

WAIMH Belgo-Luxembourgeoise Affiliate, Brussels

By Pascal Gustin, President

History

Belgium is composed of three linguistic communities: Flemish speaking people in the north of the country and French speaking in the south. Links were spontaneously made by us, French speaking professionals with our French neighbors. During many years we participated in their activities and later we decided to organize our own group, first in an informal way but in May 1998 we became officially a member of WAIMH.

In the beginning we only wished to intensify clinical exchange in a small group with a colleague from Luxembourg. Our intention was and remains to base our theoretical discussions on a clinical base and concrete material to enlighten our therapeutic and preventive prospects.

Another characteristic of the WAIMH Belgo-Luxembourgeoise group is our theoretical range which is humanistic and pragmatic. Our theoretical support is psychoanalysis linked with the perspectives of attachment, developmental psychology, neuroscientific knowledge, and family systems theories. But the common language of this Babel Tower of theories remains clinical work!

We have this cross-breeding culture in common with the professionals from Quebec who have the same experience of a three-fold community where different intellectual movements have to be associated. Yvon Gauthier, Canadian past-president of the international WAIMH helped us take our first footsteps to become an official member of WAIMH.

In the beginning we were a group of child psychiatrists and psychologists coming from different French speaking universities having exchanges about theoretical and clinical theories concerning psychotherapeutic work with babies, children and their parents. Since then we opened our activities to other professionals concerned with mental health of small children and newborns. The enlargement of our group, provoked by numerous

demands for membership and training, led to the reorganization of our activities.

Our activities

In 2001 we organized our first annual meeting. Little by little our target audience enlarged probably because we proposed discussions about the daily preoccupation of the professionals concerned with childhood and parenthood: interactions in adopting families, stress and pregnancy, interdisciplinary in prenatal prevention, early child abuse and neglect, , unconsolable infants , bodily approaches for infants playing, etc... Our annual meeting usually brings together around 300 to 400 participants.

To maintain our clinical exchanges as lively as possible, we organize, besides the annual meeting, little groups animated by one of the founding members on themes varying in function of the demands. Actually there are 4 groups working on following themes: prematurity, hospitalized children, transition to parenthood and early signs of autism spectrum disorders. New groups can be opened on demand.

Members

Our association counts about 120 members. Some of them are very active in different sectors, namely the fields of premature birth, childhood health and mental health. We have two kinds of membership: adherent and full members. Most of our members organize or participate in training or education.

Our aims

We chose the following three aims:

1. Promote reflection, theoretical and clinical research about:
 - different aspects of parenthood
 - psychic development of babies and toddlers concerning sensoriality ,

motricity, cognition and affectivity

- developmental psychopathology and possible psychotherapeutic approaches of specific pathologies.

- 2; Promote prevention and early intervention.
3. Training of various professionals specialized in childhood.

Creation of a website

In 2012 we decided to create a website which gives us more visibility. We invite you to visit it. You will get more information concerning our activities, the past and future annual meetings: www.waimhbl.be

A particular way of living together

Belgium is a small country known for its chocolate and the singer Jacques Brel but also for its political controversies and debates between the communities which end in general with a compromise and a particular way of living together. In our WAIMH group we try not only to help the circulation of thinking and resources but also to make links between the different institutions of care, rest centers and schools to amplify the collaboration between our networks. As far as we know, in the Flemish part of Belgium a WAIMH group exists called WAIMH VLAANDEREN, also a member of WAIMH international. We have very little exchanges with them because of the linguistic barrier.

Members of Council

President: Pascale Gustin, Secretary: Geneviève Bruwier, Treasurer: Maggy Camus, Supply treasurer: Gül Jullian, Administrators: Dominique Charlier, Marie Couvert, Marie-Paule Durieux, Christine Frisch-Desmarez, Eliane Pirard, and Luc Roegiers