

Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis,
Maximos Palace,
Herod Atticus Street,
Athens,
Greece,

4th October 2019

Dear Mr. Mitsotakis,

re: Recent Changes to the Organisational Structure of KETHEA

You will no doubt be aware that the European Federation of Therapeutic Communities (EFTC) recently held its biennial conference in Thessaloniki hosted and organised by our esteemed colleagues and founding member organisation, KETHEA. This was a hugely successful event, bringing together over 500 researchers and practitioners in the addiction field from more than 40 countries; including most of Europe with colleagues additionally from the USA, Brazil, the Phillipines, Israel, the Lebanon, Russia and Africa. At this conference, I personally stood down as President and welcomed as our new President, Mr. Phaendon Kalatorakis, a senior officer with KETHEA. We assume that you will also be aware that KETHEA is internationally renowned for its work in the addiction field; having special consultative status with the UN and being an active member of the Vienna NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs.

We were therefore perplexed to hear the news that subsequently, the Greek Government had stepped in to remove from office the existing Board of that organisation to be replaced with a Board of Government appointees.

For almost 50 years, the EFTC has brought together practitioners and researchers in the therapeutic community approach to addiction treatment and recovery; refining our practice and assisting in the development of new therapeutic communities both in Europe and worldwide. In this process, KETHEA has been a leading exemplar of the approach and an influential and enthusiastic exponent of good practice. Through their work and the work of other members we have built a robust research base evidencing the efficacy and cost effectiveness of the approach in addiction treatment and recovery and, most importantly, in successful and sustained social reintegration.

The therapeutic community differs from other treatment interventions in that it is a genuinely self-help approach which relies upon peer-led support and mentoring. Thus it is the client community itself which provides the impetus for change rather than the staff and therapists. At its heart is the concept of *community as method* which encourages the change through peer support and role-modelling.

The previously existing organisational structure of KETHEA clearly exemplified this approach and we can only assume that the officers of the Government who recommended and instigated this change failed to understand the very particular structure and ethos of KETHEA. Whilst we would accept that it will generally be both expedient and appropriate in commercial organisations to adopt a top-down management structure, it is clear from the existing evidence base that this is decidedly inappropriate for a treatment service based upon therapeutic community principles.

We very much hope that this change is the result of a misunderstanding of the work of a successful therapeutic community and its appropriate governance and that as such it will be possible to review and reverse this decision. As a longstanding and well-respected European network, we remain hopeful that you will feel able to call upon our expertise and advice in reviewing this decision. Please do not hesitate to call upon us for further information or clarification on this matter and the broader issue of the role of therapeutic communities and their management.



Rowdy Yates MBE

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