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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme  
Grundtvig Accompanying Measures

## New Bridges to Autism

**Tool-kits for lifelong education of persons with autism**

**Workshops: ceramics, leather, painting, arts, music, sports**

### PRINCIPLES

1. *“ the United Nations, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights has proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein without distinction of any kind”(UN Convention, Preamble (b) 2007)*
2. *“Emphasizing the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development”, (UN Convention, Preamble (g) 2007)*
3. *“Recognizing the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including those who require more intensive support,” (UN Convention, Preamble (j) 2007)*
4. *“Respect for difference and acceptance of disability as part of human diversity and humanity” (UN Convention, Article 3 – general principles (d), 2007)*
5. *“Recognizing further the diversity of persons with disabilities” (UN Convention, Preamble (i) 2007)*
6. *“Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons.”(UN Convention,Article 3 - General Principles (a), 2007) .*
7. The European Social Charter (revised 1996) in Article 15 states the right to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community which implies to take the necessary measures to provide persons with disabilities with guidance, education and vocational training.  
Article 17 states the *“full development of their personality and of their physical and mental capacities”*. In particular it requires the establishment and maintenance of sufficient and adequate facilities and services for the purpose of education.
8. Pupils with ASD need a very specific educational approach and strategies and the Council of Europe recommends to the State Parties to implement their rights in the field of education (CoE - Committee of Experts on Education and Integration of children with ASD, 2006)

## RATIONALE

One of the principles of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2007) is their full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

The right to lifelong education of adults with Autism must be respected. Society must provide the means to implement good practices in this field.

### 1. The Project New Bridges to Autism

The aims of the project Grundtvig Accompanying Measures *New Bridges to Autism* (2008) are:

- to raise awareness of the lifelong educational needs of adults with autism and their families;
- to involve local, regional, national and international organizations in the inclusion of people with autism and their families;
- to exploit innovative teaching and learning methods to implement activities in non-formal settings with people in general.

The results of Grundtvig Thematic Seminar *Bridges to Autism* (2006), a Survey in lifelong educational needs of adults with autism, members of their families and staff in European countries pointed out the choices made by people with autism to develop activities in the field of lifelong education: computing, arts and crafts, sports and music.

In order to implement activities to meet these needs *New Bridges to Autism* produced teaching and learning materials for informal settings adjusted to the different cultures of the population of the European countries involved in the project.

The partners of the project will disseminate methodologies and examples to foster good practices in lifelong education of adults with autism all over Europe.

The tool-kits for ceramics, leather, painting, arts, music, and sports workshops are some of the results of the partnership of New Bridges to Autism.

### 2- Characteristics of a person with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

A person with ASD is like any other child, adolescent or adult but may have impairments in 3 areas:

a) Qualitative impairment in the development of reciprocal social interaction

If the persons with ASD enjoy the activity they are developing it is more likely they share this activity with their peers. It can reduce the impairment in social interaction.

b) Qualitative impairment in the development of verbal and nonverbal communication and imaginative activity

Persons with ASD can be creative in their own way. They can use alternative ways of communication. Art activities can be the best way to communicate. Group work also fosters social interaction and communication.

c) Markedly restricted repertoire of activities and interests

The chosen workshops meet the needs and the interests of persons with ASD. According to Grundtvig *Thematic Seminar* survey, Arts, Information Technology, Music and Sports were the preferential themes for lifelong learning activities of adults with autism.

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