



HERAKLION, FEBRUARY 2025

The story of HER-autism... because of Mayra

Mayra, a non-speaking autistic girl, inspired the creation of the voluntary citizen movement "[HER-autism](#)" in Heraklion, Crete, Greece, in December 2023, through her parents*, Angeliki Baltatzi and Manolis Stratigis (who have three children in total).

The HER-autism group (where "HER" is the international abbreviation for Heraklion city) features the infinity symbol in its "un-business" logo, representing an ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for autistic individuals.

The primary goals of HER-autism, beyond promoting happiness and reducing stress, include: spreading awareness –Gratitude for the support of the [Autism-Europe](#) Association, and its campaign #AutismNotInvisible– and national campaign by volunteers "[YOUR TURN](#)", both fostering a deeper understanding of the autism spectrum, and ensuring the inclusion of autistic individuals. This includes striving for visible, multi-level integration of autistic people throughout their lives—from diagnosis to adulthood—into society as a whole. For more detailed information on the 14 HER-autism objectives, please view them [here](#) (using Google Translate).

https://her--autism-gr.translate.google.com/sample-page/?_x_tr_sl=el&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=wapp





The HER-autism group is made up of volunteers, including:

- Individuals on the autism spectrum
- Parents, siblings, and other relatives, guardians, caregivers, autistic specialists, and educators
- Supporters of the rights of autistic people, including friends and associations or other autism-related groups."

Without formal positions or financial transactions, our focus is entirely on autism and the quality of life for individuals on the spectrum, regardless of age or diversity. By prioritizing selflessness and solidarity, we freely offer our time and knowledge / experience. Our main goal is to amplify the “wants” and “voice” of our autistic members, ensuring a functional coexistence within society, in our city and beyond. We do not seek to substitute the responsibility and work of the State, but instead work together to ensure our rights are applied while addressing the challenges faced by the autistic community in daily life and in the long term—especially after the passing of parents of autistic individuals who need everyday support/care.

Over the course of the past year, we’ve achieved several significant milestones, including:

1. **Daily online support:** Regular communication with members via cross-platform VoIP and instant messaging, offering advice (from expert consultations to employment concerns) and fostering discussions pertaining spectrum.
2. **Nine in-person meetings:** Held at the Social Space Venue of the Kalokerinos Foundation in Heraklion, with essential participation from volunteer autism specialists.
3. **Planned Creative Work Center:** A center for 100 individuals aged 5-55+ with visible and invisible disabilities, utilizing NSRF vouchers. This is a private business initiative, in cooperation with HER-autism, which has already secured a ground-floor space with a courtyard in the city. The space is currently being renovated by the enterprise.
4. **National and international campaigns:** Active participation in various autism awareness campaigns.



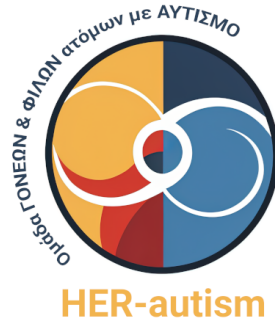


5. **Memorandum submission:** A memorandum presented to the Greek Government regarding the "National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2024-2030."
6. **HER-autism Young:** Establishment of a subgroup to encourage communication and facilitate connections and meetings among young autistic members.
7. **Local government collaboration:** Cooperation with local authorities to support the goals of autistic people, including speeches and involvement in local government programs.
8. **Psychodrama sessions:** Offered by a volunteer psychologist-specialized psychodramatist for autistic individuals and parents of children on the spectrum.
9. **ARTism Exhibition:** Organized exhibitions in Heraklion and Athens (at the 3rd Nevronas Festival) featuring works by young artists on the spectrum.
10. **"Open Letter" column:** A platform on the HER-autism website and social media for articles written by autistic individuals or their family members, along with contributions from autism experts. These articles have been shared on Greece's largest disability portal, nevronas.gr.
11. **Participation in international and national/local seminars, webinars, and conferences** [HER-autism will also host seminars and workshops in 2025].
12. **Expanding network:** A growing network of institutional and individual supporters, extending beyond Heraklion to major cities across Greece and even Brussels.
13. **Communication with Greek educational, healthcare, and other institutional bodies:** Promoting awareness of autism and fostering inclusion.
14. **New friendships and priceless moments:** The lasting impact of meaningful connections and shared smiles.

Please view highlights in our [short video](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-8vy9qjijBc?feature=share>





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Angeliki Baltatzi, an individual member of Autism-Europe, is a social anthropologist with a master's degree in European Union Studies (SEI, University of Sussex, UK) and works as a curator at the Historical Museum of Crete in Heraklion.

Manolis Stratigis is an electrical engineer with a master's degree in neuroscience and works at the Hellenic Mediterranean University in Heraklion.

