

ROUND TABLE ORGANIZED BY THE POŽEGA SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

Foster Care Development Support Program 2014-2017

POŽEGA – A round table for experts was organized today by the Požega Social Welfare Centre in cooperation with Sirius, the Zagreb-based Centre for Psychological Counselling, Educational Training and Research. The topic of the round table was the Foster Care Development Support Programme 2014-2017.

This three-year project, funded by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, aims to inform the general public about foster care and the problems of children without appropriate parental care.

Martina Vlašić, director of the Požega Social Welfare Centre, said that there were not enough foster families in the Požega-Slavonia County. As few as 14 children have been taken in by only five families. Not all of these children come from the Požega-Slavonia County, she added, but from other centres as well.

The European Union has recognized the importance of placing children without appropriate parental care into foster families, which was one of the reasons for launching the FALEFOS (Family Learning in Foster Families) project. This is an international project implemented in seven EU countries with the aim to analyse and compare foster-care systems in Europe, as well as to learn from each other and exchange experiences.

The FALEFOS project is funded by the European Commission. It has been announced that, at the end of its implementation next October, a handbook will be published containing resource materials tailored to the educational needs of all three target groups – foster parents, biological parents and social workers.

Sirius representatives report positive Croatian experiences with the project. This organization is implementing a number of other projects aimed at promoting foster care and integrating children without appropriate parental care into the family environment.

The analysis of users' needs has been completed and, according to Ivana Đurković of Sirius, an educational programme whose goal is to develop methodology and materials for educational workshops is currently being designed. After the workshops and evaluations have been completed in all the participating countries, their experiences will be compiled in the handbook in order to promote and encourage cooperation among all the stakeholders involved in the process of foster care, Đurković said.

In partnership with the centres for social welfare in Hrvatska Kostajnica, Požega, Sisak, and Šibenik, Sirius has recently started the Foster Care Development Support Program. This is a comprehensive project that will provide all the stakeholders potentially involved in the process of foster care with information and education regarding all important aspects of foster care.

This year, the project is to be implemented in the Sisak-Moslavina, Požega-Slavonia, and Šibenik-Knin counties.