

Gillberg resigns after breach of confidence

Professor Christopher Gillberg has left his post as leader of the national mapping of children’s mental health in Norway. He feels he has been backstabbed by the management of University Research Bergen (UNIFOB), Norway.

By: Karin Lillian Fladberg



Photo: Scanpix Sweden
Professor Christopher Gillberg has previously received several international prizes and awards for his research. Here seen receiving “Ågrenska Award” by Queen Silvia of Sweden in 2001.

The resignation, Gillberg says, is in response to comments made by the head of research, Hege Eriksen, to the Norwegian newspaper Dagsavisen last week. The motivation behind the comments made was the fact that Gillberg recently, for the second time, was convicted for negligence of duty in the Swedish courts after he refused to deliver his own research material concerning a central study of hyperactivity in children which started in the 1970s.

One of the comments made by Hege Eriksen of UNIFOB on Thursday was: “We want to relate to Gillberg in the role he has had and still possesses here with us as long as the trial continues in Sweden.” The head of research also emphasized that any situation similar to the one in Sweden could not have happened at UNIFOB: “The project is organized in such a way that it would be completely impossible”, Eriksen said.

Gillberg sees the comments made as serious breach of confidence which makes it impossible for him to continue as leader and field specialist for the national Norwegian “Children in Bergen”-project. In his UNIFOB resignation letter Gillberg says that he cannot accept being in a situation with an employer who does not officially give him unconditional support.

– We have received Gillberg’s resignation and will take it into consideration, said the head of research Hege Eriksen to Dagsavisen.

Appeal

Gillberg’s well known Gothenburg-research was pioneering in the field, and it has played a central role in later research and treatment of ADHD-affected children. Trouble began when sociologist Eva Kärfve, at the University of Lund in Sweden, said that information given in the study seemed to be fabricated and wanted to have a closer look at the material. The Ethical Committee at the University of Gothenburg, where Gillberg works, did not share her view, but decided to not release the material – a decision later overturned by the courts.

A few days before Kärfve was supposed to be given access to the archives, 22 meters worth of shelf space was cleared out, this included patient journals and other documentation that were destroyed and shredded by Gillberg’s wife and two other colleges.

Last week Gillberg justified the destruction of the files by referring to the promise of complete anonymity given to his patients. Gillberg also said to Dagsavisen that he has been the victim of a 6-year long smear campaign lead by scientologists.

He has himself appealed against the decision to the Crown Courts of Sweden.

His own Choice

At the same time as the trial has been taking place in Sweden, Gillberg, as a specialist in the field, has played a central role in Norwegian research on children, specifically the “Children in Bergen”-project, where close to 10 000 children ageing from 7–9 are participating. That is why the recent conviction from Sweden, yet again, raised the issue of Christopher Gillberg’s continuing role as a leader of this prestigious Norwegian project.

Head of research Hege R. Eriksen confirms her comments made to Dagsavisen, at the same time as she rejects that Gillberg has been asked to leave the project.

– We were relatively surprised by the resignation. It is now important for us to create a calm situation concerning the important work with Children in Bergen. Which further actions to take have not yet been decided, says Eriksen.

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