



3 December 2012

**Mr Nils Muiznieks**  
**Comissioner for Human Rights**  
**F – 67075 Strasburg Cedex**  
**France**

**Dear Mr Muiznieks,**

Thank you for your letter of 9 November following on our recent meeting which Minister Shatter also attended in Dublin. I also appreciate the observations you have now documented in relation to the steps we are taking to reform mental health services in this country.

In relation to the Mental Capacity Bill, I can confirm that drafting is at an advanced stage and the Bill is expected to be published early in 2013. The Scheme of the Bill, as originally published, has been extensively revised to ensure better alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly as regards supported decision-making. The Bill will provide a graduated structure of decision-making supports to address the continuum of abilities that exist and the needs that may arise to enable persons to exercise legal rights.

You also referred to the Review of the Mental Health Act and I can assure you that the Expert Group appointed in July to carry out the substantive review of the Act continues to make progress with a view to completing its work by end March next year. As I mentioned at our meeting, the Interim Report of the Steering Group who carried out the initial review was very well received by interested parties and the human rights approach mentioned in the Report received particular attention. I fully expect that the Expert Group will build on this approach as they continue their important work.

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagrás i nGaeilge

**An Roinn Sláinte / Department of Health**

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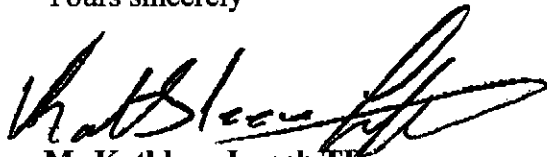
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Finally, the concern you have expressed about possible budget cuts in the disability sector is one I also share. This year expenditure on health services for people with a disability has been in the region of €1.4 billion. Efficiency savings have been sought from the budget this year and every effort has been made to limit as much as possible the impact on front line services. The nature of the public finances here in Ireland is such that further reductions in health spending may be necessary when our 2013 Budget is announced on 5 December. I absolutely take your point about the need to be mindful of the possible social exclusion impact further cuts could have on people with disabilities and every effort continues to be made to protect frontline services as much as possible.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen Lynch TD', written over a horizontal line.

**Ms Kathleen Lynch TD**  
**Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health & Older People**