

Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf – Opening Speech

Why are we here today? What is the history of this day?

These two days are the result of 7 years of work on the issue of the prevention of maltreatment of children with disabilities, mainly funded through the Daphne Programme, but also with local resources.

Our initial intuition was that as an association of people with disabilities, families and carers there was a role for us in dealing with the phenomenon of domestic violence and maltreatment of children with disabilities. We were lucky to find international partners that shared our intuition.

Very soon we found out that our role should lie in primary prevention, and that we should highlight the family as a resource. We further found out that the prevention of maltreatment is also obtained by the promotion of good treatment. Where rights are respected and good treatment is furthered, the risks of maltreatment are reduced.

We found out that it was necessary to build up expertise within the partnership and we did this through literature research, case studies, and an own International survey. Most of it is laid down in the two booklets that you received and that are available in many languages.

During 2009 we have been working on further shaping our thoughts on dissemination and on the concept of networking as a corner stone for prevention. Networking at all levels: local, national and international. Some of the outcomes will be reflected in the presentations later this afternoon and tomorrow. Anyway, this seminar is clearly a key moment in our dissemination strategy. Our aim was to gather around the table members of our local, political and operational, network and international players, as well as new organisations. If I look at the list of represented organisations, and it is not complete, I think we did succeed.

The WHY HERE? question needs also another response. The choice for Ca'la Ghironda is not the result of an attempt to find a lustrous venue, but the choice for a new partner in our network. This place is more than an art gallery or a private collection. The founder and collector, Francesco Martani, is an international well known artist himself, who obtained all these original masterpieces by exchanging them for his own works. The aim of the foundation that administers this place is to make this resource as accessible as possible to people, especially children and families, and those at risk of artistic and social exclusion. As a result of this project AIAS and Ca la Ghirondi collaborate now and in the future, because aesthetics and disability can go very well together, and art and nature, especially combined, can have a great impact on people's well being. The collaboration with Ca la Ghirondi fits in the strategy of AIAS Bologna onlus to build a network of local resources for the promotion of wellbeing of families with children with disabilities and the prevention of maltreatment.