

European Focusing Association (EFA) Annual Meeting
Agia Marina, Aegina, Greece
24-26th May 2019

Would you and some of your colleagues like to organise a Focusing 'Biennale' (a large gathering with workshops and presentations) for 2020 or 2021 in your own country?

Might you be willing to organise a smaller annual gathering for European Focusers for next year where the 2020 General Assembly can take place?

Would you like to take part in a publishing project? Take part in a Zoom meeting for EFA members? Be interested in participating in a project for online supervision? Share some of your thoughts on an email discussion list for European Focusers?

These are just some of the proposals that we now want to share with European Focusers after the annual EFA gathering that took place in Aegina, Greece from 24th-26th May.

The gathering of 21 Focusers from around the world had a very good atmosphere over the three days that we spent together. There was a spirit of real co-operation, which led to many offers being made that will be of distinct benefit to the European Focusing community. There was a clear wish for greater collaboration between individuals and groups, including making better use of the excellent website (<https://efa-focusing.eu/>) and the online facilities (e.g. Zoom for online meetings) that are now available to us. This move towards working together across borders is in keeping with the original aim of the Association to foster deeper connection and collaboration between European Focusers.

A Brief Account of the Meeting

The meeting took place over three days and ran from Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime. There was group discussion, individual workshops and time for Focusing partnerships. We were welcomed by Pat Foster who had set up the meeting in Aegina and made the arrangement with the Hotel Magda where everyone stayed. The plenary meetings and the General Assembly were ably and thoughtfully facilitated by Cornelius Gehrig.

Individuals spoke about their different reasons for having come to the meeting. These included a wish for connection with others, particularly by those who are isolated in their own country where there is little opportunity for face-to-face contact with other Focusers. Some participants were relatively new to the Focusing world while others had come to re-connect with old friends, to foster collaboration and to learn about more recent developments in the Focusing world in Europe and beyond. Questions arose around how to develop Focusing after Gene's death and how to preserve what is 'precious' in the approach. Some participants were keen to share their work with others; others to experience the nourishment of being with other Focusers. All very much appreciated the beauty of the island of Aegina and the fact that we were staying in a comfortable and friendly hotel.

We were invited to consider these questions: What am I here for? What is my spirit longing for? What do I need? What is essential? What do I wish to happen?

The key issue that faced all of us was how to bridge the irreconcilable paradox between wanting to open up the subtlety of European thinking to the rest of world and the 'heaviness' of trying to form an organisation. Can we be a European Focusing 'Movement' that actually '*moves*'?

Workshops and discussion groups were offered by participants on the Saturday and Sunday mornings of the gathering on such topics as Wholebody Focusing without words, compassion training and emotional regulation and the teaching of Focusing; Ria van Hage guided some of us in a transformative constellation around past EFA difficulties and how things might carry forward more constructively for the future. Early on Saturday afternoon Campbell Purton led a lively philosophical discussion on approaching Focusing from the perspective of 'people and situations', making reference to how the post-Cartesian mind/body split has had a negative impact on how Focusing is approached and understood.

The general discussions around how EFA might move forward dovetailed into a more formal General Assembly that took place on the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning of the gathering.

As our time together drew to a close, grateful thanks were expressed to Cornelius Gehrig for his facilitation of the group process, to Pat Foster for her warm welcome, for organising the hotel and the evening meals, to Heidrun Essler for her efficient gathering and organisation of all the topics that arose for workshops and discussion, to Fiona Parr and Ruth Hirsch and Ria van Hage for leading the attunements.

Matters arising from the General Assembly

The notes from the General Assembly are attached to this newsletter and will be posted online. The key issues that we would most like input from EFA members on are these:

As yet nobody has come forward to organise a large gathering for next year (we had agreed in Loutraki that we should have a bi-annual large gathering). Different formats were suggested and there was a general concern that the use of the word 'conference' generates specific (and very high) expectations. The term 'European Focusing Biennale' was proposed as a less stressful (and potentially more unconventional) version of a larger gathering. Realistically, it may be that a larger gathering *can't* be organised in time for next year, but what we *urgently* need is a local group who are willing to organise *some kind of gathering* for 2020.

So- as we said at the outset of this newsletter- might *you* be willing and in a position to organise a large or a small gathering for next year (2020)? If so, please can you let us know by writing to focusing.europe@gmail.com by the end of August at the latest.

Other ideas/ plans you might be interested in

Several other proposals were made for how we might come together in different and more creative ways:

Would you be interested in working with Michael Callifronas (michael@callifronas.com) and Hejo Feuerstein (h.feuerstein@focusing.de) on publishing projects? If so, please contact either Michael or Hejo directly by email.

Would you be interested in online group supervision for your Focusing practice? If so, please contact Hejo Feuerstein directly (h.feuerstein@focusing.de).

Do you know of Focusers- especially Focusers who are not affiliated to TIFI in Europe who might be 'placed' on a Focusing Map of Europe that is being prepared by Ruth Hirsch? If so, please contact Ruth Hirsch directly (ruth@ruthhirsch.com).

Would you be interested in participating in a Zoom meeting set up for discussion between European Focusers? Ruth Hirsch has offered to co-ordinate such a meeting and please contact her directly (ruth@ruthhirsch.com).

Florian Christensen has offered to collect information about what is happening with different Focusers in Europe so if you have information that you would like to share please write to Florian (florian.christensen@gmx.ch).

Are you a Focusing teacher? Would you like to be part of a group of Focusing teachers in Europe? They meet monthly online for inspiration and connection amongst colleagues. Please contact Fiona Parr (fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk).

There was also a proposal to set up an email discussion list for European focusers and this will be set up in a few weeks' time and you will be notified when this is ready.

It has always been intended that EFA should be a 'ground upwards' rather than a 'top down' organisation and there was great energy and enthusiasm for moving forward in this way in Aegina. We very much hope that some of the proposals made there will carry forward over the coming months.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The Steering Group

Hejo Feuerstein
Patricia Foster
Cornelius Gehrig
Nikos Kypriotakis
Judy Moore
Lucy Van Praag