

# 61th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

---

THE FAMILY IN FOCUS:  
20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE  
FAMILY



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM 12 - 15 May 2014

## CHAIR'S REPORT

---

The International Commission on Couple and Family Relations (ICCFR) organised its **61th conference** in the Belgian town of Brussels from 12 until 15 May 2014.

As the chairman of the **International Commission of Couple and Family Relations**, and as the organizer of this conference I had the honour to welcome 46 participants from 17 countries in 5 continents in the beautiful city of Brussels.

Once again ICCFR fulfilled its mission as an international forum where family-related themes can be discussed.

The main components of our ICCFR conferences are: keynote presentations given by some prominent international speakers, discussion groups and workshops, this year related to the conference theme: "**The family in focus: 20th anniversary of the international year of the family.**"

In addition we organized, together with FAFCE, a celebratory conference on 15 May, the international day of the family at the European Economic and Social Committee. 75 participants were present.

In the conference brochure I wrote: *"I am sure this will be a very fruitful conference for all of us, with the opportunity to enjoy the chance to network, and to share with and encourage each other in the discussions about couple and family relationship matters, all in a positive and constructive atmosphere."*

It sure was!

This conference was a good one, thanks to the excellent collaboration between the ICCFR Board and Trust, The Government of Flanders – Belgium (staff of the Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family and the agencies Jongerenwelzijn en Child & Family), FAFCE and all speakers and workshop presenters.

Let's take a look at the program!

## **The theme of the conference: “THE FAMILY IN FOCUS: 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY”**

This conference addressed the challenges facing families around the world twenty years after the United Nations’ International Year of the Family celebrations in 1994.

The sub-topics were:

- The themes of the International Year of the Family+20:
  - Balance between family life and work
  - Eradication of Poverty
  - Inter-Generational Solidarity
- The three areas of the Commission: Family Policy, Family Therapy and Family Law

### **Conference Program**

The 61st ICCFR Conference Opening Reception was hosted by Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health & Family, Jo Vandeurzen. Minister Vandeurzen was represented by his adviser Peter CASTEUR. He had a clear message from the Minister:

“ Allow me to welcome you. I feel very honoured by having the opportunity to receive this 61st edition of the Conference of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations in Brussels, the capital of Flanders, Belgium and Europe and I thank you in advance for your willingness to participate from all over the world, from overseas and from closer in Europe, to contribute personally to this conference.

As Flemish Minister competent for Welfare, Public Health and Family I gladly wished to uphold this initiative and I hope that - with the support of the Flemish Government - this conference may inspire and encourage you in the valuable work you are realizing within the framework of ICCFR.

Furthermore I'm especially glad that I may receive you here in Hotel Errera, the official residence of the Flemish Government, at the heart of our capital - a residence that, ever since it was built in the 18th century witnessed the major changes that this country and its people went through. Even today we stand on the threshold of a major state reform that provides a significant transfer of competences to the Flemish Community, also - and I dare say especially - in terms of our family policy.

During this Conference you will be addressing the themes of the International Year of the Family: balance between family life and work, eradication of poverty and inter-generational solidarity. The choice of these themes is fully in line with the priorities we

emphasize in the Policy Area of Welfare, Public Health and Family and that carry away my most special attention. Truly everyone is at some stage in life confronted with a need for welfare or health services, ranging from childcare to curative health care. And unfortunately, still a significant number of children are born into underprivileged families or in a family with an increased risk of poverty.

Innovative, transversal programs, co-creation with all stakeholders involved, away from the silos of unilateral policy development are some of the principles that we have been installing - taking into account the needs and welfare of our citizens. Socialization of care and social entrepreneurship became step by step commonly accepted principles for all sectors contributing to the welfare and health-care.

I'm truly convinced that with its inspiring program and due to its eminent speakers this Conference will be underpinning our common efforts for refocusing on the role of families in development, for taking stock of recent trends in family policy development and for sharing good practices in family policy development – in line with the goals of the twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family that we are celebrating in 2014.

Please enjoy this evening and I wish you a very good conference and a pleasant and inspiring stay in Brussels.”

## Keynote speakers

On the first conference day, Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, we had two keynote speakers.

We invited Professor Nuria Chinchilla from the IESE Business School, Spain for the first Keynote about the **Balance between family life and work**.

Unfortunately (due to family reasons) she was unable to come and was replaced a few days before the conference by her colleague **Mr. Marc Grau**.

Despite the lack of preparation time, his keynote was very interesting and very well presented.

Our second keynote speaker was **Mrs. Hanne Bruun Simonsen** (Denmark). Assisted by **Mrs. Britt U Holmstrup**, she gave a well-illustrated view on “Working successfully with PREP-programs and Couples therapy” in the Ringkøbing-Skjern Kommune in Denmark.

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May we had the third keynote speaker **Dr. Marc Callens** (Flanders-Belgium). He spoke about “Generations and solidarity”

You can find the texts of these 3 keynotes on our website.

## Workshops

We selected 7 very interesting workshops: 4 on Tuesday and 3 on Wednesday. All participants could choose 2 workshops.

### 1. The Circle of the Couple Relationship and Parenthood in Stepfamily

**Presenters: Vuokko Malinen and Sinikka Kumpula**

A new working model "The Circle of the Couple Relationship" was created in The Family Federation of Finland (2005-2010) and further developed into "The Circle of the Couple Relationship and Parenthood in Stepfamily" in collaboration with the Stepfamily Association of Finland. The model is used as a theoretical base for the development of a prevention program for couples in stepfamilies. The Prevention Program for Stepfamily couples was carried out among 66 couples participating in three separate courses organized by The Family Federation of Finland and the Stepfamily Association of Finland (2010-2012).

The Prevention Program includes "The Circle of the Couple Relationship and Parenthood in Stepfamily", basic theories of couple relationship and couple relationship in stepfamilies, theories of functioning parenthood in stepfamilies, and demonstrations and practical exercises for partners in couples. The target couples participated in five-hour long sessions on two Saturdays (two weeks interval), altogether 10 hours.

A study was conducted among the couples participating in these courses to evaluate and develop the Prevention Program further. The participants, 66 couples (132 men and women), filled in a questionnaire in the beginning and at the end of the program and an impact follow-up was made eight-nine months after the intervention. Main results are reported in two master's thesis (Kontkanen 2012 and Juuti 2013), and a doctoral dissertation is under preparation (Malinen). This workshop will introduce the "Circle of the Couple Relationship and Parenthood in Stepfamily" model.

According to the results of The Program for First Marriages (developed by Koskinen, Kumpula, 2005-2010), evaluated by the University of Eastern Finland, the couples benefited from the program e.g. intentions to separate decreased and happiness was increased. Kontkanen (2012) noticed that the happiness in stepfamilies comes from different dimensions for men and for women and the couple relationship intertwines with the parenthood more in second marriages than in first marriages. According to Juuti (2013), the problems and conflicts between partners in stepfamilies were related to the network of surrounding relationships, such as the relationship with the ex-partner. Findings from the Program for First Marriages lend support to that it is possible to make a considerable positive change in the lives of stepfamily couples with a short and an inexpensive intervention.

**Vuokko Malinen, Psychologist, couple psychotherapy trainer, Ph.D. Candidate in Psychology, University of Eastern Finland**

**Sinikka Kumpula Psychologist, couple- and family therapist and couple psychotherapy trainer, private practitioner**

## 2. The Parental Regard model: an Australian example of therapeutic post-separation family mediation

**Presenter: Bill Hewlett and Amelia Wheeler**

The 2006 amendments to Australia's Family Law Act effected many changes to the post-separation or post-divorce practice sector. Informed by research showing sustained acrimony between separated parents is damaging for children, these amendments established a number of federally -funded Family Relationship Centres across Australia. The primary purpose of these Centres is to manage disputes between parents after they separate in a less adversarial manner than in the previous court-based system. Family mediators have been empowered to develop approaches to assist separating families; however, some evidence has shown shortfalls in traditional facilitated-negotiation models of mediation. This workshop presents an overview of the Parental Regard model; a therapeutic style of mediation which has the overall aim to encourage a transformative shift in the emotional state of the parents, in turn positively affecting the parents' ability to relate to and negotiate with one another. This model seeks to establish healthy family functioning after parents separate. The workshop presents an analysis of the social policy context as well as research from two pilot studies evaluating this innovative practice model. The workshop also features a unique presentation of the Parental Regard model in action, through the use of a live role-play with actors.

Bill Hewlett - Contact: [billh@ransw.org.au](mailto:billh@ransw.org.au)

Clinical Services Specialist, Relationships Australia New South Wales

Amelia Wheeler - Contact: [amelia.wheeler@gmail.com](mailto:amelia.wheeler@gmail.com)

Research Officer, Relationships Australia New South Wales

PhD Candidate, University of New South Wales

## 3. Generations and mediation

**Presenter: Miet Timmers**

The interplay between different generations creates vitality in many organizations. People of different generations bring in new ideas and ensure diversity and innovation. Generatielink analyses the intergenerational relations in organizations and companies and provides training and advice to optimize the interaction between people of different generations.

Generational identity becomes more and more recognized as an important factor in social relationships. Although in everyday life, generation is taken for granted and experienced holistically, it can be very interesting for a mediator to be aware of his own generational identity and those of his clients. As points of view, interest and needs, all major concerns for mediators, are influenced by age and generations.

By introducing a four step method to grow in “generational intelligence” we bring in a practical and helpful instrument for mediators who facilitate mediations in which clients of different generations are involved. The four steps include methods to become aware of one’s own generational identity, understanding the baselines of the generational identity of the other people involved, becoming critically aware of the values underlying social assumptions and finding a common intergenerational position.

Miet Timmers is certified mediator in family, social en civil affairs. She is intergenerational specialist for the organization ‘Generatielink’ and is visiting professor at the Higher Institute of Family Sciences of the University of Brussels.

#### **4. Does the changing composition of older people pose a challenge to intergenerational caring patterns and relationships and how can we mitigate this?**

**Presenters: Dylan Kneale**

While it is widely recognised that the older population is growing in number, the changing composition of the older population is less widely understood. Older people’s changing personal, social, family and couple relationships are undergoing substantial changes that are likely to lead to transformations to traditional patterns of intergenerational relationships and caring patterns. This workshop will first focus on examining the changing nature of older people’s relationships within the broader context of a changing life course at older age, for example in terms of working patterns and health transitions. For instance, older people’s rates of divorce are rising while divorce rates for younger groups are declining, holding consequences for patterns of informal care among couples; meanwhile family composition is also changing, and older people are increasingly likely to adopt step-parenting roles which also may hold implications for patterns of intergenerational care. We will then move to explore these issues more explicitly from an intergenerational perspective through addressing how families can better plan for older age in more co-productive ways to prevent intergenerational conflict taking place within families. This will be related to our organisational experience as one of the largest providers of counselling in the UK.

Dr Dylan Kneale

38 Chewton Road, London, E17 7DW

Email: [Dylan.Kneale@gmail.com](mailto:Dylan.Kneale@gmail.com) Phone: 07772881533

Jul 2013 – Present

- Head of Policy and Research – Relate / Advisor - International Longevity Centre (ILC-UK)
- Head of Policy and Research for leading Relationship Support charity

## 5. Litigation v. Mediation

**Presenters: Lloyd D. Godson and Patricia A. Gorman**

Although this topic has been discussed in the past it is the belief of the Presenters that this topic needs to be revisited to explore, on a global basis, the benefits and pitfalls of both disciplines. Europe has embraced mediation. The United States has struggled with the concept by attempting to merge disciplines in varying forms in different states. The differences between the European and American systems have been the result of economic policy as well as different philosophical views regarding whether to assimilate differences in culture into the system of justice. For example, in certain Nordic countries, mediation is compulsory. In England and Wales, those seeking public funding for divorce must use the services of a mediator first. Further, there is discussion in England of requiring parties to attend a “mediation awareness session” in all divorce cases. There is discussion in the mediation field as to whether children should be involved in the process.

Description of proposal: “Litigation v. Mediation” is a program that seeks global discussion regarding the strengths and weaknesses of both disciplines and where these disciplines intersect and whether these disciplines should intersect. This program seeks to explore the differences between mediation and litigation and what risks and benefits are inherent in both disciplines. The exploration will include a presentation and discussions regarding manipulation of both systems, costs inherent in both systems, cultural inequalities, and potential benefits to these systems working in tandem.

The goal through presentation is to describe the American system, as practiced through the Massachusetts Family Courts, to discuss the current strengths and weaknesses of the American system including the effect of funding of the court system, superior resources of one party over another, superior manipulation of one party over another, cultural differences, and strengths and weaknesses of individuals involved as mediators through the court system. The goal through workshops will be to present scenarios to the participants to discuss the potential pitfalls in superior or inferior positions and how to protect the weaker party thereby evening the playing field and strengthening the family. The American system heavily involves Judges throughout the process, enabling parties to benefit from the lengthy education and experience of trial court judges. Mediation, used extensively throughout Europe, seeks to limit judicial involvement in the process.

**PATRICIA A. GORMAN - Associate Justice Massachusetts Probate and Family Court**

**ATTORNEY LLOYD D. GODSON - ATTORNEY AT LAW -  
Divorce/Child Custody/Property Division/Asset Protection and Maximization**

## 6. Siblings as resources in Families

**Presenter: Inés Brock**

Sibship is an advantage because it can counterbalance parents' powerful attitudes. Siblings can feel more closeness between one another and this could be described as family-based resources. Brothers and sisters share beliefs and attitudes and develop problem-solving abilities. But otherwise brothers experience more rivalry and aggression. Sisters on the other hand are used to communicate and to show more empathy. Improvement in parental down-regulations was indeed associated with gains in sibling relationship quality. Attitudes from sibs often quite different from their parents. When we know that sibling supportiveness and hostility are predicted by parents' behaviors we could work out strategies to help parents arrange good conditions and create a helpful environment for growing up with brothers and sisters.

Workshop deals with these questions and helps rising a feeling for these relations in families.

Dr. Inés Brock

Nathusius- Institut für Psychologie, Bildung und Beratung

[www.ines-brock.de](http://www.ines-brock.de) / [www.nathusius-institut.de](http://www.nathusius-institut.de)

## 7. TEJO : Therapists for Youngsters

**Presenter: Ingrid De Jonghe**

TEJO is an innovative, social project that gives first line therapeutic guidance for youngsters between 10 and 20, focusing on preventive, anonymous care, free of charge. The aim is to respond directly when the youngster is ready to talk about their problem and to prevent escalation.

TEJO was awarded the 2012 Youthcare Prize of Flemish Government for "Socialization of youthcare".

We are living in a restless world where a lot of young people feel lost because of our way of living in the society of today, long waiting lists in the official second level-intervention. Psychological problems are growing, we see a lot of relational issues in the family, life-stress, depression, divorce of parents...

The TEJO-project started at 13-3-2010 and we guided more than 1600 youngsters till now. Giving short solution focused therapy by qualified therapists in approx. 10 sessions, to clear their difficult personal situations, making them stronger again so that they can continue their adolescence in a normal way.

Currently focused on Antwerp region but other cities in Flanders and abroad are coming soon. Today TEJO Antwerp is working with 100 qualified engaged and motivated volunteers. The world of today needs more solidarity and more altruism. The enthusiastic TEJO-Team chooses to go in this direction.

Ingrid De Jonghe

President TEJO-Antwerp

[www.tejo.be](http://www.tejo.be)

---

## Discussion groups

A very important component of our ICCFR conferences are the discussion group sessions. They are included in the program to develop international, multidisciplinary perspectives on conference topics and participants' interests. They are a great way to participate fully in the conference.

This year we had 4 discussion groups with lively, interesting discussions.

---

## Social activities

- **Bus tour around Brussels:** we visited Brussels on a private bus tour and with guide from 'City sightseeing Brussels' starting at the conference venue and ending at the Central station/Grand-Place. This trip was much appreciated. Afterwards participants were free to have dinner somewhere in the heart of Brussels near the fabulous Grand-Place.
- **Closing Dinner on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May** in *Husa President Park Hotel*

Thursday 15th May 2014



FAFCE

FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS  
FAMILIALES CATHOLIQUES EN EUROPE

FÖDERATION DER KATHOLISCHEN  
FAMILIENVERBÄNDE IN EUROPA

FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY  
ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE



**European Economic and Social Committee**



**2014 - 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
International Year of the Family  
15 May - International Day of Families**

**Celebratory Conference at the European  
Economic and Social Committee -  
Program**

**Venue: Rue Belliard 99, Brussels – Room JDE 51**

09.00am – 09.30am Welcome and registration

Moderator: Maria Hildingsson, Secretary General, FAFCE

09.30am – 10.00am **Opening and introduction to the theme of the conference**

- Mrs Kinga Joo, EESC
- Giuseppe Barbaro, Vice-President, FAFCE, Italy
- Marc Morris, President, ICCFR, Belgium

10.00am – 10.40am **EU at the crossroads: can the family mainstreaming lead the EU out of the crisis? – A double perspective: public policy and public opinion**

- Tobias Teuscher, Secretary of the Intergroup on Family, Children's Rights and Intergenerational Solidarity, European Parliament
- Branka Moynan, wife and mother, Brussels

10.40am – 11.00am coffee break

11.00am – 12.15pm **Round table and debate with NGO representatives**

**Looking ahead: What Europe can do for families and what present and future families desire**

- From a youth perspective: Daniel Wiśniewski, Director, World Youth Alliance Europe
- From a motherhood perspective: Olalla Michelena, Secretary General, MMM – Make Mothers Matter Europe
- From a carers' perspective: Madeleine Wallin, President, FEFAF – European Federation of Parents and Carers at Home

12.15pm – 12.30pm **Round up talk and perspectives for the future**

Maria Hildingsson, Secretary General, FAFCE

Following the conference, all conference delegates were invited to a **celebration reception** following the conference

*The European Federation of Catholic Family Associations, FAFCE, founded in 1997 is recognised as an NGO with a participatory status by the Council of Europe. It represents national family associations from 16 countries across Europe, promotes the families' interests and valorises the contribution of the family to society towards the political decision makers at the European level.*

*In the context of the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2014) FAFCE wishes to promote the family as a subject of rights and thereby contribute to the strengthening of those rights that already exist and are enshrined in legal instruments at the international, European and national levels.*



**FAFCE**  
 FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS  
 FAMILIALES CATHOLIQUES EN EUROPE  
 FÖDERATION DER KATHOLISCHEN  
 FAMILIENVERBÄNDE IN EUROPA  
 FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY  
 ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE

Finally,

After the overview of the program of the most recent conference, a chair's report usually ends with an 'evaluation' of that conference.

Allow me not to do this myself. Instead please read the report from both participants who were selected and awarded the **Derek Hill** Scholarship 2014.

Derek Hill, longtime ICCFR board member and Chair 2001-2005 died 30 November 2012.

The ICCFR Trust and especially the former secretary-general of ICCFR, Mrs. Gerlind Richards took the initiative to honour his memory and his work for ICCFR and the ICCFR Trust by collecting money to offer a scholarship for ICCFR conference participation to young scholars who would not otherwise be able to attend.

Derek Hill's vision for the future of ICCFR was to encourage younger people to get involved in the international collaboration that is at the heart of the Commission. He saw that giving younger post-graduates and researchers in social sciences and social work, law and family policy, couple and family therapy and counselling the opportunity to experience and be part of an ICCFR conference as a learning experience for all and of mutual benefit.

We selected 2 candidates for the Derek Hill scholarship 2014:

- Ying LIU - 3rd Year PhD Student, Department of Social Work, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Graduated from Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.
- Mahima NAYAR, Assistant Professor in the Centre for Equity for Women, Children and Families in the School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai - India

They took the opportunity to come to the conference with both hands and were very actively involved in the conference.

### **Report Ying LIU**

Supported by ICCFR trust I was able to attend the 61st Annual International Conference of ICCFR on 12-15 May in Belgium. I would say that I have gained a lot from this impressive experience. Not only the ideas and programs shared in the conference, but also the people I met in the conference who shared so much commitment in family work gave me so much inspiring and encouragement.

The keynote speeches were well prepared, and with experienced front-line workers sharing their work in their countries. The presentations concerned about work-life balance for working fathers by raising the concept of corporate family responsibility, practice experience of Prevention and Relationship Enhancement

Program for couples therapy in Denmark, solidarity of generations. The discussion groups after each keynote speech was a wonderful arrangement, which provided the participants an opportunity to take more seriously consideration on the concern that was raised by the previous keynote speech session. It is also a wonderful platform for participants exchanging ideas and sharing the situation they observed in their countries. I also enjoyed the workshop which having the diverse choices on elderly care, therapy for youngsters, mediation on post-separation etc. With not many people but all interested in the topics, the discussions were quite fruitful. It was also quite interesting with the speakers in the discussion group that we could make the discussion of the topic in depth by asking questions and discussing the issues.

The arrangement of the conference was also wonderful, with opening reception, bus tour showing the places of interest around the city, which makes the three days rich and full of interest. Thank you Mr. Morris for walking us back to the hotel. It really helped me be a little more familiar with the city and be easier in the two following days. The bus tour covered the most famous places, and with this considerate arrangement I did not need to worry that I might not have time to travel around the city in the two days.

Finally but importantly, I would like to express my sincere thanks for the ICCFR trust for including me in the community and supporting my flights and accommodation for the conference, which made my trip possible. I would also like to make my special thanks to Gerlind's invitation and Mr. Morris support and help during my visa application and conference arrangement. It is my honor to participate in the conference. I feel very thankful for the generous offer by the committee. If there is a chance, I would really like to join it again, and recommend it to others who are doing family service in my country.

### **Report Mahima NAYAR**

The conference was organized to look at issues facing families all over the world. The themes of the International Year of the Family included balance between family life and work, eradication of poverty and Inter-generational solidarity.

***On the first day***, we started with the introductory speech about the conference after which the first key note address was delivered by Marc Grau on the topic of Corporate Social responsibility; in this address he brought up issues related to the social changes in economy, technology and demography in Western countries which had created barriers in maintaining work-family balance. He presented some of the findings of a survey conducted by International Centre for Work and Family which listed some of the causes related to work and family conflict. Some of the causes mentioned were incompatibility of work schedule with school, lack of company policies to help work and family balance, work pressures, housework, family responsibilities, difficulties related to infrastructure in the city. One of the interesting insights in his presentation was that although many companies were introducing flexible policies to ensure work-family balance;

many of the employees were unable to get benefits out of these policies. This was often because of cultural ethos which did not allow them to use the available policies; this also depended on the person whom they were reporting to or the work culture of their work space. Often employees who utilized the flexible policies were not looked at favorably and there could be a negative impact of this in their careers. This implies that the policies were present on paper but this kind of atmosphere discouraged people from utilizing the existing benefits. The presentation raised several questions about how the concept of work-life balance only focused on the economic factor, but left out other important issues. This idea was then carried over to the first discussion group.

The discussion group consisted of members from different countries and different disciplines; we had a representation from Asia, Europe, Africa and the United States. In addition to that it included people working in diverse areas like education, social work, social welfare, law, civil society organization as well as government departments. This diversity led to interesting discussions on many of the topics.

The discussion started with the idea of what happens to work –family balance for people when they are involved in caring professions. For example, a social worker working in a crises center does not have choose just between money/career and family time but the choice is between the well-being of his/her family and well-being of the client group. This makes the choice more difficult and created guilt in the person no matter what the choice he/she makes. Several examples were discussed and many options came up such as creating support services within the organization so that everyone gets some time off. Different types of families in the world and their concerns were brought up; different ways of managing with work constraints also came up. Kinship systems in some parts of the world like India and Hong Kong were differently organized; these were sometimes helpful and at other times could also be repressive. Caregiving is provided for by the family itself and most of the times; it is the women of the family who are amongst the main caregivers. This seemed to be true across countries.

In the afternoon session, there were several workshops. I attended a workshop on 'The Parental Regard model: an Australian example of post-separation family mediation' presented by Bill Hewlett and Amelia Wheeler. The workshop started with a description of the work that was being done by the presenters and their organization post-separation, theoretical considerations behind their work. This included the attachment paradigm, they used the paradigm to explain how attachment damage is often inter-generational and children carry these difficulties into their own relationships when they grow up. This highlighted the need for intervention post separation. Parents needed to form an alliance in order to ensure stability for their children. The presenters described how couples were sometimes referred to them by the court and others came on their own. Usually one of the partners would contact them and they would then invite the other spouse for mediation. The effort then is to get the parents to engage and

form an alliance. The role play which depicted the process of therapy with a mother who had recovered from a mental health issue and wanted some changes in her rights over her children was very insightful. After the role play, the discussion points related to therapy as well as legal implications.

In the afternoon there was a keynote presentation on Working Successfully with PREP-programs and Couples Therapy. PREP stood for prevention and relationship enhancement program which is a research – based educational course. This course is designed to promote well-being in a relationship and prevent a break up and therefore ensure the security and well-being for children. The presentation covered the model of intervention and its impact. The discussion group after this focussed on families and marriage encounters in different contexts. Some of the points raised during the discussion included need for pre-marital counselling, whether mediation is helpful or not, role of the judicial systems in the country, street children and their need for the family.

### **Day 2: May 14**

The second day started with a keynote on Generations and Solidarity by Marc Callens. He spoke about solidarity between different generations within a family and presented the solidarity model by Bengtson et.al (1991). Issues of care, education and role of government in ensuring solidarity were presented. He talked about family care and emphasized how most care was informal and role of the informal caregiver was mostly played by the women. He also brought out the differences between Moroccan and Turkish families and western families. According to him, the former are likely to have more internalised norms of taking care of elderly. Therefore, the elderly in these families were more likely to be taken care of within the family and they in turn have a role in looking after the children. These discussions on kinship were then taken on in the discussion group as well. The discussion focused on kinship patterns across the world, how care giving takes place, who is the primary caregiver and so on. There was also a debate on what happens to children when parents separate and how these concerns should be addressed. It was felt that keeping the child rights perspective in mind, children should be involved in the process of decision making of custody rights. Several members outlined practices where this was happening and the manner in which they did that. Another point raised were the different ways in which children were viewed in different parts of the world, in some places like Africa the belief was that decisions should be taken for the children and they did not have the capacity to think for themselves where as in other places things were changing. The discussion concluded with the understanding that inter- generational solidarity is practiced differently in different countries and cultures and needs to be explored more.

In the afternoon session, the workshop on TEJO: Therapists for youngsters, the presenter Ingrid De Jonghe presented the model for ambulant therapeutic counselling. She described how they offered individual and group therapy. She described the use of solution-focused therapy and its efficacy in working with

youngsters by focussing on the present and future. The documentary on TEJO brought out the views of the people who were volunteers and the kind of situations they dealt with. It was an inspiring presentation and generated many questions on the origin of the organization, the process, difficulties faced by the organization, feedback given by the youngsters after sessions.

Before the closing ceremony, best practices of several organizations were presented. They gave information on different kinds of work happening with families which included family interventions in prisons, coping with divorce, working with sex workers, brotherhood and family values.

### **Day 3: May 15**

On May 15 we attended a conference to celebrate the international day of families at the European Economic and Social Committee. In the first session the theme of the conference was outlined, after which presentations were made on topics related to family mainstreaming (need for changes in public policies), what the European union policies needed to take into account from different perspectives – youth, motherhood and carer's perspectives. The discussion brought out the issues related to work-family balance, excessive burden on mothers and role of fathers in care giving.

### **Reflections**

The entire experience of attending the conference from the opening reception on the 12th to the last celebratory conference on the 15th was a very enriching experience. It gave me an exposure to families and their issues in different contexts. Since there were perspectives from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and United States of America; the discussions were varied and interesting. Kinship patterns, role of the culture in maintaining families (marriages, inter-generational solidarities, care giving) were all different in different contexts. There seemed to be certain issues which were similar but were viewed differently in different parts of the world. Since, I come from a country, India, which is going through several demographic transitions (different states differ in their basic indicators) it was interesting as I could relate to people from different countries on different contexts. In India there are multiple realities, so certain parts of the country questions of work- family balance, maintaining families is important. There are also other parts where the concept of the family (especially if it is oppressive in nature) needs to be questioned.

The Derek-Hill scholarship enabled me to attend the conference in another part of the world. Being in another country also helps in seeing the issues the people in the country are facing and the cultural ethos of the city which has a hand in constitution of the present family systems. Meeting and exchanging ideas from people from different countries and different disciplinary backgrounds has given me lot to reflect on. Many of the ideas and knowledge gathered here will help me in taking back a fresh perspective to the students of social work.

With this 61th annual ICCFR conference in Brussels, came an end to my involvement with ICCFR. The first conference I attended was in 1999 in Durban (South Africa) and I have not missed an ICCFR conference since.

After 15 wonderful conferences, 10 years as a board member and almost 5 year as the Chair of ICCFR, it is not easy to leave. Looking back I must admit that I owe a lot to ICCFR: working with this Commission gave me ideas, oxygen and energy to do my job better, and gave me friends for life from all over the world.

But I leave ICCFR, knowing that the organization is in the excellent hands of my successor as Chair of the Board, Anne BERGER and my other friends on the Board.

My sincere thanks to everybody with whom I had the chance and privilege to work at ICCFR.

All the best!



**Marc Morris**

Organiser Conference 2014 and (past) Chairman **ICCFR**



ICCFR  
2014  
CIRCF