

### 3.1

#### Evaluation of outcomes and processes of the "Growing up Together" Programme of Workshops with Parents

In order to respect the principle of the development of the programme to support parents in a partnership with the participants and leaders of the workshops, and in order to obtain evidence of the effectiveness of the Programme in reaching its aims, two cycles of an experimental programme implementation were carried out. Both cycles were systematically and continuously evaluated during their implementation. The first experimental implementation of a programme consisting of 10 workshops was carried out in 13 kindergartens from October to December 2008. Afterwards, based on the evaluation results, the necessary changes were made in the programme, which was then evaluated again in the second experimental implementation in 25 kindergartens, from March to June 2009. The main **results of the internal evaluation of the outcomes and processes of the second experimental implementation of a programme** consisting of eleven workshops will be presented here.

The results are based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from the parents and leaders during and after the programme. Each workshop was subject to a project evaluation, in which *the reports of the leader teams* on their own impressions of each activity and the perceived impressions of the parents were analysed. Furthermore, *feedback written by the parents*, provided by them after each workshop, was also used. For the purpose of the evaluation, the parents who participated in the programme, but also parents not involved in the programme, completed a survey before and after the workshop cycle. Finally, the workshop participants completed another evaluation survey after the workshop cycle.

As was mentioned above, the general aim of the "Growing up Together" Programme of Workshops with Parents is to develop beliefs, values and behaviours in line with positive and non-violent parenting that promotes the rights of the child, and to improve parental competences. Each workshop had its specific aims regarding individual parental attitudes or behaviours, which together enable the general aim of the Programme to be achieved.

The purpose of the Programme outcome evaluations was to test whether and to what extent the planned aims are being realised, or to learn how participating in workshops affects certain parental thoughts, feelings, behaviours and assumptions of how they would behave in given situations.

The key questions of the evaluation were the following:

- (1) Does participating in the Workshop Programme affect the parents' beliefs about the attitude towards a small child, including their opinions on corporal punishment?
- (2) Does participating in the Workshop Programme affect the subjective experience of parenting? Does it increase the feeling of parental competence and contentment in the parental role? Does it reduce parental stress?
- (3) Does participating in the Workshop Programme increase the frequency of desirable parental behaviours (reading a picture book to the child) and the likelihood of positive parental reactions to the child's unpleasant emotions? Does it reduce the frequency of undesirable parental behaviours (shouting and hitting the child) and the likelihood of negative parental reactions to the child's unpleasant emotions?

The draft of the evaluation research was a double draft with an untreated control group (Milas, 2000). Those were initially non-uniformed groups of parents who participated in the Workshop Programme (N = 231) and those who did not respond to an invitation to participate (N = 348).

The data for both groups were collected by means of a "Survey for the Parents" before and after the Workshop Programme. The Survey consists of (parts of) other surveys and questions designed for the purpose of this evaluation research.

"Survey on the Beliefs Regarding the Attitude towards Children of the Earliest Age" (Pećnik, Radočaj and Tokić, in print), abridged form, consists of ten statements reflecting a series of attitudes in connection with parental treatment of a small child, with which the parents could agree or disagree in various degrees. Those were the following: *the attitudes on the detrimental effects of too much warmth* (e.g. too much praise and tenderness can spoil the child), *obedience and subordination of a small child to adults* (e.g. it is important to break the child's defiance and stubbornness in a good time because it's easy to bend a tree when it's young), *unnecessariness of induction* (e.g. it is not necessary to explain to a child aged 1-3 why something is not allowed), *justification of not responding to a child's crying* (e.g. small children often cry without a reason, which is best ignored), and *justification of corporal punishment* (e.g. it is sometimes necessary to strike the child to raise them well).

Parental stress was measured using an adapted "parental stress scale" (Gottlieb, 1997), which includes seven adjectives. The participants answered how often they as parents felt stressed, worried, nervous, angry, unhappy, emotionally exhausted and unconfident in themselves.

The subjective feeling of parental confidence was measured using the "parental competence self-assessment questionnaire" (Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman, 1978). Two constructs were measured: *the parental (dis)satisfaction with the fulfilment of their parental role* and *the perceived efficacy in the parental role*. The parental assessment of their satisfaction with the perceived effectiveness in the parental role is related to the feeling of parental competence, closeness with the parental role, and problem-solving abilities (Sanders, 2005). The efficacy self-assessment was related to *parenting skills*.

Parental reactions to their children's unpleasant emotions, i.e. the parental assumptions regarding their own behaviour in a given situation were measured using two questions borrowed from the scale of parental reactions to their children's negative emotions (Fabes et al., 1990). The answers offered are typical parental reactions to situations in which the child expresses unpleasant emotions (fear and sadness), like anxiety, punishment, encouraging, focusing on emotions, focusing on problem solving and reducing the gravity of the situation, or the child's experience in connection with the problem.

Finally, the parents reported on their behaviour in the past seven days, namely on *the frequency of reading* a picture book with the child, *shouting* at the misbehaving child, and *hitting* the child's hand and bottom.

The survey was anonymous, with a code that enabled the surveys completed before and after the Workshop Programme to be matched. There were approximately 200 matched valid surveys.

The results of the comparison of the answers of the survey participants (N = 200) to the survey for the parents before and after the programme will be shown separately for parental beliefs, the subjective experience of parenting, and parental actual and hypothetical behaviours.



### Parental beliefs regarding their attitude towards the child

Statistically significant differences were identified in the degree of parental agreement with each of the examined beliefs regarding their attitude towards a small child. Thus **parents AFTER the Workshop Programme BELIEVE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN BEFORE THE WORKSHOPS THAT:**

- × it is not necessary to explain to a child aged 1-3 why something is not allowed;
- × if some unpleasant experience (going away, an injection) awaits a child, it is best not to say anything to them in advance, and the unpleasant feelings will pass sooner;
- × small children often cry for no reason, and therefore it is best to ignore them;
- × limits should not be set for small children because it restricts their personal freedom;
- × too much praise and cuddling will spoil the child;
- × it is important to break the child's defiance and stubbornness in a good time because *it is easy to bend a tree when it is young*;
- × sometimes it is justified to hit the child if they jeopardise their life, e.g. when they climb onto the window sill or wander into the road;
- × it is justified to hit the child during their temper tantrum;
- × it is justified to hit the child if they have hit somebody else, to show them how much it hurts;
- × it is sometimes necessary to hit the child to raise them well.

Those results of the comparison of parental beliefs before and after the Workshop Programme indicate that they shift toward a stronger acceptance of the child and parental actions that respect the child's dignity and recognise the child as a person. Since no differences in parental beliefs were identified in the control group in the two measuring instances, it was concluded that the Programme has an impact on the beliefs regarding the desirable attitude of the parents towards children of the earliest age, and that it weakens the attitudes of the unnecessariness of induction, detrimental effects of too much warmth, need for the child to be subordinate to adults, justification of ignoring the child's crying, and justification of corporal punishment.

### The subjective experience of parenting

The reduction of parental stress reported by the parents at the end of the Workshop Programme is near the limit of statistical significance. Significant differences were identified at two points – after the Programme, the participants felt stressed and worried less frequently as parents.

The feeling of parental confidence was increased after the end of the Programme. A significant difference was identified between the parental efficacy self-assessment before and after the Workshop Programme. **AFTER the Programme, the parents feel more effective in their parental role.**

However, no significant reduction in dissatisfaction with the fulfilment of one's parental role was identified after the Programme; it only approached the limit of statistical significance.

Since no significant difference in the intensity of parental stress, perceived parental efficacy and dissatisfaction with the fulfilment of one's parental role were identified in the parents who did not participate in the workshops, the differences found in the parents who participated in the workshops were likely a result of the participation in the Programme. The limited scope of the Programme in the reduction of parental stress and dissatisfaction should be noted.

### Hypothetical parental behaviours

In the parents who participated in the Programme, several differences were found regarding their hypothetical reactions to their children's unpleasant emotions. After the workshops, the parents are more inclined to, reacting on their child's fear of injections, encourage the child to talk about their fear, and less inclined to belittle their child's fear and telling them not to embarrass them by crying.

In their likely reactions to their child's sadness due to having forgotten their favourite toy upon coming to the kindergarten, the parents are, AFTER the Programme, more inclined to support their child's expression of sadness by crying, and to encourage their child to solve problems. At the same time, they are less likely to preach (*this wouldn't have happened if you'd kept it in mind*) and belittle their child's feelings by saying that they overreact.

With regard to the parents who were not involved in the Programme, no differences in the answers to the two surveys were identified in the first situation. In the second hypothetical situation, it was found that, after the Workshop Programme, the parents were readier than before to become nervous due to their child's crying and forgetfulness, but also to tell their child that it is all right to cry if they are sad.

With regard to the statements above, the changes in the hypothetical reactions to the child's fear and sadness, found in the Programme participants (i.e. the readiness for a greater understanding, recognition and support to the child with a problem) could largely be ascribed to the effects of the Programme. That development of the parents' sensitivity to their children's right to be heard and accepted with all their feelings, as well as their ability to cope with problems and emotions, was one of the specific aims of the Programme.

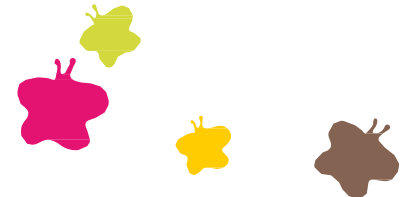
Along with the questions on the reactions of the parents to their child's expression of problems and unpleasant feelings, additional analyses of the answers to an open-ended question regarding a hypothetical situations were carried out during the first experimental implementation of the workshops (Velemir and Kašuba,2009). The parents were asked to state how they would react and what they would say if their child said to them when leaving the kindergarten that another child had hit them that day. A qualitative analysis of the answers given by 198 parents was carried out in order to examine how the parents react to such situations, and whether there are any changes in their reactions after their participation in the Workshop Programme. The parents' answers were classified into the following categories:

- × Encouragement for expressing unpleasant emotions (e.g.: *It's alright to be sad; It's alright to cry when you're sad; encouraging the child to say what made them angry or sad*);
- × Comforting the child (e.g.: *I comfort my child and do something funny; I comfort my child and start a game to fend off bad thoughts*);
- × Solving problems together (e.g.: *I help my child to find the ways to react in a similar situation*);
- × Reducing the severity of the problem (e.g.: *It's not so bad; It wasn't intentional*);
- × Giving advice (e.g.: *Tell it to the teacher!; Tell him you won't be friends with him any longer*);
- × Lecturing, preaching (e.g.: *Children should get along, not fight; Good children don't do that*);
- × Interpreting (e.g.: *He did that to attract attention*);
- × Questioning, doubt, interrogation (e.g.: *Why?; What did you do to him?!*);
- × The parent solves the problem with the teacher.

It was established that, after the Workshop Programme, the parents are much more likely to encourage their child to express unpleasant emotions and comfort their child, and much less likely to preach or lecture their child.

### Parental behaviours

The survey for the parents gathered data on the frequency of reading picture books, yelling and hitting the child in the past seven days. While no differences were discovered in the relatively high frequency of reading a picture book with the child before and after the Programme, there were differences in the frequency of undesirable forms of parental interaction with the child. The differences show that **AFTER the workshops the parents report a significantly lower frequency of yelling at their child who disobeys, and lower frequency of hitting their child on the hand and bottom.**



It is interesting to note that a change in the frequency of the behaviours concerned after the Programme was found even in the group of parents who did not participate in it, compared to the frequency prior to the Programme. Thus parents in the second survey read a picture book with their child less frequently, but there are also lower incidences of yelling at their child or hitting their hand or bottom. The reduction in the frequency of corporal punishment can be mostly ascribed to the messages on the inappropriate nature of punishment sent to the parents from different sources in that period – from the teachers at parent-teacher meetings, through educational leaflets in kindergartens, to the media campaign against corporal punishment.

The results of the comparison of undesirable parental behaviour towards the child before and after the Programme in the workshop participants are in accordance with the set aims of the Programme. However, because the positive changes were also identified in the group of parents who did not participate in the Programme, it is difficult to ascribe those changes to the effects of the Programme. Still, less yelling and hitting by parents who participated in the workshops can justly be explained by their participation. This is corroborated with the answers to the open-ended questions on the changes in their own behaviour and personal gains from the Programme that the participants gave in the evaluation survey at the end of the Programme.

In total, the changes in the parental attitudes toward the child, increase of the feeling of competence, altered actual and hypothetical behaviour in the workshop participants, and comparison of these changes with the changes in parents who did not participate in the Programme offer **the initial validation of the effectiveness of the “Growing up Together” Programme of Workshops with Parents.**

It must be noted that a generalisation of this conclusion on the effectiveness of the Programme as regards the changing of certain parental attitudes and behaviours is restricted by certain factors. The data which yielded the results were collected on a double selected sample – the parents who participated in the workshops and who attended regularly until the conclusion. And parents who were not involved in the Programme, but who agreed to complete the survey twice; they are probably more educated and readier to evaluate their parenting than other parents in the population. Furthermore, the restrictions are also a result of the flaws in data collection, particularly the survey for the parents. For practical reasons, i.e. the need to keep the instrument brief, the reliability and validity of the measures used were reduced, and so they offer only a *rough picture* and enable drawing conclusions on trends.

The evaluation of the outcomes of participation in the Programme was also completed with *qualitative data*. An **evaluation survey for the "Growing up Together" Programme**, which included seven open-ended questions, was used to collect them. During the final, eleventh session, a total of 194 participants from 24 kindergartens completed the survey.

Two leaders conducted an analysis of the answers. We present the most frequent categories of answers for individual questions, with several examples for each category.

### **Question 1: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE GREATEST BENEFIT FOR YOU?**

#### **× More confidence and self-esteem**

- *I am more confident than before that I am doing some things right; criticism from others worries me less.*
- *I am confident in myself and my actions. I am more tolerant in some situations.*
- *I am much calmer in educating my child, I no longer feel helpless and out of control.*
- *I am more confident and calmer, and so the atmosphere in our house is much more pleasant.*
- *I see I am on the right path.*
- *I know now that I am not a bad parent.*
- *My confidence in raising my children has been boosted, and I worry less about the possibility to do something "wrong" in the relationship with my child.*

#### **× Increased insight in personal growth as a parent**

- *Noticing my own mistakes and finding ways to correct them.*
- *The knowledge that I don't have to be a perfect parent.*
- *The knowledge that we learn and develop, or grow, every day.*
- *The knowledge that I can change for the better, with my own and professional help.*

#### **× Changed behaviour toward the child**

- *I have expanded my horizons regarding raising children, I have changed some "methods" that made neither me nor my children happy.*
- *I have improved my communication with my child, as well as with my own family.*
- *Patience, active listening.*



- *New ways to solve problems.*
- *I am more persistent.*
- *I am more relaxed and more concentrated.*
- *I listen to my children more.*
- *We play more.*

× ***Acquiring new knowledge and attitudes***

- *The realisation that there are different ways to raise children from those that I have been applying up to this point.*
- *Changing parental attitudes.*
- *Certain new useful knowledge.*
- *Four pillars of parenting.*
- *Setting limits.*
- *I learned how to communicate.*
- *I learned how to solve problems.*
- *I learned how to control myself not to punish my child.*
- *Neither my child nor me have to be perfect!*

× ***Better understanding of the child's needs and point of view***

- *I believe I have realised how my child functions, (so I pay more attention to them).*
- *I have become more tolerant; I understand my child and their needs better.*
- *Having persisted in attending the workshops and learning something new each time, especially a perspective on things. I believe I see many things now from the perspective of my child.*
- *I recognise my child's needs better.*
- *I understand why they behave in a certain way.*

× ***Experiences of other parents, similar dilemmas and problems, feeling of not being alone***

- *I realised I was not the only one who had problems with children.*
- *The realisation that all parents have problems and dilemmas.*

× **Encouragement to enjoy quality time and activities together**

- *I enjoy the growth and development of my children more frequently and with more emotions.*
- *We spend more time as a family.*
- *The importance of more quality time with the child.*
- *I learned how to make myself and my child happy in many simple ways.*

× **Support to satisfying one's own needs**

- *I am now aware that it is important to satisfy my own needs too.*
- *I learned how to reduce stress and anxiety.*

The analysis of the parents' answers shows that they see their personal gains from the participation in the Programme with a **greater feeling of parental competence, sensitivity regarding the point of view and needs of their child, knowledge about different ways of treating the child, and communication skills**. These gains are in line with the aims of the workshops.

Since the ultimate purpose of the support to parents is to improve the well-being of the child and fulfil their development potential, we were also interested in identifying potential **changes for the child** due to their parent's participation in the workshops. Therefore, the parents also gave their answers to the following question on the benefits in connection with their child.

**Question 2: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST USEFUL BENEFIT FOR YOUR CHILD?**

× **Changes in the parent's attitude towards the child**

- *She got a calmer, more responsive and gentler mother, who decided to follow her pace.*
- *My girls got a mother who understands them better, who doesn't yell, who talks more, who plays a lot – who is happier with herself and her life, which reflects on them.*
- *Deepening our relationship and bonding with the father.*
- *He got better parents, and his childhood is now filled with games, laughter and security due to clear limits.*
- *With the help of the workshops I realised that my child doesn't always mean to defy me, and so I approached some problems differently; my children are now happier.*

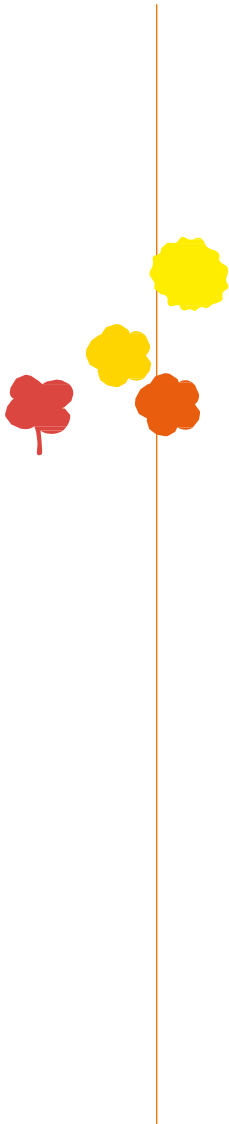
- *I react more calmly (not always) to some forms of my child's behaviour because now I understand them.*
- *They got a mother who respects them better, who sees the world more with their eyes who will try to put herself in their shoes.*
- *We spend more quality time together, so they feel happier and more loved; we have improved our communication, and there is less tension between us.*
- *A calmer relationship with me.*
- *A better relationship: more talking, less shouting.*
- *In my Personal Growth as a Parent Companion I entered that I felt better connected with my daughter, that I trust her, and that she trusts me.*

From those typical answers to that question, it is evident that the parents believe **that their child has got a calmer, more patient, happier parent who listens more, talks more, pays more attention to the child, and invests more effort, sees things from the child's perspective, and recognises their needs, all due to the workshops.** These results too are in line with the aims of the Programme.

The workshops cover a relatively wide scope of topics – on parenthood and parenting, children, communication skills for developing good relationships – we were interested to learn which ones were the most interesting and most useful to them. Therefore, we also asked them the following two questions.

**Question 3: WHICH TOPICS LEFT THE BIGGEST IMPRESSION ON YOU?**

- × *Topics connected with concrete communication techniques and strategies*
  - *I-messages (they're really powerful).*
  - *Listening to the child and clear communication.*
  - *I-messages – they made me think about how my verbal messages affect my child.*
  - *The topic I'm still afraid to start earnestly is setting limits, but I hope I'll do that soon.*
- × *Topics connected with parenting in the best interests of the child (the four pillars of parenting), parental aims and responsibilities*



- *Focusing on long-term aims and setting everyday rules accordingly.*
- *Responsibility towards the child.*
- *The traps of parenting of all topics because they made me aware of my most frequent mistakes as a parent.*
- × ***Topics connected with the development and needs of the child, the way in which the child learns about the world, and with communication and emotional dialogue***
  - *The child's need for autonomy.*
  - *The games and how to see them from the eyes of the child who grows up with them.*
  - *The topics about the child's feelings and those in which we shared our pleasant experiences with our children.*
- × ***All of the topics are equally important and interesting***
  - *Personally, I found my favourite part in each one of them.*
  - *It's difficult to name one. Something from every topic.*
- × ***Topics connected with parents as persons***
  - *The topics about the personal growth of the parent – because we cannot improve our relationship with the child without working on ourselves.*
  - *Emphasis on how the child and I feel.*

**Question 4: WHAT OF THE THINGS YOU LEARNED WILL YOU APPLY IN YOUR LIFE?**

- × ***Everything***
  - *I'll try to apply everything.*
  - *I already apply a lot of things, I'm trying.*
  - *I'd be happy to apply everything! (...) especially "the child only behaves in the way it knows".*
  - *I'll try to apply everything; I can recognise most situations now and recall the advice from the workshops, which is of great help to me...*
- × ***Communication skills***
  - *listening, I-messages, feedback, limits...*
  - *definitely I-messages, active listening, I'll try to learn it.*



- *Appropriate communication with the child.*

× ***Greter focus on the child and their needs***

- *I'll be more focused on my child.*
- *I'll watch out for my child's needs.*
- *We'll spend more quality time together (understanding, listening, playing, reading).*
- *I'll talk to my child, think of additional activities.*
- *More play and inventiveness in everyday life.*
- *From the limits that need to be set, to the love and attention that need to be given.*

× ***Kindness***

- *I will be calmer.*
- *Being a patient, kind, warm and tolerant parent.*
- *Continue to unconditionally love and care for my child, and be happy for being a parent.*

× ***Direction without violence***

- *I will not hit her.*
- *I learned how to approach my child in some situations in which I didn't know how to react before.*

× ***Acknowledging the child as a person, empowerment***

- *I will respect my child; listen to what he has to say.*
- *Understand the child as a complete person, respect his interests.*
- *I learned how to apply agreements, i.e. involving the child in decision making.*

× ***More realistic expectations from the child and oneself***

- *I won't expect her to be perfect; I myself am sometimes in a bad mood, so she can betoo.*

× ***I'll find the time for myself***

- *I'll try to be available to my child, in accordance withmy needs, calmer and happier.*

**× Other**

- *I'll apply what is necessary to satisfy my own and my child's needs.*
- *Now my "weaknesses" are clearer to me, so I'll pay more attention to them and make more effort.*
- *A glance at the Personal Growth Companion is a good enough reminder what I still have to work on.*

The parents usually reply that all of the topics of the Workshop Programme were important and useful to them, and that they found their place when it came to meeting their needs. In addition, they state that they try to apply everything they have learned to their relationship with their child, especially the things that contribute to a better understanding. Among some specific points that were singled out as the most salient and applicable ones were communication skills and a greater sensitivity for the child's needs, as well as their own. As was the case with the previously described results, it is evident that those are parental attitudes and behaviours that the Workshop Programme intended to develop or strengthen.

The "Growing up Together" Programme of Workshops with Parents offers a variety of written materials that the parents usually read at home. As a part of the evaluation, we were also interested in the opinion of the parents on the usefulness of the written materials, and therefore we asked them the following question:

**Question 5: WHICH WRITTEN MATERIALS WERE USEFUL TO YOU?**

- *Mostly all of them, because I understand more as I read them.*
- *All of them, but one has to read them; everything is a good reminder.*
- *They helped me accept myself as an imperfect parent.*
- *They will be useful because I will keep coming back to them.*
- *Absolutely all of them, I took them so they're always close at hand.*
- *I used some of them at work... borrowed them to others as well.*
- *I enjoyed reading them every day.*
- *I've read them all; everything was simple, useful and clear.*
- *Depending on the situation, all materials are useful – there should be more of them.*
- *All of them, plus the games we learned.*

- *I've read each of them a dozen times.*
- *I'll revise the materials together with my family.*
- *All of them. My husband has also read them and commented them with me, and we can ultimately apply some behaviour that the materials made us aware of, and which is in the interest of our children.*
- *For example, my husband no longer says to our son, who often expresses his wishes loudly: "Don'yell!", but rather: "I like it when you're speaking softly".*

From the typical answers it is evident that the parents usually stated that the materials given to them were useful and interesting, and most of the parents mentioned individual materials that were the most useful to them. All of the materials included in the Parent's Folder were spontaneously mentioned.

Finally, we asked the parents about their fulfilled and unfulfilled expectations, and about their suggestions for the improvement of the Workshop Programme. The following is the list of some of the most frequent answers.

**Question 6: WHICH OF YOUR EXPECTATIONS WERE FULFILLED, AND WHICH ONES WERE NOT?**

**× Fulfilled expectations**

- *The workshops helped me very much, and the written materials were useful to my husband.*
- *There weren't any expectations that weren't met; the goal was to better understand the needs of the child and the parents.*
- *The workshops more than fulfilled my expectations. Everything that I can apply I consider to be a benefit.*
- *I got some answers to the questions that troubled me, in connection with parenting.*
- *I was hoping for ready-made solutions, but now I know it's not realistic, and that those don't exist – I feel better now.*
- *I faced both my good and bad sides. I can apply some advice as recipes. Some remain too idealistic, but are at least useful to see in what ways a certain problem can be approached.*
- *I received help in raising my child, now I'm growing along with my child.*
- *I have expanded my horizons regarding raising children; I have changed some "methods" that made neither me nor my children happy.*



- *Even more than I expected, because we discussed some things people don't even think about, they take them for granted.*
  - *All of my expectations were met.*
  - *I didn't expect anything, but I'm pleased, happy and thankful.*
  - *My expectations were exceeded, every parent should come.*
  - *We got confidence in our parenting skills; I confirmed that I was a good parent. I criticise less.*
  - *I learned something new – How to better understand my child; a lot of examples and theory.*
  - *I became more patient, tolerant; I'm now closer to my child, I understand him better, I listen, we play.*
  - *I reformulated the way I talk; there are no recipes in child rearing, the choices are mine.*
  - *I'm not alone with my problem; I don't have to be perfect.*
  - *I realised I'm allowed to take care of myself too.*
  - *Fun, laughter, new friends, an exchange of experiences.*
  - *I expected being "lectured" on how to raise my child. Already after the first workshop I was exhilarated.*
- × **Unfulfilled expectations**
- *I learned much, but I haven't communicated it well enough to my family.*
  - *They weren't met: persistence and courage; I still yell; I don't set limits; I lack consistency, limits and rules, listening skills...; I still yell.*
  - *We haven't resolved all of my problem situations; I need more concrete solutions.*
  - *New horizons of parenting opened up to me, but I must still learn and work on my patience.*
  - *I am more tolerant, calmer, but still have to work on my self – on the idea that not everything is my fault.*
  - *Many of my expectations were met, most of all respecting the wishes of my child, and kindness shown to my child. We don't spend enough time together; we don't play, hear and see each other enough.*
  - *Despite the behaviour considered to be justified, my child does not react in the way he should, but rather as he wishes.*

**Question 7: WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE? THE WORKSHOPS WOULD BE BETTER IF...**

× **Nothing**

- *I'm very pleased, I wouldn't change anything.*
- *They couldn't be better.*

× **More time for discussing real situations and the parents exchanging experience**

- *I would only add more questions and answers from our everyday life.*
- *More time, less topics and tasks in one session.*
- *I wish they'd last longer, for there to be more of them.*

× **More skill practice**

- *More practical examples, more practising with tasks.*
- *More concrete exercises or rehearsals.*

× **Number of parents at the workshop and their profiles**

- *More parents in the group (there were five of them).*
- *Less parents at the workshop (up to eight).*
- *For both parents to participate, for there to be more fathers.*

× **Other**

- *A bigger psychological aspect of the topics at every workshop (working with a psychologist).*
- *Let the parents choose a topic.*
- *More advertising, more workshops.*
- *The leaders should be involved in all group work as parents.*
- *We could attend the final workshop with our children.*



The answers listed above show that the parents were very pleased with the workshops, and that their expectations were largely met. They lacked the time for resolving some practical issues in their relationship with their children. The fact that the majority of the parents stress that the Workshop Programme should last longer, with more parents involved, or with both parents, also speaks in favour of the success of the Programme.

Finally, we bring a message sent by a participant to the leaders after the workshop cycle:

Here is a sentence that summarises my reflections on the past eleven Tuesdays well:  
*The workshop empowered me to persist in the things that I realised were good, "forced" me to become aware of what I did wrong, and directed me on the path to fix it. I hope I'll succeed. Thank you!*

The feedback of several parents whose wives participated in the workshops can also serve as an additional indicator of the effects of the Programme. When asked whether they knew what was being done at the workshops, they replied that they had talked about that with their wives, and discussed how appropriate it was for their families. They stated that they noticed their wives were more patient and calmer with children. Here are some of the greatest changes they noticed since their wives started participating in the workshops:

- *The most obvious change is that my wife has become even more successful in her communication with our child, compared to me.*
- *She now thinks even more about what she does, why she does it, what the consequences and the results will be. The workshops surely contributed to that.*

In the end, they added they were interested in participating in the workshops.

Apart from the parents, the data on the effects of the Programme were also collected from the leaders. In their reports following each workshop, they recorded their own reactions, as well as the reactions of the parents to each activity carried out. Based on the insight into the difficulties, vagueness and bad experience, individual activities were changed and/or improved. However, in the course of the Programme implementation, especially in the reports of the leaders from the final session, the following messages were the most frequent:

- The workshops were extremely well accepted by the parents.
- The workshops reached their aim, and we all grew together.

Based on the data collected during the evaluation, it can be concluded that the “Growing up Together” Programme of Workshops with Parents fulfilled its purpose because it enabled the participants to question their parental beliefs, values and behaviours, to exchange their experience with other parents and professional leaders, and to grow personally as parents.

The answers of the parents point to the fact that a substantial number of the parents accepted the four pillars of parenting as their own parental value, or that they integrated the knowledge, values and beliefs in connection with parenting that respects and promotes the rights of the child in the family into their own parental identity.

If we recall changes in the behaviour and in relation to the child that they showed, it can be concluded that the Programme is able to achieve its planned aims, and that it can be considered to be an evidence-based intervention for a general/developmental support to parents.

### 3.2

#### Who accepts the invitation to participate in the "Growing up Together" Programme of Workshops with Parents, and who does not?

Apart from documenting the ability of the Programme to produce the planned effects, we were interested in learning to what extent the intention of the Programme to act as a general prevention programme, or to provide support to all parents, is being achieved. Therefore we, along with the evaluation questions, also explored the following questions:

- × *Who accepts the invitation to participate in the “Growing up Together” Programme of Workshops with Parents, and who does not?*
- × *Who are the beneficiaries of the Programme?*

In order to identify the characteristics of the parents involved in the Programme, as well as those who choose not to participate, we have compared the data collected at the beginning of the Programme, from the group of parents who participated (N = 231) and the group of parents who did not (N = 348). Unfortunately, those samples of parents who agreed to participate in the research are still selected.

**The results of the comparison of socio-demographic characteristics of parents who did or did not participate in the Programme** show that there are significant differences in their level of education, number and age of children, and ratio of sexes in both groups of parents.

**The parents who participated in the Workshop Programme** are, on average, **more educated** than those who did not. 39 % of those parents completed secondary education, 14.7 % graduated from a college, and 37.3 % have university-level education. On the other hand, among the parents who did not participate in the workshops, the majority of them has completed secondary education (53.2 %), 12.9 % graduated from a college, and 23.9 % have university-level education.

Another difference is in the number of children. The parents who participated in the workshops have, on average, **fewer children** than those who did not, and their children are **younger**. Thus the oldest child of the parents involved in the Programme is 3.9 years old, and the oldest child of the parents notinvolved is 4.8 years old.

There are **fewer fathers** in the group of participating parents (6.6 %), than among the parents who did not participate in the Programme (12.4 %).

**There are no age differences** among the parents who participated in the workshops and those who did not. Their average age is 32-33. There are also no differences in the number of adults in the household between those two groups of parents. The proportion of single-parent families is 9 %.

**A comparison of the subjective experience of parenting, parental beliefs and behaviours among the parents who were or were not involved in the Programme** resulted in the following.

**The parents involved in the Workshop Programme** are characterised by **a greater level of parental stress** and **a greater dissatisfaction with their parental role** than those who were not involved.

**The parents who participated in the workshops**, compared to those who did not, **agree less strongly with some outdated beliefs in connection with their attitude towards their child**. Thus the parents who did not participate in the workshops believe more that it is better to ignore their child's crying, that it is not desirable to set limits to their child, that too much praise will spoil their child, that it is sometimes necessary to hit their child, and that it is justified to hit their child during the child's temper tantrum.



It is interesting to note that there were no differences in the examined behaviours towards the child in the past seven days in neither group of parents. Both read a picture book to their child, shouted at their child or hit their child equally often.

Overall, we established that the Workshop Programme attracted more educated parents with fewer children, who were under more parental stress and who were less satisfied with themselves as parents. Their beliefs regarding their relationship with their children show a somewhat greater acknowledgement of the child as a person, and more sensitivity for the child's needs, while their behaviours differ little from the behaviour of the parents who were not involved in the Programme.

These findings confirm the previous impression of the leader teams, that the workshops are attended by parents who are more inclined to pursue the best interests of the child, and who are more motivated for questioning and improving their own parenting skills. This raises questions regarding the realisation of the universal right of each child for their parents to receive appropriate support in fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

The results of the comparison of the parents who were involved in the Programme and those who were not indicate a need to invest additional efforts in overcoming obstacles to creating a support programme used by a great number of parents. It is likely that the open invitation, the same for all parents, is not enough to ensure *equal accessibility* to all parents. Perhaps it is necessary to invest more effort in inviting, motivating and informing parents with a lower level of education and/or more traditional beliefs, as well as in listening to their reactions and needs. It is even more likely that some objective obstacles regarding the participation of less-educated parents in the Programme (e.g. working in shifts, jobs on the side, babysitting) need to be overcome by choosing different times of the day for the sessions or by making other adjustments.

