

## Children in Foster Care Workshop - CEE Regional Network Meeting

### Final Report

International workshop themed “Children in Foster Care” was held 9-10 September 2010 at the Department of Social Work, Charles University in Prague. This workshop was one of the activities of the regional network for Central and Eastern Europe Childwatch International (CWI) which gave the workshop its support. The workshop followed previous activities of this regional network.

The two-day workshop was attended by representatives from 6 countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Norway, Great Britain and the United States). The list of participants appears in Appendix 1. Representative of each country provided an overview of the foster care situation in their country to other participants of the workshop. In these presentations special emphasis was placed on portraying trends and current issues in each country. Questions that aroused during these presentations were discussed in the following part of the workshop. Detailed program of the workshop appears in Appendix 2.

The aims of this workshop were: (1) to develop an understanding of the challenges and successes of research experiences with foster care children; (2) to solicit potential contributions for a special issue of the journal *Social Work Forum*; and (3) to develop a network of researchers interested in foster care in anticipation of future collaboration.

Outcomes of the workshop with reference to the individual aims:

1)

Three levels of the key research areas in foster care were identified by the workshop participants and the following research topics were defined:

- Policy
  - International comparative analysis of the effectiveness of different systems incl. legislation
  - Attitude of the society towards foster care and the possibilities for changes
  - Outcomes of different approaches to the care of the youngest children
  - Standards of foster care

- Adherence to the rights of children in foster care
- Ethical questions of the foster care
- Equality for minority children
- Practice
  - Learning and training opportunities for foster carers
  - Education and enlightenment of both the professionals and the general public
  - Examples of good practice based on research results (evidence-based)
  - Possibilities and limits of therapeutic parenting (therapeutic foster care)
  - Children with disabilities in foster care
  - Romany and minority children in the foster care system
- Research
  - Monitoring the effectiveness of different types of care
  - Social work and its possibilities in the field of foster care
  - Methodology of foster care researches – possibilities and limits of different approaches
  - Effectiveness of the Romany and minority children care
  - Results of foster care for children with disabilities

As you can see some issues touched every level of the discussion. A significantly long time was spent e.g. on discussing the Romany children in foster care. Why are there so many Romany children in the institutional care? Why does it seem so difficult to find suitable foster carers for these children? To what extent is this situation influenced by the attitude of the society? Are there cases of discrimination against the Romany children in the system of foster care? If yes, where and when is this discrimination happening?

Another hot issue worth mentioning was the question of possibilities and limits of the foster care research. The main tendency in the United States strictly requires using a random control sample (randomly controlled trials). However, this evidence-based approach used in medicine and science on regular bases often seems to be unsuitable in the field of social services. In Great Britain is becoming more popular a knowledge-based approach. It takes in account subjective statements of the research participants and their environment as well as other evaluation resources. This approach does not strictly insist on using a randomly chosen control sample that is in a number of cases almost impossible to obtain.

2)

Outcomes of the workshop will be presented in two consecutive issues of academic journal Social Work Forum (<http://socp.ff.cuni.cz/forum-socialni-prace>) published by the Charles University. Brief report about the workshop, its course and objectives was already received for publication in this year's December issue 12/2010. This report was written by Hana Pazlarova. Written forms of the presentations of individual participants of the workshop are planned to be published in the next year's first issue 1/2011. These will be introduced by a more comprehensive summary article describing the workshop discussions and outcomes. This article will be composed by Mark Small and Hana Pazlarova. Printed copies of both issues will be sent to the Childwatch Int. Secretariat.

Information about the workshop was also published on the Department of Social Work website <http://socp.ff.cuni.cz/children-foster-care-workshop>.

3)

Unfortunately, representatives from other countries of the region could not join the workshop this time and therefore a strategy for future meetings was discussed. Two steps were arranged that should lead to participation of representatives from these other countries

- Colleagues from Croatia (Ivo Pilar Institute) are willing to organize a consecutive meeting next year. Thanks to geographical location would be a workshop held in Zagreb more suitable for participants from South-east Europe.
- President of International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) Chris Gardiner, who was one of the participants of this workshop, engaged himself in addressing the members of IFCO in the countries in question; he offered to give us their contacts.

We believe that combination of these arrangements will ensure that more representatives of the region will be attending the next meeting.

### **Conclusion**

The workshop successfully followed its program and fulfilled its aims and objectives. All participants agreed that such meetings give opportunity to share valuable experience and

discuss current research questions which is extremely beneficial for everyone. The question of children in care outside their own family proved to be bearing. As a preliminary theme for the following meeting was suggested “Romany children (minority children) in foster care – approaches and outcomes”.

The question is whether the subject matter of children in care should be transferred from regional level to the level of thematic group. It turned out that some of the discussed areas were current for all the workshop participants.

## Appendix 1

### Children in Foster Care Workshop

9-10 September, 2010, Prague

List of participants

	Name	Country	Organization	Contact
1.	Becke-Hansen Elizabeth	Norway	NOVA Norwegian Social Research, Oslo	<a href="mailto:elisabeth.backe-hansen@nova.no">elisabeth.backe- hansen@nova.no</a>
2.	Brajsa-Zganec Andreja	Croatia	Institute of Social Science Ivo Pilar, Zagreb	<a href="mailto:Andreja.Brajsa.Zganec@pilar.hr">Andreja.Brajsa.Zganec@pilar.hr</a>
3.	Fico Milan	Slovakia	Institute of Family and Labour Research, Bratislava	<a href="mailto:fico@SSPR.gov.sk">fico@SSPR.gov.sk</a>
4.	Gabrielová Jana	Slovakia	Department of Social Work, Konstantine The	

			Philosopher University in Nitra	
5.	Gardiner Chris	Czech Rep./Great Britain	International Foster Care Organization IFCO	<a href="mailto:right2family@yahoo.co.uk">right2family@yahoo.co.uk</a>
6.	Haburajová- Ilavská Lenka	Slovakia	Department of Social Work, Konstantine The Philosopher University in Nitra	<a href="mailto:Lhaburajova-ilavska@ukf.sk">Lhaburajova-ilavska@ukf.sk</a>
7.	Kabelková Michaela	Czech Rep.	South Bohemian University, Faculty of Health and Social Studies, České Budějovice/ Clemson University	<a href="mailto:mkabelk@clemson.edu">mkabelk@clemson.edu</a>
8.	Matoušek Oldřich	Czech Rep.	Department of Social Work, Charles Un.in Prague	<a href="mailto:oldrich.matousek@ff.cuni.cz">oldrich.matousek@ff.cuni.cz</a>
9.	Pazlarová Hana	Czech Rep.	Department of Social Work, Charles Un.in Prague	<a href="mailto:hana.pazlarova@ff.cuni.cz">hana.pazlarova@ff.cuni.cz</a>
10.	Raboteg-Šarić Zora	Croatia	Institute of Social Science Ivo Pilar, Zagreb	<a href="mailto:Zora.Raboteg-Saric@pilar.hr">Zora.Raboteg-Saric@pilar.hr</a>

11.	Small Mark	USA	Institute for Family and Neighbourhood Life, Clemson University, South Carolina	<a href="mailto:msmall@clemson.edu">msmall@clemson.edu</a>
12.	Šulová Lenka	Czech Rep.	Department of Psychology, Charles Un.in Prague	<a href="mailto:Lenka.sulova@ff.cuni.cz">Lenka.sulova@ff.cuni.cz</a>
13.	Thoburn June	Great Britain	Centre for Research on the Child and Family, University of East Anglia, Norwich	<a href="mailto:j.thoburn@uea.ac.uk">j.thoburn@uea.ac.uk</a>

## Appendix 2



*Childwatch*  
INTERNATIONAL  
RESEARCH NETWORK



### Children in Foster Care Workshop

September 9-10, 2010

*Charles University Campus Jinonice, U Krize 8, Prague 5*

The aims of this workshop are: (1) to develop an understanding of the challenges and successes of research experiences with foster care children; (2) to solicit potential contributions for a special issue of the journal *Social Work Forum*; and (3) to develop a network of researchers interested in foster care in anticipation of future collaboration.

#### **Programme:**

The programme is designed for each speaker to provide a brief overview of the foster care system in their country and to highlight any special issues and trends affecting foster care for children (20 minutes). The talk will be followed by a brief discussion (10 minutes). All participants will take part in discussions to identify future research. Participants will be encouraged to submit a 15-20 page paper for publication consideration in a special issue on foster care in the *Social Work Forum*, a journal publication of Charles University (more details to follow). For those who wish to use powerpoint, please bring an electronic copy of the presentation.

#### **Programme:**

Wednesday

19.00 Dinner for participants who arrive on Wednesday. Participants will be met in the lobby of their hotels to be taken to dinner at 18.30.

Restaurant U Sádlnů, Klimentská 2, Praha 1 ([www.usadlu.cz](http://www.usadlu.cz))

Thursday Charles University (Jinonice)

9.30 – 10.00 Welcome, Introductions, Purpose of Meeting (Hana Pazlarova)

10.00 – 11.00 Presentations on Foster Care

Czech Republic (Hana Pazlarova, Olda Matousek)

Slovakia (Milan Fico)

11.00 – 11.15 Break

11.15 -12.30 Presentations on Foster Care

Norway (Elisabeth Becke-Hansen)

Croatia (Zora Raboteg-Šarič)

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 - 14.30 Presentations on Foster Care

Great Britain (June Thoburn)

USA (Mark Small)

14.30 – 14.45 Break

14.45 – 16.00 What We Know, What We Don't Know, What We Need to Know:

Synthesis of Foster Care Research.

Discussion by Participants (Led by Hana Pazlarova and Mark Small)

Participants reflect on the day's presentations and engage in a discussion of the state of foster care research. Common themes and interests are identified and a list of research questions is compiled.



18.30 Dinner. Participants will be picked up at their hotels at 18.00.

Restaurant Kolkovna Celnice

<http://www.kolkovna.cz/index.php?place=13&show=hot>

Friday Charles University (Jinonice)

9.30 – 11.00 Next Steps: Exploring the Possible

Discussion by all Participants (Led by Mark Small and Hana Pazlarova)

Participants discuss the development of possible research agendas that might be completed either individually or collaboratively. Included in the discussion are the potential resources and obstacles available within countries for conducting research, the availability of funding, and the identification of other potential research partners.

11.00 – 11.15 Break

11.15 – 12.00 Next Steps: Exploring the Possible (Continued)

Discussion by all Participants (Led by Mark Small and Hana Pazlarova)

Follow-up activities are identified.

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.00 Publication Possibilities (Olda Matousek)

Contact person: Hana Pazlarova

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