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Introducing AFPEL Zagreb Sept 25 2012

Lifebook of a new-born child in
European Foster Care Cooperation

How my parents met...

Leuven 2010

October

Taking care of foster care

Flemish Foster Care org.

4 countries

English – Flemish – French

Strasbourg 2010

September

European views on foster care

ANPF

7 countries

English – French

Gathering : practitioners, foster carers, social workers, managers, policy makers, academics, researchers, students...

Why they enjoyed meeting

- ▶ Putting down linguistic and cultural barriers
- ▶ Exchanging view points, knowledge, experiences and discoveries
- ▶ Opening minds and challenging preconceptions
- ▶ Leading to inspiration, invention, innovation, adaptation
- ▶ Motivating and revigorating
- ▶ Aiming at improving the quality of care for practitioners, beneficiaries and the children

Second rendez-vous...

Paris January 28, 2011

- ▶ French and English
 - ▶ 10 European countries
 - ▶ Participants : practitioners, managers and researchers, names and organisations
 - ▶ Vision, mission, action : cooperation, exchange, quality care, collection of innovative practices
 - ▶ Identification of common concerns : working groups
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- **Voice of the Child**
 - **Training and recruitment of foster carers**
 - **Co-parenting**

Love letters

Not much!... It took a small group of devoted believers to foster the flame and feed the relationship, in-between actual meetings... (Fairy Godmothers, three-headed : first organising committee)

How it happened on the third date...

- ▶ May 2011 : confirmation of common concerns and interests, pilot reunion in Brussels.
 - ▶ The relationship developed « along the way », pragmatically answering to the participants' needs and concerns
 - ▶ Project to « create » and « breed » (or maybe it happened without planning ?)
 - ▶ ... and we had to adjust and take care of this potential new being.
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My 4-parents family : challenges and competencies

- ▶ **Birth Daddy** : a French and English-speaking Flemish Manager
- ▶ **Birth Mom** : a French and English-speaking Bulgarian Researcher
- ▶ **Foster Father** : an English-speaking French Social Worker
- ▶ **Foster Mother** : a English-speaking Spanish Researcher
- ▶ **Fairy Godmothers** : the interpreters and translators(for the larger audience, mail, reports, documents...)

Pregnancy : a time for questions and doubts

- ▶ Choosing a name?
- ▶ What will he/she look like ? (Looks, face, body...)
- ▶ The building of a family :
 - Who wants to be part of it ?
 - Reconsidering the relationship and its goals
- ▶ What have we done ?! Where do we go from here?...
- ▶ The fear of responsibility, the burden to care, the promises of this new being : family assessment and family support.

Preparing for the birth

- ▶ Finding a home : Global and Central Brussels
- ▶ A house with two entrance doors, and many windows (entry through English or French language, broad view to european scenery, bilingual output, local translation in local idioms)
- ▶ Securing the environment : risks assessment and opportunities for growth, need for cooperation
- ▶ Thinking about short and long term
- ▶ Committing to care and support
- ▶ Joining forces, looking for support and travelling the world : coming to Zagreb ! ... and Glasgow, Sofia, Vannes...

A new born with many needs...

- ▶ ***Need for a Name*** : Acting for the Promotion of Foster Care at the European Level
- ▶ ***Need for an official recognition*** : birth registration, nationality, residence in Belgium
- ▶ ***Need for financial support*** : looking for funds and donors
- ▶ ***Need for foster family*** : it takes a village to raise a network
- ▶ ***Need for a supportive larger family*** : active members
- ▶ ***Need for a social support network*** : partners, members and followers, a cooperative approach

Planning for the future : education

- ▶ **Education** : creating a resource of updated information on quality foster care in Europe
- ▶ **Communication** : facilitating the circulation of information via linguistic plurality and reciprocity
- ▶ **Invention** : a hub for exchange of abstracts and translation based on ICT
- ▶ **Curiosity and research** : bridging between practice and research, searching for innovative and best practice and research to assess them.

Planning for the future : defining rules

- ▶ **Giving and sharing** : active participation, commitment to feed in and out, share and spread
- ▶ **Evolution and will to improve** : small is beautiful, a process and a project more than a structure or organisation, a short-term project; a special interest and focus on best practices, information, tools to support quality care.

Our projects for APFEL

- ▶ **Our Vision**
- ▶ **APFEL's Mission**
- ▶ **APFEL's Actions**
- ▶ **Innovative Practices, from the field :**
identify, circulate, disseminate, evaluate
- ▶ **Innovative Practices, inside :** internet, social networks, cascading up and down with linguistic translations, participating in and out of the network, unconferencing and invention

First steps, first words : first results of the 3 working groups...

- ▶ Training and Recruitment of foster carers : mapping the best practices
 - ▶ Co-parenting : exploring theories and practices
 - ▶ Voice of the child : the lifebook collection project
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Examples of APFEL's first productions :

- ▶ **The Competence-based approach** for recruitment, training and support of foster carers
- ▶ **The APFEL Questionnaire** : mapping innovative practices in Europe
- ▶ **The Lifebook Project** : collecting lifebooks across Europe, see how they can sustain the child's experience and identity, identify innovative experiences in this respect (narrative techniques, storytelling, interactive video-games...)

Working Group «Training»

- ▶ **MAPPING FOSTER CARE AND INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS IN EUROPE**
- ▶ One of the central aims of APFEL network is to promote the exploration and the comparative analysis of foster care systems and practice in Europe, identify best and innovative practices, encourage their dissemination across countries and their implementation on the field
- ▶ **APFEL Training Working Group has decided to develop a pilot-study**
- ▶ **The Inter-country comparative questionnaire**

Project developed by APFEL

- ▶ **Mónica López** (University of Groningen – Child and Youth Care)
- ▶ **Frédérique Lucet** (Best Care of Children)

General objectives

- ▶ To provide a platform for the comparison of international systems, trends and outcomes in foster care today
 - ▶ To focus on innovative practices, oriented towards practitioners, (emphasis on knowledge transferring)
 - ▶ To create a useful tool for anyone involved in delivering child welfare services
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Specific objectives

- ▶ To gather information (to describe foster care in the same terms, the same categories of comparison)
 - ▶ To map innovative practices; not only to point out what works but also for whom, in what circumstances
 - ▶ To identify priorities for policy and practice
 - ▶ To transfer knowledge
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Method.

How we gather the information?

- ▶ Questionnaire in the website
 - ▶ Choosing a researcher
 - ▶ Interviews or focus groups with researchers, practitioners, policy makers, users
 - ▶ Online expert panel
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Working Group «Co-parenting»

- ▶ Analyses the influence of diversity in family models and concepts on objectives and practices in foster care (i.e. legal issues)
- ▶ High importance of our attitude towards the biological parents: influences our capacity of including them; i.e. decision-making process

Working Group «Co-parenting»

The presentation of Daniel Coum is an example of the objectives of APFEL:

- ▶ dissemination of information and research results from one cultural and linguistic area towards others,
- ▶ to confront visions and enlarge our understanding of the topic...

Working Group «Co-parenting»

Daniel Coum:

- ▶ Traditionally family placement was family replacement
- ▶ Today co-parenting means: no replacement but an addition (a cooperation)
- ▶ Working group tries to identify:
 - under which conditions can such a cooperative approach to placement be successfully implemented
 - good practices

Working Group «Life Book»

Members of this group identified 5 axes for reflection

- ▶ **The child's 'lifebook'**
- ▶ *Legislation in the different countries*
- ▶ *During and after care : to listen to the voice of the child*
- ▶ *Who bears this voice : the child himself, or someone representing his/her best interest ?*
- ▶ *What is the weight of the child's voice ?*

- ▶ Choice of the group: child's lifebooks. Each member is invited to share about Lifebooks in their own country and organization.
- ▶ Lifebooks in relation to the voice of the child.

Life Book

Following a survey in 2006 (in England) of what children want from adoption, amongst the top seven things children listed was to be told about their past ; including

- ▶ why they couldn't stay with their birth family
- ▶ details about their birth family
- ▶ where they were born ...

- ▶ In England, adoption: life story book: a **requirement of legislation**
- ▶ Children Act (England, 2002): need for children to be involved in discussions that affect their lives.

Life Book

Life-story work

- ▶ construction of autobiographical life narratives

Childhood memories

- ▶ making sense of the events in their lives
- ▶ create meaning from those experiences

Therapists

- ▶ therapeutic power of shared stories for years (useful especially with trauma related issues)
- ▶ Relation to secure attachment.

Life Book

The working group:

- ▶ Collected Life Books from different countries (England, Norway, Germany)
- ▶ Will collect regulations from all european countries
- ▶ Refers to the « United Nations General Assembly Resolution » adopted by the General Assembly/ Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children 64/142, that postulates the right of a child to know his own life story
- ▶ « Life Books » as a part of the project for the child in foster care (eventually at a european level)

Mijn Backpack / My Backpack

- ▶ The Backpack project shows how APFEL can help circulate such innovative tool
- ▶ This project was presented by Bep van Sloten in the working group « Voice of the Child /Life Book »

Mijn Backpack / My Backpack

- ▶ Presentation of the BackPack project (animation and powerpoint)

Aims of APFEL

- ▶ Facilitate the exchange of experience
- ▶ Reinforce the quality of our services
- ▶ Promote foster care in Europe

Looking ahead : European Conference in 2015 ?

- Share the results, research, tools and techniques, with professionals
- Mapping innovative practices in recruitment, training, support of foster carers
- Listening to the Voice of the Child and using supportive tools to do so (Lifebook project)
- Understanding the plural visions of co-parenting (to share responsibilities, caring and attachment between birth and foster parents)

APFEL's call for cooperation

What you can do to support APFEL and its goals :

- ▶ Become an active member and participate
- ▶ Become a member, individual or organisation
- ▶ Follow us on Facebook or Linked-In
- ▶ Feed AFPEL with carefully selected information on your innovative practices, research results, challenges, clinical monographies,...
- ▶ Feed-back your organisation with APFEL's information, in English and/or French and in your own local idiom
- ▶ Join us in APFEL's meetings and events

Thank you for your attention !

Join us : membership (individual/organisation)

Participate : active membership

Support APFEL : donate

Contact APFEL :

Website: apfelnetwork.eu (starting nov.2012)

email: apfelnetwork@gmail.com

Follow APFEL :

Facebook page

Linked-In page