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Mother-Child Seminar

**“Children of addicted parents: providing a chance for life -
From Intervention to Research and back”**

Day 1:

On Thursday 24. November the Euro-TC seminar in cooperation with Euro-TC member Villa Renata „Children of addicted parents: Providing a chance for life“ was opened with the opening session starting at 3.15 pm.

Nicoletta Capra, Director at Casa Aurora (facility of Villa Renata) pointed out the goals of the seminar namely coming together to discuss and compare experiences in the field of parent-children treatment in the sense of mutual learning. She thanked Thomas Legl as president at the Euro-TC operational office for the cooperation in preparing the event and introduced Euro-TC and its aims as role in contributing to European drug strategies to the participants. Afterwards, she presented some key words which would be of importance for this seminar:

Minors, research, intervention and comparison. Minors because of the current thinking of children taking charge of their parents and their community environment. Research and intervention because the work has to be done at two levels, so the work is well-targeted and in order to get rid of the preconception that a therapeutic community is bad for a child. Comparison has to be made between the ways the work is done in the field. She introduced the seminar as a place where a debate is happening and presented the next speakers.

The word was given to **Maria Laura Faccini Castaldini**, the president of Santa Maria della Pietà - the location the seminar was placed – and she gave an introduction to the institute Pietà in an historic point of view, as well as in its current functions. This institute places two communities, one for children and one for mothers and children. It has not only social, but also cultural aims.

Michaela Frezza, Head of Deviance Prevention Service at the Veneto region, was the next speaker who mentioned the multiple interventions since the 1990s when she started working in this field and the fight against prejudices she is trying to erase. She points out that still within treatment attention is sometimes paid to the mother only and a child is seen as a tool for the mother's treatment. Mother and child has always to be seen as a unity. Many efforts were made in this directions in the clinical

practice since the 1990s.

Her presentation was followed by **Francesco Gallo**, Family Service Officer in the Veneto region who gave insight into the aims of Family Services in the Veneto region. He presented the family, as a place where relationships between genders and ages can be learned. To reach an improvement of social wellbeing, each single value in the family has to be taken into consideration. There is a need in supporting families so they can help other families, speaking of solidarity. Associations also need to support families. The Veneto region is one of the most active regions in Italy when it comes to the promotion of trainings at regional level and financing.

Presentations were followed by a round table discussion with two participants asking questions to the two representatives of the Veneto region.

The next four speakers were representing the Department of Addiction:

Chiara Salandin was talking about intervention that describes experience of groups of parents. The activity target was to support parental functions explaining the affective background of the group and their family environments. Personal experience of group members was elaborated with specific reference to their infantile past. Semi-structured interviews were used as cognitive tool for this purpose..

Patrizia Querini and **Luisa Blasi** were presenting about guidance and therapy with families supported by the Drug Addiction Service and within the social network. According to their personal experience, a focus must lie on specific problems of women and more services for women must be opened, in order to provide best counselling at territorial level.

It is important to see the family as a resource and the task of Drug Addiction Service is to meet all components of the family, to help regain “help within the family”. Prevention must be delivered to minors, especially where a family member is already addicted, in order to prevent them from addiction.

The last speaker of this first day was **Thomas Legl**, Euro-TC president and director at Knappenhof in Reichenau/ Austria. After thanking the hosts of the seminar he was sharing some ideas with the audience about the European Drug Strategy and mentioned the coming up of very necessary quality standards. In therapeutic work with addicted families, special focus has to be given to the treatment of the children since consequences severe when children have to take over responsibility for their parents. He described this dynamics as best practice of treatment interventions.

Day 2:

The second day started with a presentation from **Alessandra Simonelli**, Researcher and Professor at the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Padua. She gave insight to research methods and strategies on parenting in the community context and presented some models and definitions on parenting, as well as the interventions characteristics of therapists.

A discussion followed her presentation, with Horst Brömer from Tannehnof in Berlin and Oleksandr Akhmerov from the the Ukraine giving a short description about the data collecting in their communities/ region and Mr. Brömer suggested increased research within Euro-TC and to collect more data on children of addicted parents.

Nicoletta Capra and **Francesca De Palo** from Casa Aurora and Villa Emma (parts of Villa Renata in Venice) presented the cooperations between treatment and research within their therapeutic community context.

The most interactive part of the seminar was the family constellation, which was led by **Horst Brömer**, director from Euro-TC member Tannehnof in Berlin. Following the pre-seminar training which was only available for limited participation, this training was open to all participants. First of all, Mr. Brömer presented the facility of Tannehnof Berlin. Then he explained the systematic approach and the transpersonal effect of constellation work. The use of constellation

work is a good tool to break the vicious circle, when family members are affected by conflicts already developed in former generations.

20 participants were chosen as active protagonists of the dynamic work while the rest of the participants served as silent visitors who added their feedback and observations after the group work. It was very interesting to see the input of old conflicts and structures on the team and group dynamics within the therapeutic team which was chosen as topic of the constellation work by the participants.

After the lunch break a short guided visit in the Pietà facility was offered to the participants of the seminar, who could learn impressive facts about the rich history of the place where teachers like Vivaldi gave music lessons to the abandoned children and orphans.

Joachim Lodders, Director of Friedrichshof in Germany was the first speaker at the afternoon session. His focus was the prevention of crisis by preparation, admission and treatment to crisis intervention. He also presented legal aspects of the German model: There is very close cooperation with the youth office which requires medical records, insisting on written contracts with the addicted parents who have to guarantee that in case of relapse the child must continue living in drug-free relationships. Additionally there are courses offered by trained professionals. Finally Mr. Lodders presented Friedrichshof's checklist for diagnosis of children.

The last speaker was Oleksandr Akhmerov from Euro-TC member Stupeny in Odessa/ Ukraine who introduced his TC to the audience.

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