



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DG COMMUNICATION - Representations in the Member States

Regional Representation in Scotland

Edinburgh, 15 February 2016

Ned Sharratt  
Assistant Clerk  
Public Petitions Clerks  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Ned,

**RE: PETITION PE1597 (Mycoplasma Fermentans in Regressive Autism)**

Further to your request for a written submission on statistics on the incidence of Autism across the EU from the European Commission in relation to Petition PE1597, I am grateful to the Directorate-General for Health & Food Safety (DG SANTE) for responding.

Please find their evidence attached below.

**ANSWER TO THE PETITION PE1597**

The European Union Health Programme has supported the European Autism Information System (EAIS) project in order to cooperate to strengthening early diagnosis and to implement and evaluate all available tools and evidence-based arguments, to propose and validate a harmonised tool for early diagnosis of ASD across Europe. One of the main difficulties to give accurate estimations about the prevalence of ASD, in a historical perspective, is the fact that the understanding of autism has changed over the past decade. One of the changes has been the appreciation that several closely-related disorders exist which share the same essential features but differ on specific symptoms, age of onset, or natural history. According to EAIS these disorders, now conceptualised as ASD, current rates of autism in the European Union are estimated to be between 3.3 and 16 per 10 000, while in fact these rates increase to 63 per 10 000 when all forms of ASD are included.

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In order to test the feasibility of the early detection protocol designed in the context of the EALS Project, the European Parliament decided to attribute additional funds to the Commission to implement a pilot action to test the protocol in a sample of 12 pilot zones. This initiative, called Autistic Spectrum Disorders in the European Union (ASDEU) has started in 2015. Comparable results on prevalence for ASD in the EU are expected for 2017.

Yours sincerely,

Graham BLYTHE

Head of Representation

c.c. Stefan Schreck, Head of Unit/C1, Health programme and chronic diseases – DG SANTE.