

A letter to PM Sipilä from European and Finnish NGOs

Citizens' participation as the topic of a Finnish EU Presidency Ministerial Conference on mental health and informal care 2019:

"Making people count"

Finland will serve as the President of the European Council for the latter half of 2019. During previous EU Council Presidencies in 1999 and 2006, Finland successfully lifted mental health onto the European agenda challenging both prejudice and preconceptions. There is a widespread expectation of a continued effort along this line, strengthening the position of all citizens and reducing stigma associated with mental health.

The Presidency period should be citizen-centred, highlighting the needs and position people with mental health difficulties, as well as their carers' and family members. Inclusion, participation, equality and empowerment are important elements which promote mental health as well as further achievement of strategic EU objectives.

In today's digital economy mental health is a core competitive resource. Mental health difficulties lead to significant loss of productivity and are associated with substantial costs, estimated at 6 billion euros in Finland alone, and approximately 800 billion euros across Europe. Promoting informal care and peer support opportunities are cornerstones in cost containment.

Across Europe approximately 6% of over 50 year olds are informal carers. It is estimated that out of the 350 000 informal carers in Finland, only 44 000 receive the benefits they are entitled to. Research indicates that without the contributions of informal carers, costs related to elderly care could be almost 3 billion euros higher in Finland alone. Promoting prospects for informal carers is a key factor in reducing costs within health and social care.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has been ratified by both Finland and the EU, which along with the European Pillar of Social Rights promotes and protects equal rights for all EU citizens to access employment, social support and to participate in society.

Implementation of the CRPD and the European Pillar of Social Rights has to build upon participation and shared decision, equal rights and accommodating autonomy. Building services in accordance with the principles of recovery allows for participation opportunities for service users, informal carers and family members as well as the broader community. Finland could have a central role in this paradigm shift in the EU and act as a model for Europe.

We respectfully recommend acknowledging the importance of addressing mental health and the role informal carers during Finland's European Presidency period and also as a part of Finland, Romania, and Croatia's collaborative trio EU Council Presidential programme. We suggest this to be the subject of a Ministerial Meeting during the European Presidency period.

01/02/2018



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Respectfully on behalf of:

EUFAMI (European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness)

GAMIAN-Europe (Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks - Europe)

HelpAge International

Mental Health Europe

Eurocarers (European Association Working for Carers)

Finnish organisations:

ADHD-liitto ry

Aseman Lapset ry

Autismi- ja aspergerliitto

Crohn ja Colitis ry

Eläkeliitto ry

Folkhälsans förbund rf

Irti Huumeista ry

Kalliolan setlementti ry

Kasper – Kasvatus- ja perheneuvonta ry

Kehitysvammaisten Palvelusäätiö sr

Koulutus Elämään Säätiö

Kuntoutussäätiö

Mielenterveyden keskusliitto

Mielenterveysomaisten keskusliitto – FinFami ry

Miina Sillanpään Säätiö sr

Muistiliitto ry

Munuais- ja maksaliitto ry

Music Against Drugs ry

Neuroliitto ry

Nuorten Ystävät ry

Omaishoitajaliitto ry

Pohjois-Karjalan sosiaaliturvayhdistys ry

Pro-tukipiste ry

Psykosociala förbundet rf

Sosped säätiö

SOSTE Suomen sosiaali ja terveys ry

Suomen Kilpirauhasliitto ry

Suomen Mielenterveysseura

Suomen Parkinson-liitto ry

Suomen Punainen Risti

Suomen uusperheiden liitto ry

Takuusäätiö

Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry

Vanhus- ja lähimmäispalvelun liitto (Valli)

Vates-säätiö sr

Väestöliitto ry