



Camille Dressler
Chair
European Small
Islands Federation
Cuagach
Isle of Eigg,
Scotland,

To
Minister Anne Berner
Ministry of Communication
PB 31
00023 Statsrådet
Finland

LETTER OF CONCERN

10 December 2016

Dear Mrs Berner,

Having been briefed on the planned experiment with ferry fares in the Finnish archipelagos, we would like to express our concerns that there appears to have been little or no consultation with the Finnish islanders on the proposed changes to the ferry subsidy system.

Being an organisation for small islands around Europe, representing 359,000 islanders on 1,460 islands including the Finnish ones through the FÖSS organisation, we are well aware of the different conditions for island residents in European nations.

Each country has its system and subsidies, developed over time, designed to meet local conditions and opportunities for its small and vulnerable island societies and deal with the inevitable over-cost due to insularity. The former Finnish system gained much attention and acclaim among European island nations for its approach to transport over-costs.

Any changes to a subsidy system, however small they might be, will have an effect on island residents' livelihood, island economy and population numbers. It would seem that in the case of Finland, no attempts were made to look at the consequence the new model will have on the islands it will apply to.

At a time when efforts are being made Europe-wide to island-proof decision making, this seems a backward step which fails to acknowledge the impacts of over-costs associated with insularity.

Islanders in all the different European island contexts – just as in Finland – adapt to the systems in which they are living. They learn to live on conditions given, but changes they do not see coming can only have a profoundly negative effect on them.

The change process must engage islanders at local level from the very start, to give them a chance to inform it and be part of it. Otherwise there is a real danger that uninformed decisions will have a devastating impact on island population numbers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CDressler', written in a cursive style.

Respectfully,

Camille Dressler

Chair

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