



Dear Friends

Christmas is a very special time for many people to renew old friendships and to gather together and spend time with their families and friends. Over the past few months, there has been a lot of talk and debate about the downturn in the European economy. It is therefore more important that this year, at Christmas time, we can turn to more happy matters and to enjoy the real meaning of Christmas – which for many has meant getting together with our families to share some extra time together, away from the pressures of today's changing lifestyles. I hope that you can find the strength to share and enjoy this special time, although I fully realise that for many who are affected by mental health problems, this cannot be so easy. I do wish that you will find some peace without any new crisis arising at this time.

It is not the time for long speeches and articles and so I will be very brief in what else I want to mention. With regards the work of EUFAMI in 2008, it has once again been a very busy year with lots of work being achieved. Not all of this is always visible to members, but I can assure you that many people within EUFAMI are working very hard and long hours on your behalf at the European level. One of the important events in 2008 was the launch of the European Pact for Mental Health and well being and EUFAMI has been actively involved throughout the process and continues to be proactive on this matter. We do however need to ensure that the Pact begins to be implemented in 2009 at both European and national level. We will do our bit at European, but you, our members in the various countries of Europe, also need to be proactive at your own national level. We will do what we can to support you in this effort.

In 2008, EUFAMI has also been working very closely with many of the professional bodies in the medical and nursing sectors and I am happy to be able to report that progress is being made through our various contacts with these bodies to ensure that families and carers are acknowledged as having a key role to play in the care and recovery process for those directly affected by mental illness. We hope to build on these contacts further in 2009.

In mentioning 2009, I just want to refer to one of our major plans for the year. As many of our Board members will recall, we held a very successful internal half day conference in May on the subject of *Children with parents who suffer with mental illness*, a group of our population whom we feel are quite neglected. Building on from this conference, a decision was taken to organise a major European conference on the subject in 2009 and to involve as many stakeholders and other interested parties in this conference. I am happy to be able to let you know that we have provisionally nominated November 2009 as being the month when we hope to hold this conference and the venue will be Vilnius, Lithuania. We also hope to fully engage our member association, LSPŽGB, in the organisation of the conference. But of course, the conference will only take place if we can source sufficient funding. If anyone has any ideas as to where we may look for additional funding, I am sure the office will be happy to hear from you. Further details will emerge in due course in early 2009.

I feel that I should stop now, but before I do, let me say how privileged I am to have been nominated as President of EUFAMI and hope to continue to great work that our past Presidents have achieved, in particular the work of our immediate past President, Inger Nilsson. In closing, I extend heartfelt greetings to one and all for Christmas and for the New Year.



Sigrid Steffen
President EUFAMI
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