AIMS For a better birth...

ENCA Meeting May 2019

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Debbie and Nadia attended the meeting of ENCA (the European Network of Childbirth Associations, of which AIMS was a founder member) in Zagreb, Croatia.

The first day was a conference on the topic of childbirth education with contributors from around Europe. Talks included the pros and cons of online courses; the growth of "peer-to-peer" education such as Positive Birth Movement groups in Portugal and a similar system established by El Parto es Nuestro (Birth is Ours) in Spain, and the development by Aperio in the Czech Republic of an online tool to help women choose the best hospital for them. This includes input from a questionnaire sent to women who have used the hospital as well as statistics and comments provided by the staff – a good reality check.

A particularly interesting talk came from Liz Kelly, from the Republic of Ireland, on "The potential role of antenatal education in preventing birth trauma." She commented that lack of support and the actions of care providers tend to be cited as the main cause of trauma, rather than the nature of the woman's birth experience. Liz believes that antenatal education could potentially help both in preventing birth trauma and helping to alleviate the effects of a previous traumatic birth experience. To do this it must be independent of the healthcare system, led by properly trained teachers, evidence-based, enjoyable, informative and with an emphasis on building confidence for women and their partners to question and self-advocate.

The ENCA meeting itself was hosted over the next 2 ½ days by the local organisation RODA (Parents in

Action). We were very jealous to discover that they have government funding which enables them to pay for a lovely spacious office in the centre of Zagreb and a staff of 6!

This was a great chance to network with colleagues from other European countries and to learn about their achievements and as well as the continuing struggles many of them face. It was a particular pleasure to see Agnes Gereb there, such an inspiring campaigner for women's autonomy in childbirth, and now at last free to travel. www.aims.org.uk/campaigning/item/agnes-gereb-clemency.

The meeting also resulted in a relaunch of the ENCA Facebook Group and there are some great posts on there, so do take a look: www.facebook.com/pg/encaeurope/posts/?ref=page_internal