

## **The power of a positive vision**

The second Transform Autism Education meeting in Athens was an experience that had a great impact on me. At first the most dominant emotions for me were despair and disappointment due to the different political and social conditions among Italy, Greece and Britain. More specifically, the economic situation in Greece was much worse than the economic situation in the other two countries. However, at the same time I saw this project as a great challenge. What was of great relief to me was the common vision about autism and inclusion of autistic children in mainstream settings. The educational material that was provided for us to translate and adapt was the starting point that enabled us to adopt to a more dynamic attitude. More specifically, the Greek team adapted the educational material according to the needs of the Greek reality. To succeed that, we shared this material with the practitioners and we tried to transform it through mutual collaboration (knowledge exchange etc.). At that point of the project we felt determined to succeed and the most dominant feeling among our team was hope. After the training of the practitioners, came the implementation of the practice in schools where children with autism were studying. During the implementation I started observing the first changes in children's behaviour and their development with regards to their school readiness. As this project had a positive impact on both children with and without autism we felt happiness, enthusiasm and able to develop our creativity. This experience motivated me to continue sharing good practice in more schools and geographical areas. It also had a striking impact on me as it made me be more optimistic, determined and more personally and socially effective. This project changed the schools' culture with regards to the way they see children with autism and their parents. Thus, it enabled us increase autism awareness and improve children's experiences within the school setting.

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