

Preliminary Program

A EurAdopt Conference on the Relevance of Adoption Improving life for children who cannot live with their family

Utrecht, The Netherlands

Wednesday June 1st and Thursday June 2nd 2016

This conference attempts to describe the contemporary environment in which intercountry adoption is employed as an option for children who cannot live with their birth family. The aim of the conference is to discuss adoption, but this is not to be an 'about and for' discussion event without the primary parties concerned - the adoption triangle. Therefore, each part of the triangle will be represented here, and adoptees have been given an active role in the program. It is hoped that multiple presentations from practice as well as academic research combined with the opportunity to interact with fellow participants will both challenge and enrich the current outlook of the delegates.

Wednesday June 1st: Options for Children in the Countries of Origin

This first day of the conference will put adoption in a broader framework: What options exist for children who cannot live with their biological families? How do countries deal with those children? What opportunities do they have and what are the effects of the subsidiarity principle? What is in the best interest of the child?

Stephen Ucembe (KESCA) from Kenya will speak about his personal experience of living in an orphanage.

Tracy Kyagulanyi MSc (Child's i Foundation) from Uganda and Jim Dé (HOLT) from India will evaluate the significance of intercountry adoption within the overall field of child protection in their respective countries.

Professor Dr. Julie Selwyn (Professor of Child and Family Social Work, University of Bristol) will elaborate on the experiences in the UK on adoption from foster care, a policy to enhance the stability of placements of former foster children. She will also bring up the power of adoption and the strength required by adoptive parents to raise vulnerable children.

Professor Dr. Beth Neil (Senior Lecturer and Director of Research, University of East Anglia) is an expert on birth families and she will talk about the effects of abandonment and adoption on birthmothers and how grief can be diminished.

The program will start and end with an interactive panel discussion prepared together with adoptees. A number of adoptees and birthmothers will be on the panel.

Thursday June 2nd: The needs of adoptees in the receiving countries

The second day will approach the issue of how receiving countries can respond to the needs of adoptees once the decision for (intercountry) adoption has been made. Prerogatives in policy; results from scientific studies together with personal input from adoptees and examples from Post Adoption Services will be presented here. Finally, the results of a study into the degree of satisfaction in Dutch adoptees will be presented. This study has been commissioned especially for this conference.

The first part of the day will focus on policies around adoption.

Laura Martínez Mora (Principal Legal Officer, HCCH Permanent Bureau) will address improvements made as well as unintended drawbacks as a result of the The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Angelo Moretto (Executive Board Member, EurAdopt) will present what EurAdopt considers good practice in intercountry adoption.

Next, two adoptees will show different ways to look at intercountry adoptions: ir. Jurrijn Tack (Foundation Intercountry Adoptees) will put the need of documentation and regulation in adoption in a different perspective, and drs. Hilbrand Westra (United Adoptees International) will illustrate the importance of identity in the life of an adoptee.

The presentations will be followed by a panel discussion, the panel consisting of adoptees, adoption parents, adoption organizations, Central Authority and HCCH Permanent Bureau.

Scientific knowledge on the development of adoptees will be presented by Prof. Dr. Femmie Juffer (Professor on Adoption Studies, University of Leiden) and dr. Anneke Vinke (ADOC). Professor Juffer will give a general overview and Anneke Vinke will elaborate on special needs adoptions and on experiences from her private adoption practice.

What has been presented during the day and brought up in the panel discussion will be discussed in an interactive session.

Irene Parssinen-Hentula (Director, Save the Children) from Finland will present the findings of a large EurAdopt Post Adoption Survey from among EurAdopt members and a representative from the Dutch Foundation Adoption Services will show some new types of Post Adoption Services in The Netherlands.

For the benefit of this conference a questionnaire has been sent to a over 4000 Dutch adult intercountry adoptees to gauge their level of satisfaction with adoption and also their general wellbeing. Adoptees and adoption parents were invited to express what they think and feel about adoption based on their own experience. Groups of adoptees have contributed to the development of this survey and Gera ter Meulen (ADOC) will present the findings.

Following this presentation delegates are invited to participate in a discussion about the surveys and their findings.

Adoptees will be asked to picture their feelings about their adoption on paper by means of drawings, poems, etc. The results will be presented in the Conference Hall.