

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004205/25
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(25 October 2025)**

Subject: Autism: trends, challenges and policy questions in the EU

Across the world, the number of autism diagnoses are rising significantly. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US, diagnoses of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) have increased from around 1 in 150 children in 2000 to 1 in 36 in 2020.

Similar trends have been reported in the EU: although rates vary by country and methodology, incidence is estimated at around 0.5% according to meta-analyses, with significant variations depending on health systems and diagnostic tools.

In Greece, recent analyses of administrative data show rates close to 0.94% in children aged 2 to 17 (2021) and up to 1.15% in an older sample. These values are above the European average.

Possible factors need to be investigated. As regards the use of paracetamol in pregnancy, the data remains inconclusive: large studies (e.g. JAMA 2024) have not been able to demonstrate a link with autism, while the European Medicines Agency (2025) recommends continued use at the lowest effective dose. At the same time, several systematic reviews and observational studies continue to identify potential correlations with an increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders, which calls for caution.

Can the Commission say:

Does it intend to draw up targeted prevention and awareness-raising measures to reduce the incidence of autism in the EU?

Submitted: 25.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(3 February 2026)**

The Commission supports individuals with autism through comprehensive and coordinated efforts. The focus of the Commission's work on health is on preventive health ⁽¹⁾.

The 'Healthier together' initiative ⁽²⁾ provides the strategic framework for addressing Non-Communicable Diseases and related risk factors through prevention efforts targeting vulnerable populations that aim to reduce health inequalities.

For example, EUR 6 million is available for national authorities to promote mental health by improving access to care, reducing stigma, and supporting inclusive recovery practices.

The Joint Action JADE Health ⁽³⁾ supports Member States to reduce the burden of neurological disorders such as autism. The project 'Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle groups in Schools' ⁽⁴⁾ aims to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly among children with intellectual disabilities.

Under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes, the EU has so far invested EUR 250 million into autism research as part of its funding on brain research, and continues to provide funding opportunities ⁽⁵⁾.

An additional EUR 150 million is being invested in the new European partnership for Brain Health ⁽⁶⁾, catering also to the needs of autism researchers.

Regarding the use of paracetamol during pregnancy, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) notes that paracetamol remains an important option to treat pain or fever in pregnant women.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/b1817a1b-e62e-4949-bbb8-ebf29b54c8bd_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20-%20VARHELYI.pdf.

⁽²⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/healthier-together-eu-non-communicable-diseases-initiative_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://jadementia.eu/index.php>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.specialolympics.org/regions/europe-eurasia/european-union-funded-projects/inclusive-healthy-lifestyle-groups-in-schools#:~:text=The%20Inclusive%20Healthy%20Lifestyle%20Groups%20in%20School%20%28IHLS%29,for%20students%20with%20and%20without%20intellectual%20disabilities%20%28ID%29>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-DISEASE-02-two-stage>.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.brainhealth-partnership.eu/>.

Therefore, the EMA's advice remains that paracetamol can be used during pregnancy when needed. This recommendation is based on a rigorous assessment of the available scientific data. According to EMA, there is currently no new evidence that would require changes to the current EU recommendations for use ⁽⁷⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/use-paracetamol-during-pregnancy-unchanged-eu>.