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PRESS RELEASE

Inclusive education and social inclusion are not simply a big money issue

*Report on Autisme Genève visit to GAUTENA Association
in the Spanish Basque Country*

GENEVA, 22 March 2016 – *With the 2nd April International Autism Awareness Day only a few days away, Autisme Genève is presenting a report on the inclusion of autistic persons in the Spanish Basque Country further to the field visit to GAUTENA Association. The objective of the visit was to understand their model, how it came about, how it works, to see the resources devoted to it, and to visit residential and work facilities. Autisme Genève has come back with tangible elements to support implementing inclusive education in the Canton of Geneva.*

A policy of inclusion and a successful model

For the last 30 years the government of the Spanish Basque Country has been implementing a policy of inclusion which favors educating special needs children in mainstream schools (be it full inclusion in mainstream classes or in integration classes). From the start this successful model has been implemented in cooperation with associations, with parents, with clearly defined financial modalities, roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. This policy is based on the UN principles on the rights of the child and on the rights of persons with disabilities; it puts ethics at the core of its activities and promotes a vision focused on the individual's abilities and potential.

GAUTENA's program for autistic persons

In its report entitled 'Inclusive education and social inclusion for autistic persons in the Spanish Basque Country', *Autisme Genève* describe in a 30 page document the role ascribed in this model to each stakeholder, as well as the organization and funding modalities of GAUTENA, an association devoted to the lifelong inclusion of autistic persons: initial diagnosis and help at home in the case of younger children, running of integration classes, training of

education assistants who provide support to pupils in mainstream classes, inclusion at university and at work, day care, residential facilities and family support for youngsters and adults.

This system works!

The result is: 88% of autistic children are in full time inclusive education in primary school. Placement in psychiatric care is extremely rare (3 cases in 15 years) and a mere 28% of autistic persons (all ages taken together) are under medication, while for children the proportion is only 7.5%. Furthermore support options for autistic persons are wide-ranging and are provided by very devoted specialists who have undergone quality specific training. It must be stressed that *GAUTENA*'s work has been recognized by several certifying bodies for the quality of the services provided, for its ethics as well as for the quality of its management.

For inclusive education to become reality in Geneva

Autisme Genève suggest that:

- An array of lifelong education and support measures, on the model of what is in place in the Spanish Basque Country, be implemented
- a training curriculum for highly committed support persons which includes modules on ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) specificities as well as specific internships
- Extensive awareness raising among the general population, in particular mainstream school teachers and parents of children without disabilities

For further information contact:

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presidente@autisme-ge.ch or tel: 079 330 61 90 on Tuesday 22 March
- Report on *Autisme Genève* visit to GAUTENA in the Spanish Basque Country on 14 & 15 October 2015: "Inclusive education and social inclusion for autistic persons in the Spanish Basque Country":
www.autisme-ge.ch
- Press conference live from 11.00 am on 22 March 2016 or webcast on:
<http://new.livestream.com/GvaPressClub>