



ACTIVITY: TOOLKIT

The focus of the project partners is to develop a programme, including training guidelines and a toolkit, to support employers in integrating people on the autism spectrum into the workplace. The vision is to build a bridge between companies and people with ASD. This will support SMEs in the process of integrating people with ASD into their workforce.

Autism spectrum disorder (or ASD) and Stigma

Social stigma can create barriers or unequal access to opportunities for people with ASD. Because of certain characteristics associated with ASD, it has a special relationship to autism.

Autism is considered an invisible disability. The person is usually not perceived as having a disability until he or she exhibits abnormal or maladaptive behavior, as it is essentially a social disability. Some of the symptoms of autism include socially unacceptable behaviors or lack of social skills, such as overly formal language, seemingly inflexible adherence to routines, inappropriate social responses, difficulty making eye contact, and so on.

The stigma associated with ASD is often more pronounced than the stigma associated with other disabilities in the workplace. It may arise because the person belongs to a particular group (people with autism) or because they do not exhibit the social and behavioral norms expected in the workplace. We are reaching this aim by developing objectives and extending relevant learning opportunities, including designing a toolkit and curricula to have a professional approach regarding the labor inclusion of people with autism.

Autism is estimated to affect between 1 and 160 individuals in Europe. This is equivalent to one in every 2,000 people. Some researchers suggest that, particularly because of undiagnosed cases and limited services in different countries and regions, the overall number of people with autism in Europe could be much higher.

Across the European Union, only 30% of adults on the autistic spectrum work full or part-time, and only 7.6% of those with autism work more than 30 hours a week.

This requires attention to provide more support and resources for people on the autism spectrum to obtain meaningful employment.

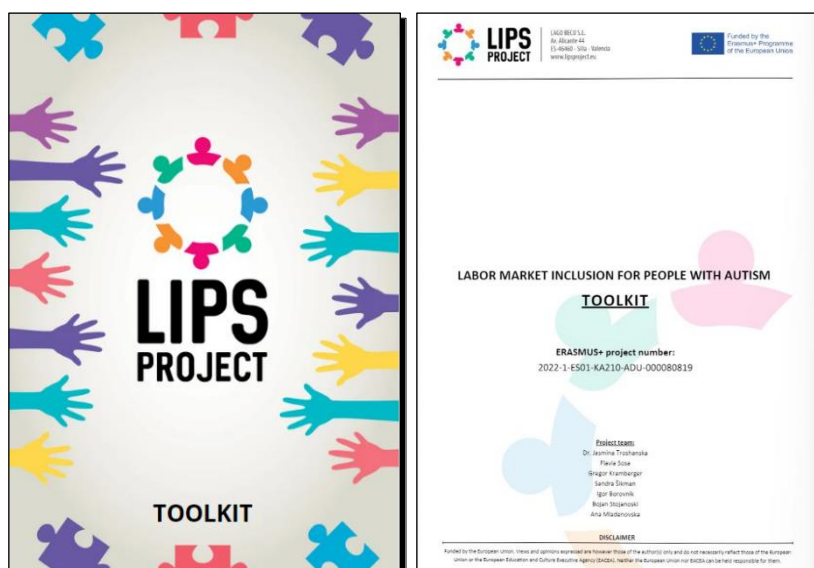


Understanding autism can help companies attract exceptional talent while fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace with many benefits.

Businesses have much to gain from understanding that making their jobs autism-friendly isn't just about meeting requirements. It should be about finding talented people who can do the job and can add value to the business in several ways, not just through work experience.

RESULTS OF OUR WORK

LIPS has completed the development of a [toolkit](#) that can support employers in the process of creating an inclusive workplace for people with autism. This is the combination of online and print-based materials for support to learn more about autism in the workplace. The [toolkit](#) is now available on the LIPS project [website](#). It can be downloaded or read in English, Spanish, Polish, Macedonian, and Slovenian languages.



The partners reviewed the progress made from the beginning and discussed the content of the toolkit on the basis of the work that had been done and the objectives set by the team. It has been possible to cover all the important issues and how they can be put into practice. Here are some highlights:

- In-depth information on the benefits of working with people with ASD.
- Developing a set of tools for companies to create a neurodiverse work environment.
- Breaking down stereotypes.



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- Building quality links between businesses and people with ASD.
- Preparing professionals to help in the integration process.

On the 28th of September, the Spanish company Lago Becu, lead partner of the LIPS project, was the recipient of the project award from FEMEVAL, a nonprofit organization founded 35 years ago that unites 3,700 companies in the metal industry, trade, and services. It is the leading productive sector in Valencia, employing more than 200,000 people and representing 12.9% of the GDP.

LAGO BECU S.L., awarded for its inclusiveness, is a neurodiverse company founded by people diagnosed with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, and they have more than 20 years of experience with a core business in business intelligence. Their social commitment is related to social inclusion through work inclusion. They work on projects that value the talent of people with autism spectrum disorder.



Furthermore, the Northern Macedonian partner, Jasmina Troshanska, president of the Blue Firefly association, was invited for an interview on SITEL Television's Morning Show. The interview was based on a discussion of the toolkit produced by the LIPS project on the inclusion of people with autism spectrum disorder in the workforce.



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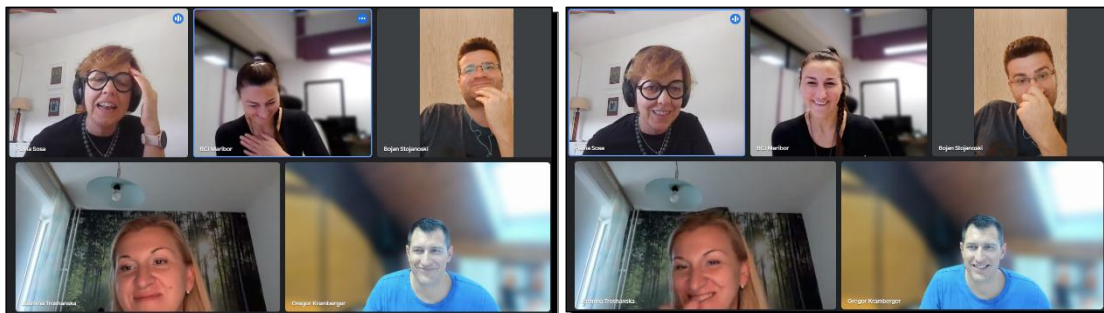
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THE LIPS TEAM

The partners meet regularly to discuss and agree on the next steps and dissemination of the project. This is crucial once the toolkit has been finalized.



The partners' last online meeting focused on the development of a curriculum that will include a training programme on how to create an inclusive workplace for people with autism. The LIPS team believes that integration and diversity in all areas of education and training are essential to ensure the successful inclusion of people with ASD and to create a neurodiverse atmosphere in the workplace.

For inclusion to be successful, we need to work in both directions, supporting people with ASD in their integration and supporting the people who will be their teammates, human resource professionals, managers, and mentors in the company. LIPS project will make sure that all aspects of inclusion are considered, including the infrastructure that needs to be adapted.



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NEXT STEPS!

The partners are now working to develop a more specific curriculum that will provide easy hands-on tools and innovative methods for educators, SMEs, and professionals. The goal is to give the tools that are giving support in the labor inclusion of people with ASD. We are in the process of delivering resources and training plans, to deliver practical guides for employers and other areas wanting to make their environments more autism friendly.

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