

OBJECTIVE 01

To increase accountability and visibility of CSOs toward the public including measures to improve enabling environment for civil society

ELDERLY AND MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS

Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health



Photo Credit: Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health



THIS ACTION INVOLVED

Supporting the organisation that works on the rights of elderly individuals and people with mental health disabilities in the northern part of Cyprus during their legal identity build up.

Conducting a situational analysis of the elderly care homes in the northern part of Cyprus, and sharing its findings with the public and local bodies.

Creation of the website and social media accounts of the association.

Organisation of a seminar entitled "Human Rights in Mental Health" on 13 December 2019 in Famagusta with a guest speaker from the Human Rights in Mental Health Initiative in Istanbul.

Conducting a survey to identify families' preferences and problems related to elderly care in the northern part of Cyprus, and sharing findings with the local bodies.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF ELDERLY RIGHTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Founded in 2018, the mission of the association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health is to strive for the establishment of legal and institutional infrastructures that will improve the life quality of the elderly and mentally ill people and safeguard the fundamental rights of this population.

STORY OF THE ACTION

This action aims to build the capacity of the association to advocate for the rights of the elderly and people with mental illness. The improvement of legal texts on care services to ensure the rights and dignity of the elderly and mentally ill people in the northern part of Cyprus is also among the objectives.

"Human rights do not diminish as we get older and people with mental disorders do not have less human rights because they are sick and cannot question their rights. We aim to overcome the stigma and remind the families their rights and guide them to enjoy services and support that are required to be provided by local bodies."

Prof. Hatice Jenkins

The association created its website and Facebook page to reach its target groups. A seminar entitled "human rights in mental health" was organised on 13 December 2019, with a guest speaker from the Human Rights in Mental Health Initiative in Istanbul.

Moreover, the association conducted a situational analysis to identify the reasons for inadequate care in the care homes. The association drafted "a very first report" on the elderly care homes in the northern part of Cyprus based on the results. It focused on six privately owned elderly care homes in Nicosia, Famagusta, Sygkasi/Sınırüstü, and the only mental hospital run by the local bodies, the Barış Psychiatric Hospital.

Jenkins highlighted the main outcomes of the report as:

"There is a wide array of problems. Elderly persons do not receive full-fledged care due to a series of reasons, including mismanagement, lack of infrastructure and financial resources, staff shortages and inadequate training. Furthermore, the substantial difference between old people's homes is widely unknown and overlooked by the public and local bodies. All institutions-elderly homes and care homes-are qualified as care centres under the 1989 legal text on elderly homes. Currently, elderly and mentally ill people are taken care of under the same roof due to lack of a "social state perspective" and investment in infrastructure for the last four decades."

A legislative committee was set up within the association to work on translating and examining relevant laws on the care homes for the elderly and the disabled in the Republic of Cyprus and examining respective law in Turkey. Furthermore, the action conducted a survey to identify the preferences of families of elderly in care homes and reported.

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The findings of both reports have been shared with the public through mainstream media and social media channels. The association representatives visited local bodies to demand improvement of legal texts on elderly homes, the establishment of care homes and the improvement of social support mechanisms in line with the EU standards. In addition, the association took an active part in the relevant committee meetings to provide recommendations on relevant legal texts.

Jenkins believes the Grow Civic action was "a great opportunity", which provided "an initial impetus" for the association in the process of its establishment to build its capacity to become one of the few organisations advocating the rights of the elderly and people with mental illness and enhance its visibility.

"After each public appearance, we receive calls from people who want to be our members. This individual movement will become a bigger movement and we will have a crowd big enough to create pressure on the local bodies to build modern elderly care homes, and a new mental hospital."

Prof. Hatice Jenkins



WHAT'S NEXT?

The association aims to closely monitor social welfare policies and standards development for elderly homes and upgrade the conditions of the individuals being looked after by their family members.

TO FIND
MORE ABOUT
THE ACTION



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This Project
is funded
by the
European Union

