

In everlasting memory of Fintan Farrell

With deep sorrow in my heart I write these words to respect Fintan's everlasting memory as dear friend, as my Irish brother and colleague in European Antipoverty Network and to EAPN-Finland. EAPN-Fin was founded in 1994 and I was the first representative of it in EAPN exco. Finland become member of European Union in 1995. Fintan was one of the key persons, who supported us as newcomers in the European network. Everything was new and confusing to us. Fintan had a special talent as very experienced person to support and help us as ignorant newcomers in this context with respect and understanding our needs.

Fintan had a special ability to meet with great respect and sensitivity people who ever they were and where ever they lived and to build friendships and alliances. Once he was visiting in Finland and we had a seminar in Lapland. A saami-lady in Lappish national costume opened the event with joiku, saami-song. It was beautiful and touching. The first speaker was Fintan. And what he did, he started to sing an Irish traditional song and with that he had a place in the hearts of the audience. We also visited in the same trip a person, who had his living of reindeers. Listening to their discussions, I understood, how very deep understanding Fintan has of very big differences in living conditions of people and of poverty as multifaced phenomena.

Fintan was a passionate and brave advocate for social justice and in fight against poverty. He was also creative to find ways of doing it. Words alone are not always the strongest message. When antipoverty program got stuck in the Commission, we had an event to lobby for it in Brussels. We wanted to express our strong opposition to the negative decision. We did it by showing a red card to the Commissioner responsible by the whole audience in the event. That event came into my mind when thinking of Fintan. For me this is a symbol of his creative way of working.

Fintan was president of EAPN for two terms and I had a great honour to be the vice-president those years 1997-2000. When working closely with him that period, I learned a lot from him, his deep understanding of poverty and what is important in lobbying for your goals. Meetings of people experiencing poverty and that their voice is really heard, were very important to Fintan. Fintan was strongly committed to tackling the structural inequality and to defend human rights.

Fintan had a strong vision that poverty can be eradicated. He worked for it together with all of us in all levels, global level in United nations, in European and national and grass-root levels. He never gave up and he always, I am sure till the very last moment in his life, believed that change is possible. Now it is our turn and responsibility in all networks and movements he worked with and inspired with his wisdom to continue the work for social justice, sustainable development and eradication of poverty.

We think Fintan with great gratitude and also remember his humanity, good sense of humour, laughter and singing. I, my family and EAPN-Finland want to express our deepest sympathies to all his friends, colleagues, and most particularly, Fintan's partner Yves and his family. The life given to us is very short, but the memory of a life well spent is eternal- that we can say of Fintan. May he rest in peace.

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