

## WELCOME TO AIF!

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Alternative Future (AIF) partners!

The project, which is funded by the European Commission under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme, will run for two years, ending in December 2017. It aims to develop resources that will enable staff who work with young people in residential care to better understand how the experience of violence affects them, how gender impacts on perceptions and experience of violence, and how to support the young people more effectively. Ultimately, Alternative Future aims to reduce the risk of them becoming victims or perpetrators of violence in later life.

Six organisations are partners in the project. SURT (Fundació de dones) in Barcelona is the lead partner. SURT supports women who have been victims of abuse and has a strong track record in violence reduction approaches. The other partners are Animus (a provider of services to vulnerable children based in Sofia), Dissens (a gender education and research agency in Berlin), AMGI is a centre for masculinity research, education and psychosocial support, Innocenti (a child welfare and child policy organisation based in Florence) and Children in Scotland (the national network for child rights and wellbeing in Scotland).

AIF's work will be carried out initially by talking directly to young people in residential care. They will be presented with various scenarios

and asked for their views on each of these. We are also gathering information from the practitioners who work with them. Through this we will establish how this particularly vulnerable group of young people perceive violence and the nature of current knowledge and practice experience among care staff. We will use this information to develop a capacity building programme for staff which will be delivered later in the year through a series of seminars. We are just beginning the information gathering process which we intend to complete by the end of April 2016.

## THE AIF WEBSITE

The project has its own website. Find it at <http://alternativefuture.eu>.

On the website you will find detailed information about the project as well as regular updates on partners' activity and relevant news items.

## ROUNDUP OF PARTNER NEWS

### AMGI

In Austria, the project has started in the last months. The Province of Styria, Department for Social Affairs, Work and Integration, is the co-financing partner and Wiki Kinderbetreuung is an Associate Partner. Both partners support the project.

The project partner in Austria, the Research Department of the Association for Men's and Gender Issues Styria (AMGI), has developed the first analysis instruments (guidelines,

questionnaires) in close cooperation with Dissens – Institute for Education and Research (Berlin). Meanwhile all the focus group interviews with professionals in four selected Residential Care Facilities (RCF) as well as the first Workshops with children/adolescents took place in different regions in Styria.

Two facilities are operated by the Province of Styria:

- One RCF cares for female and male youth aged 11 – 18 who suffer alienation, eating disorders and/ or violence. They offer different forms of living (e.g. living communities with single rooms for about 40 youth and assisted living), internal or external schools, job coaching and apprenticeships in internal training companies or external companies.
- The second has a similar caring concept focused on male youth aged 15 – 18. They offer regular and integrated vocational education in internal training companies in nine different skilled trades.

Two other RCFs are run by different non-profit organisations:

- One offers so-called 'familyhouses' with children aged three to 15. They offer middle and long term stays (from one to ten years).
- One RCF is a short term night shelter for homeless youth and young adults. Youth can stay overnight there (no more than 10 nights per month).

In the next weeks, the questionnaire survey with professionals will take place and all the generated data material will be analysed.

## Dissens

Dissens is co-leading the needs analysis together with AMGI, developing instruments for data gathering and analysis. In the needs analysis, Dissens is working with two RCFs. The first facility is a full-time care RCF for young people who abuse drugs or other substances and usually have other problems such as personality disorders, anxiety and relationship difficulties. Staff voiced concern about the possible impact that talking about issues of violence might have on the young people. We dealt with these concerns by organizing a pre-meeting so that the young people had the opportunity to ask questions before the actual workshop would take place. Eventually, most of the young people decided to participate in the workshop. The staff in this RCF already use Trauma Pedagogic (see below) concepts in working with the young people and hence are equipped to anticipate and deal with the wounds that might be opened up by asking them to think about violence.

The second facility is semi-residential, caring for young queer, transgender and/or intersex youth who live in shared flats. In this case, it were the young people themselves who raised concerns about the impact that talking about experiences of violence might have on their wellbeing. Again, we suggested a pre-meeting. However, the staff decided to talk to the young people themselves and decided to support the workshop with the young people by cooking a dinner for all participants while the workshop takes place. We loved this idea as it creates a comfortable atmosphere.

The concepts for the focus groups with the professionals and the young people work fine, the young people from the first RCF were keen on discussing violence with us and it seemed that the workshop concept helped everyone to approach the difficult topic somehow safely. In Germany, the term Trauma Pedagogy has been in use since the 1980s. It is now recognised as a specific therapeutic approach with accredited training. Its principles and practice methodologies will provide useful contextual knowledge as we develop the CBP.

## SURT

The starting of the project: Kick-off meeting in Barcelona and work with RCF in Catalunya

On January 12th and 13th 2016, SURT and its five partner organisations met in Barcelona for the Alternative Future Kick-Off Meeting.

The aim of the meeting was to get to know the partnership, to establish the common working standards for the two years project and to start the discussion on the first activity of the project, i.e. a Needs Assessment to determine and analyse the existing gaps in residential care professionals' work. The meeting was really useful and the general evaluation of the participants was really positive.

On the other hand, SURT is glad to share that we have 3 RCF who participating to the project.

During the last weeks, the project team already visited and carried out 2 focus groups with

professionals and 3 focus groups with the children. Besides, SURT already distributed the questionnaire among professionals working in RCF across the country.

SURT team is excited because the field work is going smoothly and both children and professionals are showing great interest towards the project!

## Animus

Together with the other partners of the project, and under the leadership of AMGI and Dissens, Animus Association Foundation (AAF) took part in the development of Needs Assessment methodology.

Currently, the AAF project team is translating and adapting the questionnaire for professionals, the guidelines and script documents for the focus groups with children and professionals respectively. Bulgaria is undergoing a process of deinstitutionalisation and is currently in the final phase of transition towards alternative community based family-type care for children. From AAF we are looking forward to conduct the needs assessment activity from the Alternative Future project especially during this dynamic period of deinstitutionalisation. AAF aims to conduct the needs assessment in three alternative care institutions and is currently finalising the selection of RCFs. We are striving to conduct the assessment in three different contexts and hope that the qualitative data that we gather will be diverse: one home

for children without parental care that is currently transitioning to a centre for family-type accommodation; a residence dormitory operated by Concordia foundation that we often cooperate with; and a crisis centre for children who have been victims of violence.

## Innocenti

We participated in a meeting led by the Florence municipality (which is an associate partner in the project) involving residential units that operate in the Florence area. We explained the project goals and invited them to participate. Some of the people present at the meeting expressed concerns about our approach as some of the children they cared for are not victims of violence. They were also concerned about the additional work that their participation in the project might involve. However, we received a positive response from two organisations that manage a number of residential facilities and we are meeting them next week to arrange the focus groups.

## Children in Scotland

We are leading on project dissemination activities so have been working on drafting the project's informational materials and on editing this newsletter. We'll later be involved in the organisation of the seminars and events that are part of the work programme. As far as the data gathering is concerned we have received permission from the City of Edinburgh Council to carry out the Needs Assessment work within its RCFs. Edinburgh is the second largest

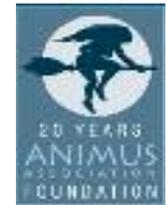
municipality in Scotland with a diverse range of residential provision so should provide valuable information for the CBP.

We've also been working on ethics guidelines for the project and on the leaflets and consent forms for professionals and for young people.

## Summary

The results of the needs assessment will be discussed in the next partner meeting in June in Graz, Austria. They will shape the capacity building programmes, which we plan to conduct from July on in each partner country.

## Partner information:



## Associate partners and co-financers:

The Scottish Government Looked After Children Division is also supporting the project.



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