

**Farewell our Beloved Betty-**  
**“Always in our Thoughts, Forever in our Hearts”**

On January 6, 2017, our beloved President of ICEVI-Europe, Mrs. Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, tragically passed away at the young age of 45. Words cannot express the depth of sadness, sorrow and distress we all feel for the undeserved and untimely death of our beloved Betty. Her funeral took place on Monday, January 9, 2017 at 16:00h Athens time at the Church of Iero Nao Metamorphosis tou Sotiros in Glyka Nera, Athens, Greece. Hundreds of people from Greece and from abroad attended the funeral to pay their respects and say their last goodbye to their dearest loved one, friend and colleague.

Betty's death constitutes not only an extraordinary loss for her family and closest friends and colleagues, but for the field of visual impairment and movement of disability as a whole. From early on in her career, Betty was devoted to the rights of people who are blind, partially sighted and/or had additional disabilities. Her main purpose in life was to improve the quality of life and the education and rehabilitation services for people with visual impairments. She fought with great conviction, diligence, integrity and passion to break down the barriers for the visually impaired and the disabled. Governed by a sense of altruism and selflessness, Betty put her heart and soul into supporting and advocating for the needs and rights of hundreds of blind and partially sighted children, adults and their families.

Betty was a Social-Psychologist/Sociologist who had worked in the field of education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired persons since 1994. She had earned a Master's Degree in The Management of Educational Systems and a Graduate Degree in Employment Rehabilitation and Vocational Training for the Visually Impaired. For ten years, she held the position of Scientific Director at the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece. From 2003-2010, she was employed at the Ministry of Education as a Career Counselor for children with visual impairments and from March 2009 - October 2009 Betty held the position of Advisor to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Mr. Aris Spiliotopoulos, on issues of Special Education. From 2010-2012 she was appointed by the Ministry of Health as President of the Public Entity Paidopoli, St. Andrew Child Protection Center. Fifteen months ago, Betty became appointed by the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity as the C.E.O & President of the Board of the Center for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind (C.E.R.B.) in Greece.

Throughout her career, not only on a National but on a European level, Betty was actively involved in and committed to the aims of organizations that promoted the equal access to appropriate education and rehabilitation of people with visual impairment, so that they may achieve their full potential. From 2004 -2013, Betty held the position of Board Member of the International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment - European Region, representing the Balkan Countries. In July 2013, at the General Assembly of ICEVI-Europe in Istanbul, Turkey, Betty was elected as President of ICEVI-Europe, a position she held until presently.

For us at ICEVI-Europe, her loss leaves an irreplaceable void. In the short period of her administration as President of ICEVI-Europe, Betty was committed to realizing its mission and goals. She was a dynamic

and charismatic leader who inspired her fellow colleagues with her fruitful thoughts and ideas in endeavoring to achieve ICEVI-Europe's aims and objects. It is with great energy, creativity and diligence that she approached the aims of the organization and with a profound sense of consideration and professionalism that she interacted and cooperated with her colleagues. She was truly a special individual who believed in and strove to make a real contribution to society, especially for persons with visual impairments. We have nothing but fond memories of cooperating and collaborating with Betty for the successful organization of ICEVI-Europe Board Meetings and Conferences. Betty's involvement and work with ICEVI-Europe will be greatly missed by all. We wholeheartedly thank her for her tireless efforts and for all of her achievements.

Tragically, our beloved Betty was taken from us way too early before she had the opportunity to complete what she envisioned for the evolution of the organization. We will strive and give our very best selves to follow through with the projects and initiatives she began as President of ICEVI-Europe, and most importantly, to continue her legacy-, to advocate for the rights of persons with visual impairments and additional disabilities and lead ICEVI-Europe to the future it deserves.

Our beloved Betty will be greatly missed but her warmth, kindness, and gentle spirit will be remembered forever. May her soul rest in eternal Peace.

With love and remembrance,

On behalf of The Board of the International Council for Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment - European Region,

Nathalie Lewi-Dumont  
Vice-President of ICEVI-Europe