



European Citizenship Awards

Bjorn Formosa

Description of the nominee:

Bjorn Formosa is a 29-year-old from Malta who has been diagnosed with terminally ill ALS last August 2015 and from then onwards he has worked tirelessly to find a cure for ALS and improve sufferers' quality of life through the ALS Malta Foundation. Bjorn is focused on the Maltese ALS and motor neuron disease and sufferers. There are about 50 to 100 ALS patients in Malta at the same time. The aim of Bjorn and of the foundation is to raise awareness about the disease, improve quality of life of patients with ALS, and research for a possible cure.

Bjorn has started the foundation with a bank balance of a few hundred euros and in the past 9 months, the foundation managed to fundraise more than half a million euros. On the 13th of May, Bjorn gave his full commitment to the cause by donating his life savings of 100,000 euro during a telethon on local Maltese TV where a total of 430k were collected. The aim of these funds is to acquire improved motorised accessible vehicles for patients, high-tech AAC devices, and boost research through a partnership with the University of Malta and RIDT. Bjorn's prognosis is of about 2-3 years, however he is devoting his remaining time to find a solution that could possibly stop the progression of the disease and find a cure for those who will be diagnosed after he passes away.

Last December Bjorn was also honoured by the President of Malta with the Republic medal for his commitment and work in society. Bjorn was also awarded personality of the year 2015 by local Maltese newspapers.

Impact achieved:

Bjorn Formosa has been inspirational to the Maltese community. Through his suffering and young age he has delivered a message of hope, even in the darkest of situations. Many locals have shown their attachment to his story and their continued support through all fundraising activities.

Bjorn Formosa has been the host of many motivational talks, speaking about his personal experience and sense of life. He has spoken to children, drug abusers, and people in difficult life situations. Bjorn is also a campaigner for accessibility rights and works continuously with local disability institutions to develop better accessibility policies.

What makes the initiative innovative?

The hundred percent commitment to the cause makes the initiative very rare in its sector. Bjorn is devoting his remaining energies and all his physical possessions to give a fighting chance to those who will be diagnosed after him.

Being statistically almost certain that a cure will not be found in his lifespan, his unique gesture of altruism is something absolutely remarkable.

Contribution to European values:

Bjorn depicts some of the most important values that one should treasure and share in society. Dedicating your life and possessions to others is just a pure expression of altruism.

Solidarity can be seen in the way he deals with other sufferers and tries to give them a positive perspective even in this bleak situation.

His respect towards others can be seen in the way he dedicated himself to research for new therapies that could improve other people's lives.

Website or promotional materials:

<http://www.alsmalta.org/about-us/in-the-press>