



The Pomegranade (Il Melograno): The network of welcome

Year 3 – Issue 10 – December 2008

Summary:

- The newsletter 'Il Melograno' celebrates its 10th issue.
- It was a winter day: the testimony of a young Bolivian girl.
- Eurochild: to act in favour of young people living without a family.
- Osraty sees the fruit of its work growing.
- The story of Olea: an example of welcome from Kiev.
- We present 'Il Melograno': the foster families League of Ukraine.

Il Melograno

Dear all,

'Il Melograno' celebrates the 10th issue of its newsletter, voice of welcome. In the last year the network has been consolidated, new members have been added, many of us has presented a common project at the European Union in November (we will keep you informed about this), it has been collected a series of testimonies about 'welcome', thanks to the work that has been done in Peru, and there is more that has been done at a local level by the single associations.

But obviously this is not enough and in 2009 we would like to re-launch our work and the common sense of affiliation to become a resource to spread a real culture of welcome and to improve the politics in favour of adoption, fostering, and social inclusion of young people coming our from foster care.

In January we will have a common space in the new website childout.org, more than this, during the new year we would like to consolidate the network more and more with new proposals and a more active structure that we will discuss with you in the next weeks.

Whishing you a Merry Christmas, I will see you next year with common projects and initiatives.

A big hug,

Filippo Agostino- 'Il Melograno'



Bolivia

It was a winter day

It was a winter day: the institute or “that house” was empty and silent, we were scared and sad.

Suddenly a short woman, with pale eyes and dark skin, came out and brought us in a room. There she asked me about my parents and why I have been institutionalised. I was just able to say that my parents did not have a good relationship and that my mother was ill. The woman answered: *“I hope you would be ok here, because you will stay here together with other children of your same age”*. We went out a bit scared and then we started to create relationships with the others and, slowly, we got used to the institute...

Some Sundays my grandmother and my Aunt would come to see me, so I would not feel sad, sadly other children in the institute did not have anyone to come and see them.

One day, we were grown up, there came some nuns looking for me and other boys and girls, they told us we were going in another institute in another city: Tupiza. At that point I started crying because it was so painful for me to separate from my brother: he was still young, I could not believe I was leaving him alone. I have never imagined separating from my brother, I felt like they were taking a part of my body out of me.

In all those years I have not known anything about my brother, nothing about my family, no one. No one was coming to see us, or to ask for us, so then I realise we were alone, me and my older brothers.

I concentrated on my studies, what the nuns always wanted from us: to study and a good behaviour; the nuns have always been nice with us and brought us along a good way, teaching us what means having a responsibility.

Time passed without having any news about my mother. One day I received a letter from my aunt and uncle saying that my mother was death. It felt a pain so huge that I did not know what to do, from that moment I felt like I was the mother of my brothers. I was just a girl: why this responsibility to me? I could not believe it. What I was going to tell to my brothers? I would have preferred to be with my parents, to stay with my mother till the end, I do not know anything about her; I do not even know where she has been buried.

Now that I am not a girl living in an orphanage anymore, I have something important to say: you maybe are asking to yourselves if we have everything in an orphanage? Well, no. We have a house, food, a bed, education...but we do not have love, stimulus and comprehension. We do not have someone that would love us, even if we are wrong, someone that would say to us that we would be able to keep going, because in life there are obstacles, but we always have to be able to recover.



Europe

Eurochild: to act in favour of children living without a family.

Budapest (Hungary) hosted the Euro Child annual meeting from November 5th to 7th (European network of associations working in support of disadvantaged children and adolescents). The meeting has been a good occasion to discuss the European politics in relation to children and to develop the discourse about some key issues.

Amici dei Bambini promoted and participated to a specific workshop about care-leavers which title was “*Young people leaving alternative care: key challenges and framework for action*” in which it has been discussed the necessity for more actions in favour of the social inclusion of young people. During the workshop Amici dei Bambini has presented the first results of the research developed on this issued at European level, results that have been confirmed by a similar research realised in the Baltic area.

Among the issues emerged: the lack of data and monitoring about the care-leavers paths, the fragmentation of the responsibilities and the politics, the lack of a proper period of transition to an independent life after leaving the state protection system, the lack of specific paths inside the institutes to prepare the young people for an autonomous life.

It does not surprise us that the young people leaving the institutes always have the feeling to experience a new abandonment, they feel they have to magically became autonomous without any preparation and without being able of actively participate in their life path in the institute.

To strengthen the action in favour of children and young people living without a family in Europe, the meeting has been an occasion to create a specific working sub-group inside Euro Child that has been called “*Children without parental care*”, an expression of the civil society actively committed towards the change.

Morocco

Osraty sees the fruit of its work growing

During last autumn a specific training have been realised for the family association Osraty (see the presentation in the newsletter issue N° 6). The association participated in some courses, run by experts in the sector, on themes as: projects management, fund-raising activities’ planning, communication campaigns’ organisation, web site management, the fundamental aspects of adoption and post-adoption. The fundamental basis for an association to start an effective action to raise the awareness about the abandonment problem and the welcome as the solution of it, has been transmitted.

This is a training that Osraty received as part of the project “*Yassir*”, financed by the UNDP; the project aim to strengthen the Moroccan associations in their capacities, to be able to act in the civil society. The project permitted to strengthen different instruments that have been useful for Osraty, in fact the association has been recognized in the last months as the first social actor in the fight against abandonment in Morocco; and also as a support for the couples and the women that are willing to



welcome a child following the Kafala (the Islamic law that regulates the welcome and the adoption of children in Muslim countries).

Ukraine

Olea's story

Olea lost her father when she was 12 years old. It has been a miracle for her not to end up in an Internat, thanks to the help of the director of her school. None of her documents was following the regulations; her mother's certificate of death was registered under the wrong name. For this reason she did not have any of the support that usually the Ukrainian state offer to children in the same conditions.

There was no way to establish the state protection on Olea, no way for her to have access to free lunch at school, free transportation or benefits because of the fact she lost her parents. Olea was alone since October 2000. Before his death, her father sold the house he owned in the centre of the city. The competent services did not react to the fact that the girl went to live in a rented house in much worse conditions than the previous one.

They have not lived there together for a long time, after three months her father died. From that moment nobody have been interested in Olea anymore, only her neighbours and the director and the teachers of her school were offering her some food.

We met because of my insistence. The address I had was not correct and I looked for the girl for hours, knocking at 'every door'. Luckily my efforts brought me to a result when the girls' neighbour said: "*After long time of loneliness someone is finally interested in this child!*"



My first words to Olea have been: "*Come with me, I will show you my cat and her kitties*". So the girl came to live with me since that moment. It took me a long time to set up all the documents. But, finally, after 9 months, there was born a new foster family.

We have lived together for 8 years now. A lot of tears have been shed in this period: she was stubborn and with a bad character, but now she grew up and she is a woman!

At the moment Olea is studying at the University, she is at her fourth year studying Social sciences. In the last period she also started working to help other people and she became a volunteer for Ai.Bi. Kiev and the foster families League of Kiev.

*Marina Mihailova – foster mother.
Vice-president of the foster families League of Kiev.*



To present 'Il Melograno':

We continue the presentation of the groups that are part of the International network 'Il Melograno'; here we want to present the foster families League of Ukraine, from which we have received the testimony of welcome reported above:

<i>NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION</i>	Charity foundation “FOSTER FAMILIES LEAGUE”
<i>PRESIDENT</i>	Kononenko Volodymyr Anatoliyovych
<i>N° ASSOCIATES/PARTICIPANTS</i>	95
<i>MISSION</i>	Protection of the right of children to have a family.
<i>PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divulcation of the information about the state protection system in families connected with non governmental and religious organisations. - Promotion of the foster families' interests with the legislative and executives government bodies. - Collaboration with state bodies to realise family-centred 'welcome' centres to the end of optimize their activities.
<i>TERRITORIAL DIFFUSION</i>	Ukraine
<i>BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION</i>	The foundation of the foster families League has been created on the 12.01.2001 from the first four families in Kiev with the aim to unite all the foster families of the region to create the favourable conditions for the development and socialisation of foster children, also, to increase the possibilities for them to become realised individuals in the society.
<i>REFERENCE NAME AND CONTACTS</i>	Kononenko Volodymyr Anatoliyovych E-mail: liga_ps@mail.ru , www.ligaps.org.ua