



19 December 2012

Happy 20th Anniversary!



Today, 19th December 2012, is a very significant day for EUFAMI. It was on this day 20 years ago that EUFAMI was officially formed as a European Federation looking after the interests of families and carers of those people affected by mental illness. I find it difficult to believe that 5 years have passed since we were celebrating our 15th Anniversary. Time seems to be passing quicker and quicker as the days go by; maybe this is a reflection of the fact that we are all getting older!

In the words of our President at that time, Inger Nilsson, *'the world is a much changed place from that day back in December 1992.'* Well even in the 5 years since that then, the world has changed even more dramatically, especially from the social and economic perspectives; bringing more and more challenges to families. I am happy to say that Inger completed her term as President and amongst many other things which she achieved oversaw our very successful congress in Torun, Poland where approximately 600 delegates took part.

She was succeeded as President by Sigrid Steffen, who guided EUFAMI through the intervening years. Sigrid has been very active in promoting the role of families in the work of the WPA on person centred medicine. She has also represented EUFAMI at many European and international events and led our own congress in Basel last year. So, in some ways, I find it somewhat daunting to follow both these ladies as the current President, especially when I reflect on their achievements while in the role. However, I am encouraged by the excellent support I receive from my fellow Directors and from the staff at the EUFAMI office and the support of our member associations.

EUFAMI has also changed quite a lot in the past few years and in particular in relation to its governance structure and procedures. I believe that these changes will result in EUFAMI becoming more efficient and transparent in its operations so that it can meet and overcome the ever growing amount of challenges which families face on a daily basis.

Communication is essential to our working effectiveness and in that respect too the world has certainly changed hugely in the past 5 years, especially with the arrival of the new forms of social media – YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Google+ to name but a few. EUFAMI must also move on and embrace these methods of communication. So to mark this special day, our 20th Anniversary, I am glad to tell you that we have released our first ever set of YouTube videos. You can see the playlist by following this link: [EUFAMI @20 Playlist](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLL7dQX96lYQcSrhyO7vkNwv5HAFXArOj1) (or by copying the following text in your browser's address bar <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLL7dQX96lYQcSrhyO7vkNwv5HAFXArOj1>). I am sure that you will find it informative and enjoyable viewing, enabling you to learn more about EUFAMI's aim and objectives, its new strategy for the period 2012 to 2015 and its plans for the year ahead, with messages also from some of our members.

I particularly want to bring to your attention the major Family Conference we shall be holding in Dublin on the 24th May 2013. It will be a very special event and I do hope to welcome in person as many of you as possible on the day.

Meantime may I wish all of you - our members, friends and supporters - a very happy Christmas and a good new year. With your continued help and interest we can look forward to serving the cause of families affected in whatever way by mental illness as we have done for the past 20 years.

Bert Johnson
President
EUFAMI

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