Erasmus Plus Project Multiplier Event, Rotterdam

The European Cleft Organisation (ECO), lead partner in the Early Care Training Programme (ECTP – 2017-1-NL01-KA2-02-035195), organized the project’s final multiplier event at the Sophia Children’s Hospital, Eramus MC Rotterdam, on 4 October.

Around 20 participants from all over the Netherlands, as well as from Spain, UK and Bulgaria, attended the event. The course aims to improve early care for all babies born with cleft lip and palate and expert clinicians present included representatives from cleft surgery, breast feeding counselling, nursing, speech therapy and a parent support group. Senior cleft nurse at the Sophia Children’s hospital, Mariska van Veen-van der Hoek, opened the day by welcoming everyone to the event and encouraging attendees to network and share good practice models.

During the morning, Gareth Davies, Executive Director of ECO, highlighted the background to the course development, including the research undertaken and methodology used. Nearly two hundred health professionals and parents had taken part in surveys to inform course content and ensure that identified needs were being addressed.

During the afternoon, Kostadinka Bojikova, specialist cleft nurse from the project’s Bulgaria partner, ALA, provided an overview of all 4 project modules and then gave a detailed presentation of module 2 which explains issues affecting feeding babies with clefts. This was received very well by the audience who were keen to engage and ask questions. Handouts were available in Dutch for participants to take home with them.

Everyone agreed that the course could be adapted and used in all the countries represented, particularly for non-specialist staff in pediatric hospitals and maternity units, and in medical schools. The course is designed to be used in different contexts and can be run over one or two days, and include a pre course reading requirement where appropriate.

Gareth Davies summed up “we are delighted so many people attended the event and it is clear there is a lot of material in the curriculum that is relevant to everyone caring for babies born with cleft lip and palate. We would welcome the opportunity to team up with professionals in the Netherlands and elsewhere to help run the full course in partnership with local hospital teams”.