



Il Melograno: the welcome network

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Romania

European meeting “Nice to meet you”: promoting direct participation of young people.

A European meeting of young people leaving childhood protection system has been held in Bucarest, Romania, from April 28 to 30. The national Moldovan care-leavers group took also part to the meeting on behalf of “Il Melograno”.

A video recording of the meeting has been sent from the Bolivian youth groups belonging to the “Melograno” network. (Read their presentation on the following pages).

The meeting was the main part of the European research project “Life after Institutional Care” and it gathered twenty young persons from seven different countries in order to let them exchange their ideas on the transitional phase from institutionalised life to an autonomous and independent existence and a full social inclusion.

The workshop focused on the priorities of these young people, analyzing the structures and resources available to them in order to receive some help during the difficult transitional phase leading towards individual independence. Their own suggestions formed another important point on the meeting’s schedule, because this kind of first-hand information may be very useful to improve European Social Policies and the private social care initiatives planned to help them.

For further information you can visit the www.childout.org website or e-mail to filippo.agostino@amicideibambini.it.





EVENTS

Il Melograno takes part in ENAPA, the national meeting of Brazilian adoptive families.

From 22 to 25 May 2009, the 14th Brazilian National Adoptive Families meeting is going to be held in São Paulo. The event is going to be an important occasion to meet, to awaken public opinion, to share different ideas concerning adoption and to promote the right of every child to be part of a family.

“Il Melograno” guaranteed its presence through the Regional Secretariat – the GAASP, i.e. the support group for São Paulo adoptive parents, that is also the co-organizer of the meeting and whose aims were to introduce the network and to illustrate to the audience the importance of the creation of networks promoting both direct participation of foster-parents in the elaboration of policies concerning deserted and adopted children and the reciprocal exchange of experience.

For further information on the programme and results, please visit the www.gaasp.net or www.childout.org websites or send an e-mail to omotta@amcham.com.br.

Ukraine

Happy Birthday Liga!!

The “Liga” – the Ukrainian foster-families association celebrated its first 8 years of activity on February 20th. The association was founded in 2001 by a group of family who wanted to promote local family fosterage.

A meeting was held in order to celebrate the recurrence and some foster-families of the Kiev, Odessa and Dnepropetrovsk provinces took part in it.

“Eight years ago, when we founded our organization, we were conscious of the importance of promoting fosterage culture in Ukraine” – said Vladimir Kononenko, president of the foster families association, to our local staff.

Until now, the families of the association have given hospitality to 200 children. The association counts, among its members, foster parents, and couples running care homes.

Our association counts more than 3,000 members, both individuals and families, living in different Ukrainian regions and we provide them with information, said Marina Mikhaylova. – vice-president of the Liga. – All these families are facing the same problems and need a concrete help. We can support them thanks to our experience with children with family problems.

To celebrate its eighth anniversary, the association is going to print and distribute a magazine entirely dedicated to its activities called “**The Child’s Room**”, that is going to deal with the problems of orphans, of children without parental care and of foster-families.

Happy birthday and good luck !



Mongolia

We can grow up together

In January 2009 the Mongolian youth group called 'A Good Idea' held a course called 'An Healthy Lifestyle'. The topic of the course was life without alcohol abuse, smoke and violence. The young participants had also a meeting, followed by a debate and by a small theatrical performance. The boys and the girls staged a comedy aimed at illustrating to people of the same age the negative effects of alcohol, smoke and violence.

Among the audience there were also the younger boys and girls living in Ulan Bator orphanages.

In February the group held another course entitled 'Let us pay Honour to Mongolia by learning to know Mongolian Traditions'. This course was meant to teach Mongolian customs to young people living in orphanages. The traditions taught during the course included salutations, courting rituals, storytelling, proverbs, riddles, etc



The boys and the girls also helped the teachers to organize the traditional "*Tsagaan sar*" feast. During the party they gave a demonstration of traditional games and everybody took part in the traditional wrestling and archery contests.

In occasion of the Mongolian teacher's day the students set up a "*Shuka*" race for their teachers and then they offered them some gifts entirely manufactured by them, with some help from the people of the group.

Kenya

Kenya: meeting of the adoptive parents' association.

On Saturday, March 21, Kenyan adoptive parents, united together in the APKA association, met in Nairobi.

The meeting was organized by the "Kenyan Care Homes" and was attended by more than twenty families.

The event started with the direct evidence bore by a 43 years old father, who had been adopted when he was still 10 months old and was told about his adoption when he was already an adult.

He underlined the shock he had to face and stressed the importance of making foster children aware of their adoption as soon as possible.



A psychologist commented the man's story by saying that there is not an ideal moment to reveal his/her adoption to a child, but parents must be prepared to identify the right moment to reveal the truth to their children.

Some parents unveiled their preoccupation concerning their foster children birth certificate because it contains the clearly visible word 'adopted' and they are afraid that it may bring to discrimination at school or in other places where such a document is required.

In the second part of the meeting, AiBi introduced the 'Melograno' care-leavers network and explained the true meaning of being part of an adoptive parents' association and of a mutual aid group.

Mr. Clifford, president of the adoptive parents' association, spoke about the necessity of involving all the members of the members in promoting the culture of children adoption.

Three departments have been created: media, education and legal. Parents can choose one of them according to their personal interest and knowledge.

Brazil

The secret of adoption – Study and Support Group of the 'Adote Legal' association of Contagem (Minas Gerais State, Brazil)

The present reflection upon the secrets and prejudices that are often hidden behind an adoption is the result of a meeting held in April together with the members of the study and support group of the 'Adote Legal' association of the city of Contagem.

The right of the adopted person to know his/her natural origin and about his/her adoption should be granted for juridical, moral, emotional, social and medical reasons.

Medical reasons: because of the improvements in medical genetics and of everyone's right to know the medical history of his/her natural family, because it may be of vital importance for the preservation of life and physical and mental health.

Social reasons: in order to avoid relationships, even sexual ones, between consanguineous, without being aware of the existing blood relationship. Such episodes are likely to happen, above all, in municipalities with a small population.

Emotional reasons: in order to avoid adopted children to know accidentally about their condition, because this may lead, especially in the adolescence, to serious psychological problems and behavioural consequences.

Moral reasons: as good cannot be built upon evil, a good parental upbringing cannot stand upon lies.

Juridical reasons: as stated in article I comma III (Dignity of the Human Individual) of the Federal Constitution.

Familiar reasons: if the consequence of adoption is the separation of brothers, especially if the children are already grown up and are emotionally linked to their natural family.

To deny or to hide adoption does not mean that it ceases to exist. It is fundamental to bear in mind that past events cannot be modified, because past events had already happened, but it is possible to modify our attitude toward them.



Not to reveal the truth or to hide it can affect the child's personal upbringing. The negative familiar atmosphere created by the keeping of the secret about adoption may bring to a lack of reciprocal trust in the relationship between parents and children.

To keep adoption secret means that parents want to protect themselves from society, because, according to social conventions, the ability to procreate is a necessary condition for being socially accepted. By keeping such a secret, parents want also to protect their children from prejudices.

It is necessary to free our minds from these prejudices in order to protect our children effectively. Keeping adoption secret can expose the child to different emotional problems: secret generates anguish and confusion, thus leading to rebellious and hyper-critical behaviour. A relationship based on children's mistrust originating in parental fear is perceived through emotional behaviours that may cause psychosomatic reactions. Sometimes families reveal adoption, but are reluctant to tell the children about their origins, but it is important, however, to make them aware of their past life.

Although telling foster children about their adoption is now a common principle consolidated by professionals' experience and enforced by the media, it is still possible to notice the presence of families that still keep adoption secret (...).

Presenting 'El Melograno':

In this number of our newsletter we go on with the presentation of the groups forming the Melograno International network, introducing the **Bolivian Melograno** coordinating group (melograno.bolivia@gmail.com), an organization of families and youth groups. Congratulations!

AJUCA - Asociación Jóvenes Unidos Contra el Abandono (Association of Young People against Child Desertion). This association was formally founded in November 2007 by ex-institutionalised young men and women from the cities of La Paz and Palo Alto. Their main goal is 'to prevent desertion and fight against institutionalization'. In the group logo there is the sun, symbolizing the voices of those who want to enlighten and awaken society, the two colours of La Paz – red and green – and the Illimani Mountain, symbol of their culture and Andean roots.

The activities of the group aim to make people aware about the issues of children desertion and institutionalization and to form public opinion in order to achieve a radical social change leading to the only solution to children desertion and the unique resource against this problem: family.

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Asociación Familias del Corazón (Heart Families Association): This association was founded in La Paz in 2007 by about 40 adoptive parents, future adoptive parents and volunteers, all struggling to give a family to every child.

The association goals are: to inform society on the traumas consequent to abandon and institutionalization; to provide support and help to future foster parents before, during and after



adoption and to make bureaucratic procedures easier to adopt Brazilian children in order to advantage them and to reduce the time spent in structures.

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JOVISDEIBI - Jóvenes Voluntarios de los Niños (Young volunteers for the Children) : This association was founded in Potosi in November 2004 and now counts, among its members, more than 20 teenagers and young adults between 17 and 24 years old.

Jovisdeibi began its activities as an informal group of institutionalised teen agers who met periodically to organise recreational activities, self-aid and to think over the problems related to their situation. The group successively became an association opened to everyone willing to promote and defend human rights and in particular every child and teenager's right to live in a family.

Jovisdeibi members also hold meetings, debates and plan collective actions concerning deserted children and life in institutions to promote familiar care culture.

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CUENTAS CONMIGO (Count on me): It is a recently born group whose founding members are young (and very young) institutionalised people from Cochabamba city. At the beginning the activities of the group were focused on mutual help and collective therapy aimed at recovering from the traumas caused by institutionalization. The group gradually widened its range of activities including information and public awareness on children desertion and institutionalization in Bolivia. The association actively promotes new social policies in defence of families – especially disadvantaged ones – and enforces foster care as an answer to abandonment and institutionalised life.

ASCA – This group was founded on the own initiative of one of its actual members who had a long experience of institutionalization in Cochabamba. In 2007 the founder started to contact young people with similar life experiences and the group started to acquire its identity until it reached its present composition of about 13 members. The activities and the meetings organised by the group are aimed at promoting people awareness towards children desertion and towards the consequences of institutionalised life on children and teenagers who grow up without being part of a family.

Beneath the talks and the activities of the group lies the necessity to promote both social change and state policies to help abandoned children.

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ASOCIACION DE FAMILIAS ADOPTIVAS –

This association supports family as an alternative to children desertion and to institutionalization of children and teenagers not living with their families.

The association was founded in 2001 by a group of adoptive parents that were already organizing informal mutual-help meetings to discuss about their experiences and their doubts.

Today the association broadened its activities opening towards society by carrying on activities focused on making public opinion aware on foster care as a caring alternative to desertion and institutionalization. The association takes part in seminars and tries to promote and spread adoption of Bolivian children through active participation in training courses for people interested in becoming adoptive parents. E-mail: celiajordanbolivia@yahoo.com.