

Qualitative report summary

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Capturing verbal content and other data from the groups

FOCUS GROUP 1: Interaction was serious and on-topic. What predominated however was not discussion amongst participants (professionals in the field of juvenile justice) but communication addressed to the moderator. Indeed, interaction between participants clearly followed professional lines – juvenile justice authorities on one side, lawyers on the other. There was little dialogue or dynamics within the group, and relations remained formal. There was a tendency for the discussion to be dominated by certain participants, who expressed themselves in largely self-referential terms, not at all conducive to the focus group's goals.

KEY MESSAGE: *I'll tell you how it works and how to improve the others*

PRINCIPLE of SHARING: **technical and professional cooperation**

FOCUS GROUP 2: Interaction was livelier, tending to include the moderator: communication on equal terms between experts. The non-verbal language indicated that the content of the comments was understood, appreciated and shared.

KEY MESSAGE: *Let's discuss, tell each other about our experiences, together we can grow*

PRINCIPLE of SHARING: *common experience*

FOCUS GROUP 3: Productive communication between the participants, in the sense that parents compared their points of view and shared them, showing understanding and agreement. All those present showed a good level of participation, acknowledging the moderator's guiding (but not dominant) role. Specifically, some of them shared poignant reflections with the group on the theme of goal-oriented education. These were favourably received above all by those participants who were initially more hesitant but grew more confident as they realised their common fate.

KEY MESSAGE: *We are all in the same boat; will there be a safe port for each one of us?*

PRINCIPLE of SHARING: *common fate*

FOCUS GROUP 4: A rather fun atmosphere. The focus grew in intensity, in the sense that the widespread initial timidity subsequently gave way to joyful and playful participation. However, not everybody managed to integrate: one seemed to be completely absent (for unknown reasons) while another two spoke only when addressed directly. The "active" participants formed two sub-groups who sought to

involve the moderator either as a friend figure or as a maternal figure, making the general interaction more difficult.

KEY MESSAGE: *What are we doing here? Help me to change, but my way.*

PRINCIPLE of SHARING: **imposed conditions**

Key points

Well-prepared and transparent projects – adequate preparation of staff and families – training and information – support and constant presence of institutions – dissemination of a culture of fostering – giving minors a voice.

Potential change

- On a political level: it is necessary to shift investment and resources away from criminal policies towards social policies designed to facilitate coexistence in the various communities, which can use such resources to promote a culture of fostering and the training of those involved, be they professionals (including lawyers) or members of the public.
- The legislative framework regulating fostering does not require extensive modification
- In terms of social services, what emerges in the focus groups, confirmed by the majority of women working as carers, is that the traditional idea of the family needs to be replaced with that of “ECOSYSTEMS of living together”. The main characteristic of such systems is that the envisaged forms of living together depend not so much on blood ties and common values, but correspond to actual conditions of life and life choices. In an ecosystemic project, the organisation of services reflects the structure of the system: they should not be seen as a series of specialist measures, but as part of a network. This objective requires extensive awareness-raising and adequate training.
- Concerning the tools, the model adopted here is “clinical”, i.e. not a theoretical or academic approach based on teaching, information and application, but a more practical “learning by doing”, centred on actual cases. Ideally, it should work as follows: the juvenile justice centre authorises selected centres in the area to assess the training programmes (aimed at lawyers, social workers and families) leading to the acquisition of credits that will be a compulsory requirement in order to work in the field of family-based fostering. As well as guaranteeing adequate and effective training, in this way, cooperation between the various professional groups is intensified and a database of adequately qualified fostering families can be set up. Investment is made in the promotion of concrete rather than general responses.

Life stories

We decided to gather three life stories, drawing on the experience of the two fostering parents in the 3rd focus group, and the only minor in foster care from the 4th focus group.