



Annual report Nov.2016/Nov.2017

Presented by Vincent RAMON, President, at AGM 2017 - Barcelona

The objective of an annual report is to make a stop as to measure the progress made in one year and to specify the projects for the future.

This year, our reflections on the future of APFEL must take into account the specific aspect of the functioning of the association under Belgian law.

APFEL members in November 2017

At the 2016 general assembly, we welcomed 6 new full members including 3 associations. APFEL currently has 30 full members, with in details are 20 individual members + 10 corporate associative members.

10 countries are represented: Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Switzerland.

13 associate members paid a membership fee in 2017.

APFEL activities in 2016/2017

Our participations :

- Lille Days on the 1st and 2d of December 2016 organized in partnership between ANPF and APFEL
- Meeting of the APFEL training group in Brussels on March 24th, 2017
- ANPF Days in Nancy (France) on 21 and 22 September 2017 (Aurore Denayer / Frederique Lucet / Mireille Chervaz) on the theme of *the Care*
- Congress organized by the Siegen Foster Care Research Group / ONPE / ANPF / University of Nanterre in Paris on "breakdowns and continuity in family home (Bep van Sloten / Pascale Staquet and Marie France Lambert / Robert Theisen) September 29, 2017 Report available in French at <https://www.gynger.fr/accueil-familial-les-ruptures-au-coeur-dune-journee-detude/>

Our productions:

- a bilingual poster and flyers summarizing APFEL objectives, methodology and core values (attached)
- the preparation of the publication (March 2018) of a book on parenthood coordinated by Nathalie CHAPON made from conferences of APFEL meetings in Milan and Lille.
- the creation of a French life book (Nathalie Chapon) with the collaboration of Apfel
- the preparation of a training session with the tool "My backpack" (Bep Van Sloten) for France in March and May 2018
- preparation of APFEL exchange days with Catalan professionals in Barcelona, supported by GRISIJ and FEDAIA (16.November 2017)

- a first meeting in Paris on 28th September with PAIDEIA, Gorgia SALVADORI, to profile the Turin Days in November 2018 (probable theme: the emotional resonance of professionals and its expression in the dynamics of intervention)
- on the website of the association: various interventions and maintenance.

Comments:

- *Concerning the partnership with the associative members of APFEL: Our links remain strong and well anchored with the ANPF; other member 'associations offer us conditions to make a temporary stay of our caravan, in Spain (GRISIJ and FEDAIA) and in Italy (PAIDEIA in 2018). The associations that gather lots of volunteers and professionals constitute the local bridges that APFEL needs to disseminate information and organize the events of its caravan in different countries. Only associations have the means to get involved in such provisions*
- *Concerning the themes developed by APFEL: The biographical work and storytelling with the foster child sowed other initiatives and bring us back to the central concern: the benefit that the child gets. Co-parenting is also a central theme of our exchanges and our reflections.*
- *Concerning the dissemination of information: the website has been improved but it remains poorly fuel by members themselves.*

Review of the resolutions of the last board of directors of December 2016

It was decided to improve the governance and management of the association as follows:

- the number of directors is reduced to one representative per member country;
- each country creates a cell that works its position in APFEL and communicates or works with other countries.
- each working group summarizes its work in order to feed the website; each group proposes a follow-up of its work in progress or closure;
- website: we all agree that having a WEB portal is essential to exist, to make ourselves better known and disseminate our reflections and works. A budget is allocated to strengthen the tools to install and the participation of all is expected to bring up the content and information.

Comments:

In terms of one-year results, it must be noted that the decisions taken were not followed up despite the good will of the people involved.

The decision to elect one representative member per country is complex to implement and requires more explanation; the working groups did not work as such; the website is poorly powered by members ...

Rather than returning once again to the reasons for these blockages, it seems more appropriate to revitalize APFEL by specifying together:

- *our current objectives: what do we want to share and build together in the coming years*
- *our organization must be pragmatic, in line with the means that everyone is willing to dedicate in terms of availability and financing.*

To think about the future of APFEL

APFEL must engage in a thorough reflection on its objectives as it will soon have to renew its management team whose mandates expire in April 2019.

Clarification of operation will derive from the project.

On November the 17th we will have to openly discuss issues of substance:

- *What do we expect from APFEL?*
- *What and to whom APFEL can be useful?*
- *What means should we give to the association: legally recognized status? financing? work time ?*

The general meeting must address these issues because April 2019 the 30th is a very important deadline for the operation of the international association under Belgian law: the mandates of the 5 legally recognized directors expire and are not renewable. APFEL will lose its mainstay or back bones which have worked so far in terms of activities and representation of the association!

If the association decides to continue functioning as it is now, we must now consider the succession of outgoing directors and seek at least 3 effective members willing to be officially recognized to perform the necessary functions: administrative and financial responsibility and relations with the Belgian State.

It will also be necessary to find a person (preferably a member of the association) who will effectively take over the secretariat on a volunteer basis: keeping accounts, listing identities of members, call for contributions, organization of meetings, tax declarations and others

As a reminder, the official status of APFEL's associative status was motivated by the prospect of obtaining European or other funds. However, faced with this type of procedure, we have found that only large structures (with a budget and a permanent salaried secretariat) are able to meet the requirements to apply to such projects that require the obligation to finance at least 20% on own funds.

From now on, and within a short period of a year, the following question arises: **in what form do APFEL members wish to continue or reinvent their exchanges?**

- in its current legal form of Belgian law, requiring the recruitment of a volunteered secretary and the election of at least 3 administrators officially responsible for its operation?
- by pursuing the project in another form: in another European country? With or without official status?

One could even ask the question of the shutdown of APFEL! But this seems inappropriate given the interest aroused by our area of exchange and professional mix with new members who wanted to join our associative adventure.

We remain convinced that APFEL is an important initiative on a relatively close deadline. Some members who have a long experience and sometimes meet the resistance for change, come to APFEL to find a supporting base allowing evolutions of visions and practices. Other members wonder about their own initiatives and want to confront them with the experiences of others.

APFEL is also the place where members can exchange tools used locally and echo innovations in other parts of the world.

Given the quality of our members and our exchanges, we are approaching this moment of transition with serenity and confidence.

To help the reflection

I give you some benchmarks concerning the evolution of our association.

APFEL was born from a wish to expand at least to Europe the exchanges and the sharing of experiences around one of the most complex practice: family foster care. Some very motivated people started under unformal association since 2011; others joined them to form a legally recognized association since 2013.

Along the way we have woven links, links of interest and meaning, we have shared concerns and questions, we have dared confrontation despite our differences, our discrepancies too. We have also achieved many things, relying on our personal energies and the desire that drives us. From meeting to meeting, APFEL has developed an identity that is difficult to objectify fearing to freeze it, but which, in my opinion, can be clarified as follows:

- A group of varied actors making a good place for professional diversity between practitioners and researchers;
- values centered on the respect of the people and the child in development in particular;
- A core questioning on family foster care, that is to say the complexity of the sharing of parenthood around the foster child;
- A desire to ensure the highest quality of care, quality based on the relational dynamics rather than goals of economic efficiency;
- A wish to share and discover our experiences, our ideologies and our organizations;
- A desire to cross borders to decentralize ourselves from our own grids of analysis and their links with available knowledge;
- The highlighting and enrichment of emerging questions concerning all family foster car' issues: what means and makes a family? The plurality of families, the recognition of attachment bonds, the need for continuity of life, the need for training the carers and all team and recognition of the expertise of foster carers, the need to consider family care in the context of societal solidarity and not just as an individual and isolated adventure ...

Recently on the occasion of the Paris Days of 27-29 September 2017 (Siegen Foster care research group + Univ. Paris Nanterre + ONPE + ANPF) we have carried out the realization of a poster and I was surprised how easy it was to get agreement on the contents. (see attached document). At this stage, this writing's facility reflects real progress in the formulation of both our identity than our values and goals.

I would like to thank very warmly all those who are very closely committed in this adventure of Apfel along this past year, namely all the people mentioned in this report, and those who support its run and goals.

I have no doubt that imagination and desire will match to draw lines of a future to this exciting associative adventure.