DEVELOPING PARENT EDUCATION IN AUTISM IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

**Rationale of the Project**
- Autism is a lifelong pervasive developmental disorder
- There is overwhelming evidence that autism can significantly affect families and family functioning
- Parent training is an important tool to support families and those with autism
- Models seen in the US / UK / western Europe remain unavailable in other settings, such as south-eastern Europe

**The Project**
- Three-year project running from September 2015 - August 2018
- Funded by the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Programme – Key Action 2 Strategic Partnership: €432,210
- Partners: From Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the UK
- Focus on parent education and training for parents of children on the autism spectrum in three south-eastern European countries where diagnosis and service provision in autism is emerging

**Main Objectives**
- Develop an evidence-based model for delivering parent education in autism
- Develop a core curriculum and locally-appropriate parent education training materials
- Use these materials to provide parent education to families living with autism in Croatia, Cyprus and the FYR of Macedonia
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the materials and the impact of the training using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis
- Share the model curriculum, tools and materials with stakeholders and make recommendations to decision-makers across Europe

**Needs Assessment: Barriers and Needs in the Targeted Countries**
- Limited opportunities for training
- Often time-limited projects and inaccessible to most
- Parents’ survey in the three countries:
  - 253 questionnaires were distributed and 148 were returned – overall response rate of 58%
  - High interest in parent training: 89% of respondents wished to participate

**The Training: Based on Results from the Parent Survey**
- Majority of respondents across all three countries favoured training sessions at the weekends.
- Topics identified within six domains, derived from the literature review and pre-existing training models:
  - Awareness and information
  - Communication
  - Specific approaches
  - Behaviour and self-care skills
  - Socialisation and relationships
  - Leisure and recreation
- First training sessions held in March 2016 (Cyprus and FYR Macedonia) and April 2016 (Croatia)

**Project Evaluation**
- Combined process and outcome evaluation methodology
- Quantitative methods
  - Pre-training, post training and follow-up participant questionnaires
  - Validated Quality of Life measure integrated within survey
- Qualitative methods
  - Participant interviews
  - Trainer focus groups
  - Trainer reflective diaries
  - Document analysis

**Primary Results: Parents’ and Trainers’ Feedback**
- Parents opinion about usefulness of sessions (1 = not helpful at all, 5 = very helpful)
  - Session 1: Introduction to Autism
    - 24 respondents: 8 very helpful, 8 helpful, 8 slightly helpful
  - Session 2: Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviour
    - 68 respondents: 13 very helpful, 13 helpful, 1 slightly helpful
  - Session 3: Practical Strategies to Manage Behaviour
    - 85 respondents: 2 very helpful, 16 helpful, 16 slightly helpful

**In General**
- 98% of participants would like to attend future training from this programme.
- All participants would recommend this training to other parents.
- All participants enjoyed attending the training.
- 75% have stated they strongly agree that they would recommend this training to other parents, 25 participants agree that they would recommend it.

**More Info**
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