



## News from ISAAC-Denmark, The ISAAC Communicator, June 2019

### Our Own World, Birthday, and Conference 2019

This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of [ISAAC-Denmark](#). We celebrated with a champagne toast at the General Assembly of our national conference, held on March 18 -19.

Ole Brunbjerg, who attended the founding meeting of ISAAC-Denmark 30 years ago, also attended in 2019. During the dinner one of our members entertained us with an account of the history of our time.



The national conference, with 217 participants, again set a record for attendance (the fourth in a row). According to the electronic evaluations submitted after the conference, the content was also a success. We can see from the evaluations that participants have very different backgrounds. That is why we always end up with a varied program.



The Conference started with a session with Astrid Siemens Lorenzen. She is a high school student and AAC user. She spoke about the importance of having the right conditions for communication and how you have to overcome barriers in order to get a high school education as an AAC user. Her speech was very inspiring for all the professionals who worked in the AAC field. We all need insider knowledge.

Our chairperson, Birgitte Brandt, picked up inspiration from ISAAC 2018 in Australia to address a subject we have considered covering for a long time: AAC and Autism. Cynthia Cress from Nebraska, a lively and creative presenter, invite some participants to take part in an exercise in order to visualize the challenges in being a person with autism and wanting to communicate.



Tenna Lygum illustrated the efforts to bring AAC in use in a place for grown up people with complex communication needs. She offered hope for this process for many professionals and people working with other age groups.

Many other themes were covered, more than we can mention here, but a few examples are: Talking Mats with Joan Murphy; Social Media, Amanda Hynan; Refugees and AAC, Ulrika Ferm; and finally, AAC user Martin Merrild on his University Project. We had 13 different

presenters during the two days (some of them making different presentations). The AAC companies exhibited their products and made 18 small presentations as well. A group of AAC users had a meeting during the conference and planned their autumn gathering.

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### **Political Level Efforts on Influence**

The National Board of Social Services is monitoring different groups, mainly groups defined by one or more diagnoses. ISAAC-Denmark has contributed to the annual consultation about these audiences and has explained why it doesn't make sense to describe a mixed group of people with autism and with complex communication needs. They each need a separate focus. Even if communication problems are a part of several diagnoses, ISAAC-Denmark has argued that there is a need to focus on people with complex communication needs, whatever the cause you may find. It is the communication problem that is crucial. Our experience is that the communication part often is under stressed in favour of more common issues regarding a diagnosis – for instance, the motor part or sensory part. We have proposed using the expression “people with need of complex efforts” instead of “people with complex communication needs.” We think that all people have the same need for communication but some require complex efforts to meet their needs. Between them are different AAC solutions.

The National Board of Social Services has just endorsed a description of children and youngsters with complex results of cerebral palsy. The description is a guiding tool for the local authorities in Denmark to build knowledge and experience and to give support for organizing the efforts for the group mentioned. ISAAC-Denmark has attended a reference group for this project and is proud to say that communication is stressed in many ways together with other important themes around cerebral palsy.



*- Submitted by Birgitte Brandt, Chair of ISAAC-Denmark, and Margit Grønkjær, Chapter Member elected to the ISAAC Council*