

FALEFOS – Family Learning in Foster Families
539028-LLP-1-2013-1-AT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP

Focus Group Evaluation

Partners

- P1 Jugend am Werk Steiermark GmbH - AT
- P2 ARIADNE - CH
- P3 University of Siegen - DE
- P4 Sirius - Centre for psychological counseling and education - HR
- P5 FormAzione Co&So Network - IT
- P6 University of Lodz - PL
- P7 General Directorate of social assistance and child protection Harghita - RO

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1. Introduction

This evaluation regarding the Focus Group has been carried out by FormAzione Co&So Network, the partner responsible for the internal evaluation of the project, in collaboration with the project partners and is based on evaluation questionnaires developed for the purpose (see Annex). The focus group interviews took place as follows:

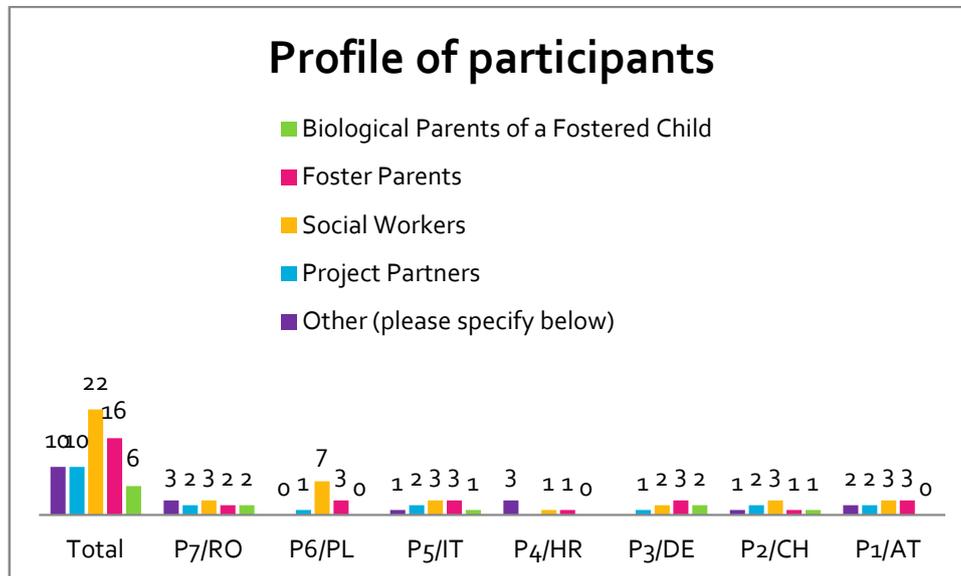
Partners	Place	Date
P1 (AT)	Graz (AT)	28/05/2014
P2 (CH)	Menzingen (CH)	12/08/2014
P3 (DE)	Familiennetzwerk Siegen (DE)	01/07/2014
P4 (HR)	Zagreb (HR)	03/06/2014
P5 (IT)	Florence (IT)	24/07/2014
P6 (PL)	Łódz (PL)	26/05/2014
P7 (RO)	Miercurea Ciuc (RO)	24/06/2014

After the focus group interviews, all participants were asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire. Partners could decide to give them the questionnaires in printed form right after the interviews or to send it to them later via e-mail. Therefore, although all partners carried out the focus group interviews with many participants not all of the participants filled in the questionnaire. In this document we reported all answers gathered in the partner countries and summarized the main findings in order to support the development of WP2 – Needs analysis.

P5 developed the questionnaire in collaboration with all partners. The questionnaire contained the following sections:

1. Profile of participants
2. Participants' satisfaction with different aspects of the focus group (with the possibility to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 and to comment on the positive aspects and on what should be improved)
3. Open questions

2. Profile of participants



Participants' Category	P1/AT	P2/CH	P3/DE	P4/HR	P5/IT	P6/PL	P7/RO	Total
Biological Parents of a Fostered Child	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	6
Foster Parents	3	1	3	1	3	3	2	16
Social Workers	3	3	2	1	3	7	3	22
Project Partners	2	2	1		2	1	2	10
Other (please specify below)*	2	1	0	3	1	0	3	10
Total	10	8	8	5	10	11	12	64

*Other: 1 Psychologist; 1 Padagogue (AT); one stakeholder of social department Rotkreuz / Zug (CH); Representative of Ministry of social policy and youth; Representative of scientist in the field of social pedagogy; Representative of Home for Children (HR); 1 Psychologist (IT); 1 psychologist, 2 foster home director/educator (RO)

Comments of evaluator:

In the chart above we reported all participants who took part in the focus groups in the partner countries. However, as specified in the introduction, not all of them filled in the questionnaire. Therefore, this report is based on the answers we gathered from the questionnaires filled-in.

The majority of participants is represented by social workers regarding the total number covering all partner countries (22 out of 64 considering all partner countries), but it's also the case of 5 partners (P1, P2 P5, P6 and P7). Also foster parents were numerous (16 out of 64), while in some of the countries there have been also other participants beside those listed in the questionnaire: a psychologist and a pedagogue in the case of Austria, a stakeholder from the social department of the municipality of Rotkreuz / Zug in Switzerland, while in Croatia among participants there have been a representative of the Ministry of social policy and youth, another representative of scientist in the field of social pedagogy and one representative

from a Home for Children, in Italy a psychologist and finally, in Romania, a psychologist and 2 foster home directors /educators. This is an extremely important aspect of focus groups, as these stakeholders represent a good occasion also to disseminate our FALEFOS project to a wider local network.

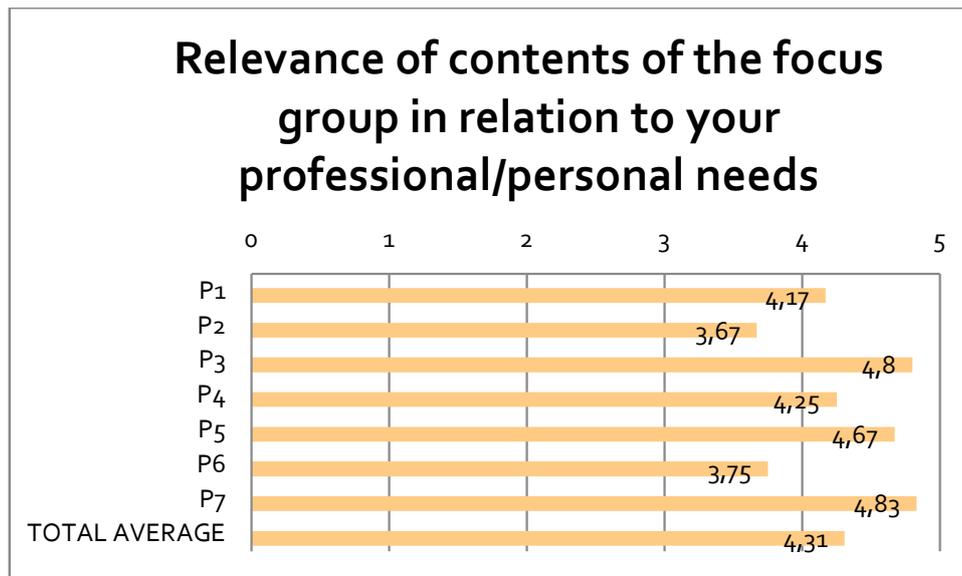
All partner countries had some difficulties to involve biological parents in the focus groups, therefore their number is not so high (6 out of 64 in total) and they didn't participate in all countries' focus groups.

Last but not least, projects partners were also present in most of the partner countries (in total 10 out of 64).

We can state, therefore, that all target groups were represented in the focus groups.

3. Participants' satisfaction with different aspects of the focus group

3.1 Relevance of contents of the focus group in relation to your professional/personal needs



Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL AVERAGE
Relevance of contents of the focus group in relation to your professional/personal needs	4,2	3,7	4,8	4,3	4,7	3,8	4,8	4,31

	Very dissatisfied							Somewhat dissatisfied							Neutral							Somewhat satisfied							Very satisfied																		
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT															
Relevance of contents of the focus group in relation to your professional/personal needs																2	2							1	5						1	4	1	3	2	3	1	15	3		4	1	4			5	17

What did you like the best?	
P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People with different professions were invited, the selection was ok 2. The difference in needs between professionals and personal matters. 3. More awareness among biological parents 4. relevant topics were discussed
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I liked that the discussion might help to value each other's insights better. 2. It was important for me to meet with other SWs who work in other organizations and to learn that they are dealing with similar problems / obstacles. In the same time the meeting revealed different perspectives. 3. I learnt more about Life Long Learning programs and possibilities in this frame – status of Switzerland in ERASMUS + 4. That we raised the issue that it is not always easy to build up empathy and stay calm on the same issue. 5. That this discussion might help to raise the cooperation between the parties involved in fostering. I learnt about interesting links: ERASMUS +, "Leuchtturm" project, researchers of Uni Siegen

	6. Get to know the FALEFOS program and the possibilities within ERASMUS +
P3	drawn from life, embrace problems and questions I have
P4	1. Opportunity to see a problem from the perspective of different roles 2. From the experience of experts in social care I received information that I can use to increase quality of foster care 3. Questions were relevant and significant
P5	1. The presence of all actors involved in foster care 2. the possibility to talk about our experience 3. The attention to practical needs 4. The themes that were approached
P6	1. Opportunity to meet and to share experiences from different points of view. 2. Mutual understanding of the needs both of the child and of individual people close to it, taking care of it, and making decisions on its behalf 3. Contact with persons "from the other side", speaking their opinions and observations on the operation of institution that I represent 4. listening to the opinions and expectations of foster families
P7	1. To talk about the unusual forms of maintaining relationships 2. I especially liked the exchange of opinions between the FPs, BPs and the SWs 3. I've been working in this field for a long time and I find these discussions always useful. One can always learn something new, to enrich the ways to approach some situations. There is always something new. I think, that this occasion provided an opportunity for me to better understand the biological families. 4. It was good, I was happy and honoured to be invited, that the other listened to us. 5. it was a free discussion with well chosen participants 6. A lot of emotions came out of the FPs and the BPs 7. I like the presence of the BP families

What would you change?	
P1	1. unfortunately there were no biological parents participating in the focus group 2. I would prefer a stronger communication between foster families and their professional assistance.
P2	1. Would have been nice to have more BP participants. 2. Unfortunately, there were not more foster parents and biological parents participating in this focus group. Maybe also due to the date / time in the afternoon (working time) – maybe better to organize such a meeting in the evening. 3. Get more hands on hints on this issue (especially on conflict management) 4. Organize such meetings more frequently (trans-disciplinary, multi perspective) 5. Invite more stakeholders
P3	-
P4	1. I think that in this phase of the project we got exactly what was meant to get and personally I do not know what could be different 2. The focus group has met my expectations 3. It would be good if there was more time and more participants in order to elaborate main topic in more details
P5	1. More biological families involved
P6	1. I would very much like to change the time and frequency of the meetings 2. Nothing 3. More questions concerning the aims of cooperation of foster families with social care workers
P7	1. It would be interesting to talk these emotions through, even during another meeting

Comments of evaluator:

Regarding the relevance of the focus group contents to participants' professional (in the case of social workers or stakeholders) or personal needs (in the case of biological or foster parents) the average rate is quite good: 4,31, as 17 participants in total were very satisfied with it, while 15 were somewhat satisfied. 5 of them kept neutral about this issue. If we have a look at the country-specific rates we can observe that it's P7 (RO) and P3 (DE) who evaluated this aspect the most positively (4,83 and 4,8, respectively) and P2 (CH) and P6 (PL) the most negatively (3,67 and 3,75). All the other partners rated this item with an average rate above 4 which is very positive.

We can understand participants' opinion better from their comments. The most positive aspect of the focus group (mentioned by 7 participants) revealed to be the relevance of topics discussed: these topics were drawn from real life-situations and real practical needs / questions of each actor involved. Another very positive aspect (mentioned by 11 people) was due to the fact that participants could see and become more aware of the point of view of all the other actors involved in foster care, they could understand the similarities and differences of their needs / problems. For social workers it was also interesting to see how their colleagues working in other organisations solve the same kinds of problems and this exchange of experiences and approaches may increase the quality of foster care. Of course the possibility to see the same issues from different perspectives is due to the presence of all actors involved in foster care and this is also mentioned as a positive aspect by 3 participants.

Last but not least, two of the participants mentioned as a positive aspect that they could learn about the LLP programme (and ERASMUS+) and the FALEFOS project, while others underlined how positive it was to be listened to and how many emotions came out from this situation (especially from parents).

Participants commented also on the other question, namely what were the aspects they would change. Most of them (5 in total) would have preferred to carry out the focus group with more participants, especially with more biological parents (in Austria there were no BP in the focus group), but also with more foster parents and stakeholders, in order to discuss more in-depth these relevant issues. Another important aspect was the time: they would have preferred to have more time for discussion and to organise such interviews not during working time. This might be also the reason for a lower participation in some countries. Also, they would like to have more often these kinds of meetings.

Two of the participants mentioned that more questions on the aims of cooperation, as well as a stronger cooperation would be important among foster parents and social workers, who are professionals in the sector, which would lead to more awareness on how to deal with different issues, especially with conflict management.

P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To listen to different views, understanding the importance of this kind of meetings 2. The possibility to say what we need 3. A very important moment of learning 4. The possibility of discussing with all actors involved in foster care 5. The exchange of opinion was interesting
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opportunity to hear out the arguments of biological family, social workers and to voice my own opinion 2. Opportunity to hear others talk about their problems 3. I have learned that the expectations of foster parents toward competent services are not bound by any regulations, for them the most important thing is the human factor, understanding, respect for their dedication, ordinary human advice, trust, and other issues often passed over in bureaucratic approach 4. Learning about the experience of a family educational care facility
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus Group Interview provided a professional reinforcement 2. You can always learn something new, share experiences with other 3. For me it wasn't very relevant, as the child returned home, and we are thankful to everyone who helped. 4. It wasn't really useful, but it was good to hear others experience and opinions. Especially of those of the biological fathers, although everyone knows, that he was far from the truth. I would change the law: if a parent can't keep up with his obligations, he shouldn't have any rights. 5. It was useful, because I was able to have a deeper view into the emotional background of the speakers

What would you change?	
P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It should give more of these dates, because it is an important theme and it is necessary to cooperate. 2. Give more money in family and social welfare.
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have more biological parents and foster parents participate. But I am aware that this was not easy to organize. 2. Have such exchanges more often. 3. Invite more stakeholders and various participants dealing with this fostering issue, e.g lawyers, judges, other NGO members like from Familienbrücke Zug etc.
P3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Transfer in the policy
P4	
P5	
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nothing 2. Non-professional related families should constitute a significant majority of the researched persons, so that the actual situation could be reflected 3. In my opinion, another person should be the moderator and recorder of the interview 4. No attempt to develop a "theoretical model" of working with foster families
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would change the number of participant into more 2. I would introduce small group discussions, so that everyone can speak his problem out

Comments of evaluator:

Regarding the utility of the focus group in relation to participants professional or personal needs we have basically the same rates as for the 1st question: the total average stands at 4,27, as 33 people were satisfied with this item. Once again, P3 rated the highest (4,8) while P2 and P6 the lowest (3,5 and 3,75) and all other

partners have average rates above 4, the minimum rate that has to be reached in order to say that we are on track.

Once again, participants (10 in total) appreciated mostly the fact that they could have an insight in the perspective and the emotional background of all the actors involved in foster care and share their opinions / experience. This also raised their awareness regarding the problems of the parties involved, for example the need of foster parents to have psychological support and advice from competent services, instead of too much bureaucracy, as well as regarding the importance to have regular meetings with all of them and helped them to overcome communication problems that often occur in these relationships, as commented by 2 participants. Some other comments reveal how useful was the focus group, because participants could express their needs and opinions and also because it was an important moment of learning.

In Switzerland, the focus group represented a possibility towards the creation of a self-helping group in the territory, especially for biological and foster parents and involving also parents with migration and/or vulnerable background. We think that this is a very good point, as it turned out from the WP2 research that in many partner countries biological parents are coming from very disadvantaged situations and often they have a migration background. Therefore, giving them the possibility to meet and create relationships is extremely useful.

Last but not least, one of the participants was very satisfied with the focus group as it will help the development of the FALEFOS workshops.

Regarding aspects to be improved, once again, we can find similar comments as for the 1st question. Participants would prefer to have more often these kinds of meetings and also to involve more participants (especially biological and foster parents, but also different kinds of stakeholders, such as lawyers, judges, representatives of NGOs dealing with foster care issues). One of them mentioned that it would be necessary to invest more money in the family and social welfare sector, which is of course a very important aspect, but unfortunately the FALEFOS project is not able to have such an influence on policies. However, what we can (and must) do is to raise more awareness and disseminate our project to the widest possible range of stakeholders.

Other comments state that it would have been useful to have smaller groups for the discussions, so everyone has more time to express freely his/her point of view; that the majority of researched persons should have been non-professional related families, so that the real situation could be reflected; that there was no attempt to develop a “theoretical model” of working with foster families, while others were simply not satisfied with the moderator or didn’t find useful the meeting because their child has already returned back home, therefore foster care is not the situation anymore. In one case the participant (probably foster parent) stated that it was interesting to hear the biological father, although he doesn’t believe of what this father said and when a biological parent is not able to carry out his/her duties he/she shouldn’t have any rights over the child.

Regarding these comments we can say that, first of all, it was not the aim of the focus group to develop a model on how to work with foster families, but just to collect opinions and discover needs of all actors involved in foster care, while regarding the profile of participants all partners invited those families and social workers to whom they have access and to whom they will offer the workshops. Therefore, all in all we received many useful and constructive comments on behalf of the focus group participants, however there was one very severe critique (the last one mentioned in the paragraph above) that clearly shows the

P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relaxed and authentic atmosphere 2. There was time for everyone to listen to the conversation;
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A precisely defined duration 2. Sufficient
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The time was good used in order to achieve the objectives of the discussion 2. Although we had a lot of time (3-4 Hours), the time was too short 3. It was longer than expected. 4. There were some interesting topics, the time passed away quickly 5. There was no real end conclusion. I still have some open questions

What would you change?	
P1	
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would have been better for me to find another time – e.g. in the morning or early evening ... maybe next time? (doodle??)
P3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. such groups more often
P4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It would be good if it could last longer
P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More than one meeting would have been needed 2. I wish I could participate in more meetings like this
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nothing 2. It should depend on the group's needs
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The discussion could be longer with breaks perhaps

Comments of evaluator:

The duration of the focus group was evaluated slightly better than the first two questions: the total average stands at 4,38 which is a very good one. Indeed, 21 people in total rated to be extremely satisfied with it, 12 of them were quite satisfied, 4 of them kept neutral and 1 participant was somewhat dissatisfied with it. P1 was the most satisfied partner (rated 4,83), while P2 and P4 were just somewhat satisfied (both of them rated 4, which is just the minimum rate necessary for a good quality).

Basically all participants (9, to be exact) highlighted that the duration of the focus group was sufficient, therefore everyone had enough time to listen to the others and to contribute to the discussion. They also mentioned that the time frame was clearly defined at the beginning and respected during the focus group. Some of them mentioned that the time frame could have been longer as the topics discussed were relevant, although most of these participants are working during the day and it would have been difficult to organize a longer meeting. There was just one of the participants who found too long the focus group. Finally, one of them highlighted how the atmosphere was relaxed and authentic.

Some of the participants suggested to have more often these kinds of meetings and another one mentioned that the timing was not perfect (we suppose because he/she works during the day) and suggested to use doodle to agree on the date and time of an eventual next meeting. More participants would have preferred a longer time-frame (maybe with breaks) and one of them would regulate the time

	participants
P3	1. a lot of different topics were discus, everybody could say his opinion
P4	1. Well selected participants, covered on several levels 2. Focus group facilitator very well structured time and gave everyone enough time and space 3. Experience of the other participants concerning a work of foster parents.
P5	1. We could hear the voice of everyone 2. Different roles were involved
P6	1. Diversity of the group 2. Corresponding to the assumptions
P7	1. The presence of the biological parents enhanced the openness of these families to co-operate. 2. It was good, it followed a goal, that could be reached partially. 3. Everyone had the opportunity to speak. We were also listened, we could also tell how it was. [their case]

What would you change?	
P1	
P2	1. More biological parents would have been useful. It was difficult for me to express myself sometimes. 2. Would have been fine if Miriam could have found more biological parents and foster families to also participate in this meeting. 3. Involve more biological parents and other stakeholders – maybe also from Luzern and the fostering home in Ägeri / ZG?
P3	
P4	
P5	1. More families (both foster and biological) should have been involved 2. I wish more biological families were involved 3. It would have been good if there were more people
P6	1. Too few foster families fulfilling various functions, family shelters, specialist functions 2. No representatives of related foster families present, no biological parents present, Inappropriate proportions 3. Nothing 4. Too large number of people from social care; No biological parents
P7	1. It would be nice to bring in more persons, as well as children to hear opinions

Comments of evaluator:

The structure of the focus group received a good average rate of 4,27 as in 2 of the partner countries (P1 and P3) it was rated 5 by all participants, which means they were extremely satisfied with it. The less satisfied were the participants of P6, their average rate stands at 3 and we can have a better understanding on this if we have a look at the comments.

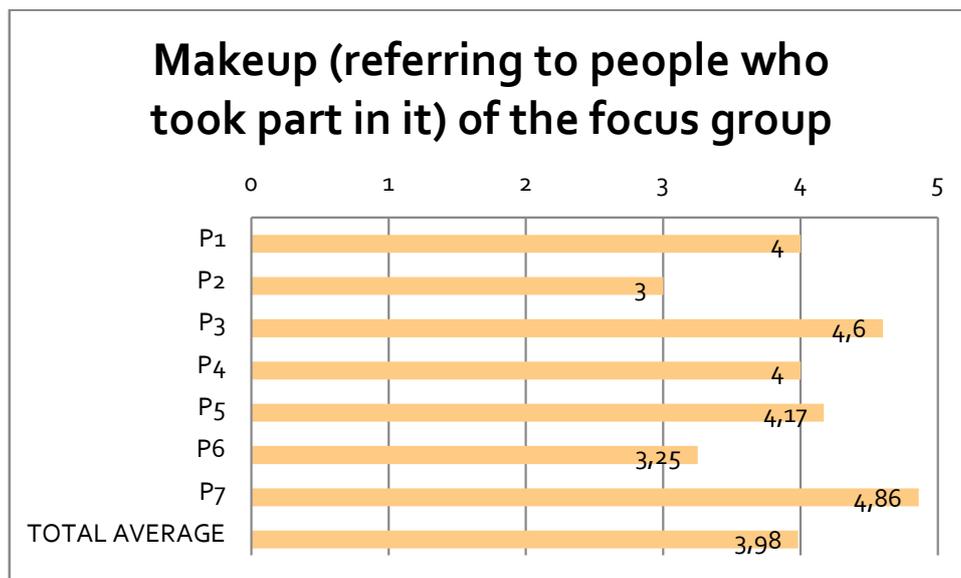
According to participants' comments the structure of the focus group was just perfect, as all of them had time to express their opinion / problems and the whole interview was well structured and moderated, at

least this is what 7 of them commented. 6 of them highlighted again their appreciation concerning the constitution of the group: participants were well selected therefore everyone could have an insight of the other actors' perspective, especially regarding biological parents who, with their presence, expressed their willingness to cooperate. This combined with the different topics discussed increased participants' satisfaction. One of the participants was satisfied with the fact that P2 sent the agenda of the focus group and information on the FALEFOS project prior to the meeting, another one mentioned as a very positive aspect that the atmosphere was very friendly and informal, while another person stated that the focus group corresponded to the expectations.

The only aspect that all participants would have liked is to involve more biological and (especially related) foster parents, also in order to have the right proportion of the different target groups represented. One of the participants mentioned also to involve more stakeholders from other organizations and cities as well, while another one suggested to involve also the foster children in such focus groups.

Therefore the only thing participants would have liked to change in the structure of the focus group is the number of people involved, especially concerning biological and foster parents.

3.5 Makeup (referring to people who took part in it) of the focus group



Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL AVERAGE
Makeup (referring to people who took part in it) of the focus group	4	3	4,6	4	4,2	3,3	4,9	3,98

	Very dissatisfied							Somewhat dissatisfied							Neutral							Somewhat satisfied							Very satisfied														
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT											
Makeup (referring to people who took part in it) of the focus group									2					1		3		2		2				1		5	6	2	2		5	2	1	18				3	2	1		6	12

What did you like the best?	
P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To introduce the project it was important for all participants to get the same information. 2. All participants were interested in the topics, there was a very open minded discussion atmosphere.
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nice, that Miriam could find a biological mother who was willing to participate – I guess that was not easy task! 2. Good that there was one participant from every party: stakeholder, biological mother and foster father. Gave me an insight on different viewpoints.
P3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good mixture
P4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I think that the representatives of the professionals know very well issues that were discussed 2. Representatives of different areas in the field of child care 3. Participants were relevant for the discussed issues.
P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People were interested and wanted to hear each other 2. Variety of people 3. All of the three categories involvced participated
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presence of biological family 2. In my opinion, the group included persons, who by definition are a part of the system
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone had the opportunity to explain his/her views or problems 2. Starting from the FP, BP, SW, the management was also present. I found this very good, that they are also implicated. 3. I liked, that each group, party had a representative. 4. I found it good, that everyone was represented. 5. Each professionals attendance was important

What would you change?	
P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For a successful discussion you should divide the group in parts to be more efficient 2. some birth-parents would have made the group even more interesting, although I know that it is difficult to reach them for such projects;
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More biological parents and foster parents would have been useful 2. Would have been useful to have more foster families and biological parents participating. More stakeholders would also be appreciated! 3. More participants from BSs and FFs 4. More participants from different areas (lawyers, more BPs and FFs)
P3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. more people from other German states, more people
P4	Lack of the representatives of beneficiaries
P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More biological families involved 2. More biological families involved 3. More foster families involved
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Too many social workers, there should be more biological families, foster families. 2. Inappropriate proportions 3. Perhaps the participation of biological parents of children remaining in foster care 4. Too large number of people from social care; No biological parents
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I missed the social professionals from the biological families residence, the professionals from the Mayor's Office who could provide information related to the recourses a BP could use 2. More psychologists

Comments of evaluator:

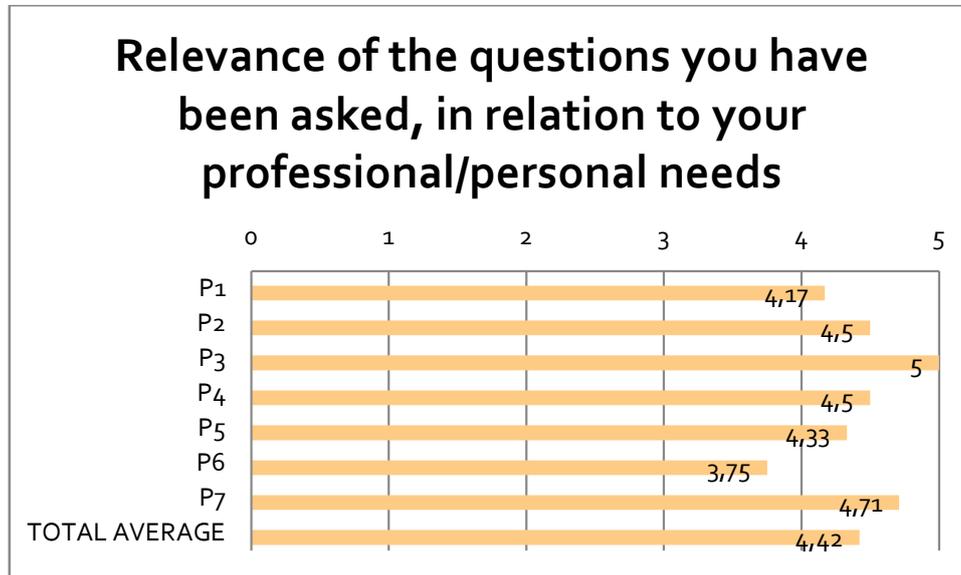
The makeup of the focus group, i.e. the composition of participants, received the lowest rate in the whole evaluation questionnaire: the total average stands at 3,98. In the previous questions we could already see that this was the most delicate part of the focus groups. The partner who appreciated this item the most was P7 (4,86), while P2's participants rated 3 to this aspect which means they were not completely satisfied regarding this issue.

As a positive aspects the majority (12) of participants mentioned again the fact that all parties involved in foster care took part in the focus group interview. This allowed them to understand also the others' point of view in relation to the same issues. Another important aspects was highlighted by 3 participants: that all parties represented were really interested in the topics and wanted to listen to each other, which have led to a very open-minded atmosphere. One of the participants appreciated very much the fact that representatives of the social sector were very professional.

Although these positive comments participants revealed the reason why they rated lower scores and here we return to the same issue: basically all of them (16) would have preferred more people involved in the focus group, especially biological parents (this target group was the most difficult to involve), but also foster families and stakeholders. In Germany, one of the participants mentioned that it would have been useful to involve people also from other German states, in Austria a participant suggested to divide the group in smaller groups in order to discuss better (like this there is more time to exchange experience and opinions and also the atmosphere is more intimate), in Poland participants found too high the proportion of social workers compared to other participants, while in Romania a participant would have appreciated to have in the group also some professionals from the biological families residence and from the Mayor's Office in order to learn about resources offered to BP.

The fact that this was participants' only concern regarding the focus groups is extremely positive, because it means that they appreciated very much the topics and discussion and would have liked to deepen them even more.

3.6 Relevance of the questions you have been asked, in relation to your professional/personal needs



Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL AVERAGE
Relevance of the questions you have been asked, in relation to your professional/personal needs	4,2	4,5	5	4,5	4,3	3,8	4,7	4,42

	Very dissatisfied							Somewhat dissatisfied							Neutral							Somewhat satisfied							Very satisfied										
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT							
Relevance of the questions you have been asked, in relation to your professional/personal needs																1								1	1	3	3	3	2	4	3	15	2	3	5	2	2	6	20

What did you like the best?	
P1	1. That was a high relationship to my profession as well as being a foster father.
P2	1. Issue of communication 2. Miriam was well prepared. Good monitoring of the discussion. 3. All points that we were discussing were relevant to me – thanks! 4. Good preparation of the moderator. I could feel that Miriam had professional background and information on this topic. 5. Any topics we were discussing were interesting for my professional needs. 6. Issue of EU programs – the opportunities in this field – was new to me!
P3	1. feel addressed, drawn from life
P4	It is always useful to discuss problems that we are facing in everyday work with the others that are involved in this field
P5	Each participant was given enough time

P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The questions were broad and to the point 2. The questions were helpful to me in my work, where approach to the needs of foster parents is concerned
P7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have now a better overview on the problems biological parents are facing 2. The opinions shared, all were important, and there were good advices too 3. All questions suited the discussion. I appreciate that the moderator had questions to everyone 4. The questions targeted emotional releases, which are very important to understand the attitudes and approaches of the parties.

What would you change?	
P1	
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More biological parents would have been great! Would strengthened my point of view in this group. 2. Provide more information about this EU Program (milestones, workpackages, outcomes and some idea of budget regarding FALEFOS – especially on the planed workshops)
P3	
P4	
P5	
P6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nothing 2. My needs are different than the professional families' ones - I have at heart not only the welfare of small children, but also of their parents, and in particular of our son. 3. Nothing 4. More questions regarding expectations of all parties – participants' expectations towards one another and regarding the cooperation
P7	

Comments of evaluator:

The relevance of questions that participants have been asked received the highest rate in the whole evaluation questionnaire: 4,42, as 35 participants were satisfied with it and just 3 of them kept neutral. P3's participants were the most satisfied with this item, as their average rate stands at 5 (all participants were extremely satisfied), while P6 revealed to be the less satisfied with an average rate of 3,75 (but this is very close to the threshold of 4, therefore is still a good one).

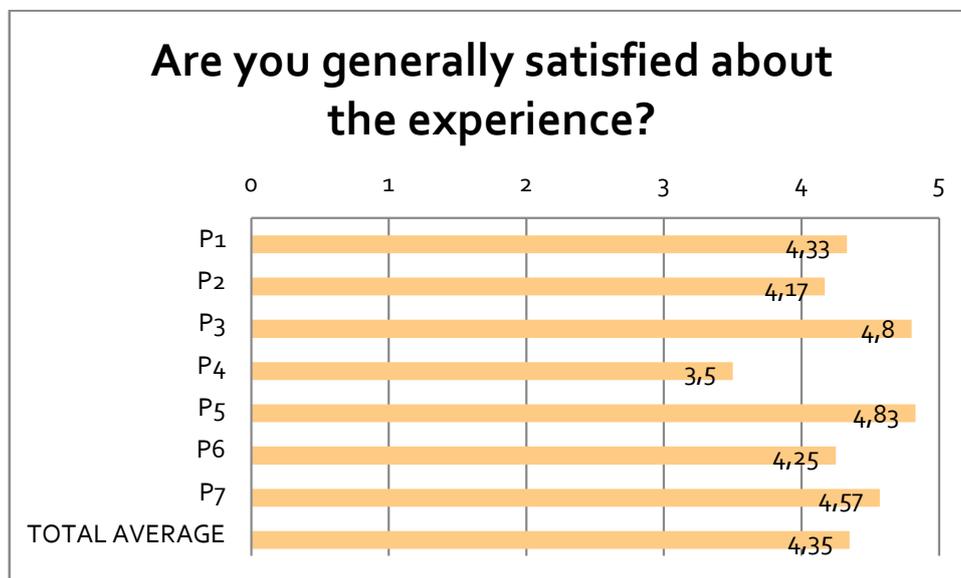
10 participants mentioned that the topics discussed were really relevant and related to their profession / personal life and it was particularly interesting to discuss of their everyday problems with the other actors involved in foster care, this allowed them to see the same issues from different perspectives. Three of them mentioned also that they were very satisfied with the moderation during the focus group and the professionalism of the moderator, who dedicated enough time to listen to everyone. Moreover, one of the participants highlighted as a positive aspect that one of the topics during the discussion was the issue of communication between parties, another one learnt about the opportunities offered by EU programmes, while another one underlined the importance of topics such as emotional release which is very important

to understand the attitudes and approaches of the parties. Last but not least, a participant appreciated the fact that everyone had enough time to express his/her opinion and to share his/her experience.

There were also some aspects that participants would have changed, namely the involvement of more biological parents (in order to have a more detailed overview on their point of view) and to have more information regarding the FALEFOS project itself, but one of them mentioned also that it would have been interesting to speak also about the needs of non-professional (related) foster parents as they don't have to take care only of the foster child but also of his/her parents, while another one suggested to have more questions regarding the expectations of all parties involved in foster care (expectations on cooperation and in general what do they expect from the other actors).

We consider these very useful issues that could be addressed in the workshops.

3.7 Are you generally satisfied about the experience?



Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL AVERAGE
Are you generally satisfied about the experience?	4,3	4,2	4,8	3,5	4,8	4,3	4,6	4,35

	Very dissatisfied							Somewhat dissatisfied							Neutral							Somewhat satisfied							Very satisfied										
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOT							
Are you generally satisfied about the experience?																																							

What did you like the best?	
P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To hear the different meanings of one and the same thing and trying to solve problems the focus group was very well organized;
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, it was a good starting point for me. Organize a self helping group in Zug Miriam was well prepared – good monitoring. Anyone could point out his / her ideas, visions.

	<p>4. Good to exchange different perspectives and needs, best practices (e.g. guidebook “Lechturm” and communication techniques from Marshall Rosenberg)</p> <p>5. I am curious to know more about the 3 planned workshop now and am looking forward to participate. I also appreciate the initiative to organize self-helping groups – especially for the biological parents.</p>
P3	1. knowledge about different meanings and experiences
P4	<p>1. Discussed issues are very important for the development of foster care, but realization of the majority of the conclusions depends on preconditions on which we cannot influence from this level, like organization, means, unrealistic standards in work of social workers</p> <p>2. Participation in this focus group has met my expectations. I think that focus groups are good opportunity for experience exchange among representatives of different groups and this leads to increasing quality of care for children without adequate parental care.</p> <p>3. Topic of this focus group is very relevant and I like that we have discusses about the needs of professionals that very often neglected</p>
P5	<p>1. We could speak freely</p> <p>2. We could speak freely</p>
P6	<p>1. Opportunity to take part in such a program</p> <p>2. I feel the need to exchange my experiences</p> <p>3. The form of interview allowed for impartial, free statements, revealing the emotions</p> <p>4. Interesting experience, an opportunity to meet professional foster families</p>
P7	<p>1. I liked the onbounded, free atmosphere</p> <p>2. It was a good meeting.</p> <p>3. It was good. It is the first time we participated on something like this. But we were welcomed, and we are thankful to the Lord and you [:)]</p> <p>4. it wasn't perfect, but it was good.</p> <p>5. I like, that there more discussion about this topic</p>

What would you change?	
P1	1. It would have been good if there would have participated some biological parents.
P2	<p>1. Group could have been more diverse.</p> <p>2. More biological parents and stakeholders from different organizations / institutes dealing with fostering.</p>
P3	
P4	
P5	
P6	<p>1. This kind of research should be more common, used more often.</p> <p>2. In my opinion, the moderator to a greater extent should control the way the conversations were going</p>
P7	<p>1. There should be organized more events, discussions like this</p> <p>2. I would allocate more time to discuss emotions</p>

Comments of evaluator:

The last question in this section was about participants' general satisfaction concerning the focus group interview. The average rate given stands at 4,35, which is a good one (above 4), as all the total averages except of 1 are above 4. The highest rate was given by the participants of P5 (4,83), while the lowest by P4 (3,5). However, from their comments we can't understand the reason for lower rates.

Participants highlighted different aspects as most positive ones. The majority of them (4) appreciated the fact that they could hear the opinion, understand the point of view and exchange experience and best practices with all the other actors involved in foster care and they believe that with these focus group interviews it's possible to improve the quality of foster care. One of them also mentioned that during the focus group also the professionals' needs were addressed which is very positive, as usually it's neglected, while another one became more aware of her/his need to exchange experience with the others.

Some other participants (2 to be exact) appreciated very much the organisational aspects and the moderation during the focus groups, that allowed to each participant to express his/her perspective. Others were very satisfied with the possibility, offered by the focus group, to organize self-helping groups in the area, because this will help especially biological parents (but not only) to improve the care of their children and to collaborate better with the other parties involved. Moreover, 4 participants felt that they could speak very freely during the focus group and express their emotions, which is again extremely positive. Some of them just mentioned that they were happy to participate in such an experience and they would have preferred to have more time for these discussions.

One participant expressed his/her interest to participate in the following FALEFOS workshops, while another one expressed his/her satisfaction with the focus group, however was more sceptical regarding the possibility to change the system of foster care in terms of organization, means and the unrealistic standards in the work of social workers.

Of course, it's impossible to change laws and have an influence on funds with the FALEFOS project, however we think that this project represents a very good occasion to raise more awareness on these topics also among wider stakeholders and also to create more cooperation between biological parents, foster parents and social workers. Therefore it's important to keep on involving these people also in the following project phases.

Regarding aspects to be improved we can find again the same comments as for the previous questions: participants would have preferred more people involved (especially biological parents) but also stakeholders, in order to have represented a various scale of institutions/organisations dealing with foster care, while others would prefer to have these focus groups more often and to dedicate more time to discuss on emotions. Just one of the participants was not completely satisfied with the moderation, stating that a better control on the discussions would have been necessary.

4 Open questions

4.1 After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the cooperation between the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker) and about your tasks in the framework of the cooperation?

3. After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the cooperation between the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker) and about your tasks in the framework of the cooperation?

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Yes	5	6	5	4	6	2	6	34
No	1					3	1	5

P1	1. I think I'm working in this field for more than six years and writing my thesis on a topic which refers to this, therefore I didn't hear great news there. Although, it was very interesting what the other participants told there and how they focused on this topic.
P2	<p>1. We all need to work on our communication skills – foster empathy for each other’s situation. I also need to learn to talk about my personal point of views. I will also study the guidebook “Leuchtturm” which Miriam lent to me.</p> <p>2. I liked the idea of working with this portfolio – got some good ideas. Also the “Leuchtturm” guidebook was inspiring to me. I believe communication is a big issue to work on in the future – for all parties!</p> <p>3. I – once again – experienced that the foster situation is very complex for any party involved and that it needs good communication to guarantee the welfare of the fostering child. It is very important that each one has to work on his / her communication skills in this context. It needs training – and hands-on guidance (e.g. role plays, best practice examples etc.)</p> <p>4. We should help to organize more self helping groups for fostering parents / family members and biological parents. I learnt that there is a great need in this field! I also want to be updated on the future outcomes of FALEFOS program and the service ARIADNE is providing in this. I surely will inform my colleagues about these workshops of FALEFOS.</p>
P3	<p>1. Got new ideas how to look at the biological parents</p> <p>2. Feel more aware, but for a lot of changes the foster family system must change</p>

<p>P4</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every communication and experience exchange with the persons involved in this topic, for me is always useful and motivating. This focus group has encouraged me to question my way of dealing with problems and to better understand other participants' problems. 2. I become more aware that without good cooperation there is a lack of quality care for children without parents. 3. I become more aware of the need for the continues education and support for the foster parents as well as unrealistic expectations of scientific institutions, CSO and alike
<p>P5</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We need to repeat the experience in order to analyse in details cooperation and needs of the actors 2. I was never doubtful about cooperation 3. I now know the perspective of each actor 4. I am more aware of every actor's experience on each aspect
<p>P6</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I AM AN OPEN PERSON, INVOLVED IN VARIOUS FORMS OF ACTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENTHOOD, I REPRESENT THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOUNDATION IN THE COALITION FOR FOSTER PARENTHOOD, WHICH OPERATES IN POLAND AND INTERNATIONALLY, I RUN A SUPPORT GROUP FOR FOSTER PARENTS, DURING MY PEDAGOGICAL DUTY HOURS AT THE FOUNDATION I OFTEN MEET WITH BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES, WHOSE CHILDREN ARE PLACED IN FOSTER CARE. I AM UP TO DATE WITH THE ISSUES RELATED TO FOSTER FAMILIES 2. The opportunity to listen to social workers, their problems and limitations was important for me. My impression is that the law introduced in our country is still in diapers. 3. Neither one way nor another. The topics brought up by some of the foster parents during our meeting are familiar to me from my observations of clients, nevertheless, I have never heard such expectations from them directly. 4. Biological parents did not participate in the meeting. During the meeting the issue of cooperation between the three parties was not clearly emphasized, only various visions of that cooperation in the foster family and the related family were specified. I have considerable knowledge about that issue and the meeting did not provide any important information.
<p>P7</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important to harmonize all efforts and activities in order achieve objectives. You have to approach the problem creatively, to raise the efficiency and success rate of activities 2. If the collaboration between the three parties is good, the child's reintegration can be easier. The FP has a

crucial role in this process.

3. As I mentioned before, I appreciate the presence of the biological families. It was useful to present their point of view.

4. We can understand how complex this issue is. What kind of difficulties the FP's have. But if a parent wants his child, thank he should do everything in his power. The SW helped us a lot, and we did everything she asked. Now the child is back home.

5. I was very clear about the complications of this issue, I did not learned anything new. I have no prejudices towards the BP.

Comments of evaluator:

The big majority of participants (34 against 5) declared that thanks to the focus group they are more aware about the importance of a good cooperation between the three parties involved in foster care and about their tasks in the framework of this cooperation. Just some participants commented on why they rated “no” to this questions, and we can understand that the main reason was that cooperation between all the three parties was not clearly emphasized during the focus group or simply because they didn't learn anything new about the issue.

Participants of P2 mentioned especially communication skills and empathy as the most important issues in foster care and highlighted the importance to work on this in order to improve foster care and, especially, the foster child's wellbeing.

Social workers commented that although they work in the field since a long time, therefore they were already aware of the issues raised and maybe they didn't learn anything new, it was very interesting to get an insight in all actors' perspectives. The focus group helped them to understand better the other parties' point of view and to question their own approach / way to deal with biological and foster parents. This is true also for the other actors of foster care: they could all have an overview on the other's perspective and experience, the complexity of the situation, the difficulties each actors face as well as the legal limitations and duties of social workers. This helped them to understand the importance of a good cooperation with each other in order to improve the foster child's life and his/her reintegration in the biological family.

Moreover, social workers gained also more awareness regarding the expectations of foster parents, as well as the fact that they need a continuous education and support, but also about the fact that scientific institutions have too high expectations.

Many participants gained understanding about the needs of the different parties involved and are motivated (and convinced of the importance) to repeat the focus group experience – in Switzerland for example they decided to organize self-helping groups with the participation of biological and foster parents.

Finally, one of the participants mentioned that although she/he feels more aware, in order to achieve long-lasting benefits in foster care it would be necessary to change the foster care system. Of course with our FALEFOS project it's impossible to have an influence on these policies, however, as we mentioned before,

it's extremely important to raise more awareness on these issues among a wide range of stakeholders and to give the possibility to the three actors to meet with each other and exchange experiences.

4.2 After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the needs of the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker)?

4. After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the needs of the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker)?								
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Yes	5	4	4	4	6	2	6	31
No	1		1			2		4
Neutral		2					1	3

P1	<p>1. It is always interesting what are the needs of foster families;</p> <p>1. In the discussion I learnt about the struggle the 3 social workers are facing in their daily work (too many files to take care of, much paper work and difficult, international cases to solve etc.). I was not really aware of that.</p> <p>2. Once again: Communication skills are important for anybody involved in fostering care to foster the welfare of the child and can help to improve his / her conflict management.</p> <p>3. We need to build up more empathy – anyone ... but this is very demanding. I wonder if FALEFOS can meet this challenge – I believe it is too striving.</p> <p>4. We should take more care to build up better relationships – trust and confidence ... but this needs more time!!</p> <p>5. the group was not really diverse enough to elaborate on this.</p> <p>6. We clarified different objectives of everyone, e.g. full agenda of the social workers in this field.</p>
P2	<p>1. The participants in the focus group were cooperative, keep an open mind and agree with the situation. Now aware about the needs of the others.</p>
P3	<p>1. I was aware of this, but despite that, this is not encouraged enough in practice.</p>
P4	<p>2. Yes, I've heard the experience of the other participants that I could use in future</p>
P5	<p>1. Make biological families more at ease</p> <p>2. I always felt involved</p> <p>3. Especially the trust issue of biological parents</p>

<p>P6</p>	<p>1. FOR A LONG TIME NOW I HAVE BEEN OF THE OPINION THAT THOSE THREE GROUPS, EVEN EXTENDED BY SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES, SPECIALISTS, THERAPISTS, SHOULD ACT TOGETHER ON BEHALF OF A CHILD PLACED IN FOSTER CARE, WHO, AS IT OFTEN TURNS OUT, HAS BEEN THROUGH TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES.</p> <p>2. I have realized this again after our meeting. But this realization has frustrated me further, because I do not have the time to adequately reconcile it all. The time I have allows me to only perfunctorily approach the foster parents, it does not let me focus on the meaning of our work.</p> <p>3. Biological parents did not participate in the meeting. During the meeting the issue of cooperation between the three parties was not clearly emphasized, only various visions of that cooperation in the foster family and the related family were specified. I have considerable knowledge about that issue and the meeting did not provide any important information.</p>
<p>P7</p>	<p>1. I find it important to raise the foster parents' motivation and the level of satisfaction in order to avoid burn-out.</p> <p>2. The BP has to give up his child because of certain problems. For an FP it is important to inform the child about these causalities, and conditions in order the child can understand his position. We support the relation with the BP especially because of this, so that the child can better understand.</p> <p>3. I don't know, each person is different. There must be tolerance and love. Everyone should be listened.</p> <p>4. I've been able to understand BPs, however it was good for me too to hear about it. I think I learned that I have to be more tolerant. I lost my temper during the discussion with the biological father.</p>

Comments of evaluator:

The situation is slightly different regarding participants' awareness concerning the needs of the other parties involved in foster care: 31 out of 38 feels more aware, but 4 of them don't and 3 of them kept neutral about this issue.

From the comments we can understand that more participants see as a main need the communication skills, conflict solving skills, empathy and tolerance, for all the parties involved in foster care. However, in order to meet these needs more time is needed and maybe the lifetime of the FALEFOS project won't be enough as it needs continuous practice.

Another important need that turned out was the need to have more trust and confidence, especially in biological parents and also to let them feel more at ease and “listened to” in the foster care process. This is a common problem in all partner countries, therefore it’s important to address this issue also during the FALEFOS workshops. Of course this also requires more time but it’s important to be aware of this problem and work on that.

One of the participants mentioned that she/he was not aware of the efforts and work that social workers are facing (especially when dealing with international cases and bureaucratic issues), while another participant simply commented that he/she is aware of the different actors’ needs but unfortunately these are not really considered in the practice. Some other comments state that although participants are aware of the other actors’ needs, especially after the focus group, they don’t have enough time to dedicate to their clients, again others mentioned that the real need would be a strong cooperation between all the actors, including therapists, school representatives, etc., while another person mentioned the importance of motivating foster parents in order to avoid burn-out. Another important observation states that it’s extremely important to explain the biological families’ situation to the foster children, in order to let them understand and accept their situation. Others simply commented that they didn’t learn anything new regarding these issues.

All in all, these comments are extremely useful for the development of the FALEFOS workshops and we must take these into consideration.

4.3 After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about what would you expect from a workshop on the subject?

5. After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about what would you expect from a workshop on the subject?								
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Yes	3	5	5	3	6	2	5	29
No	3			1		2	3	9
Neutral		1						1

P1
P2

1. I must admit that I don't exactly remember the results of the focus group;
 2. I got a detailed description of the Falefos project before the focus group took place, my expectations on a workshop didn't change since this information;
1. I am curious and for sure want to participate 😊
 2. ... more or less ...
 3. It would be great to focus on better communication skills – as earlier mentioned.

	<p>4. I am interested in the issue on conflict management – just hope that it won't be too theoretical - we need hands-on techniques.</p> <p>5. I am not so sure if the workshops of FALEFOS will be able to satisfy the different needs. To me this seems very ambitious.</p> <p>6. There are some doubts however because I am not sure if it is feasible in the time frame that Miriam mentioned.</p>
P3	<p>1. change of perspective, new results of research, exercises, tips, saying my opinion and my experience</p>
P4	<p>1. I became familiar with goals of this project and I consider 3 parts to be very important: educative workshops, promotional activities and practical guidebook.</p>
P5	<p>1. Foster care and relationship between various actors, not only social workers, foster and biological families</p> <p>2. The relationship between foster and biological family and how to make it better</p> <p>3. What foster care is, the possibility of being creative within the framework of foster care, the relationship between actors.</p> <p>4. The experience of biological families in approaching foster care</p>
P6	<p>1. I AM ALWAYS EAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL WORKSHOPS CONCERNED WITH THE CHILD AND ITS FAMILY. FOR A LONG TIME I HAVE BEEN AWARE THAT ANY AND ALL MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS CONCERNED WITH CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ENRICH THEIR PARTICIPANTS AND HELP THEM DEVELOP.</p> <p>2. I am aware that I need legal and psychological information, but only coming from experienced, wise people. I certainly need relaxation exercises. Believe me, I have never before lived in such stress, been so tensed and afraid. I need quality information on developing relationships with the children's mother and their grandparents. Me and my husband use any help we can get, because in this seemingly never-ending, crisis situation we are acting blindly. We cooperate with various institutions, foundations, psychologists, we read, and we can see a light at the end of the tunnel concerning our situation, but only</p>

	<p>because of our frantic activity - and the workshops perhaps will give an opportunity to satisfy at least a part of our expectations (family needs) in one place.</p> <p>3. The subjects of the workshops and their quality (low, probably resulting from a lower price), to which my employer sends me, are very different from my expectations.</p> <p>4. The meeting revealed differences between related families and professional foster families. I think that it would be beneficial to develop methods of work that differ depending on the relationship or no relationship during the workshops. The goal of our work should be discussed in much detail – what is “help and support” for a foster family, which I am supposed to provide as a coordinator, how foster families understand that and what they expect from us.</p>
P7	<p>1. The direct contact strengthens the ability to cooperate and it strengthens the foster parent's professional awareness. As social worker, I find it important that the FPs can approach me with confidence at all time they face difficult or an unexpected situation.</p> <p>2. One can't put this issue into constrains. At this meeting we discussed a lot, everyone had the opportunity to share its experiences. We shared our experiences. For me it was satisfying</p> <p>3. A lot of important topics were discussed during this meeting, like the first meetings with the BP's. The different behavior problems of the children related to the events of meeting their BPs should be targeted too.</p> <p>4. I think one has to deal with the people, you can't deny a parent visitation, but the parents has to put an effort too.</p> <p>5. It depends from situation to situation</p>

Comments of evaluator:

29 out of 39 participants stated to be more aware about their expectations regarding a workshop on foster care, 9 of them is not aware and 1 of them kept neutral about this issue.

Participants are very confident and positive regarding the workshops and gave many useful tips regarding the possible topics addressed by these workshops. More of them suggested to focus on the topic of relationship and cooperation between the three different actors of foster care (especially biological and foster parents) and on how to improve it, while others suggested to include sections on what foster care is (introduction), communication skills, conflict management, different methods of work for each target group, legal and psychological information, what does “help and support” mean for each actor in foster

care and what do they expect from the others, relaxation exercises, how to face behavior problems of foster children, practices on how to change one’s perspective and how to be creative in the framework of foster care, practical exercises, tips, but there should also be space to exchange experience and opinions, with a particular focus on biological parents. Promotional activities and a practical guidebook are also fundamental parts of a successful and educative workshop.

All in all, according to participants’ opinion, the workshops shouldn’t be too theoretical but they should include more practical methodologies. Two of the participants mentioned also that they have some doubts regarding the feasibility of all these issues in the time frame set by the FALEFOS project, while one person stated that the workshop’s topics and quality is not in line with his/her expectations, however we think there is a misunderstanding, as the partnership is starting just now to develop the FALEFOS workshops.

As the development of workshops has to begin just in the following project period we suggest to select the most relevant issues that we must address, in order to have a wider coverage of needs in the time frame available. All in all we have to mention that the focus group was really important in order to understand the real needs of the parties involved which will allow the partnership to develop relevant contents for the workshops.

4.4 Please express below any further suggestion or comment you might have about the FALEFOS Focus Group:

P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The FG was a good setting to talk about certain topics and to realise that there are different point of views but also understanding for each other. I had the feeling to get heard and there was a common interest of all participants among the topic. It would be good to forward such kind of discussions in order to reach the aim of a better cooperation between foster parents, biological parents and social workers. 2. The project should be developed further on with exact tasks and results. 3. Representative of the local authority had different interest, so maybe only mix up, foster parents, social workers and if possible biological parents.
P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I want to be updated on the next outcomes of the workpackages of FALEFOS. 2. Please keep me informed about the implementation of the workshops in canton Zug. 3. Thanks for your work. 4. very useful project! I will inform other FFs in my network about the workshops! 5. I will forward this information to my colleagues
P3	
P4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In some parts of focus group discussion it seems that some participants had took too much space. For some issues there was a lack of critical thinking and a will for reconsideration. It seemed that we are trying to justify our current way of working and to put the responsibility for the lack of improvement on others.
P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To repeat the experience 2. To involve more biological families in order to hear their needs and expectations 3. It would be good to make some more meetings

	4. More possibilities to share experience with all actors involved with more focus groups
P6	<p>1. I THINK THAT PARTICIPATION IN THIS KIND OF GROUPS TO SOME DEGREE SHOULD BE OBLIGATORY FOR THE THREE BASIC GROUPS: BIOLOGICAL PARENTS, WHO WANT THEIR CHILD TO RETURN HOME OR WANT TO ACT FOR ITS GOOD, SOCIAL WORKERS, AND US, FOSTER PARENTS, WHO, OFTEN HAVING THE CHILD'S WELFARE IN MIND, DO NOT THINK ABOUT ITS PARENTS AND OTHER CLOSE RELATIVES.</p> <p>2. I will take the liberty and point out that there were no people in the group who are supposed to be the pillar of this law - related foster families and biological parents. I could be wrong, but related families constitute over 90 % of foster families. When a child does not receive proper care from its biological parents, it should remain with its closest family (most often these are grandparents, sometimes siblings). Professional families, family children's shelters more often than not already have some experience and some kind of knowledge. But no matter how strongly they are involved with the children, this is not their personal emotional pain, they do not experience personal failures, they do not feel responsible for the action of biological parents, they do not go through personal humiliation. And they do not have to deal with a whole range of negative emotions. I notice important differences between a related and a non-related family. In my opinion, if this study is to do any good for this case, every effort should be made to activate related families and biological parents. To activate the related foster parents, their personal situation needs to be investigated (maybe they have no one they could leave the child with, perhaps they feel ashamed, part of them probably faces financial problems because many of them had to quit their jobs to take proper care of the children). Perhaps an all-day ticket to playground facility would be a tempting incentive here. I think that there would be foster parents who would want to be heard out in a sympathetic atmosphere, and in exchange you could gain important information. And one more thing - children should be in foster families. But only "for a while", and that should be the focus of foster families and of social workers. Unfortunately, in our country no one is working with biological parents. Often the reason for this is an addiction - but there is a complete lack of any kind of cooperation. The only way natural relationships are looked after are centers where children stay with their parents, which is a questionable form of taking care of those relationships to me (taking into consideration the child's good). Chances that the child will return to its parents dwindle when it stays for too long even with its grandparents. The children have stayed with us for over two years now and I reject the opinion that their return to parents would be beneficial for them. I would be very eager to talk about this with a wise, no-nonsense and experienced child psychologist. Maybe it would be possible to invite someone like that to the group? Perhaps to the workshops?</p> <p>4. Perhaps it would be good to take care of more anonymity of the participants (if possible). There is only one department in Łódź and all foster families cooperate with it. Thus, families (especially professional ones) from Łódź are not anonymous for employees of the department and the families are aware of that. This could have caused that they did not speak their minds. Employees also could have been more reserved in their opinions, taking into account the fact that the families have contact with their colleagues and can be easily identified. In my opinion, if everyone had felt safe and anonymous, the meeting could have taken a different course.</p>
P7	<p>1. After the Focus Group Int. I've found that both groups (the FP's and the BP's) should receive more support. There should be given more importance to strengthen this feeling of being supported, and to raise the trust towards the professionals. This can be achieved by nurturing the personal relationships.</p> <p>2. It was really good to attend to this activity, we talked about a lot of important issues. There were also negative outcomes, like the biological fathers behavior. However I still hope,</p>

he has now a better overview about this attitude and he learned some useful things too.

3. It was good experience

4. I appreciated very much the openness of the participants. Everyone was respectful and on the same level. Even the social workers.

5. For me it was useful to participate on this FG Interview. I got aware how important it is to handle emotions in the context of maintaining relations. To assure a successful collaboration everyone has to put away its one believes and prejudices, and everyone has to focus on the easy realisation of the meeting itself.

6. I would like if other discussions would be organised in the future.

Comments of evaluator:

Many participants commented on the last question regarding other comments and suggestions, which is extremely positive and clearly shows their engagement towards the improvement of foster care.

Most of the participants (7) highlighted the importance to organize such focus groups with the involvement of all actors in foster care and suggested to organize it more often, in order to improve the cooperation between these actors. However, one of them mentioned that it would be better not to involve other stakeholders (representatives of local authorities for example – therefore people not directly involved in foster care), just biological and foster parents and social workers. Like this participants can get a view on the different perspectives and more understanding of the others' problems. Two of the participants mentioned also the importance to involve more biological and related foster parents, in fact, these target group were the less represented in all focus groups. Other useful comments highlighted the need of support that especially biological and foster families have and the importance of being able to handle emotions and put away prejudices in order to improve cooperation.

One of the participants in Poland highlighted some crucial aspects that should be addressed by social services and could be addressed in the FALEFOS workshops: non-related foster parents are often not aware or don't understand the emotional background of the biological and the related foster parents (personal humiliation, failures, etc.). Therefore, as the majority of foster parents are related family members of the child every effort should be made to activate related families and biological parents, taking into consideration their background. It's extremely important to give them the possibility to express their feelings and to listen to them, therefore exchange sessions with the moderation of professionals/psychologists could be a good tool.

All the participants in Switzerland were very motivated about the FALEFOS project and would like to participate in the workshops and be updated on the project's results, which is again extremely positive.

Besides all these positive and useful comments there were also some that revealed some problems: in Poland foster families are not anonymous for social services, therefore they might have not said everything they wanted at the focus groups because they could have been easily identified, while in Romania there were some problems with the behaviour of a biological father, although these problems have been solved by the end. Regarding the focus group in Germany some of the participants took too much space and didn't show much interest and openness to change or reconsider their own approach. Moreover, it seemed that some participants tried to justify their own way of working and put the responsibility on others when something is going wrong. We consider this comment very important as it reveals a crucial element in

foster care: the lack of empathy, the need to understand others' point of view. Which is extremely difficult to change but we must address this issue in the workshops that have to be developed.

5 Conclusions

The results gained from this evaluation activity were on the whole really positive. 39 participants of the focus groups carried out in partner countries filled in the questionnaire and not only rated positively on the majority of items but also commented on them, which shows a good understanding of the importance of evaluation activities for the success of the project. The quantitative and qualitative feedbacks are both extremely helpful in assessing the success of the focus groups and in identifying positive aspects and issues to be addressed in the FALEFOS workshops.

Hereby we summarise the average scores given to each question, both in the single partner countries and in general:

Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL AVERAGE
Relevance of contents of the focus group in relation to your professional/personal needs	4,2	3,7	4,8	4,3	4,7	3,8	4,8	4,31
Utility of the Focus Group in relation to your professional/personal needs	4,3	3,5	4,8	4,3	4,7	3,8	4,6	4,27
Duration of the Focus Group	4,8	4	4,6	4	4,7	4,3	4,3	4,38
Structure of the focus group	5	3,3	5	4,3	4,7	3	4,6	4,27
Makeup (referring to people who took part in it) of the focus group	4	3	4,6	4	4,2	3,3	4,9	3,98
Relevance of the questions you have been asked, in relation to your professional/personal needs	4,2	4,5	5	4,5	4,3	3,8	4,7	4,42
Are you generally satisfied about the experience?	4,3	4,2	4,8	3,5	4,8	4,3	4,6	4,35
Total average	4,40	3,74	4,80	4,13	4,59	3,75	4,57	4,28

All of the questions but one were evaluated with a total average of 3,98 or above. The overall average for all of the elements combined stands at 4,28, which is an extremely good result. The **highest average score** is related to the relevance of the questions asked during the focus group in relation to participants' professional/personal needs (rated 4,42). The **lowest average score** reported was 3,98, concerning the makeup of the focus group (referring to people who took part in it). As explained above, this is due to the fact that participants would have liked more people involved, especially biological parents.

In the chart above we can see also the average rates given in each partner country: all of them expressed average marks going from 3,74 (P2) to 4,80 (P3), a result which can be considered definitely satisfying.

From participants' comments we can understand that that the **most positive aspects** of the focus groups were that participants could see and become more aware of the point of view of all actors in foster care and the difficulties they face as well as the legal limitations and duties of social workers, they could understand the similarities and differences of their needs / problems and share their opinions / experience. For social workers it was also interesting to see how their colleagues working in other organisations solve the same kinds of problems. They appreciated that topics discussed were really relevant and related to participants' profession and/or personal life.

Moreover, the atmosphere during the focus groups was really friendly and welcoming and also the moderation was well structured, therefore everyone had the time and possibility to share his/her experience and could feel that they are “listened to”.

However, there have been also some other **aspects that participants would have changed**: they would have liked to carry out the focus group with more participants, especially with more biological parents, but also with more foster parents (especially those related to the child) and stakeholders (also from other organisations or cities), in order to discuss more in-depth these relevant issues and also to have the right proportion of the different target groups represented. Moreover, participants would like to carry out these kinds of focus groups more often, on a regular basis. Some participants were not completely satisfied with the moderation, while others simply stated that they didn’t learn anything new during the focus group.

Finally, this evaluation questionnaire has identified some key issues that we suggest to address in the FALEFOS workshops, as well as recommendations on the methodology of such workshops:

- Some of the participants mentioned that in order to achieve long-lasting benefits in foster care it would be necessary to change the foster care system and to have more funds. Unfortunately the FALEFOS project is not able to have such an influence on policies, however, **we must raise more awareness and disseminate our project to the widest possible range of stakeholders**.
- The project represents also a good occasion to **create more cooperation between biological parents, foster parents and social workers**, therefore it’s important to keep on involving these actors also in the following project phases and **organise regular meetings** with them.
- The **core issues that the workshop should address** are: relationship between the three different actors of foster care (especially biological and foster parents) and on how to improve it, as well as what does “help and support” mean for each actor in foster care and what do they expect from each other, different methods of work for each target group, legal and psychological information, relaxation exercises, how to face behavior problems of foster children, communication between the three parties involved, empathy, conflict solving skills, practices on how to change one’s perspective and how to be creative in the framework of foster care, practical exercises, tips. But there should also be space to exchange experience and opinions, with a particular focus on biological parents and related foster parents – it’s extremely important to listen to them, to have more confidence in them and to motivate them. Moreover, workshops shouldn’t be too theoretical but they should include more practical methodologies.

6 Annex - questionnaire

FALEFOS – Family Learning in Foster Families
539028-LLP-1-2013-1-AT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP

Focus Group Evaluation

Date

City (Country)

Partner

Evaluation by participants

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

We would like to thank you very much for kindly taking part in the focus group of the EU-Project FALEFOS. In order to further improve the quality of our needs analysis, your opinion about the topic is extremely valuable. We would therefore be very grateful if you could comment on your personal experience with the FALEFOS focus group by answering the questions below. Your answers will be kept confidential and only used for statistic purposes.

Thank you very much for your contribution.

The FALEFOS Project Group

Information on Participant

Which of the following categories do you belong to?

A Biological Parent of a Fostered Child

A Foster Parent

A Social Worker

Other

Please specify:

Please give your opinion about the FALEFOS focus group you took part in, making reference to following criteria:

5= very satisfied
 4 = satisfied
 3 = neutral
 2 = somewhat dissatisfied
 1= very dissatisfied

Topic	Mark	What did you like best?	What would you change?
Relevance of contents of the focus group in relation to your professional/personal needs			
Utility of the Focus Group in relation to your professional/personal needs			
Duration of the Focus Group			
Structure of the focus group			
Makeup (referring to people who took part in it) of the focus group			
Relevance of the questions you have been asked, in relation to your professional/personal needs			
Are you generally satisfied about the experience?			

After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the cooperation between the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker) and about your tasks

in the framework of the cooperation?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on that -----

After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about the needs of the three parties involved (biological family, foster family, social worker)?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on that -----

After participating in the Falefos Focus Group, do you feel you are more aware about what would you expect from a workshop on the subject?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on that -----

Please express below any further suggestion or comment you might have about the FALEFOS Focus Group: