggesting that 40% or fewer individuals with ASD ever attend college, and very few obtain a degree Shattuck et al. (2012). Additionally, the transition of youth with ASD into postsecondary education has received limited attention, highlighting the need to understand and address the considerable needs of this population as they pursue higher education (Pinder-Amaker, 2014). Furthermore, postsecondary education outcomes for youth with ASD have been reported to be weaker compared to those of youth with other disabilities (Ditchman et al., 2017). This suggests that individuals with ASD may face additional challenges in accessing and completing postsecondary education in Ireland which are not experienced by those with other disabilities. The literature emphasises the importance of equipping youth with ASD with the necessary skills and support to navigate the transition to adulthood successfully, including accessing appropriate educational opportunities (Test et al., 2014).

2.1 Profile of the Country

2.1.6 European Union

The total percentage of individuals with ASD

According to Elsabbagh et al. (2012), it is estimated that there are five million people in Europe who are on the autism spectrum. However, it is essential to note that this data is only an estimation due to limitations in data collection and inclusion criteria.

The European Commission has stated that “the EU lacks sufficient data to test hypotheses on secular changes in the incidence of autism. Due to specific methodological limitations, the high prevalence rates reported in recent autism surveys in the EU and the US cannot be used to draw absolute conclusions on this issue” (Montserrat, 2005).

Institutions that focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder

The European Union's institutional framework consists of seven main institutions, seven additional bodies, and over 30 decentralised agencies, all collaborating to serve the EU's and its citizens' collective interests. These entities, including approximately 20 specialised EU agencies and bodies, execute legislative tasks and support policymaking across various sectors (source Eurostat).

Number of organisations (public, NGOs, private) that host individuals with ASD within their accommodations

The precise number of organisations providing accommodation for individuals with ASD, alongside other resources, is not definitively estimated. However, the EU recognises at least 300 “decentralised” organisations operating under its policies. These decentralised entities are dispersed across Europe and address issues impacting the daily lives of approximately 450 million EU residents. Examples include food safety, healthcare, legal matters, transportation safety, substance abuse prevention, and environmental protection.

Number of social services/welfare centres that support individuals/groups with ASD

The four primary decision-making services and centres –European Parliament, European Council, Council of the European Union, and European Commission—guide legislative processes, aided by bodies like the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Central Bank. With a staff of around 60,000 officials serving 450 million Europeans, the EU operates efficiently compared to its national counterparts, such as the French Ministry of Finance, which employs 140,000 for a population of 67 million (source Eurostat).

Employment and income of adult individuals with ASD

The employment rate (source Eurostat) among the autistic population is less than 10%, significantly lower than the rates of 47% for individuals with other disabilities and 72% for those without disabilities. Autistic individuals are frequently underemployed, working in precarious or short-term positions with low wages, often within institutions or sheltered settings, and are at a heightened risk of poverty and social exclusion. While specific income statistics were not identified in the research, autistic individuals typically receive government funding following the regulations and actions of each EU country.

Number of public programmes that support individuals with ASD



The European Union actively funds or co-funds numerous public programs, all of which are intended to assist vulnerable populations. Among their primary strategies is promoting inclusion for diverse and disabled populations. This strategy underscores the EU's commitment to ensuring that individuals of all backgrounds and abilities have equitable access to opportunities and resources. Through funding initiatives and collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, the EU breaks down barriers and creates a more inclusive society where everyone can participate fully and contribute meaningfully. By prioritising the inclusion of diverse and disabled populations, the EU demonstrates its dedication to fostering a more just and accessible society for all.

Gender differences of individuals with ASD

Recent statistical data on gender differences among individuals with ASD is lacking, with the last submission to Eurostat occurring in 2013. Previous data suggest a higher prevalence of ASD diagnosis in males compared to females, as supported by research (Halladay *et al.*, 2015). Particularly, some researchers mentioned that boys/men are diagnosed with ASD around about four times more often than girls/women (Kirkovski *et al.* 2013; Van Wijngaarden-Cremers *et al.* 2014; Rutherford *et al.* 2016; Baio *et al.* 2018). However, some studies argue against significant gender differences, positing that women may effectively camouflage ASD characteristics (Fombonne, E., 2020).

The educational level of individuals with ASD

In Europe, autistic people face big challenges in education, work, and healthcare. They often struggle to get the support they need in school, leading to high unemployment rates. This discrimination affects their whole lives. According to statistics selected by Autism Europe, autistic individuals encounter significant barriers to accessing education, often facing exclusion from mainstream educational settings or inadequate support within inclusive environments.

In the European Union, approximately 70% of autistic children are educated in mainstream schools, according to various reports, including data from Autism-Europe, the National Autistic Society and European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. This is particularly true for those with higher-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome, where the need for additional support may be lower compared to those with more severe forms of autism. In a mainstream education setting, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) typically participate through primary and early secondary school.

However, despite being enrolled in mainstream settings, many of these students face significant challenges related to sensory sensitivities, social interaction, and academic pressures. Schools often have varying levels of support, and some students may transition to specialised schools as they progress through their education.

In conclusion, autistic people face big challenges in education, work, and healthcare. They often struggle to get the support they need in school, leading to high unemployment rates. This discrimination affects their whole lives.



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Project Partners



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union