

Platform Universities of Applied Sciences and Eigen Kracht

From 2008 onward, the members of the platform Universities and Family Group Conferencing meet on a regular basis. Over twenty academies are involved, to exchange knowledge of and experiences with citizenship and to further develop their cooperation. The platform intends to familiarize students in the field of care and wellbeing at an early stage with the underlying vision of EK-C, so they will start working from this vision. In 2010, the first Minor of Hogeschool Utrecht on this subject was completed. Other Universities of Applied Sciences offer similar minors or modules. However, the platform wants to embed this vision integrally and structurally in the education right from the start of the study, in order to get a different attitude from professionals towards citizens that make a plan. The idea is that a fundamental change, from a welfare state to a society that expects participation of citizens, will take place. This requires a different type of professionals than the ones that are educated by the academies at this moment.

“The responsibility is no longer mine alone. Some family members keep an eye on things and my client wants to go for it.”
Hans 48 years, personal coach



Eigen Kracht Training Department

Training for professionals: get the engine running again

The last ten years, the Eigen Kracht Centrale has gained a lot of experience with a restorative work method, in various fields. This enables the Centrale to support communities and professionals with training and consulting. The Eigen Kracht Centrale's vision on care is about realizing that people almost always have access to a circle of 'own people'. 'Eigen Kracht' is a dynamic concept, an incitement. It appeals to an ability, to something that people have and can put to use. Like an engine that doesn't run sometimes, falters, dies down and of which people sometimes say it doesn't exist at all. The core of this approach is, that when professionals focus on this engine and get it running again, he or she gains access to additional sources and is no longer solely responsible as social care worker. We call this a restorative approach. Connections are made with forces that are both close and durable. 'Own' people usually stay around longer than professionals. This may seem a simple approach, but it is quite complicated to execute, because of the way in which care is organized. How many care workers are held accountable for the number of families they activated to use their own sources and/or take control of their lives again? This requires a different organization of institutions and social care. Working with plans made by citizens themselves requires a shift in the way professionals think and act. This may not come about by itself, but it can be learned! In 2010, the Eigen Kracht Centrale purposely took the direction of training professionals in the vision underlying Family Group Conferences, by establishing a department for training and consultation. Everyone who wants to promote the restorative vision and work method and embed it in institutions or municipalities, can apply to this department. Thousands of Eigen Kracht-conferences have made clear that citizens are willing and able to become active. It is important to embed this vision in daily practice.

ANBI status

The Eigen Kracht Centrale foundation and the support fund Maryška Jansen-Schwarz foundation were given ANBI status in 2010. This means that donations may be deducted from income tax. The purpose of the support fund is to obtain financial means for deploying Eigen Kracht-conferenties for persons and groups who would like to have access to Eigen Kracht-conferenties but who don't have it yet. Eigen Kracht-conferenties for new target groups and the development of innovative projects is supported as well. The account number is 11.72.64.326, stichting Steunfonds Maryška Jansen-Schwarz, Zwolle, the Netherlands. For more information, contact Marieke Wittendorp, 038 - 422 07 82 e-mail: info@steunfonds-mjns.nl.



European network and congress

In 2002, the European network of countries and organizations that work with Family Group Conferences (FGC) was founded in London. Annually, an European country organizes a network meeting.

Many European countries are part of the network the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and all Scandinavian countries. The Netherlands were host in 2011.

Over the years, The Netherlands have become involved with the introduction of FGC in Poland, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina the Russian Federation and Bulgaria.

State of Affairs

Eigen Kracht Centrale

Juno and Dewi were about to fall under court custody. Their parents put together a detailed plan together with family members, friends and people from their

More confidence in available powers

neighbourhood. By doing so Juno and Dewi could stay with their family. Their tutor was able to work with this plan and put it in practice.

The Eigen Kracht Centrale is striving for a society in which it is natural to strike up relations with people from the circle around a person they feel concerned about, continuously and as a matter of fact. Ask citizens first to make a plan to solve a problem or conflict, with their 'own people', and instead of a list of demands, to be executed by third parties, good and safe plans will be made, to which they contribute their own resources. If necessary, an independent citizen can help to make the circle wider, and an Eigen Kracht-conference (EK-c) will be initiated. Too often, individual programs are made without looking for sources within the own circle. Consequently, a lot of ideas, help and support are not put to use. Through the Eigen Kracht-conference approach, responsibilities come to rest with the people themselves again, enhancing the social structure of families and communities.

Around a person or a family, relations and connections can be formed. Likewise, relations and connections can be formed around a district or neighborhood. The problem or conflict is placed in the middle, everyone who feels concerned is given the chance to contribute to a solution. Those who take that opportunity are proud of the plan they make together. For the greater part, they execute the plan themselves as well. When asked, professionals offer assistance. The plan made by the 'own circle' is leading for the solution and the help. The position of those directly involved improves and the financial demand on society decreases.

This way of thinking and acting can be applied to many areas of care, social care, education and to conflict handling. Widening the circle of own people contributes significantly to a shift in our care society. This vision can be applied to organizations as well. Along those lines, with an expanding Eigen Kracht Centrale, a network of circles has been built, resulting in an informal, democratic structure with direct communication lines.

The past year, close to a thousand Eigen Kracht-conferences (EK-c's) were held in youth care, in matters related to social support, in domestic violence cases, in matters related to problems in a district or neighborhood. In almost nine out of ten cases, the results were positive. Close to 10.000 citizens participated in a conference, many more citizens tackled their problems in their own circle. This State of Affairs offers you an overview of the progress made to date, working on a society in which it is normal to make a demand first on the resources that are available within a circle of people, when one of their own is facing problems.

Rob van Pagée
Board of directors Eigen Kracht Centrale

August 2011



From the figures on 2010

Right from the first Eigen Kracht-conference in 2001, data are registered. As in previous years, research bureau WESP provided the year figures. The 2010 report contains data on referrals, results and execution of the plans, and on the satisfaction of participants. The full report on the annual figures is available in Dutch on www.eigen-kracht.nl/inhoud/onderzoeksresultaten.

- In 2010, 826 requests for EK-c's were completed, an increase of over 20% as compared to 2009.
- The requests were from eleven provinces, most of them from the urban area of Amsterdam, the province of Overijssel and the urban area of Rotterdam.
- In 20% of the cases, the families themselves applied for a EK-c.
- Professional applicants are mostly CPS and institutions for youth & parenting help and disabled.
- The EK-c's are for families with children (81%) or for adults (19%).
- The number of applications for adults increased by 23%.
- The average number of problems per application is three
- In 95% of the situations the participants make a plan together.
- In 66% of the plan the own sources are complemented with a request for professional support.
- In 93% of the plans the participants arrange an evaluation meeting.
- An average of 12.1 persons attends an EK-c.
- About three months after the EK-c, two third of the respondents from professionals and family members feels that the situation has improved.
- About three months after the EK-c, 40% of the participants feel that the plan has been executed completely, 50% that the plan has been executed partially.

Satisfaction regarding Eigen Kracht-conferences:

	EK-c	Plan	Eigen Kracht-coordinator
Children	7.9	8.4	8.4
Adult participants	7.8	7.9	8.1
Professional applicants	7.6	7.4	7.7

Eigen Kracht-conference

a strong brand

In 2010, it was decided to give a uniform name to all different types of Eigen Kracht –conferences, because all varieties are based on the same principles: widening the circle, making a plan with people who are involved, and returning control to the people for whom the conference is initiated. If restoration is needed, or if, in a larger group, people don't not know each other very well, the work approach differs slightly. This goes for educational matters as well. The basics, including the position of an independent Eigen Kracht-coordinator, and the ownership of the plan, are the same in all cases. Names like Restorative Justice conference, All Hands-conference, Real Justice conference and Learning circle, have been abolished. In those cases where a distinction is desirable, the following additions are used:

- Eigen Kracht-conference for families and individuals:**
 - Who? Family or individual with family and acquaintances.
 - What? Making a plan to solve questions/matters/problems in their own lives.
- Eigen Kracht-conference after wrongdoing and/or crime:**
 - Who? Perpetrator and victim and both their families and acquaintances.
 - What? Repairing damage caused by intolerable behavior.
- Eigen Kracht-conference for group, neighborhood, or district:**
 - Who? Group(s) of people in a neighborhood, district, school or company.
 - What? Making a plan in cases of (public) nuisance.
- Eigen Kracht-conference for matters at school:**
 - Who? Pupil, teacher, family and acquaintances.
 - What? Making a plan to attend school and do homework.

Child Protection Law

On March 15, 2011, the Netherlands Parliament voted unanimously to amend the Child Protection Act. The Act now grants parents or guardians of a child the right to meet with family and other involved friends or close supporters to make their own plan regarding how to care for a child of concern. The right to meet and make a plan for a child comes as a first recourse before the state and courts are permitted to intervene. Under the new law, citizens are entitled "to construe an action plan, or to adapt an existing plan, within six weeks" of a case going to court. An exception is made only if "there are concrete threats to the development of the child, or if the interests of the child are otherwise at risk." While the Eigen Kracht conference model itself could not be written directly into the law, it is mentioned in the "Elucidation" of the amendment and will likely be the primary mode for families who choose to make their own plans. You can download the amendment at: www.iirp.org/pdf/Amendement-32015-ENG.pdf.

E-Circle

E-Circle is an interactive tool that supports the empowerment within family networks. These family networks consist of family members, friends and relatives that try to solve a problem with the help of a Family Group Conference. They can either do so with the help of a facilitator of the Centre for Restorative Practices in The Netherlands, or they can solve their family problem by mobilizing a network themselves. In both ways, E-Circle is a strong tool to coordinate the planning and communication of the network.

From the very first beginning the question, the plan and the tasks and responsibilities of the members are posted on the site. Every member of the network can post messages and photos, post and tick off tasks, express his own feelings or findings or read about others' in various ways. The online overview of all actions and communication keeps every member of the network informed and therefore involved. Easy planning and good communication are important conditions to keep up spirit.

E-Circle is developed in cooperation by the Eigen Kracht Centre and ShareCare. E-Circle is translatable and ready to be made available for other countries and languages. It can globally be distributed by country licenses.

The independent Eigen Kracht-coordinator

Eigen Kracht-coordinators are people from the community who support families in organizing their Eigen Kracht Conference. These coordinators are independent fellow citizens who do not interfere with the content of the plan. The fee they receive for a conference is not paid by any of the parties who have an interest in the outcome of the conference, which guarantees their independence. The enthusiasm with which coordinators relate about their function, inspires others to become a coordinator as well. And increasingly, people who participated in a conference for a family member or friend, want to become a Eigen Kracht-facilitator.

People of all ages apply. Their education ranges from little to high, and they have all kinds of professions. To become a Eigen Kracht-coordinator, applicants attend a six-day training at the Eigen Kracht-Centrale. The training consists of two parts. The first part (EK-1) deals with the EK-c work method for families and individuals. Apart from developing the necessary skills and insight in the model and the work method, this training entails a mutual selection procedure. At the end of the first three days, both the participants and the trainers have decided on the candidate's ability to initiate a first EK-c. When the candidate has completed two conferences, he or she is admitted to part two (EK-2) of the basic training. This training focuses on conferences for restorative justice and EK-c's for group, district,

or neighborhood. September 2011, the Eigen Kracht-coordinators numbered 556. They represent many different cultures and backgrounds, speaking 87 different languages and dialects. To keep up and improve their skills, national study days and regional intervention and training meetings were organized.

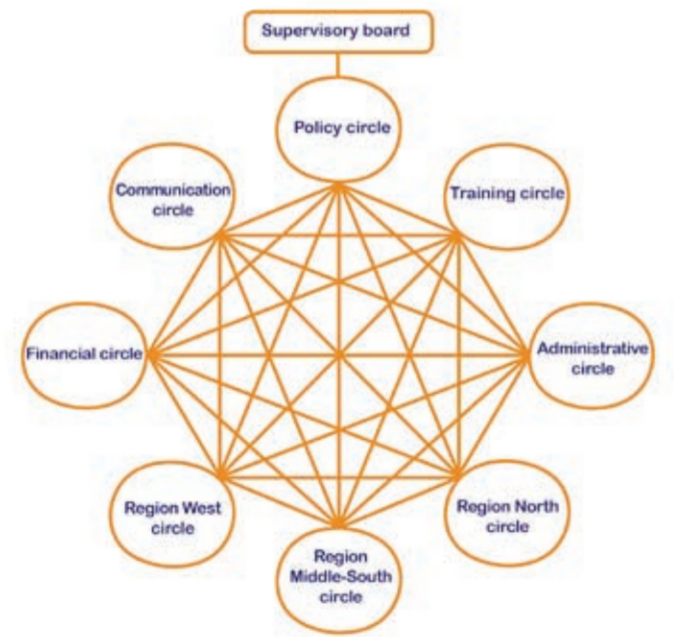
“Quite scary to talk about myself, but everyone was very nice. I never expected that.”
Mira 11 years, home alone too often



The Eigen Kracht Centrale as organization

Organization

In 2009, an organizational concept was developed, which was put into action in 2010. A number of core values, corresponding to the mission and vision of the Eigen Kracht Centrale, are bonding/relation/inclusion, balance, emergent, congruent, functional. In line with the vision on forming and connecting circles, the organization consists of a number of circles, by region as well as by theme. After a hesitant start, the experiences in the annual report are positive. The organogram below illustrates the new organizational structure.



The staff covers financial-administrative jobs, region management, coaching staff and board. This is excluding the over 500 community coordinators who actually facilitate conferences. They are contracted and paid per conference.

Communication

Recently EKC got attention from national television, the television program Dokument broadcast the film 'Met Eigen Kracht', in which Anemarie's family was followed during and after their EK-c for almost a year. Various national newspapers and magazines publishes articles on FGC for the general public. Also magazines for professionals wrote about EK-c.

Various brochures and flyers are published by our organization. A communication strategy is developed and recently a new website became available. The various possibilities of EK-c's were explained in new leaflets. A brochure was published on five years of EK-c's in the Province of Flevoland, another on the possibilities of EK-c's for elderly people, by evictions, by Child Protection and by vulnerable adults.

Recently a resource book about EK-c was published. This book is useful for anybody who wants to know more, including civil servants and other professionals.

The Eigen Kracht Centrale also produced short films in which EK-c participants share their experiences. Most of these films are English subtitled. These can be viewed on our website www.eigen-kracht.nl/nl/films or on youtube: www.youtube.com/eigenkrachtcentrale.

Supervisory Board

The Supervisory Board supervises the duties of the management. These comprise financial matters, personnel management, and strategy. The S.B. fulfilled an important role in this last area. The members of the S.B. are members of the community and were actively involved in various matters.



Costs of Eigen Kracht-conferences

In the annual report, the development of a cost system was completed. This marks a new mile stone in the financial policy. The costs of a FGC consists of three components:

1. Direct variable costs 54% of the total costs
2. Direct fixed costs 27% of the total costs
3. Indirect costs 18% of the total costs

A brochure is developed, in which the cost and the method of accountancy is described.

Automation

A future mile stone for 2011 has been announced in the annual report: an administrative and financial control system named Tosca. This system allows all staff to handle matters that are important to them, ranging from administrative and financial tasks to substantive activities.

Personnel

The number of personnel has increased again and to date in 2011, almost 40 staff are working within the organization (32 full time staff)

New-Zealand's gift to the world

In the eighties of the previous century, New Zealand encountered huge problems in youth care. Many children, especially from the Maori minority, were placed out of home. Looking for an answer to this problem, which increased because of an economic crisis, Maori, government officials, professionals and important leaders got together to develop a new, more modern Child Care System. This resulted in the 'Children, Youth and their Families Act', which was passed in 1989. Family Group Conference (FGC) was at the heart of this law: the family group has the first responsibility to come up with a plan containing a solution to the problem. This Act had some unforeseen consequences for youth care: family groups did not make a great demand on the available provisions. Judges, politicians and professionals in New Zealand consider the vision as laid down in the law as the way to conduct youth care. Through Australia, the United States,

the United Kingdom and Ireland, this inspiration reached Europe. In various countries, FGC is now embedded in the law. Contrary to many methods and approaches that come from afar, the knowledge on FGC is made available free of charge. Much (research) material is available without restrictions, without costly licenses or intervention procedures. Inspiring professionals from New Zealand, like Mike Doolan, former Chief Social Worker, are willing to come and give an account of their experience with this rigorous change in youth care. At www.eigen-kracht.nl/films you can find a video report.



Overview research

Eigen Kracht-conferences: results and cost benefits

Research shows that Eigen Kracht-conferences are effective, even in complex situations where youth care is involved, in cases of domestic violence, as well where so-called multi-problem families are concerned. The costs are relatively low, clients are satisfied, and in most cases the quality of the plan that families make is good, according to family as well as professionals. Most plans are executed, the problems are solved and escalation is prevented. In many cases, Eigen Kracht is effective as well as cost saving. This is because families use their own resources; instead of applying for residential care, as professionals might do, they arrange for help at home and for (network) foster care instead of residential youth care. Even if Dutch research into financial profits of Eigen Kracht has been done on a small scale only, the results are in line with international research into Family Group Conferencing (FGC).

The Dutch studies were done by various research bureaus and vary in framework and scale. The studies are about the Eigen Kracht Conference model only. Characteristic for this model is the independent Eigen Kracht coordinator, who has no attachment to a decision making or care giving institution. The Eigen Kracht centrale considers it important to emphasize that the costs and profits described below only happen in this particular setting. The Centrale thinks that taking the lead and participating in a decision making process is only possible when there is a balance of power. This is not the case when professionals in youth care facilitate the decision making process of families, as these professionals, by definition, then have two parts to play. Network approaches that are done by social care workers are therefore not included in this research. As stated above, the Dutch studies were conducted by various research bureaus; the following may be concluded about the effectiveness of Eigen Kracht-conferences:

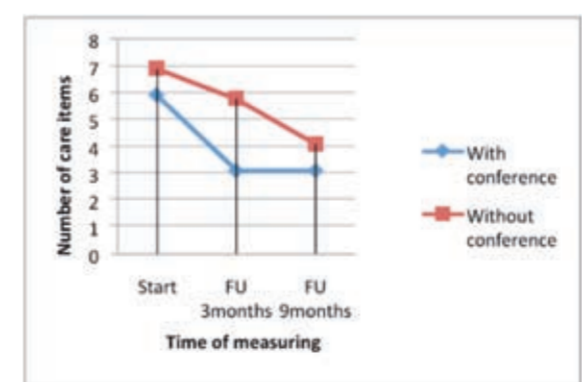
Promoting social cohesion

Eigen Kracht-conferences promote social cohesion. The circle of active participators around a family is enlarged. This is the first thing to happen when an Eigen Kracht-conference is initiated. An average of 13 persons takes part in an Eigen Kracht-conference. These people contribute their knowledge and cooperate in formulating and executing a plan. Children and young persons like the fact that their family and environment are working on a solution. The increase in social cohesion is consolidated after the conference and is still notable after 9 months. Parents indicate that they experience more support with parenting and need less support than at the time of the conference. Social cohesion improves the wellbeing of the social environment. Neglect by the social environment, neglecting the social environment and neglecting a child: these processes that interact and enhance each other may be stopped by an Eigen Kracht-conference.

Improvement of the child's situation

The execution of the plans that were made during an Eigen Kracht-conference, lead to an improvement of the situation of the child. The number of care items decreases. This happens noticeably faster than in situations where no Eigen Kracht-conference took place. Professionals as well as family members notice an improvement in safety and wellbeing of the child. Research into the use of Eigen Kracht-conferences in youth care proves that Eigen Kracht results are at least as good as regular practice, as far as promoting the safety of children is concerned. In cases of out-of-home placement, it is noteworthy that children are placed out-of-home for a shorter period of time and often find a place to stay with family and network.

Figure 1 - Change in the total number of care items for families with and without a conference



Reduce in care consumption

In New Zealand, where FGC is a legal right, the use of FGC has led to great changes: the number of children in government care was reduced by 60% and the number of court orders was reduced substantially. There are several indications that care consumption decreases in The Netherlands as well, when Eigen Kracht conferences are employed. Research into youth care shows that the number of care items decreases faster in families where a conference was held, than in families without a conference. This means that care is needed for a shorter period of time, which reduces the total amount of professional care. In youth care, the number of out-of-home placements is equal in families that did or did not have a Family Group-conference, but on average the placements are three months shorter and take place in network foster families more often. This is in line with the data that were gathered of all Family Group Conferences. These show that 48% of the children had a less drastic change in residence when they were placed out-of-home. It also

shows that families in youth care where a conference was planned but not held, received non-residential care more often. Also, the form of care they received was more severe.

Based on the preceding, it is to be expected that the use of Eigen Kracht-conferences is cost reducing. This is implicated by two studies. Research in Overijssel compared the plans of professionals with those of families, where 83% of professional help was substituted by help from family and network. A second research, in which the costs of social care in cases with an Eigen Kracht-conference were compared with the costs of comparable cases without Eigen Kracht-conference, showed substantial differences between the two. In cases where an Eigen Kracht-conference was held, (less expensive) network foster care was preferred over (more expensive) residential care.

Figure 2 - Costs of social care with and without EKC

Indication of costs per kind of help	Kind of file	Total costs (€)	Number of files	Average costs (€) per file
Residential care	EK-c	7,760	1	7.760
	Shadow group	89.920	6	14.990
Foster care	EK-c	44.530	7	6.360
	Shadow group	19.040	5	3.810
Non-residential care	EK-c	27.800	4	6.950
	Shadow group	36.660	5	7.330
Total amount of costs	EK-c	80.090	9	8.900
	Shadow group	145.630	9	16.180

Directorship more with families

Eigen Kracht-conferences contribute to a more demand-based care system. The emphasis is on empowerment, and activating the people who ask for care. There is a shift in focus of the problem: to what extend can this family carry its burden. Families and their environment make a plan themselves, usually after they have been informed by social care workers. They take directorship in making the plan, and usually they don't relinquish that directorship afterwards. Professionals as well as families judge that the directorship has come to rest more with the family, after the Eigen Kracht-conference. This means, amongst others, that families ask for help sooner when they think they need it, and that the amount of professional help in the family has decreased. A side effect of this shift in directorship is that professionals (re)consider their part in the cooperation with families. Because of the conference, they get to know more people from the network.

Effective in complicated situations

The Eigen Kracht-conference can be used, and is effective, in complicated situations. The effects and profits described above happen in families with multiple problems, within youth care as well as outside youth care. The opinion that Eigen Kracht-conferencing cannot be used in youth care is not supported by research. The same goes for the use of Eigen Kracht-conferencing in families with complex problems or in situations where domestic violence is an issue. <http://www.eigen-kracht.nl/en/inhoud/research>

