

The IPAT project has just started

On the 28th and 29th of January 2021, the IPAT project - Integrative Parents' Autism Training – was kicked off with a two-day online meeting.

The Child and Adolescent's Center as project coordinator and its partners gathered together online for a kick-off meeting that was planned to happen in Athens. Due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the partnership met online and fruitfully worked together towards the achievement of the project objectives.

The IPAT project, funded by the Erasmus+ program, aims at increasing awareness about the role and the importance of parental training in the global management of the needs of autistic people, facilitating accessibility to effective training, motivating parents to use a valid self-training approach at different stages of life, in order to advocate for the rights and social inclusion of autistic individuals and eliminating stigma.

The project can count on the participation of four European countries represented by five organizations: the Child and Adolescent's Center and EPIONI from Greece, Autismo Burgos from Spain, the Gaziantep University from Turkey and Controvento Cooperativa Sociale Onlus from Italy.

After a warm institutional welcome from the coordinator's board and the associated partners (Greek Organization for the Protection of Autistic People, Association of Parents Guardians and Friends of People with Autism Larissa, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Woman and Family Branch Office Clinical) the first day of the meeting was devoted to the analysis and discussion of the policies and practices currently implemented in each project country.

The first session proved to be very useful for comparing different approaches and triggering an open discussion on what are the strengths and weaknesses each country experience and most of all how they relate to the objectives of IPAT and can contribute to it. In the second session, under the guidance of the Child and Adolescents' center and Mr. Yannis Grammatopoulos, partners discussed the methodology for the implementation of the focus groups that will help organizations gather fundamental data necessary for the development of the IPAT training and self-assessment tools.

Leading by example, the project coordinator shared with all participants the preliminary results emerging from the focus group implemented in Greece with parents of autistic people.

The second day of the kick-off meeting was devoted to the presentation of the methodology of work that each partner organization will put in place for achieving the objectives and producing the intellectual outputs (IOs) of the project. Namely, the IPAT partnership throughout the duration of the project will develop a needs assessment report (IO1), an integrated parents' autism training module (IO2), an integrated parents' autism self-training digital tool (IO3) and an evaluation report (IO4) describing the results of the IPAT experience. Finally, the partners under the guidance of Controvento and EPIONI discussed the communication and dissemination plan of the IPAT project, its tools and channels. A proper communication will be put in place for maximizing the impact of the project beyond the partnership and assure that the results and resources of the IPAT project will be available to the widest audience as possible.

The online Kick-off Meeting was also the opportunity for international partners to get to know more about the Child & Adolescent's Center. Before the official closing of the meeting, the coordinator offered a virtual tour of the Center's departments: the Children and Adolescents' Department in Chios, the Day Care Center for Adolescents with Autism in West Attika and the Specialized Diagnostic and Rehabilitation center for people with ASD "Helianthos".

Partners in each country are now ready to start implementing the field research and in the following months will share the first results of the research and IPAT will then initiate the development of crucial tools and resources that will support parents of autistic people and help improve the quality of their lives.