With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

**PROJECT NUMBER: 2020-1-FR01-KA204-080300**

# INCL'AUTISM

**Reference Employee - Competency Reference Guide**

Massenzio Etica e Autismo

FACE GRAND TOULOUSE
Les entreprises contre l'exclusion

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croix-rouge française

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# Reference employee skills reference system

## Context and challenges

The development of this competency reference guide is part of a larger project called INCL'AUTISM. Supported and financed by Erasmus+, it brings together four partners from Portugal, Italy and France. The overall objective is to work towards the social and occupational inclusion of young adults and adults with Autism Sphere Disorder (ASD).  These partners work in different and complementary fields:

- ➢ On autism: the Italian association MASSENZIO ETICA E AUTISMO (MEA)
- ➢ About the company: a business club FACE Grand Toulouse, member of the Fondation Agir contre l'exclusion
- ➢ On training: A vocational training organization in Portugal: PREVIFORM and a higher education institution in France: Institut Régional de Formation Sanitaire et Sociale de la Croix-Rouge en Occitanie

The INCL'AUTISM project is based on the notion of welcoming the employee within the company and continues with daily support, a work organization adapted to his specific needs as close as possible to the workplace, ensuring both the integration and the continuation of a professional path without break. It is also part of a European framework and refers to the «European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030» established by the European Commission. Several areas are being developed, including access to employment.

The realisation of this project involves the construction of a MOOC for managers and employees, as well as a reference guide for point of contact employees, for the support of people with specific needs.

This document presents this reference guide for reference employees. It is the result of work resulting from the consultation between persons presenting ASD and their families, users' associations, the business world, and training professionals from the three countries mentioned above.

The challenge of this skills repository is to define, recognize and develop the skills of this employee-referent, enriching his curriculum vitae, his employability and his professional development.
The objective is to enable:

- ➢ the referring employee to refer to it, to find points of reference to acquire and evaluate his skills, to make his function visible internally but also to the person presenting an ASD

- ➢ it is up to the company to refer to it to support the employee-referent and give him the means to act, to identify the obstacles and limitations at the organizational level, to develop training actions, to enhance and sustain this function within the company.

- ➢ to the partners, to any type of employer and structures specialized in the insertion of persons with a TSA to locate this function within the company.

## Definition of the employee-referent function

The employee-referee carries out his activity within the company where the person with an autism spectrum disorder works. Its main mission will be to promote the integration of the person presenting an ASD into the company and to ensure his quality of life at work by relying on internal and external resources.

To be able to support the person presenting an ASD and assess whether the professional environment is adapted to his specific needs, the employee-referent should work in the person's immediate environment, have information on the organisation of the workplace and be made aware of the general and specific characteristics of people with ASD.

The support activity carried out on a daily basis by a reference employee is similar to a traditional activity in a company:

- ➢ **The integration of a new collaborator.**

The integration of a person from neurodiversity present unique features and continues over time to ensure permanence in employment.

### The employee referent: a contact person

To define the employee's mission, we explored several concepts.

**Integration and reception of new employees, the concept of on-boarding**: on-boarding is a process that brings together all the practices related to the reception and integration of a new employee. It is usually spread over 4 to 6 months. Presentation of the company, the position, delivery of useful documents (welcome booklet, etc.), setting up the workstation, informing future colleagues, integration path, etc. are all possible actions.

**Sponsorship** can be offered. The sponsor will welcome and accompany the new employee during the first weeks. Relationship of advice and trust, it is preferable that he knows the workstation so that he can answer the newcomer's questions.

**The concept of mentoring**: mentoring is a concept related to development and learning, and the purpose of which is to offer the mentee to be accompanied by an experienced person to achieve professional objectives.

**The concept of tutoring**: The tutor in the company does not concern only the learning period for example in the framework of a contract of alternance training. A tutor may have the role of mentoring a new entrant, or a person entering a new position in the company.  His role is to promote integration in the business, in the internal procedures of the company, and to promote the integration of the person with his co-workers.

**Why choose the notion of employee -referent?** The referent is defined by the Robert Dictionary as a person who serves as a contact (with an authority, an organization). Social referent, educational.

This is the role we want to develop. The referee-employee is a voluntary, who knows the job and the company and volunteers to be a link, a support, which will establish a dialogue between the person welcomed, his human environment, material, logistics.

This interlocutory role puts him in a position of equality with the person. It is the one that allows communication often so difficult for a person with neurodiversity disorders, especially autism disorders.

## Transversal skills

What is a skill?
  ➤  A skill is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context.
Several authors have defined the concept of competence, for example:

- ➢ A competence is defined as a system of knowledge, both conceptual and procedural, organized in operative patterns and which allows, for a family of situations, the identification of a problem task and its resolution through effective action (Gillet, 1991, p. 69).
- ➢ A competent person is a person who knows how to act with relevance in a particular context, choosing and mobilizing a double equipment of resources: personal resources (knowledge, skills, qualities, culture, emotional resources, etc.) and network resources (databases, information networks, networks of expertise, etc.). Being able to act with relevance implies being able to carry out a set of activities according to certain desirable criteria (Le Boterf, 1999, p. 38).

The competence is therefore:
- ➢ Knowledge to act
- ➢ A contextualized knowledge of action
- ➢ Acting knowledge that mobilizes internal or external resources.  Internal resources are defined as personal resources and include all the person's knowledge, experiences, skills, interests, attitudes, etc. (Le Bortef, 1994). Internal resources also include knowledge (declarative or conceptual knowledge), know-how (procedural knowledge), strategic knowledge (conditional knowledge).

Competence is based on the implementation of these different types of knowledge, which are considered resources for the competent individual. "Knowledge or ability does not mean competence. One may be familiar with accounting techniques or management rules and not know how to apply them in a timely manner. One can know commercial law and miswrite contracts" (p. 16). Perrenoud (1998),
External resources are both physical, human and temporal. Boterf (1994) describes them as "resource networks": databases, information networks, networks of expertise, etc.
- ➢ Acting knowledge that manifests itself in each situation. There are many ways to be competent, but "successful" is successful, effective, and efficient. The competent person acts appropriately (Le Bortef, 1999), appropriately (Perrenoud, in Brossard, 1999), depending on the need and specificity of the task (Lasnier, 2000)

The reference employee's competence framework is therefore based on both
- ➢ The concept of key competences

Key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC of 18 December) are part of the family of transversal competences. The European Union defines them as "a transposable and multifunctional set of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for every individual for his personal development, social integration and professional life".

- ➢ The reference framework for the recognition of key competencies – RETEC and the following point
  - ○ Self-positioning or crossing of positions between peers, or between trainer and learner or between managers and employees.
  - ○ Development through traces of identified and/or developed transversal skills (portfolio, CV, interviews, etc.)

## The activities of the referring employee – context of intervention

We first defined the specific activities of the employee-referent, based on the collection of testimonies of associations, integration institutions and the experience of TSA people.

- ➢ As part of this mission, the employee-referent may be required to:
- ➢ Anticipate the welcome and accompaniment of the person with ASD.
- ➢ Analyse and assess the specific needs of the person on his or her workstation.
- ➢ Ensure the well-being of the individual and the fit-up of their work environment.
- ➢ Work with the disability advisor or any other internal or external partner who monitors the person
- ➢ Communicate about function internally and externally.

This activity will be carried out in collaboration with:

- ➢ The person with a specific need
- ➢ All internal departments concerned in the company
- ➢ Job Coaches, Job Coaches, or other external stakeholders responsible for accompanying the person in his or her professional project.
- ➢ Specific internal services such as Disability Referents for example

# Competency framework

Regarding the context and the role of the employee-referent, we determined the skills implemented, relying on both the AEFA and the RETEC standards.

| AEFA and RETEC reference | Repository of the reference employee involved in the integration of an employee with TND* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Organizational hub** | | | |
| organise their activities | **Creating conditions conducive to welcoming and integrating the person with an autism spectrum disorder** | **Identify and remove barriers to the integration of the person into their work environment** | Listen and participate in the reflection on the specific needs and expectations of the person on the organization of his work environment<br><br>Ensure that these specific arrangements are put in place |
| Consider the regulations | | **Knowledge of the work environment in which the individual is working** | Good knowledge of how the person's work environment works<br><br>Identify the persons, bodies or resource arrangements that can be mobilized as part of the accompaniment of a person presenting a TSA<br><br>Be proactive in finding and updating information |
| Work as part of a team | **Cooperate internally**<br>**Identify resource partners** | **Cooperate with the person's work group** | Explain the framework of his intervention and his function to the team |

| | | | Building on the collective to foster the integration of the person with autism<br><br>Interface with ASD and team members as required |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reflexive pole** | | | |
| Manage information | **Be part of a continuous evaluation process and adjust practices** | **Evaluate the support provided** | Measure the effects of continuous support with the person, internal and external stakeholders<br><br>Readjust throughout the accompaniment |
| | | **Self-evaluate your employee-reference activity** | Learning to set goals and evaluate them<br><br>Assess interest in the function<br><br>Assess time spent on this function<br><br>Assessing your training needs<br><br>Reflect on yourself, the difficulties encountered, your achievements and experiences<br><br>Identify strengths and areas for improvement<br><br>Knowing how to measure progress |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Responding to the unexpected | | **Knowledge of the work environment in which the individual is working** | Good knowledge of how the person's work environment works<br><br>Identify the persons, bodies or resource arrangements that can be mobilized as part of the accompaniment of a person presenting a TSA<br><br>Be proactive in finding and updating information |
| | | **Gain theoretical knowledge** | Building a Foundation of ASD Knowledge<br><br>Identify the relationship specificities of the person with ASD<br><br>Identifying the professional consequences of autism |
| Communication hub | | | |
| Communicate orally and/or in writing | | **Communicate appropriately with the person** | Ensure accessibility of all communication media<br><br>Adapt your communication |
| | | **Developing social skills** | Acquire verbal and non-verbal communication techniques and tools<br><br>Develop interpersonal skills |
| Considering socio-cultural uses | | **Ensure a good understanding of how their framework works** | Introduce the person with ASD by adapting their communication |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Ensure that the person has a good understanding of work rules (supports/processes at work/safety etc.) and their rights

Help the person identify contacts within the company based on the identified issue and request |
| Updating knowledge and learning | **Acquire and update knowledge** | **Gain theoretical knowledge** | Building a Foundation of ASD Knowledge

Identify the relationship specificities of the person with ASD

Identifying the professional consequences of autism |
| | | **Taking part in a continuing training process** | Know how to search for information

Regularly update its achievements (news on ASD, educational monitoring, partnerships, etc.) |

*\* Neurodevelopmental disorder including autism spectrum disorders*

# Recognize acquired skills

The reference framework for the recognition of key competencies – RETEC offers leads that we take on our own account.

      o   Self-positioning

o   Development through traces of identified and/or developed transversal skills (portfolio, CV, interviews, etc.)

**Self-positioning** is based on a question that encourages the person himself, to situate himself in front of knowledge, abilities, or to evaluate his own skills.

**This questioning can be based on a questionnaire/test, or on a description of activities, a guided interview, or an annual goal interview…**
**It can be the subject of a controversial evaluation with the accompanied person himself, in a dialogue supervised for example by a disability advisor, a job coach, a human resources manager.**
**It can be based on the description of lived situations, how the difficulties were overcome.**

On the other hand, accepting the role of employee-advisor to a new employee of the company, and especially an employee with TND, develops a set of personal qualities, highly sought after in companies: **soft skills.**
Soft skills are defined as the ability to behave and to be given the situation. These behavioural skills are thus the visible part of each personality and are mobilized differently depending on the work environment and the situation. Partly innate, they may also have been developed or acquired in the extra-curricular sphere, for example in artistic or sports practices.*" Caroline Vène (Educational Director, Leadership and Transformation Programs, Centrale Supélec Exed Executive Education Department)*

That is why, in the assessment of skills, we also propose a self-positioning with regard to his skills.
What are the key competencies defined by the Oxford Dictionary as *"personal attributes that allow someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with others"*.

- Analytical thinking and innovation capacity
- Active learning techniques
- Creativity, originality and initiative
- Ability to design technologies and program
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Ability to solve complex problems

- Leadership and Social Influence
- Emotional intelligence
- Reasoning, ability to solve complex problems
- Systems analysis and evaluation skills

We are convinced that some of these skills are developed within the framework of such a mission, and in particular:
- Creativity, originality and initiative
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Reasoning, ability to solve complex problems

We suggest the following grid that can be adapted to each case:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Reflexive analysis of the support experience as a reference employee of an employee with a DRT** | | |
| **Skills** | **Questions** | **Modalité d'évaluation de la compétence** |
| **1/Creating conditions conducive to welcoming and integrating the person with an autism spectrum disorder** | Have you been able to attend such meetings regularly? <br> Had you been able to detect the person's particularities beforehand? (Need silence, need to get up regularly, need visual cues to perform tasks…) <br> Were you able to share your understanding of the accommodations required? <br> Did you find these meetings useful? <br> Were you able to put in place the necessary accommodations? | Be able to quickly describe the conditions under which the new employee was welcomed <br><br> Ability to assess and present accommodation needs <br> - Working conditions and environment <br> - Specific communications materials <br>   - - Relationships with co-workers and coaching |

| | | | - - Relationships with internal and external advisors and resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2/ Cooperate internally** | Do you have a good knowledge of the person's work environment? What are the people, bodies or resources that can be mobilized as part of the support of a person presenting a TSA in your company? Have you had to perform an information search to update this information? Have you been able to explain your intervention framework and mission to the team Have you identified in the work group the resource persons who will facilitate the integration of the new employee? Did the work team identify your role as an interface between employees and the team in case of difficulty, misunderstanding, etc… | | Be able to describe the work environment in terms of the individual's specific context Be able to identify all contacts in the company Be able to describe a situation that required an internal update of the cooperation data Be able to describe - How the work group was informed, - How he reacted - How it may have been necessary to readjust information, manage misunderstandings |
| **3/ Identify resource partners** | Have you met people capable of accompanying you in your role? Did you need to advise the person to discuss/meet with external contacts? | | To be able to designate the resources at its disposal to best carry out its support? |
| **4/ Be part of a continuous evaluation process and adjust practices** | How do you measure the effects of continuous coaching? Did you have to readjust your actions? Can you assess your interest in the mission, and the time spent? | | Be able to describe the significant elements demonstrating the integration of the person in his work environment, through concrete examples |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | What are your strengths and areas for improvement? | List the following cross-cutting competencies and request a self-assessment:<br>- Creativity, originality and initiative<br>- Analytical and critical thinking skills<br>- Emotional intelligence<br>- Reasoning, ability to solve complex problems<br><br>Can you define your relationship with the person you are accompanying? |
| **5/ Acquire and update knowledge** | Do you have any training, information about autism spectrum disorders or neurodevelopmental disorders?<br><br>Could you describe the relationship specificities of the person you are accompanying?<br>Did you have to deal with a more critical situation, and how did you react?<br><br>Do you express the need for further information, and how do you respond to it? | Be able to define the organization set up in agreement with the person, the collective of work and the supervision, to meet the specific needs of the person |

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**This guide was produced as part of the Incl'Autism project.**

It summarises two years of work on promoting the professional integration of autistic adults in ordinary environments.

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Project Incl'Autism – Standard stabilized octobre 2022