11th European Expert Meeting on Self-Help Support in Finland 15.6-17.6.11

SWOT-TING SELF-HELP & SELF-HELP SUPPORT

Rapport, edited by Anitta Raitanen
1. INTRODUCTION

Helena Palojärvi (Vice President of Citizen Forum and Director of Naistenkartano ref)

The 11th Self Help Expert Meeting on self help support was organized first time in Finland at the Seurakuntaopisto in Järvenpää during 15.6-17.6.11. Kansalaisareena ry - Citizen Forum was accepted to act as main organizer in 10th European Expert Meeting in Berlin year 2009. Citizen Forum has been active participating in international self help meetings almost 20 years. The meeting was also the 20th anniversary of the European network. Other Finnish organizers of 11th meeting were Diaconia University of Applied Sciences and Naistenkartano ref. Both actors are also supporters of self help in their work. The program of the conference was planned by group of European self help activists. Special thanks for Jürgen Matzat and Peter Gielen, who gave many good comments for planning the programme. Also many of you who had presentations gave your ideas. After all comments I could make the final programme. Also Solbjorg Talseth and Jannicke Kihlman gave good tips and their support organizing conference in Finland. Director Anitta Raitanen from Citizen Forum organized practical matters and finance, study visits and leisure time program. Lecturer Marianne Nylund from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences helped in practical matters on behalf of Seurakuntaopisto and Diaconia University. She also helped in mails and planning the seminar.

We welcomed 22 participants from 10 different countries. They were brought together to map the self help situation in their countries. The overall focus on the meeting was “Swot-Ting Self-Help and Self- Help Support”. Our main speaker was American Professor Thomasina Borkman, who began with an example of self help in North America and brought us to the sources of self help movement and self help clearing houses. After that we started hearing presentations from different European countries (Israel included). After each presentation we could discuss and share our ideas. We used our experiences and knowledge on working with and developing self help groups and support while discussing the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of self help and self help support in Europe. We all understand that self help is needed but how it is organized varies in each country. There are many factors that affect self help and our work as self help supporters.

The presentations are now in this report and presented according the program. Our meeting was also roughly evaluated by giving feedback in turn at the end of conference while making summary discussion and closing remarks. Feedback was generally positive concerning practical arrangements, contents and leisure time. Many thanks for you all who helped to do this - the organizing team, planning activists and all the participators. But the last important news also was, when Jürgen Matzat informed that Italy will be next place for 12th European Expert E Meeting. We will go on discussions there!
2. OPENING AND WELCOME

2.1. Welcoming Jorma Niemelä (Rector, Managing director of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences)

I wish you all a very warm welcome to Finland to discuss an important theme. We live in a time of unstable economy in Europe but yet facing growing social challenges which is why all the paths to welfare must be taken seriously. The theme is nevertheless most interesting from my perspective, considering my work history. I have worked in the area of addiction problems for over 20 years. Read more 📖
2.2. Welcoming - Anitta Raitanen (Citizen Forum, director)

This seminar is organised by Kansalaisareena ry (Citizen Forum), Naistenkartano and Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. On behalf of Citizen Forum I have the honour and it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Eleventh European Expert Meeting on Self-Help Support here in the Church Training College.

Kansalaisareena ry (Citizen Forum) is a National Volunteer Centre for the support of Self-Help Groups and Voluntary Network. It promotes and develops participation, volunteering and peer support activities, volunteer centres, collaboration between professionals and volunteers, cross sector network and international cooperation. Read more

I will thank Naistenkartano (Helena Palojärvi), Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Jorma Niemelä and Marianne Nylund) and Slot Machine Association (Janne Jalava and Sari Miettunen) for making the conference possible in Finland. But especially I will thank you all participants supporting this conference. I wish you all good luck and good meeting. Your contribution will be indispensable. Be welcome!

3. GOALS AND EMPHASIS OF THE SEMINAR

Helena Palojärvi (Kansalaisareena ry - Citizen Forum, chair person, Naistenkartano, director)

Dear Rector Jorma Niemelä and dear colleagues
Welcome to 11th European Expert Meeting on Self Help Support in Finland. We are happy to meet you all here. The theme of this meeting is Swotting self-help and self-help support. It is time to start evaluation of self help group activities. We are going to study what are the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of self-help and self-help support. We are going to examine what over time, profoundly affects self-help and our work as self-help supporters. We must show the significance of our work as self help supporters.

The meeting brings together a selected number of self-help supporters who do similar jobs in different countries. In the days to come we will make rough assessment and evaluation of self help in various countries, exchange ideas and knowledge about good practises. The context for our evaluation is Swot analysis. Presentations/studies in the field from different countries and discussions make our method. We shall also have scientific perspective in some of the presentations.

Professor Thomasina Borkman from USA has for a long time made research in the field of self help and she is the first speaker. She gives us an example from USA where some of most important roots of self help are.
4. SWOT-TING SELF-HELP & SELF-HELP SUPPORT

4.1. Self-help/Mutual Aid in North America
Professor Thomasina Borkman, USA

Professor Thomasina Borkman and Juergen Matzat from Germany

Literature
4.2. Funding Self-Help – The role of Finnish Slot Machine Association
Janne Jalava, Evaluation Manager & Sari Miettunen, Team Leader

Janne Jalava (left) and Anitta Raitanen

5. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

5.1. Action research and participatory action research as adequate methodologies for self-help support. Examples from Greece

Lainas Sotiris
6. SELF-HELP GROUPS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

6.1. Self-help groups and mental health: relationships, benefits and limits
Sara Mori (the Tuscany Regional Coordination Centre of Self-Help Groups in Italy)
Sara Mori
6.2. Self-help supporters: a part of society or apart from society

Georgiou Alexandros (left) and Lainas Sotiris

6.3. Self-help groups cooperating with various partners (health and social services guideline committees etc)

Marianne Nylund (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences)

Marianne Nylund (left) and Thomasina Borkman
6.4. Peer Support as a prevention
Irja Mikkonen (Kansalaisareena ry - Citizen Forum)

6.5. Self-help and empowering social work among women in the field of addictions
Helena Palojärvi (Naistenkartano)

Helena Palojärvi (right) and Hilde No/kleberg from Norway

6.6. Israel Self-help Center, past three years and how it has survived
Anat Moshe

Anat second in the left.
6.7. Self-help situation in Norway
Hilde Grimstad Andresen, Hilde No/kleberg (Norsk selvhelspsforum)

Self-help situation in Norway

The Norwegian self-help forum (NSF)

7. WHAT THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE?

7.1. The Italian situation of self-help groups: threats and opportunities
Francesca Focardi (Tuscany Regional Coordination Centre of Self-Help Groups in Italy)

Francesca Focardi (left), Sara Mori
7.2. What weaknesses can be observed? Self-help and big pharma
Jurgen Matzat (Kontakstelle für Selbshilfegruppen)

Ursula Helms, Juergen Matzat (in the middle) and Lainas Sotiris (left)

Self-help and Big Pharma
Details from Switzerland
Details from Germany
The Influence of Big Pharma
Big Pharma would like to befriend you
The International Alliance of Patients Organizations (In whose Interest)
Fragwuerdiges Finanzgebaren

7.3. European Network of Self-Help Support – ENSHS
Ursula Helms (Nakos)
7.4. Self-help in Belgium
Jolijn Janssens (Trefpunt Zelfhulp)

7.5. Self-help movement in Austria: development and future prospect
Mag. Wolf Dorner (Austrian Self Help Association)

The acceptance of different forms of self-help (cross thematic self-help umbrella organizations, and contact points) has in recent years changed significantly not just by professional social and health-care groups but also from the decision making and funding bodies. While self-help in Austria was viewed with scepticism, and even outspoken criticism in the early nineties, it is now widely accepted and considered to be an important addition to the social- and health-care system.

This positive development of self-help in Austria has shown that integration in the social- and health-care system is changing the nature of the work. Addressing the question of how self-help in its original form, most importantly identified by the mutual support among the affected people, keeping, and can at the same time expand and develop further in proportion to expected obligations, will in the future increase in importance. It is essential to remind and be aware that the heart and core of self-help work lies in the commitment of those affected. It shows here that awareness of flawed developments is a step towards, for example, through specific further education, professional standards, and definition of minimum standards. An essential prerequisite for qualitative development in self-help at different levels are binding conditions on the structural, financial, and human level.

So that the collective participation of patients can develop further, it is needed to recognize the independent role of self-help and also for it to be embodied at the
legislative level.

In the face of diverse expectations involved in self-help, the scientific monitoring of self-help work takes on a special meaning, and in my view, is also essential to obtain a systematic and purposeful co-operation between self-help and the social and health sectors. Self-help is according to existing resources seen as partner to be available to help shape care structures, participate with, set standards, change social contributions – therefore, work on and in the community – together with others.

Wolf Dorner is in front. Visit in Ainola.

8. STUDY VISIT RINKULA

The Multicultural Activity and Support Centre Rinki and the Center of Voluntary Activity Rinkula, Järvenpää

Jyrki Brandt: Non-Governmental Organization Setlementti Louhela ry
Loan Thi Tran: Multicultural Activity and Support Centre Rinki
Study visit in Support Centre Rinki.

9. EVALUATION, CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our meeting was roughly evaluated by giving feedback in turn at the end of conference while making remarks about the conference. Feedback was generally positive concerning contents of the program, practical arrangements, and leisure time. Someone said that it is good that meeting place was in the countryside so we stayed together. Many pointed that the discussions were intensive and lively.
There was enough time for discussions after the presentations. Also small groups had enough time for their work. In summary many said that it was well organized conference.

Although many self help clearing houses have difficulties in financing their activities there are also good signs. Finnish Slot Machine Association is a good example for financing possibilities for self help. Norway has widened its self help clearing house system, when new offices have been founded around Norway and more people than before are attending self help groups. In Sweden Self help clearing house has got new resources. On the other hand there is not so much interest in volunteering and attending self help groups in clearing houses in middle European countries. It seems that active announcement/advertisement and information about self help groups are important tools for promoting self help nowadays. Also looking at self help groups only from the problem side is not good. German word bildung and English words personal growth are good concepts when thinking of purposes of self help. The groups should pay attention more than before to individual needs and not only point to same problems individuals have for attending the groups. Self help groups should empower people individually and perhaps raise concept of prevention of problems in the field of self help. Generally speaking we need a new definition what self help means in different contexts in the European level and in the level of UN. We need also standards and guidelines for clearinghouses although there are big cultural differences in the infrastructure of self-help and self-help support. Especially in these days when it is difficult to find financing for self help new ideas for supporting self help are needed. Also structures of self help were questioned in closing remarks. Is association as registered foundation with its board members etc. the best way to finance self help and promote self help activities?

Finally we discussed that self help experts meetings are important for exchanging ideas, experiences, concepts, trends and visions to do everyday work for self-help. Despite the cultural differences we can consider is it time for more organized European Network of Self Help Support?

10. THE TWELFTH EUROPEAN EXPERT MEETING

On behalf of the Tuscany Regional Coordination Centre of Self-Help Groups in Italy Sara Mori and Francesca Focardi invited all participants to Florence in summer 2013. The attendants gladly accepted the invitation.
ANNEXES
Final program 📄
List of Participants 📄