

## The last circle

*In the closing circle some participants were asked for remarks and observations: I take with me...*

‘That lovely situation of Ireland. I heard at the start of our conference ‘150.000 euro was available for giving help. But, due to the plans of the families themselves we used only 20.000 euro so far, because families take their responsibility’.

‘Our targets are the same. We have similar agenda’s. There is much consonance’. ‘But also the differences were very interesting’.

‘The principles are equal. Different approaches are all accepted’.

‘We have met that terrible newspapers. So we’re now in a defensive position’.

‘But at that time of ongoing struggle I’ve got in these days new energy, I refreshed myself with so many suggestions, also at the coffee machine’.

‘W’re now three years from the start of the European Forum. Internationally we did so much effort in such a short period. It’s an amazing wide spread movement’.

‘I’m impressed that so much intensive work is done. It’s good to take this two days for some reflection. Just social workers need this’.

‘The voice of the client, panels of participants, not only the overall evaluations, we need that voice, and also the conferences, bringing up in campaigning. We need to work with small communities, empowering them’.

‘We, in Russia, are going to build up a system of conferencing, starting next December. Being here was very inspiring and helpful. We were the only country without conferences until now. We listened to your experiences. Now, we have so much to our disposal’.

‘It was good to get acquainted with you and your experiences, especially all that discussions about the role of professional social workers en to have to reflect on that role’.

‘Who gave the five conditions about FGC? I read on your flap: May be it’s a wonderful and helpful meeting, but it’s not a family group conference. So, I guess, it is not about what is the best form, but about ‘core business’. The private time for the family. How private? How long private? What is that condition? No, it’s just about private. We have to tell that to the community and to the agencies. Big discussions about models A, B, C, D brings our work in danger. The reason: the hart of what we are doing is to change the helping system behind’.

‘We in Belgium are working on conferencing within the criminal justice system. We give the morality as a basic value tot that framework: the offender meet the needs of a victim. Here, we spoke at the first time about conferencing and the welfare system’.

‘I found it valuable that kind of principles to bring in a conference model, because always our community is looking for the possibilities to give form to that principles’.

‘At first the emphasis on this model was about children in trouble. There were to aspects: how to do with a justice system for young children? How to do with child protection? The model gave respect to what the indigenous people felt and did when their children were in trouble. For me that is inspiring’. ‘But that cultural affected system is not a cultural specific issue. We need to bring together the victims and the offenders for moral reasons from the scope of the offender system’.

'The struggle for implementing these model requires a lot of time. It's a big change: handing over the power. Now we are evaluating time after time. We will prove the successes. I think we have to change our evaluating labour into campaigning'.

'We think we have to justify ourselves. Social workers at the other side don't ask the approval either. We work hard for getting the conditions for implementing the conference model. We exhaust ourselves to do research and more research. Stop that. We have a body of knowledge. We have evidence: the model is working. Or, feel we a battle in ourselves?'

'Let we say: this is an other manner of decision making. It's not a model for problem solving. No doubts about that. We only have to campaign this way of decision making'.

'Our research need to be done for fund finding, not yet for building more evidence. What we did this days was reflection on the best practice'.

### **Next steps**

We decided:

Each country makes a fact sheet about:

Projects (short context), # Conferences, Training, Research, Info addresses

We developed this Forum within three years: sitting in circles, talking about the model and its implications, about our best practices on an informal way. We are connected by linked persons in each country. We will go further on in this way.

We used the open space technology. That was a better way to organise the agenda.

We can learn from each other, more than in the lounges of formal congresses.

We work more concentrated, more intensive.

We could easily combine the FGC and RJ model.

It's a more vulnerable, but more fruitful collaboration.

It links up with our need of logistic updates, year by year.

There are some other congresses coming up in 2005 and 2006. Have we to combine our meeting like a pre-conference in the shadow of a big congress? Some of us have difficulties to find enough funds for coming, also now in Leuven (Sweden, Denmark, Finland; Poland).

2005, Manchester, FRGroup in collaboration with IIRP

2005, A Northern Ireland assemblee

2006, The Nordic Congress on FGC

2006, A New Zealand congress.

We choose to continue this small way of bringing together our experiences, without connection to the big congresses. Our own identity: working fully on the practical issues. When some country cannot attend others will represent them as good as they can.

(e.g. Norway-Zweden-Finland-Denmark; Netherlands-Central Europe).

We are connected by the link persons. Will we limit the amount of participant pro country? We think of a maximum of five, may be six.

The first and also the second meeting was organised by the Family Rights Group in London.

This third meeting is organised by the Dutch and Belgium colleagues in Leuven.

The fourth meeting will be on 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2005.

The Cardiff team will it organise at de location of their university.

We will make a report on this before 15<sup>th</sup> of December. The Belgium team will exchange.

Many thanks to them.

Jan van Lieshout (NL) - Leuven, 19-20 November 2004