

Eigen Kracht



Information about the implementation of FGC in the Netherlands

Since 2001 there has been experience with implementing FGC, which in the Netherlands, locally named Eigen Kracht-conferences. Conferences enable citizens in vulnerable positions to assume responsibility for their own problems and conflicts. Even in difficult circumstances citizens appear able to work with their family and friends towards effective solutions and safe plans. When conflicts are involved, a great deal can be accomplished too, whether it be within a large or small network of people. Saying out loud what has happened and how this affected people, the negativity is lessened and opens the way for positivity and a plan for restoration. A simple, effective and inexpensive approach.

It is also compatible with the times in which we are living today. It echoes what is intended by the Dutch Social Support Act (WMO) with regard to 'participation': stimulating people to devise solutions for problems that arise in their own social environment. Also the Dutch Youth Care Act emphasizes the coping capacity of families. At the heart of this legislation is reinforcing the position of the client and ensuring that help is based on the client's request.

Though these objectives sound good in theory, professionals continue to dominate the implementation of these laws. Despite the intentions of legislators, it is not easy for clients – or rather citizens – to maintain control over their own problems and conflicts. Their say in the matter is all too easily taken over and solved by professionals and their organizations applying their knowledge and expertise. Meanwhile, the resources and talents that citizens and their networks have at their disposal are often passed over. After all, the professional usually has no knowledge of these resources and talents and knows even less about the citizen's environment in which these are to be found. We now know that this attitude is unnecessary and that things can really be done differently. Let citizens themselves have the first chance to take responsibility for a plan and arrive at a decision. Take advantage of their 'eigen kracht' (literally: own capabilities or strengths) first.

Examples of such situations:

- * In case of Child Welfare and Protection;
- * In case of putting an end to domestic violence;
- * Youth returning to society after residential treatment or being released from prison;
- * In health care if asked what kind of support a particular 'patient' needs;
- * When a neighborhood is being harassed by youths;
- * Connect in a circle youths who cause the problem and those people who suffer the consequences, aimed at plans or agreements;
- * Custody of children and arrangements concerning parental;
- * Eviction from home.

Eigen Kracht-conferences (FGC) have been employed in different kinds of situations and have often resulted in amazingly simple solutions arrived at by those who are most closely involved. An Eigen Kracht-conference (FGC) is not a source of assistance but a decision-making process. It has been shown that anywhere a decision or plan has to be made, citizens can be easily encouraged to take action.

Is it always successful? No, not always. Sometimes, there is too much quarrelling going on; sometimes there is no family with which to work and a safe conference is not possible. But these situations are more the exception than the rule. To find out if the



concept has a chance of success, all it takes is to make the opportunity available. It should become normal again to encourage citizens to use their own capabilities. Therefore, before any plans devised by outsiders are employed, put 'Eigen Kracht' to work first. Research has shown that 'Eigen Kracht' is effective in all cultures in our country.

In the Netherlands, expertise in social and welfare services is highly developed. Is Eigen Kracht a plea for abolishing the professional system? On the contrary, people who are confronted with problems want the best level of social and welfare services they can get. They want access to the best available expertise and the most appropriate solution. But the one thing they want above all is to retain control over their situation. When this happens, professional help

has a better chance of success. Now that more than a 1000 'conferences' have been held, citizens have demonstrated very well their 'own capabilities and strengths'.

What do we strive for?

The Eigen Kracht Centrale seeks to maximize citizens' control by using their own capacities together with the capacities of their family and social network. The Eigen Kracht Centrale also stimulates organizations, levels of government and movements to head in this direction. Before everything, put the citizens' own capabilities first!

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Various conferences developed

Inspired by the FGC movement originating in New Zealand, various conference and network approaches have been developed:

- o Eigen Kracht-conferentie (FGC), for dealing with problems within a family or living unit.
- o Echt Recht restorative action conferences, for dealing with conflicts between parties or at school, etc.
- o Leercirkel/Learning networks at schools for promoting the individual school careers of pupils.
- o Alle Hens conferences for dealing with difficult situations in a neighbourhood or organisation by having those involved work together on a solution and by inviting talented people to participate.

Independent co-ordinators

There are now 239 citizens trained as independent facilitators for Eigen Kracht-conferenties (FGC). They include citizens from the Dutch Antilles, Surinam, Turkey, Morocco, the Netherlands and various African and Asian countries. Many have been trained to coordinate different kind of conferences.

Recognition

Eigen Kracht Centrale has since 2001 received several Honourable mentions, Recognitions and Awards.



What others have to say about Eigen Kracht

Much has already been published about Eigen Kracht-conferenties (FGC). Here is what others have to say:

From a lecture given by Professor Mijnhardt, Historian at the University of Utrecht

(...) Eigen Kracht is putting a definite end... to two centuries of the intervention state and to the professional machinery that has lost none of its strength and pretensions even now that citizens have been emancipated. This analysis also makes clear... why the need for Eigen Kracht is so essential at this particular time. It is an outstanding learning pathway for citizens living in a socialized system who were becoming accustomed to the idea that they no longer held responsibility for the public arena. Eigen Kracht provides them with a multifaceted method of not only recognizing, but also taking their responsibility to public interests (...)

From the final report issued by the Jeugdzorgbrigade *, June 2006

(...) The conclusion of this section on innovation focuses on an entirely different kind of innovation: the Eigen Kracht-conference (FGC). This method, originating from New Zealand where it is known as the Family Group Conference (FGC), has proven itself internationally as a non-bureaucratic, effective way of providing help. Eigen Kracht is distinguished by a different division of roles between the provider of social services and the client; in this case, the client is accompanied by his or her network. At the heart of the concept is the idea that the responsibility for arriving at a plan for help, as well as for carrying it out lies primarily with those directly involved: the family and its social network. Professionals are involved primarily in a supportive role. More importantly, however, is the fact that the citizens' 'eigen kracht' – their own capabilities – are being employed and strengthened. People appear able to solve their own problems in a surprisingly high percentage of cases. Research has shown that an average of 15 family members and other closely involved people participate in these conferences. They arrive at a plan with an average of 18 agreements, 80% of which they will implement themselves. Almost all their plans are accepted as safe by the professionals involved. Another important point is that both the client and those people in his or her environment who are directly involved are very satisfied with this method.

(*Jeugdzorgbrigade is an organization established by the Ministry of Health and Welfare to ensure the proper implementation of the Youth Care Act)

From the Dutch cabinet's response to the final report issued by the Jeugdzorgbrigade, June 2006

(...)The final report submitted by the Jeugdzorgbrigade requests attention to the Eigen Kracht-conference (FGC). It has been shown that the family, friends and social network, together with the youth, are very capable of making plans that are safe and feasible. The basic principles of the Eigen Kracht-conferences – reinforcing the position of the client, emphasizing the coping capacities of families, and giving families responsibility – are compatible with the Youth Care Act. The use of Eigen Kracht promotes a demand-driven approach and offers sufficient guarantee of the child's safety. Eigen Kracht-conferences can be conducted previous to the indication-for-treatment proposal, for the purpose of proposing a good indication, or even earlier within the framework of preventive youth policy. The cabinet is therefore pleased with the project in the Province of Overijssel, which seeks to consistently integrate the implementation of Eigen Kracht methodology. By means of the national policy framework, we set out to bring the Eigen Kracht methodology to the attention of other provinces as well. (...)

From the press release issued by the Province of Overijssel, 1 June 2006

EKC (FGC) for all children entering the Overijssel Youth Care Agency. (...) From now on, every child with problems that applies to the Overijssel Youth Care Agency will first be offered an Eigen Kracht-conference (FGC) before being referred to professional youth care services. During an Eigen Kracht-conference, family and friends will examine what the child's own environment can do about solving the problems. Commissioner Gert Ranter, in charge of the Provincial Care and Welfare services, made this announcement today during a seminar about Eigen Kracht. This province is the first in the Netherlands to implement the Eigen Kracht methodology so systematically. According to Commissioner Gert Ranter for both children and those close to them, it is most comfortable if they get the chance to solve their problems themselves as much as possible and do not have to depend so much on an agency. 'We have found this approach so effective that we have arrived at an agreement with the Youth Care

Agency that in 2010, all the children requesting youth care services will first be offered an Eigen Kracht-conference,' says Ranter (...)

In two-thirds of the cases studied, the client's social network became more active: support provided by the immediate circle surrounding the parents and child increased. Having decided on the required help themselves, a better cooperation developed with the professionals who, due to this shift in their role, could work more effectively.

From a press release presenting the study entitled 'Standing at the Edge between Meddling and Caring' by WESP, April 2006

(...) Family requires less, and less intensive help from youth care services. Clients of youth care services are organizing their help with the support of their family and are doing so in a way which is more simple and closer to home than professionals could accomplish. This was the finding of a study conducted by Bureau WESP into Eigen Kracht-conferences (FGC) being held in the Province of Overijssel. Since 2004, those requesting help for young people in Overijssel have been given an opportunity to draw up a plan for help themselves. Eighty-three families were offered an Eigen Kracht-conference.

The researchers compared the plans made by the families with the required care assessed by the professionals. The professionals were asked what they would do if no Eigen Kracht-conference would be held. In 83% of the cases studied, the help of family and network replaces the services provided by professionals. Not only is less care requested, but the care that is requested is also less intensive. For instance, youth protection services are not enlisted and children are not placed outside of their homes in boarding schools or foster families but go to live with other family members instead. Professionals find that families make plans that are safe for the children involved. All the plans (100%) made by the families have been accepted as being safe and adequate by the professional care providers.

The results of using this method demonstrate that citizens working with people in their own network are capable of much more than is often assumed.

Trend of dates in the annual report 2006

- * Immediate delivery of conferences
- * Also for adults
- * 65% of conferences held within two months
- * Growing number of referrals by the family itself (from 1% to 9%)
- * On average 13 participants
- * Plan within one session: 94%; 4% in two meetings; 2% no plan;
- * 83% also develops emergency plan;
- * 87% evaluation after three months;

Follow-up after three month's:
20% of the plan totally completed;
72% of the plan is in progress, partly completed;
8% of the plans is not working;

Satisfaction:

	Conference	Plan	Co-ordinator
Children	7.9	8.2	8.6
Family members	7.7	7.8	8.2
Professionals	7.7	7.6	8



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This is a publication of the Eigen Kracht Centrale – National Centre for Restorative Action, in the Netherlands.
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