SAP is looking for autism sufferers

BERLIN, GERMANY: Computer software company SAP said on Tuesday (21 May) it wants to employ hundreds of people with autism as software testers and programmers over the next seven years.

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The company, which has already launched pilot projects in India and Ireland, said the move aimed to find workers "who think differently", leading to innovation.

"By 2020, one percent of SAP's 65,000-strong workforce is expected to be affected by autism," a company spokesman told AFP.

In India the group said it had taken on six people with autism as software testers and that productivity and cohesiveness in key areas had increased as a result.

"Under the Ireland-based pilot scheme, screening is being completed for five positions to be filled this year," it added.

SAP, which is working on the scheme with Specialisterne, an organisation established in Denmark in 2004, said it would widen the programme globally, kicking off in the US, Canada and Germany this year.

"With Specialisterne, we share a common belief that innovation comes from the 'edges'," Luisa Delgado, a member of SAP's executive board said in a written statement.

"Only by employing people who think differently and spark innovation will SAP be prepared to handle the challenges of the 21st century."

"Specialisterne aims to harness the talents of people with autism to work in technology-orientated jobs and operate internationally," the SAP statement said.

In Germany, employers with 20 staff members or more are required to ensure that at least five percent of these jobs go to severely disabled people.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge