

# A pioneering voice on health

By ANIL İŞIK

"WE ARE setting out to become the voice of patients" — that is the message of a new, EU-funded project in the TRNC.

The two-year Patients' Voice project, which has an 87,000-euro budget, aims to be a pioneer in upholding patients' rights by telling people what they are entitled to expect from health professionals — and how to complain if they are not satisfied with their treatment.

It is to be carried out by the TRNC's Universal Patient Rights Association with Italian partner Active Citizenship Network (ACN).

At the launch of the initiative in the Turkish Cypriot Journalists' Lefkoşa premises on Tuesday, it was revealed that a series of events and activities would be organised to raise public awareness of "universal rights" and those enshrined in the European Charter of Patients' Rights.

Emete Imge, head of the Patient Rights group, told *Cyprus Today* a 2013 workshop had highlighted "a series of deficiencies" in the country's health care.

"It indicated a need for a durable health policy and strategy allowing for legislation to create an efficient health service in terms of proper inspections, protection of patients' rights and restructuring the system," she said.

Following the workshop, the minister at the time planned to enact a health sector Bill to regulate patients' rights and this was drawn up in 2013. The Bill remained on the shelf, however, as the former minister had planned to enact it as part of a package of measures. We have seen three governments and ministers, including the new one, and all have or had this issue in their government programme, but we have witnessed no action so far. We therefore felt compelled to take our own action."

She added: "We won't just be raising awareness, though — it goes beyond that. We also want to encourage people, both locals and foreigners, via our leaflets in Turkish and English, to ask for their rights.

"Every individual will not only be [of what they are entitled to] but also be an activist and advocate patients' rights at the end of the



From left: Izlem Sönmez, Patients' Voice communication and advocacy officer, Hassan Vahib, Patients' Voice project manager, Emete Imge, the head of the Universal Patient Rights Association and Ezgi Bertiz, sign language translator

project, which will act as a social mobiliser."

Mrs Imge said civil participation in legal issues would also be promoted. "There are various Bills being discussed but people who will be directly affected do not have any say in formu-



Michela Foresti of the European Commission delivers a speech at the launch event

lating them. We want to participate and this project will help us to do so.

"We call on all people, locals and foreigners, to join us and help us to reach everyone in the country."

ACN director Mariano Votta, who took part in the project launch via Skype, said: "ACN, in partnership with civil societies and patient organisations, is committed to strengthening the protection of patients' rights within the European framework.

"[We] strongly believe that empowered patients and their organisations are cost-effective resources and not a financial burden."

Michela Foresti, of the European Commission, hailed the "important project", saying: "I am confident that it will help patients in many ways; to receive health services and sound advice to prevent illness, to be better informed on their state of health, to obtain more respect for their privacy and confidentiality, and not to be refused access to health care for financial reasons or place of residence or kind of illness."

For more information about Patients' Voice, call (0392) 227 7234 or email info@ehhd.eu.



Safety breaches on building sites are common

## Second worker after falling from hospital building

By YASEMIN GÜLPINAR

A SECOND man has died following a fall from a building site for Girne American hospital in Karaoglanoglu — despite monitoring by health and safety of fatality.

Ismail Akay, 44, lost his fight with hospital last Saturday, five days after falling from a height of 14 metres and fracturing his skull.

Construction company Baştaş, which is currently facing a fine from the Ministry of Labour and Labour Ministry, which claimed the life of 26-year-old Akay.

Police inquiries after the fatality revealed a lack of safety harnesses for the workers and insufficient barriers. The findings were handed to the Girne Labour Department for further investigation.

Such breaches of safety had been reported to a specialist committee is now evaluating the fine should be levied.

Labour Department inspector Ayhan Kaya said: "We carried out inspections and found serious violations on how much any additional fine workers are not obeying rules by not using protective equipment."

"The employer has, however, not taken the necessary care in that respect."

"Since [February], our specialists have been visiting the site every two weeks to monitor the conditions, which were looking good."

Mr Akay's family will receive a compensation from TRNC Social Insurance scheme. The building work permit had been submitted to the relevant authorities pre-permit clearance to work.

Mr Bayraktar — the first worker to die in 2016 — was said to have been working illegally on the £500,000 project on the roof of his building. He had topped from the roof on his way to work in the country on a tourist visa just before he died. He was to have had no work permit.

# Youth could pave the way for peace

ANIL İŞIK

People should be encouraged to cross the border more often and to do more to "pave the way for a future where the two communities can coexist" — that is the recommendation of a peace researcher following his revelations by a survey of

"interdependence" among youngsters on both sides of the divide. He said border crossing needed to be promoted, since "in order to get to know the other community you have to have contact".

Those of the 600 university students questioned, North and South, who did have contact with the "other side" produced more

different levels: doing business together, studying, sharing certain worries together, going beyond the Cyprus problem and being involved with each other in the environment, music, art and culture...

"If you do not see with your own eyes and do not meet people and get to know them, they just end up being urban legends."