

## **Inclusive education and social inclusion for autistic persons in the Spanish Basque Country**



**Report of Autisme Genève field visit  
to GAUTENA in the Spanish Basque Country  
14-15 October 2015**

## Acknowledgments

We feel privileged to have been able to see firsthand the outstanding extent and quality of inclusion of autistic children in the Basque Country. We were moved by the amazing devotion shown by those we met. We wish to thank our hosts for the excellent organisation of the visits, the quality of the information provided, their open-mindedness and their warm welcome.

- Mr Ramón Barinaga, GAUTENA Director
- Mr Juan Félix Palacios, GAUTENA Vice-president
- Ms Marijo Gonzalez, GAUTENA education coordinator
- Dr Ignacio Gallano, psychiatrist, GAUTENA Clinical Team Coordinator
- Ms Isabel Galende, inclusive education and special educational needs coordinator, Basque Country Department of Education
- Ms Carmen Charo Nograro, Head of Special Needs Education, Basque Country Department of Education
- The management and staff of the Hernani, Oleta, Ikasbide and Carmelo schools.
- The management and staff of the Berio residence and day centre

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## INTRODUCTION

### Reasons and objectives of the visit to GAUTENA

Every other year Autisme Genève organises, among its various activities, a scientific symposium on a topical theme in the field of autism. During the 2014<sup>1</sup> edition a comparison was shown between the education integration model for autistic children submitted by the Geneva Department of Education (Département de l'instruction publique - DIP)<sup>2</sup> and the inclusive education model in use in the Spanish Basque Country<sup>3</sup> which was introduced by Professor Joaquin Fuentes. The Basque model, which is the result of cooperation between the Basque Country government and GAUTENA<sup>4</sup>, the association of parents of autistic children of Gipuzkoa province, fosters lifelong total inclusion of autistic persons within their community.

The contrast with the situation in Geneva was so striking that Autisme Genève expressed the wish to see firsthand the situation in the Basque Country. The GAUTENA Director, Mr Ramón Barinaga, agreed to our request and suggested we invite representatives of the DIP to accompany us. The State Councillor in charge of the relevant department, Ms Anne Emery-Torracinta, while interested in receiving a report of the field visit, could not make a representative of the DIP available. Subsequently Autisme Genève invited along Mr Cyril Mizrahi, President of FéGAPH<sup>5</sup>, member of the Grand Conseil genevois (local parliament) and initiator of draft bill No 2247 on inclusive education. Mr Mizrahi joined the four member delegation of the Autisme Genève Committee (three parents and one psychologist) on 14 and 15 October 2015 (see detailed schedule in Annex 1).

The field visit had the following objectives:

- Understanding the origins of the inclusion program for autistic persons and how it works by meeting GAUTENA officials and representatives of the Basque Country Department of Education.
- Seeing the resources deployed for the inclusive education of autistic pupils by visiting classrooms in schools of different grades.
- Visiting a residential home and a workplace for autistic adults requiring substantial support (in preparation for the 2016 scientific symposium on the topic of living environments for autistic persons).

The schedule of visits suggested by Mr Barinaga totally fulfilled our expectations.

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1. « Autisme : quelle place pour la diversité à l'école, au travail et dans la société ? » (Autism : how much room is there for diversity at school, at work and in society)

2. Presentation by Ms Paola Marchesini, Deputy Director General of Education and by Ms Gabrielle Falquet, Head of « Libellules-Aire » primary school, of a medico-educational centre (Office médico-pédagogique) located inside a mainstream school.

3. Reference to the Basque Country is to be understood as the Spanish Basque Country. There are two official languages: Basque and Spanish.

4. [www.GAUTENA.org](http://www.GAUTENA.org)

5. Fédération genevoise des associations de personnes handicapées et de leurs proches. (Geneva Federation of disabled persons and their families)

## Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder of biological origin which becomes apparent in early childhood. It affects approximately 1 out of 100 people, mainly boys. The number and seriousness of symptoms vary from case to case.

This disorder is characterised by:

- impairments in communication and social interactions
- limited and repetitive behaviours, interests or activities

## Glossary and acronyms

**Autism** – In this report, 'autism' means ASD.

**Inclusion** – When persons with a disability are fully included in the mainstream, whether at school (mainstream class), at work or for leisure activities, with or without individual support (see Annex 2).

**Integration** – When persons with a disability benefit from full integration in a specialised unit. This unit is located within a mainstream facility (see Annex 2).

**CLIS** – Classe d'intégration scolaire/integration class : Special needs class located inside a mainstream school.

**AIS** – Assistant à l'intégration scolaire/education assistant : In Geneva this term describes the person who provides classroom support to a pupil in inclusive education. In the Basque Country this describes the person who provides support to a pupil during transport, meal times and break times, as well as in the classroom if the pupil is in inclusive education.

**TEACCH** – Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped CHildren : This approach promotes adapting the environment and the teaching to the pupil's needs. It offers a structured environment with, in particular, a clear organisation of space, of the daily schedule and activities and of each individual's working methods. Visual aids are the favoured means to achieve this.

## THE BASQUE COUNTRY POLICY OF INCLUSION

In 1980, when the new autonomous Basque administration took over, the government contacted the parents' associations to find out which kind of support they wished for their children. GAUTENA asked that the specialised institutions for persons with disabilities be replaced by a policy of inclusion. The government reacted favourably to this request and, within twelve years, had closed all the specialised institutions and reassigned the staff to mainstream schools where all children

were to be educated. Presently in the Basque Country 98% of special needs youths are educated in mainstream schools (either in inclusion or integration). This transfer to mainstream schools was primarily driven by ethical considerations rather than budgetary ones. The vision of the political authorities switched from one focused on the individual's disabilities to one focused on the individual's abilities and potential.

Furthermore the government elected to rely on GAUTENA to set up various categories of benefits for autistic persons which are financed through the social services and the Department of Health and Education. These benefits are available to autistic persons throughout their life, in line with the vision of inclusion.

They are financed from public funds without the need to search for private funding. Families automatically receive a pension for their disabled child which enables them, among other things, to pay the 10% contribution which they are required to pay.

According to the latest PISA studies, the Basque Country enjoys the highest ratio of equity in education in Europe. This is the direct result of a policy which rests on ethics and human rights (UN Principles on the Rights of the Child and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

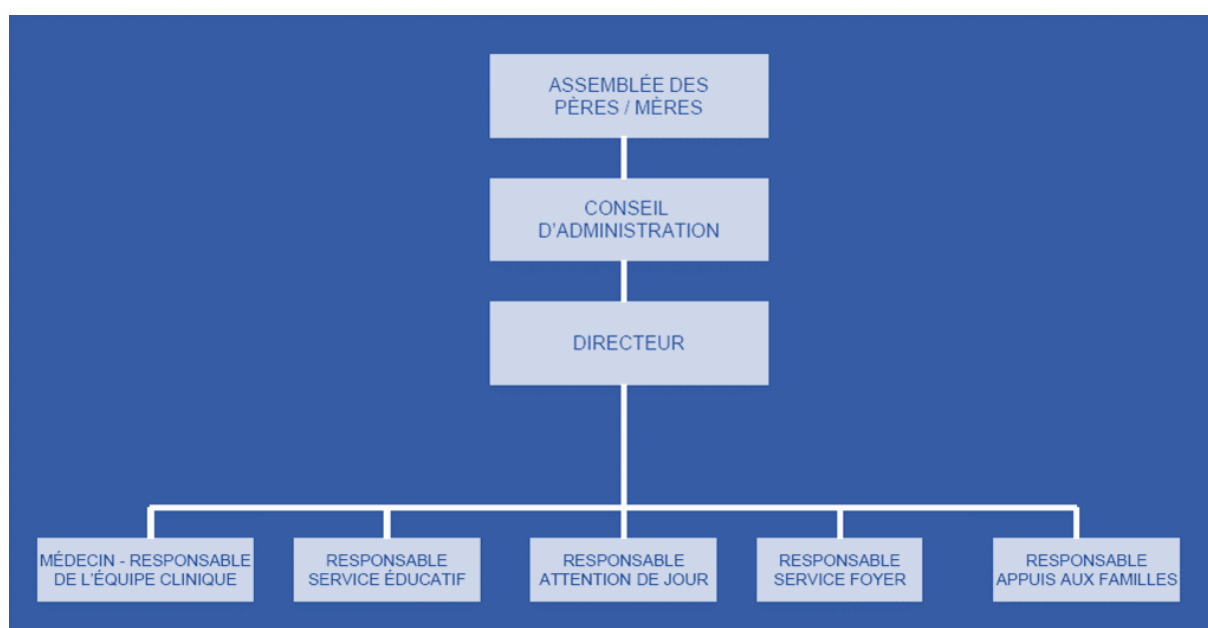
## GAUTENA

GAUTENA is a parents' association based in Gipuzkoa province. It was created in 1978 and it offers a network of support services for autistic persons and their families. The association is lead by the General Assembly of parents and only families sit on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee directly supervises the General Directorate which consists of:

- the Director
- the medical officer heading the clinical team
- the Head of education services
- the Head of day centres (work places for adults with significant support needs).
- The Head of housing services (residential homes for adults with significant support needs)
- The Head of family support services

The General Directorate and the various services are financed through public funds.

## GAUTENA's organisational structure



GAUTENA's action, which is financed by public funds, extends throughout Gipuzkoa province (population 700 000). There is no specialised institution for autistic children in the province since all children are educated in mainstream schools. It should also be stressed that hospitalisation in psychiatric care of autistic persons is very rare in Gipuzkoa (approximately 3 cases in the space of 15 years). Such result is possible thanks to the quality of staff training.

We have had the opportunity to meet Mr Juan Félix Palacios, one of GAUTENA's founding parents. He told us that GAUTENA's success is due in part to the financial support by the government and in part to the outstanding quality of the professional staff working in its different departments. When hiring staff GAUTENA pay particular attention to how motivated they are to want to work at the service of autistic persons and their families. GAUTENA consider that such commitment is essential to guarantee quality support.

## GAUTENA's services

### Diagnosis and day care

GAUTENA is in charge of diagnosis and evaluation for Gipuzkoa residents with suspected ASD. There are four consultation centres in order to reduce travelling distances for families. These centres are run by GAUTENA and financed by the Department of Health. The consultation service team consists of one psychiatrist and six psychologists who provide 450 outpatient treatments as well as support to about 700 families.

The parents, then the child, are seen within one month of the initial request. There is currently a waiting period for diagnosis services as the caseload is increasing. The health authorities will have to become more involved due to the higher number of cases and of co-morbidity rates.



Children are generally diagnosed at the age of 2 to 3. Approximately 75% of children referred for an evaluation are diagnosed with ASD. Very few cases go unnoticed.

GAUTENA psychologists provide outpatient treatment (following a cognitive, behavioural and developmental approach and stressing the acquisition of communication and social skills). The psychologist, the child's family and the school work as a team to set common goals and strategies.

Each psychologist is in charge of about 60 children. Their action complements that of the team of educational psychologists working in the schools. When a child starts school, The GAUTENA psychologist sees him/her at least once a week initially. This support is then considerably reduced between the ages of 12 and 17, and increased again later to assist with the transition to adulthood. This support is mainly provided outside of school but the psychologist meets the teachers one to three times a year. In case of emergency the school can call on the psychologist who then comes immediately.

The other types of support (speech therapy, occupational therapy etc.) take place in individual sessions inside the school.

Approximately 28% of the persons receiving support from GAUTENA (all ages) are under medication (mainly anti-psychotic drugs and anti-depressants). For children the proportion is about 7.5%.

### Education Service

GAUTENA runs the integration classes in Gipuzkoa province. These classes are designed for children who are unable to be included full time in mainstream education and they are located within mainstream schools.

There are 18 integration classes with a ratio of two adults (one special needs teacher and one specialist educator) for each class of three to five pupils. These classes are run using the TEACCH model.

Out of the 677 autistic children attending school in Gipuzkoa province, 93 attend integration classes while the rest are full time in inclusive mainstream education, with or without individual support (Annex 4). Therefore an overwhelming majority of pupils is in inclusive education, in accordance with the government's ethical guidelines.

### Day care service

This service is designed for adults whose level of independence does not allow them to work in regular or sheltered employment. It is available to adults from the age of 20 and, presently, this service caters to 102 persons. The staffing ratio is one to four (ideally it should be 1 to 3). This service, which is funded by the Gipuzkoa social services, has four centres, two of which are units located within regular companies.

We visited one of these centres and noticed that it had been designed with users in mind, architecturally speaking as well as activities wise. The activities offered have either a functional objective (helping in repair work, meal preparation, laundry work etc.) or a leisure objective.

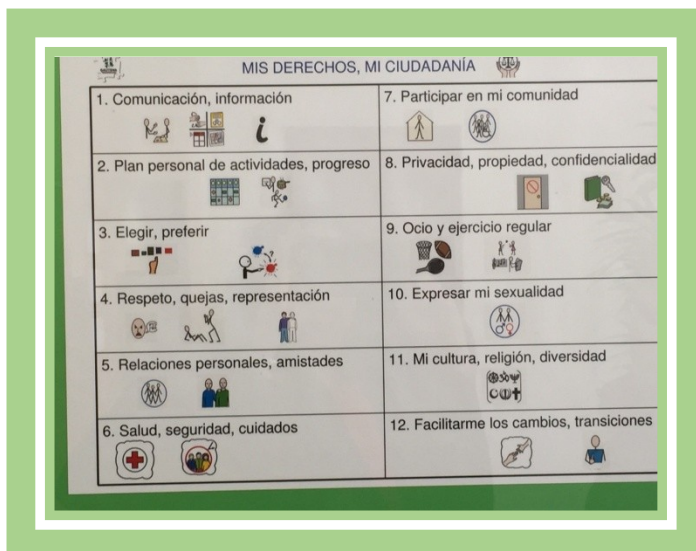
The weekly schedule always includes periods of integration in the community, with a functional objective. The fact that residential premises and day premises are separate enables the users to not have to be on the same premises 24 hours a day.

## Residential homes

There are six residential homes for adults, consisting of several flats which can accommodate up to eight people, for a total capacity of 75 residents. These are the residents' living quarters; during the day they move to different premises to work or take part in various activities.

In the residential home we visited our attention was immediately caught by a board displayed in the main hall which lists the rights of individuals. The residents are accommodated in single individually decorated rooms which can be locked to avoid being disturbed by other residents (the specialist educators have a master key). The common rooms are spacious and pleasant. The staff premises are deliberately smaller so as to reserve maximum space for the residents. The environment is structured and laid out with personalised visual aids.

One of the flats is reserved for short stays of youngsters and adults (to give the family a break or to prepare the ASD individual to transition from home to a residential home).



## MY RIGHTS, MY CITIZENSHIP

1. Communication and information
2. Individual activity program, progress
3. I choose, I prefer
4. Respect, complaint, advocacy
5. Personal relations, friends
6. Health, safety, care
7. I take part in my community
8. Privacy, personal belongings,
9. Regular leisure and physical activities
10. Expressing my sexuality
11. My culture, my religion, diversity
12. Making changes and transitions easier for me

“MY RIGHTS, MY CITIZENSHIP” board displayed in the hall of the residential home

(Autisme Genève translation)

## Support to families

GAUTENA devotes much of its effort to direct services having set up and running a wide network of specialists to provide support to families.

These services cover 4 different fields:

### 1. Types of support to families

- Week-ends and short stays  
GAUTENA organise short stays to give families in difficult situations a break. The child or adult can spend a weekend or a week in a residential home suited to their needs.
- Home intervention  
As soon as a child's difficulties are noticed (generally around the age of 2), the family is offered specialised home support. If applying acquired skills outside of school is problematic, GAUTENA offer family educational support (twice a week for two hours for instance but sometimes more if required) which can be long term if needed. This support is paid for by the social services as it is deemed help for the family.
- Emergency support  
GAUTENA can provide emergency help by sending someone on site when a family is temporarily unable to care for a child due to accident, illness etc.

### 2. Services for Aspergers and their families

- Services for families
- Services for Aspergers  
There is for instance specific support for Asperger students, to help facilitate higher education.

### 3. Leisure and spare time outside of school

- extra-curricular activities
- summer programs
- holidays

### 4. Training for families

- monthly conferences
- three-monthly workshops

## Cooperation between GAUTENA and GUREAK for inclusion at work

GAUTENA works in cooperation with GUREAK (<http://www.grupogureak.com/>), a group of Basque companies that generates and manages stable employment opportunities adapted for persons with disabilities in Gipuzkoa. GUREAK offers jobs in various fields such as industry, services and marketing. The organisation employs persons directly in its own factories and business activities or in other companies (hotels, retirement homes...). GUREAK employs 5,000 persons, including 4,200 with disabilities. Each person has an employment contract with GUREAK.

Moreover GUREAK is active on the market finding jobs in other companies for persons with disabilities (prospecting, selection, training, support and monitoring) who then sign a contract with the company that hires them. These jobs concern another 200 persons in Gipuzkoa, in addition to the other 5,000 employed by GUREAK. According to the Basque law, companies of more than 50 staff must include at least 2% of disabled persons among their workforce.

## How is GAUTENA financed

Approximately 700 families benefit from GAUTENA's services

Number of specialists            200 (68% of whom work full time)

Budget                                8 600 000 Euros

Funding :

- Public services            90 % (education 29 %, health 4 %, social services 67 %)
- Families                      10 %

## Certification

The GAUTENA program has been endorsed by several certifying bodies both for the quality of its services and ethics as well as the quality of its management.

1997: ISO 9001/2000

2000: Quality certification awarded by the British National Autistic Society

2001: Quality of Life Certificate awarded by 'The Council' (USA).

2006: FEAPS Quality Model (three pillars : quality of life, ethics and management quality)

2008: European « Q » Total Quality Silver Model,

2014: FEAPS Quality Model certification

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

In the Basque Country, 88% of ASD children attend mainstream school full time (Annex 4). Intellectual level is not a decisive factor. Only children requiring considerable support (severe autism) attend integration classes (12%). The integration classes are also attended by children with similar needs for whom this type of class is beneficial.

Schooling of all children, with and without disabilities, is the responsibility of the Department of Education from birth<sup>6</sup>. Parents may choose between a state or a private school. Private schools (about half of all schools in the Basque Country) receive public subsidies. Most children start school at the age of 2 but, if places are available, they may attend from birth. All premises are located inside schools, including those for very young children.

The Department of Education, in consultation with the parents and with GAUTENA, determines whether the child should attend a mainstream class or an integration class. The family's wishes are taken into account as much as possible.<sup>7</sup> There is no waiting list.

Normally there is a maximum of one integration class per school. Before opening an integration class in a school, much attention is given to the school's acceptance of this class. The schools are carefully selected.

When enrolling a child in a mainstream class, a compromise is made between the child's age and level of development and independence in order to avoid too big an age gap with the other children.

When a child is enrolled in a mainstream class, the class size is not reduced because the child receives the support needed (such as an education assistant). Class size is approximately 25 children in primary education and 28 in secondary education.

Children attend school from 9.00 am to 4.15 pm every weekday, from preschool throughout compulsory education.

Children from 0 to 2

- School is not compulsory. A place is not guaranteed but support is provided if needed.

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<sup>6</sup> From the ages of 0 to 4 school is organized on the model of a nursery or a kindergarten. Having early childhood services under the responsibility of the Department of Education enables administrative and practical continuity which greatly facilitates transfer of information (schools are thus rapidly informed of the tools and adaptations required for their pupils).

<sup>7</sup> When we asked whether parents were able to appeal a decision, our GAUTENA and Department of Education interlocutors did not understand our question at first because it was so totally inconceivable to them that such a situation should occur. Of course the right of appeal is written in the law but no family has ever had to use it. In the rare cases where the parents disagree with the Department's decision, a compromise is always found while respecting their views.

Children from 2 to 6<sup>8</sup>

- School is optional and free. The government services must provide a school place and they also provide support if needed. ASD children are directly enrolled in a mainstream class, with the support of an education assistant if necessary.

Children 6 to 16

- Free compulsory education.

## **The respective roles of public authorities and of GAUTENA**

Public authorities

- Public authorities are in charge of all the support provided to special needs children attending mainstream schools. The education assistants who work in State schools are public sector employees. Private schools receive public funding to hire their own education assistants.

GAUTENA

- Special needs teachers, specialist educators and education assistants in the integration classes are employed by GAUTENA.
- There are integration classes both in state schools and in private schools. For the latter, GAUTENA enters into a contract with the school and pays the school a small allowance to use a classroom and its equipment.

## **Training and job specifications for the specialists who provide direct support to ASD children**

Priority is given to individuals who are highly motivated and committed to working with disabled persons.

### **Special needs teachers and specialist educators**

Training

- Special needs teachers: University diploma in special needs education or educational psychology; the teachers then benefit from specific continuing education courses in the field of autism run by GAUTENA.

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<sup>8</sup> The majority of children start school at the age of 2.

- Social educators: their training is similar to that of the education assistants (see Annex 3) with a compulsory module on social integration.

#### Working with children in inclusive education

- Special needs teachers provide occasional individual out of class support.

#### Working in an integration class

- The special needs teacher and the specialist educator work 32 hours each (23 hours with the child and 9 hours devoted to preparation and meetings).

### Education assistants

#### Training

- The education assistants take a two year specialized course in education and integration of persons with disabilities in different contexts (Annex 3).
- Afterwards they attend approximately 40 hours each year of continuing education courses paid for by the authorities. GAUTENA is sometimes called upon to run some of these courses.

#### Working in inclusive education classes

- They work a maximum of 40 hours a week providing support (including at mealtimes and during transport) and 10 hours per month for preparation.

#### Working in integration classes

- The education assistants work in pairs, 15 hours a week, in the integration class, mainly during lunch, breaks, leisure activities, sports etc.

Interns are also sometimes present but the interns do not replace the education assistants and they are never left alone with the children.

## Guiding principles to design an ASD child's individual educational plan

- Priority is given to inclusion, at all levels and in all environments.
- It is always the environment and the curriculum which are tailored to the child's needs, not the opposite.
- A life plan is designed over a 4 year span
- The child's progress is assessed every three months and a report sent to the parents.
- The plan is revised each year, in cooperation with the parents. It is prepared at the beginning of the school year.
- If the child in inclusive education only requires minor adaptations, his/her academic results can be validated through a certificate which grants access to mainstream education curriculae.
- In integration classes, the assessments help evaluate the child's progress, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, taking into account the initial objectives, and to determine the amount of support needed.
- Particular attention is given to good coordination between the various partners.

## Educational approaches and specific adaptations

- TEACCH is the favored approach, both in inclusive education and in integration classes, but in a non dogmatic fashion. What is chosen is what works best for each child. For instance PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is used if it is beneficial to the child.
- Children in inclusive education have a few hours a week of individual tuition with a special needs teacher belonging to the school's psycho-educational team. Children in integration classes regularly receive individual tuition at their desk.
- Whenever possible, children in integration classes are ascribed to a mainstream class which they attend at specific times which are beneficial to them.
- Reverse integration, whereby mainstream pupils spend short periods of time tutoring children in integration classes during fun activities, is possible and is on a voluntary basis.
- Further adaptations are available, such as being able to use a computer in class, being allowed extra time to complete an assignment, being able to visit beforehand the room where an exam will take place, etc.



- Schools provide premises for individual tuition or to take a pause. It should be stressed that primary schools are fenced in (including the playgrounds).
- Children with behavioral difficulties are not taken out of school; instead solutions are found.

## Cooperation with the parents

- Parents take part in setting the objectives in their child's plan.
- Teachers encourage parents to help their child apply the skills learnt at school elsewhere (through oral transmission or with the help of videos filmed at school).

## The team supporting the child and the family

- Each family has dealings with many different people: the Ministry of Education, the school's psycho-educational team, the teachers and educators, the education assistants, outside specialists (such as GAUTENA) etc. Among them one person is chosen to act as coordinator. This person becomes the focal point and coordinates all the work done in relation to the child.
- The various partners have access to a computer file which contains all the information required about the child and the child's educational plan.

## Support given to other pupils

- From a very young age children are used to being with special needs children in their school or in their class. They are given explanations and discussions take place over fears, risk of teasing or how to relate to an ASD child.
- Every year the teachers from the integration classes visit mainstream classes to show a video which provides information and clues on how to react to behavioural problems (for instance if an ASD child takes food from another child's plate at the canteen).
- Pupils wishing to do so may visit the integration classes.

## How integration classes are organized

- Each integration class has four to six pupils (up to 20 years old), one special needs teacher, one specialist educator and two education assistants.
- The teacher-educator pair split their day with the classroom assistants pair so that at all times there is a minimum adult/pupil ratio of two adults for four to six pupils.
- The children join their mainstream peers mainly during meals and breaks. Further opportunities, such as school parties or school trips, are also taken advantage of.
- The classroom is divided into various activity areas: for instance an individual desk for each child, a play area, an area for snacking and watching videos, an area to get changed.
- Each child has his/her own schedule which is displayed using pictograms, photos or text.

## Vignettes

Our delegation received a very warm welcome from all the people we met and it is with fully deserved pride that the schools' educational teams showed us around their schools. We witnessed a spontaneously positive attitude towards inclusive education, which is in stark contrast with the fears currently expressed in schools in Geneva. Our hosts were at times astonished by our questions (how to deal with behavioural issues, cooperating with families, children's academic standard...) as, to them, inclusive education is taken as a given. When there are problems, the teachers work with GAUTENA experts to find solutions, but the presence of the child in the class is not put into question.

### Visit to a primary class which includes one ASD pupil

Xavier<sup>9</sup> is an 11 year old boy with ASD. He is in a mainstream class with 10 year old pupils. He has moderate intellectual delay and poor language skills. He is supported full time by an education assistant. He also has four hours of private tuition per week in a separate room. His curriculum has been designed taking into account his abilities and his desk has been positioned to give him easier access to his daily schedule (displayed with pictograms), his school material and games which are organized in labeled pigeon holes.

We first watch Xavier as he arrives at the school on the school bus with the other children. He is accompanied by his education assistant who has travelled on the bus with him.

We then go into the classroom, where we see Xavier busy doing math with physical objects and with the help of his education assistant. The other pupils are doing a Spanish language lesson. The fact that there are different activities going on at the same time does not appear to bother anyone. When Xavier has finished his assignment he spontaneously gets up to go and put his math material away, he removes the math pictogram and he points on his reward board to the picture representing the game he wants to play.

When Xavier reaches the age of 13, he will move to mainstream secondary education for three years. When he reaches the age of 16 he will probably continue his schooling in an integration class which combines general academic and pre-vocational subjects. Then a decision will be made as to his future.



Inclusive education in a mainstream class with the support education assistant



Schedule, school material and games are of an easy to reach

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<sup>9</sup> Name has been changed.

### Visit to an integration class for 4 to 7 year olds

There are six pupils in this class, four of which benefit from partial mainstream inclusion.

The children arrive at 9 o'clock in a school bus with a driver and an accompanying adult.

As they come into the classroom, with or without assistance depending on their abilities, the children empty their school bag, put it away, check their daily schedule (prepared with pictograms or photographs) and place a red arrow pointing to the picture representing their next activity.

The classroom is organised so as to help them understand the activities.

The lessons cover various fields such as gaining in independence, social skills and cognitive development.

When we arrive in the classroom at about 12 noon, the education assistants have just begun their turn of duty and are showing the children how to put on their apron for the meal.



Set up of the play area



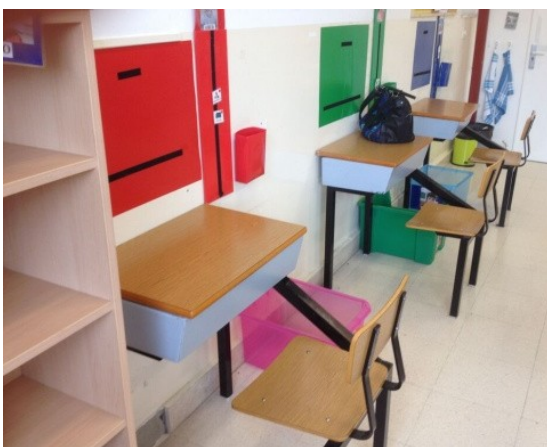
Individual daily schedules

### Visit to an integration class for 7 to 12 year olds.

Time-table: 9.00-12.30 classroom work; 12.30-15.00 lunch, group games; 15.00-16.15 therapies, library, music, etc.

The weekly schedule is varied. Besides lessons aimed at improving communication and academic skills and activities such as music, drawing or gymnastics, the pupils learn other things such as playing together as a group, taking turns or how to deal better with a visit to the doctor.

An outing is organized once a week to practice the skills learnt (ex: eating out, obeying pedestrian traffic signals, becoming acquainted with medical centers<sup>10</sup>, etc.).



Structured classroom environment: play area, table for joint activities, individual desks for personal work.

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<sup>10</sup> GAUTENA keep a list of doctors trained in autism, which includes two general practitioners in San Sebastian available as resource persons, and dentists.



### Visit to an integration class for adolescents

There are six pupils, aged 13 to 20 in this class. Two of them benefit from part-time mainstream inclusion, two afternoons a week, one with the support of an education assistant.

The young children in the school are used to seeing the teenagers of the integration class since each day one of them (a different one each week) comes to their class to introduce the lunch menu using photographs. The teenagers of the integration class thus become 'special friends' and they are well accepted by the younger children.

Like for all other integration classes, meals, breaks and school trips take place with mainstream pupils. Generally the mornings are spent in the classroom while the afternoons are spent in specific locations depending on the particular activity. The youngsters learn to cook, to shower, to buy clothes etc.

At the time of our visit all the youngsters were working at their desk, either on their own or with the support of an adult.



Weekly schedule of one of the teenagers



Menu which the integration class teenagers introduce to the infant class

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Persons with disabilities have access to a wide range of support options in the Basque Country. The aim is to meet various needs throughout the person's life while giving priority to inclusion in the mainstream in all fields. This wide array of support is provided through specialists who have gone through specific quality training and who display a deep commitment towards supporting autistic persons.

GAUTENA, an association which is run on public funds, is one of the pillars of this system. GAUTENA suggest solutions which are respectful towards ASD persons and which suit their abilities, using among other things the TEACCH approach, an approach which has been recognised as effective in all education systems (Panerai et al., 2009<sup>11</sup>).

This system 'works' – as can be seen from the high percentage of autistic children (88% in primary education) schooled in mainstream classes and the extremely low number of admissions in psychiatric care. Koegel et al. (2009)<sup>12</sup>, who reviewed various publications on inclusive education, stress the importance of a well thought out inclusion and conclude that « as a whole, the data support the inclusion of students with autism and other significant disabilities in regular education classes for both social and academic development »<sup>13</sup> (p.152). The inclusion in a mainstream class of an ASD pupil can also be beneficial for the other children in the class.

In all likelihood, in the long run the overall cost of an inclusive education system would not exceed that of the current segregation system as the adult/pupil ratio in inclusive education naturally tends to be reduced over time while it remains constant in specialised institutions.

In our canton, the segregated system remains the most common approach, although the law on inclusive education<sup>14</sup> states that inclusive solutions should be preferred over segregation options. Even the children who have attended the excellent Autism Early Intervention Centre (CIPA) are unable to find a state school willing to accept them<sup>15</sup>. As of the fall of 2014, Geneva only had fourteen education assistants for the entire primary and secondary schools put together, and these provided support to approximately thirty pupils who mostly had visual impairments or reduced mobility<sup>16</sup>.

It is the role of a parents association to advocate and defend the rights of the families it represents. In the Spanish Basque Country we saw that an inclusive society can exist based solely on human rights. The Basque government has openly pronounced the UN principles as *sine qua non*: such a solution is dignified for all, disabled persons, politicians, professionals and citizens.

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11 Panerai, S. et al. (2009). Special education versus inclusive education. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 39, 874-882.

12 Koegel, R.L., Robinson, S., & Koegel, L.K. (2009). Empirically Supported Intervention Practices for Autism Spectrum Disorders in School and Community Settings. In Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support*, 149-176.

13 (ibid., p.152)

14 Bill on integration of special needs children and adolescents, Geneva, 2010.

15 To our knowledge only one child coming from the CIPA has been able to continue his education in a mainstream state school.

16 <https://edu.ge.ch/site/capintegration/acteurs-de-lecole/assistants-a-lintegration-scolaire-ais/>, found on internet on 12 January 2016

## Suggestions

In order to make inclusive education a reality in Geneva we suggest the following:

- Putting into place a package of educational and support measures from primary school throughout the ASD person's life, similar to what is in existence in the Basque Country
- A formal course program for support persons – intended for highly committed people – which includes modules covering ASD specificities, applying TEACCH principles, using PECS, managing behavioural problems, as well as specific internships to make this endeavour a success. The current offering in terms of education assistant training<sup>17</sup> is well below what is required (Annexe 3).
- Significant awareness raising among the general population, in particular mainstream school teachers and parents, in order to facilitate putting this new paradigm into action.

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17 The education assistants have been hired "by Pro Juventute in the framework of a 'back to work' program (dispositif d'emplois de solidarité (EdS). [...] They have in common their strong motivation, rich life experiences but also the absence of official certification of their skills which limits their future employment opportunities. [...] One objective would be to enable them to have their skills officially validated under the auspices of the vocational training and continuing education authorities to obtain an official certificate." <https://www.ge.ch/dip/GestionContenu/detail.asp?mod=communiquer.html&id=1870>, found on internet on 17 October 2015 (in a release dated 6 June 2012)

In the longer term, the education assistants should be able to obtain a CFC socio-educational assistant diploma. (see <https://edu.ge.ch/site/capintegration/acteurs-de-lecole/assistants-a-lintegration-scolaire-ais/>, and the report of the Geneva State Council in response to the draft bill on inclusive education : <http://ge.ch/grandconseil/data/texte/M02247A.pdf>, 26 August 2015, found on internet on 12 January 2016)



## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 – Program of the field visit

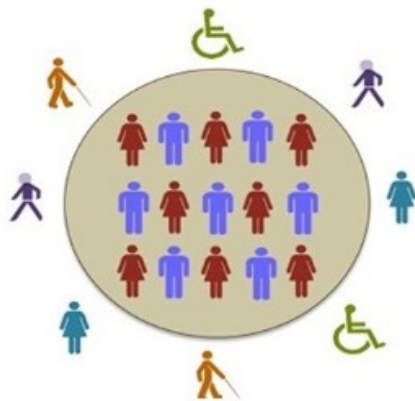
#### VISIT SCHEDULE Autisme Genève (Switzerland) 14-15 October, 2015

14 <sup>th</sup> October	
9.00 – 9.45	General presentation of GAUTENA <i>Ramón Barinaga</i> (Director)
9.45 – 10.15	Diagnostic and Treatment Service <i>Dr. Ignacio Gallano</i> (Psychiatrist, Clinical Team Coordinator)
10.15 – 10.45	Educational Service <i>Marijo González</i> (Educational Coordinator)
10.45 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 11.45	Meeting with representatives of the Educational Special Needs Area at the Department of Education of the Basque Government (who will also participate in the integrated classroom visit in the morning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of the situation in the Basque Country (20 min)</li> <li>• Discussion (25 min)</li> </ul>
11.45 – 13.00	Visit an integrated classroom at Hernani (4-7 ages) <i>Marijo González</i>
13.00 – 15.00	Lunch <i>Juan Félix Palacios</i> (Vice-president of GAUTENA), <i>Dr. Ignacio Gallano</i> , <i>Marijo González</i> and <i>Ramón Barinaga</i>
15.00 – 16.00	Visit an integrated classroom at Oleta (7-12 ages) <i>Marijo González</i>
15 <sup>th</sup> October	
9.30 – 10.30	Visit Ikasbide ordinary school, where a person with ASD is integrated and individually supported <i>Marijo González</i>
10.45 – 11.45	Visit an integrated classroom at Carmelo (13-18 ages) <i>Marijo González</i>
12.00 – 13.00	Visit “Berio” Group Home, and Day Activity Center, for Adults
13.00	End of the visit

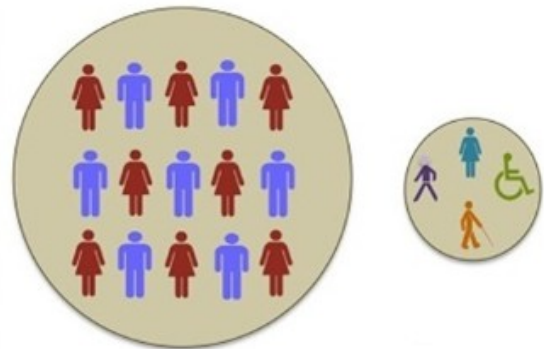
## Annex 2 – Living patterns and educational systems available to persons with disabilities throughout the world.

Unidentified author, internet, 23 October 2015

**Exclusion**



**Segregation**



**Integration**



**Inclusion**



## Annex 3 – Education assistant basic training in the Basque Country

<http://www.lanbideheziketa.net/moduc.php?codigociclo=817102>, 17 October 2015

Pre-requisite: end of secondary education diploma (such as baccalaureate) plus two years of higher studies in social integration

**SOCIAL INTEGRATION**  
**Advanced - 2000 hours**  
**Approximate module duration (number of hours)<sup>18</sup>**

Modules (subjects)	hours (approx.)
Educational support	120
Home support	165
Social intervention context	99
Entreprise et entrepreneurship	60
In company training	360
Job training and guidance	99
Social skills	132
Technical English	40
Social and occupational integration	200
Community mediation	120
Social intervention methodology	132
First aid	60
Promoting personal independence	198
Social integration projects	50
Augmentative and alternative communication systems	165

The curriculum includes both theory and practice (internships)

Afterwards the education assistants can continue their practical training (with about 40 hours each year of continuing education) under the direction, for instance, of a GAUTENA professional when providing support to an autistic child.

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<sup>18</sup> Translation : Autisme Genève

## Annex 4 – ASD pupils distribution in the Spanish Basque Country

Table drawn from the presentation made on 14 October 2015 in San Sebastian by Basque Country Department of Education representatives.

### Datos alumnado con TEA 2015-2016

Escolarización	Etapas	Bizkaia	Araba	Gipuzkoa	CAPV
Aula ordinaria	Infantil	233	59	126	418
	Primaria	864	145	284	1.293
	ESO	263	61	142	466
	Bachillerato	21	5	11	37
	FP	73	6	21	100
	EPA	10	1	0	11
Aula estable	NEEP	11	18	47	176
	NEES	27	15	19	61
	AAT	45	12	27	84
	<b>CAPV</b>	<b>1.647</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>2.646</b>

**Aula ordinaria:** mainstream class

**Aula estable:** integration class

**NEEP/NEES:** primary/secondary integration classes

**ESO:** Secondary compulsory education

**Bachillerato:** Baccalaureate

**FP:** Vocational training

**EPA:** Education for adults in integration classes

**AAT:** Task learning class

(translation by Autisme Genève)

## **Annex 5 – Primary inclusive education for autistic children in Geneva**

In the absence of statistics, the Department of Education (DIP) was unable to answer our questions about inclusive primary education for autistic children. These questions were:

- How many ASD pupils attend a mainstream class full time?
- How many ASD pupils attend a mainstream class part time and what is the time ratio?
- How many ASD pupils are there in integration classes, in transition classes or in the DIAMS program (integration and blended learnings program) and what is the proportion of time they spend in a mainstream class?
- How many ASD pupils benefit from the support of an education assistant (or other adult support) and for how many hours?
- How many ASD children attend private school or do home schooling?