

REPORT OF THE STUDY VISIT

Ostria's Rehabilitation Home (Ploes Epsyme) participation at Inclusive Living Forum through Lighthouse Network of Easpd was the motive of this study visit. The idea was to find partners and discuss the problems that we are facing every day, share our concerns and difficulties, and seek for approaches based on participants' experience as Ostria has only 2 years of function. Hence, the topics of our study visit were architecture and autism, handling crisis in autism, supported decision making and team building.

We found great partners at Support Girona, Girona Spain (Ferran Blanco, Sergi Martinez Blanco) and at ACREE, Madrid, Spain (Berta Brusilovsky) to help us organize it and Support Girona also offered the space to host this event at its premises from 26th to 28th of September 2022.

We had participants from Greece (Egnyia – Kristina Bilimanaj), from Moldova (Keystone Moldova – Ludmila Malcoci) and from Malta (Agenzija Sapport – Maria Cynthia deBono), who presented their organization and contributed to the discussions that realized.

Support Girona and its director, Josep Maria Sole I Chavero gave us tour visit at its premises and talked us for supported decision-making model & global support. Also he proposed to continue the collaboration that just began. Montse Haro Bertran, Julia Manb (social workers) and Sergi Matinez Blanco (criminologist) from Support Girona presented us ERESS (Ethical Thinking Space), they talked us about building bridges of empathy and we did a experiential exercise for 10 minutes by trying to be/think/feel as an autistic.

Berta Brusilovsky (architect) gave us lectures on why and how we can design safe and understandable spaces for people in autism spectrum, how their mind works and key design approaches and recommendations. She is also eager to collaborate with us. Our organization presented its function, as the rehabilitation home's Ostria (Eleni Iatridou – Social worker), a 3-minute video of its premises, modifications and barriers concerning the space accompanied with photographs (Anastasia Georga – psychologist/manager) and also a case study on crisis management (Dimitra Kremmyda – registered nurse).

Important local participants presented us also their work. Mario Montero (director, pedagogue, social educator) from University of Girona Autism Cathedral presented how the academic body brings together families and services for persons with autism. David Encinas (psychologist, systemic familiar therapist) and Sara Garcia Baca (president, mother of autistic) from Viu Autisme shared their experience with examples.

From IAS, the Public Mental Health Service Provider, Helena Rivera (clinical psychologist at CSMIJ) and Cristina Lombardia (psychiatrist/head of services) presented us their work with children and juveniles with autism, **how we can pass from seeing it as a disorder considering it as a condition!** They also mentioned gender bias. Helena Rivera in fact proposed to train Ostria team through zoom platform on their approaches.

Natalia Diaz Calleja (psychologist, responsible for autism unit in Tillers) and Aida Palacin Maresma (psychiatrist, head of UHEDI & Tillers Units), also from IAS, talked to us about how we can prevent the acute crisis and what can we do to face the difficult situations. They also presented us thoroughly a case study and insisted on how much importance has to interview the parents thoroughly when they ask for services.

Last, but not least, another participant who contributed was Vicky Simitopoulou, architect from Greece (private participant), a future partner of Ploes Epsyme, who was interested in the topics of this study visit.

Our study visit fulfilled with a visit in Fundacio Estany, a facility in Banyoles, 20 minutes far from the centre of Girona (transport by van from Support Girona). The director, Isabel Lopez, presented their work and Irene Farrero, an autistic, helped the presentation with partial interpretation and by informing us for the begging of group sessions for women (autistics or women with autistic children supporting each other).

We considered that it is a peer learning, no one is an expert. All of the participants referred to the need of team work and collaboration with different specialties, but primarily with the family to have better & effective results. We have to replace “does not want” for “can’t”.

Environmental variables play a significant role. We have to create spaces that talk to people with physical and cognitive accessibility. Organization and sequences are very important, shapes, colours and light also. People with autism are visual thinkers.

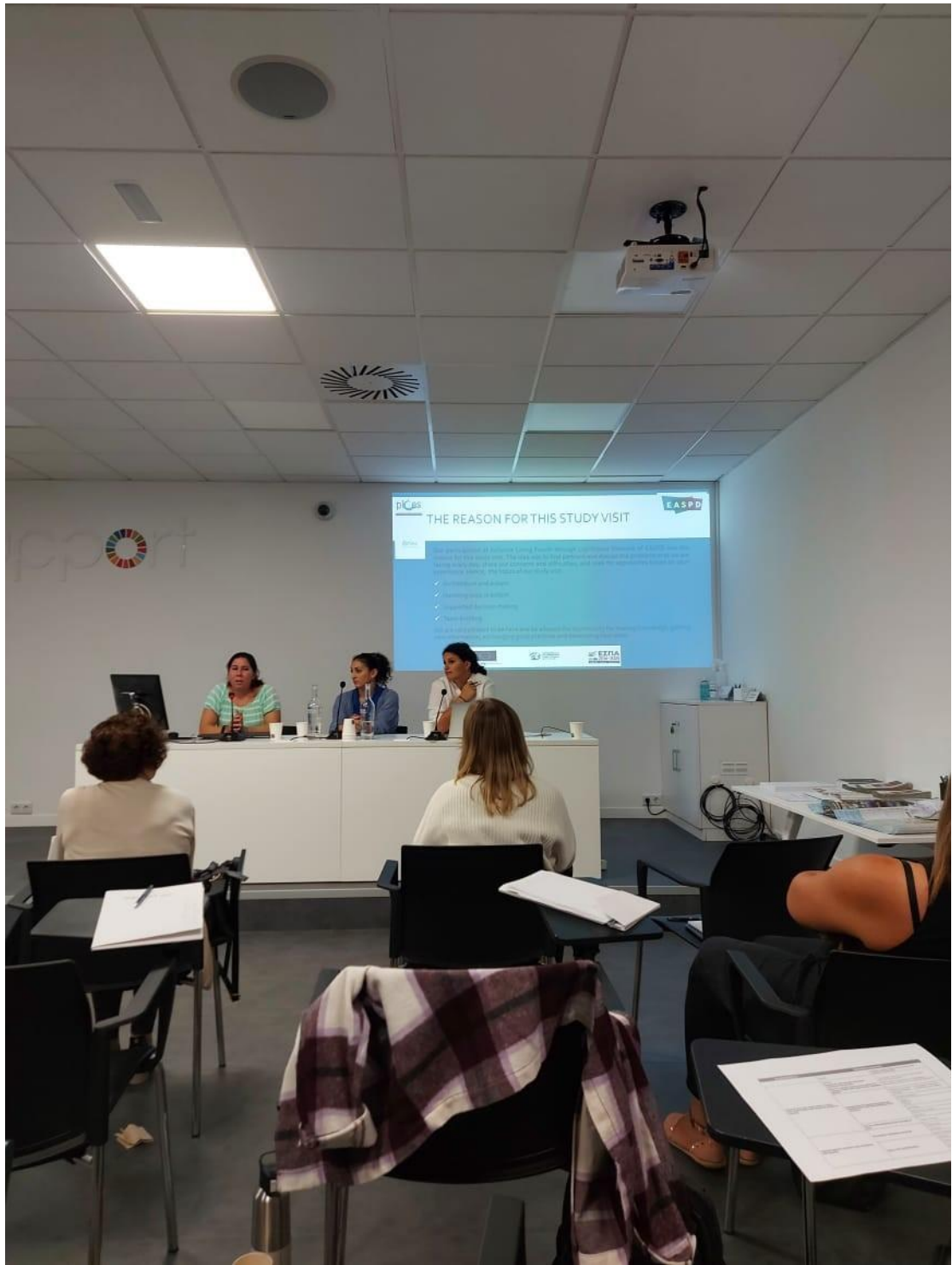
By changing the environment and mentalities we can change the person. If we have behaviours of concern, partners proposed NAPPI (Non-abusive psychological & physical intervention, which is applied in the UK) and Positive Behavioural Support. How team reacts is the part of the solution.

A complex situation we can manage it by using new approaches, finding new ideas and at the end we will find the resources. Ludmila Malcoci proposed to Ostria to use Social Role Valorization Theory. Dr Aida Palacin insisted on intervention plan, that there is no magic pill. We have continually to explain to the autistic what is going to happen. A good advice for Ostria was to start with a less challenged resident, focus on him, train all the staff about him. We will watch the results of our work and the staff will be motivated for the others residents.

Listen carefully the family, use volunteers, networking were also some other proposed ideas.

To sum up, nothing of the above couldn't happen without the significant funding of Lighthouse Network of Easpd and the guidance/directions of Konstantina Leventi and Zoe Lardou from Easpd. We are very pleased that we were allowed the opportunity for sharing knowledge, getting new information, exchanging good practices and developing new ideas and collaborations. And we hope to continue somehow these acquaintances.





picas THE REASON FOR THIS STUDY VISIT EASPD

Why are we here? A growing body of research suggests that the reasons for this visit are:

- ✓ **Knowledge and skills**
- ✓ **Learning from others**
- ✓ **Expanded business thinking**
- ✓ **Networking**

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