EIGEN KRACHT CENTRALE

Proposals Relating to FGC European Network

Context

The 2011 FGC European Network meeting in Utrecht held on the evening of 18 October and all day 19 October 2011, was hosted by Eigen-Kracht Centrale, The Netherlands. The meeting preceded the European Congress on the FGC held 20-21 October 2011. The host country had proposed that a half-day of the Network meeting be devoted to looking at the future of the Network. The host recounted the history of the Network and noted that:

- The number of nations joining the Network had increased, with growing attendance from the East European bloc accounting for most of this;
- The Network is largely unstructured, usually occurred over two days, and consisting largely of country reports and discussions and advice-sharing about these;
- Five Country representatives are invited to attend each meeting, but there is no requirement for consistency of membership, meaning that many attending each Network meeting are attending for the first, and sometimes only, time;
- There is a broad scope of Country experiences, ranging from those for whom FGC is a recent occurrence to those with many years of FGC services, evaluation and research;
- It may be time to consider options for the future of the Network, and in particular how the Network can most effectively raise the profile of FGC in European countries

The attendees were randomly assigned to four working groups, which reported back their suggestions to the full meeting.

Feedback about the Network

There was unanimous support for the continuation of the European Network. Points made were:

- There was strong support for the Network's current openness, informality and flexibility;
- There was agreement that the Network might benefit from some structure, but without undue formality or hierarchy;
- The meeting should continue to be held over two days, with the next hosting country being identified at each meeting;

- There were benefits in scheduling the Network with another major event in which representatives could participate, such as happened on this occasion;
- There was a need for more up-to-date email lists for member countries (but there were no suggestions advanced about how this could be done).
- It would be useful to have folders of all the information prepared for Network meetings, such as country reports, in different languages (but there no suggestions advanced about how this could be done).

Proposals about Network Activities

Proposals advanced by the four group reports were as follows:

1. There is a need for a FGC "position paper", perhaps modeled on the one developed with international support by the American Humane Association, but adapted for European purposes. The Netherlands offered to sponsor an initial drafting of a document which would define what FGC was and what it was not, for discussion by country members before the next Network meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, in November 2012;

2. A European FGC website would be useful, either as a stand-alone site; or as an aspect of another compatible site; or a "yammer" website that would link Network members to individual country websites. A website could contain country evaluation and research reports; training availability; a calendar of upcoming events; and similar items;

3. There was support for the creation of a set of European standards for FGC policy and practice;

4. The Network should consider ways to lobby Governments to gain rights to FGC practice for families, using existing European structures;

5. The Network might coordinate bids for EU funding

6. A Network E-Forum could be considered to advance matters between Network meetings

7. There is a need for a core set of evaluation and research questions to ensure comparability of data;

8. Countries might consider cooperative research; being available to other countries for FGC advice and support; and providing advice on funding issues;

9. The Network could coordinate a circle of inter-country and international FGC trainers.

Proposals about structure

Two suggestions were made:

1. That the Network join with another pan European structure, such as Eurochild, making use of such an organization's infrastructure, website and the like;

2. That the Network maintains its current annual 2-day meeting, with country reports and discussion on day one, with day two devoted to discussions on papers presented. This proposal had the following features:

    - The establishment of a number of Collectives (similar to Standing Committees) relating to topics of interest to the Network;
    - Membership of the Collectives would consist of at least one person from each Network country, with a member country volunteering to coordinate activity in each Collective;
    - The Collectives would take responsibility for developing the proposals listed above, in addition to reporting on their area of interest;
    - There would need to be work done between Network Meetings, using email, E-Forum and/or Skype technology, to ensure a topic had been fully developed, with recommendations for the Network meeting
    - Collectives suggested are:
        1. Strategy and vision
        2. Standards
        3. Training
        4. Governmental lobbying
        5. Funding
        6. Network Communications (websites, etc)
        7. Project support and advice
        8. Evaluation and research

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