

May 2023

# Newsletter

**AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**  
2ND APRIL



World Autism Day is celebrated annually on April 2. This date has been **recognized since 2007 by the UN** as an important date for the defense of the rights of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Actions with more impact and more ambitious objectives are increasingly carried out. There are more transversal objectives that are maintained, such as **giving visibility, raising funds for research, and fighting for the social inclusion of people with ASD.**

The 2023 drive aims to raise awareness of autism spectrum disorder, focusing on three essential aspects: variability on the spectrum, social recognition and the sense of belonging to the group.



## **Autism is not linear, but a spectrum, a diverse condition.**



This variability of the spectrum is represented by the symbol of the infinity. Although autistic people share the same diagnosis, each one of them is different from the others and has its own capacities, needs, and interests. For this reason, they require individualized and specialized support adapted to each stage of their life cycle in order to promote their social participation on equal terms. The range of colors also shows the great diversity, specificity and uniqueness of the autistic spectrum.

In addition, Autism Speaks promotes an awareness campaign through the illumination of public and private monuments around the world in blue -the color associated with ASD-. The social media hashtag chosen for Light It Up Blue 2023 is #LIUB. Over the years, the Empire State Building in New York, Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt and the Arch of Constantine in Rome (to name but a few) have been lit up in blue.

With these newsletters we want to share the highlights of the events in each country of the partnership (Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Denmark and Greece) working together for the YouthASD Erasmus+ project co-financed by the European Commission.

The project aims to raise awareness in society of what autism spectrum disorder is and to promote the inclusion of people with ASD in all activities in which they wish to participate. How to do this? On the one hand by providing society and organisations that might first come into contact with young people with ASD (youth organisations) with the methodology and training tools needed to include young people with ASD and by providing organisational support to the organisations themselves (training of administrative and management staff). On the other hand, providing training opportunities also for youth with ASD adapted to their needs.

In this way, the project aims to support the participation of young ASDs in the activities of youth organisations and at the same time increase the attractiveness and accessibility of youth work and participation in society for youth with ASD.

As the project partnership is trying very hard during this period of activity, the society is also taking great steps to raise awareness for autism spectrum disorder. Read on to find out what has been organised for this purpose in some of the countries of the partnership!



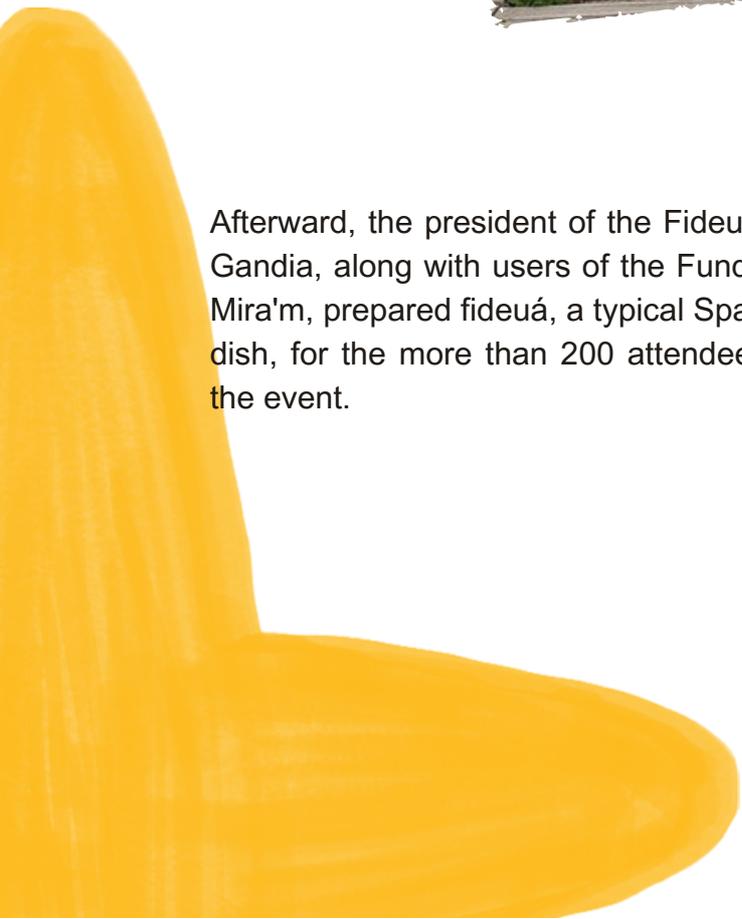
## Spain

In Spain, events and initiatives were organised, such as the launch of a campaign "Llamémoslo por su nombre" drive featuring testimonials from people with ASD: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM8d39oFBD4&t=4s>

The project's partner association in Spain Mira'm, organized an event divided into three parts for all families and professionals. On this special day, the invited families enjoyed a pleasant walk through the natural landscape of Gandia (Valencia).



Afterward, the president of the Fideuà de Gandia, along with users of the Fundació Mira'm, prepared fideuá, a typical Spanish dish, for the more than 200 attendees at the event.





After lunch, two music groups set the rhythm for this day of coexistence in which everyone had a great time together.

As a culmination, the City Council of Gandia illuminated its facade in blue to commemorate this day, and a manifesto in favor of the rights of people with autism was read. This day provided society with a better understanding the characteristics of ASD and empathize with families, as well as a day of coexistence with all the people who are part of the movement such as professionals, families, political and social agents.





# Cyprus

## World Autism Awareness Day in Ayia Napa, Cyprus

The purpose of World Autism Awareness Day is to inform the global public about autism and the steps that need to be taken to ensure the smooth integration of autistic people into society. Any direct or indirect promotion helps significantly to raise awareness in our society, and sport is a helper in spreading knowledge of difference, acceptance and solidarity.

Every social action that we all share together educates society, makes it more open and flexible, and familiarises it with diversity. We are therefore working to include and embrace all kinds of diversity, to integrate it and move towards an inclusive society.

## Run For Autism Ayia Napa 2023

On Sunday 2 April 2023, Run for Autism Ayia Napa held its second race on the Nissi Avenue Road up to Ayia Thekla Avenue, Sotira, including a 10K, 5K and 1K races.

The charity run was organised by Autism Support Famagusta along with the volunteer runners, Run For Autism Famagusta Team. The event was under the auspices of Mr Yiannis Karousos, Minister of Transport, Communications and Works, and the Municipalities of Ayia Napa and Sotira. There was a huge interest from local sponsors, which supported this initiative and as a result has supported Smile Project Sotira in providing specialised support for young adults on the autism spectrum over the age of 21. It was a huge success with hundreds of runners from all over Cyprus.





# Italy

In Italy, awareness towards autism is still not as strong as towards disability in general. In fact, Italy is one of the countries in Europe that devotes fewer resources to the social protection of persons with disabilities. This lack of preparation involves schools and the third sector, which are often unable to take charge of the special needs of autistic persons. This translates into a lack of equal educational opportunities and job development.

That is why this day is very important because it becomes a symbol of a goal we can achieve.

What was organised in Italy? Lots of events, to name a few:

- In Rome, sixty associations from all over the country met thanks to the promotion of the Gruppo Asperger Lazio, the Municipality VIII of Rome and the Bambino Gesù Hospital. The meeting featured those who are not experts but who daily encounter autistic people in the various contexts of life, such as work, leisure, culture and sport.
- In Piemonte, a region in the North of Italy, the Friends of the Po River organised boat rides 'in blue' in honour of World Autism Awareness Day.
- In Campania, the USR for Campania has proposed the creation of a digital book entitled "Sensibilising the soul with a click" - 2nd Edition, which recounts in images the experiences promoted by school institutions on the subject of autism.
- In Palermo, the city turned blue and the show sponsored by the Presidency of the Ars, the Presidency of the Sicilian Region and the Municipality of Palermo began, with young people with ASD dancing on stage. The event, with free admission, is open to institutions, authorities and schools of all levels that have participated in autism awareness campaigns.
- In Veneto, a march was organised by the Gruppo Marciatori di Altavilla Vicentina. Subsequently, in the splendid setting of Piazza dei Signori, thanks to the National Fire Brigade Association of Vicenza, the event 'Pompieropoli per l'autismo - soccorso inclusivo' was held. The event allowed children to participate in a practical simulation of the activities of the Fire Brigade, with a certificate of participation included. The course was facilitated by the presence of directions made through PECS images

In addition, the active participation of the National Association of Parents for Persons with Autism (ANGSA) was very important, thanks to which many other events were organised in many cities across Italy.



Finally, President of the Republic Mattarella himself underlined the importance of this day by attending the opening of the second PizzAut pizzeria, in Monza, where autistic youth will be employed. He was served a special pizza with the colours of the flag, called 'Article 1', which says that 'Italy is a democratic Republic, founded on work'.

'Mattarella one of us' can be read on the apron he was given, 'this is a compliment for me because I am one of you, thank you'. "Every person has his own way of expressing himself, of realising himself, of experiencing a sensitivity. No one is the same as another so it means that everyone must have the opportunity to be able to express themselves and succeed" was his message to youth.



These are just some of the initiatives that have been organised with the aim of raising awareness of what Autism means and how important it is to focus on making our communities as inclusive as possible, as everyone has the fundamental right to participate in society.

