

EUROPEAN FEDERATION
OF PSYCHOLOGISTS'
ASSOCIATIONS
EFPA



STANDING
COMMITTEE OF
SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS
CONVENOR : NIGEL FOREMAN

REPORT TO THE
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IN ISTANBUL

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Report to the General Assembly, EFPA, Istanbul, July 9-10, 2011 from the Standing Committee on Scientific Affairs

Executive summary

The Committee has met on three occasions since the 2009 GA. The Committee hopes that EFPA will (a) support and encourage attendance at the Committee's workshop on 8th July, to discuss the Euro-PhD (minimal requirements), (b) adopt the Committee's paper on Research Ethics as a working document, (c) adopt the Committee's paper on criteria for the evaluation of ECPs as a working document, and encourage MAs to provide feedback on the above, also (d) approve the proposed developments regarding the *European Psychologist* journal. EFPA should encourage dialogue on a more regular basis between the Committee and MAs via on-line fora for the purposes of discussing and improving up-loaded documents. The Committee suggests that experts are recruited for participation in Expert databases and for monitoring of Wikipedia contents, via News Sheets, via the Istanbul GA, and via contacts with individual MAs. The Committee would ask all MAs to nominate representatives to its membership in 2011-2013.

Introduction

The Committee has had three meetings since the July 2009 report, all well attended with most members present (detailed below). Each meeting consisted of a pre-agenda meeting and meal, followed by a meeting throughout the following day. Every attempt is made to use the opportunity to speak to representatives of the national Association and better understand regional and local issues. The first meeting was held at Hendon, London on 21-22 January 2010, the second, Stockholm on 3-4 September 2010 [delayed after originally being scheduled for 3-4 June 2010], and the third in Brussels on 18-19 March 2011. An interim report of activities was sent to the EFPA Head Office in July 2010. Minutes of the above meetings are all posted on the CSA page of the EFPA website. Thanks to JHK and EVR for taking minutes.

Venues

Choice of venues for future meetings of the committee was discussed since it was felt that members from less affluent MAs might be prevented from attending northern European venues. This is still a concern. The committee has asserted its autonomy regarding how and where it organises its meetings, but intends to remain vigilant regarding cost. As indicated above, this problem would be partly ameliorated were more business to be conducted in future via electronic means.

The Committee's Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the CSA remain broadly unchanged from previous years, but these were clarified in a mission statement and action plan produced by the Committee and posted on the EFPA website. Responsibilities include: European Congress of Psychology (ECP) planning monitoring and evaluation, Research ethics, Minimum PhD standards across Europe, scientific oversight of the European Psychologist journal, and consideration of sources of funding for projects in which EFPA might participate. The Committee also contributes to decisions regarding the Comenius and Aristotle prizes, awarded at each ECP. Recently the Committee was also asked to propose experts for inclusion in an on-going EFPA Expert Database [supporting EFPA contributions to European policy making], and also to consider ways of ensuring the accuracy of materials posted under Psychology on the Wikipedia website.

Sub-Committees

The following sub-committees were set up in 2009 though these will be reviewed and developed by the in-coming committee:

EFPA Website
[Communications]*
Research Ethics
Euro-PhD (minimum standards)
ECP Evaluation protocol
Funding Opportunities

*Communications and dissemination of European psychological findings has been adopted as a responsibility of EFPA Head Office and this subcommittee has been terminated. The Committee continues to assist and consult, wherever possible, in relation to research review and dissemination.

Meetings 2009-2011

(1) The first meeting was held in Middlesex University, London, UK, 21-22 January 2010. Present were NF, MB, UE, OH, RJ, BJ, VL, TL, PO'D, MVP, KES, CS, NS, EVR and RZ. On the evening prior to the meeting, the committee was hosted for a meal by the British Psychological Society, attended by the BPS' Parliamentary Officer, Ana Padilla, who spoke about strategies for influencing policy making at UK and EU parliamentary levels.

(2) The second meeting [originally scheduled for 3-4 June 2010 but cancelled] was held in Stockholm, Sweden, 3-4 September 2010. Present were NF, TL, NS, KES, RJ, MB, RL, VT, RZ, JHK. The meeting and preceding meal were hosted by the Swedish Psychological Association and the meal was attended by the CEO of the Association, Orjan Salling.

(3) The third meeting was held in Brussels, Belgium, 18/19 March 2011 at the EFPA offices in Grassmarkt. Present were JYB, NF, OH, RJ, BJ, JHK, RL, TL, JMP, KES,

CS, NS, EVR, and BV. The Editor in Chief of the *European Psychologist*, Alexander Grob, and EFPA President Rob Roe also attended in the morning and gave presentations on proposed changes to *European Psychologist*, and proposed restructuring of EFPA, respectively. The meal on 18 March was kindly provided by EFPA, held jointly with the EFPA committee on Traffic Psychology.

Topic areas Discussed

Ten main topics have been discussed in these meetings. Progress on each across the 3 meetings is described below, and areas are highlighted in which (in line with the Committee's mission statement and action plan) we hope that the new Committee will make progress in 2011-13:

1. Minimum standards for PhD programmes in Europe and the concept of a Euro-PhD qualification

It had been previously decided that the essential issue, related to European mobility, is to know what skills a PhD graduate will have minimally acquired, irrespective of the country in which they have been awarded the doctorate. A list of criteria had been developed, which was extensively discussed in an invited symposium at the Oslo ECP. Following the acquisition of more data, a minimum standards document was produced and this has been posted on the EFPA website as a working document (Appendix A). The Committee welcomes comments from MAs. The Committee is hosting a round table discussion on this topic on Friday 8 July as part of the Istanbul ECP.

2. Research Ethics

The committee had discovered a wide range of practices regarding ethical approval procedures across MAs. The Committee felt that it was important to post a document at this point, since all MAs need to pay careful attention to the need for suitable ethical approval for experimental work and data collection, as a means of protecting participants from harm, protecting the reputation of Psychology as a discipline, and protecting individual psychologists carrying out research. The document posted on the EFPA website (under CSA) is based upon those adopted by several MAs already (Appendix B). Contact was made with EFPA's ethics committee but our Committee is keen to receive comments from all interested parties with a view to modifying and updating the guidelines via an on-going process. Dissent was registered by one of the Committee members, who favoured a voluntary system of ethical reflection rather than a legalistic set of rules. Again, this is an issue for further debate within the Committee and views of MAs are sought.

3. Guidelines for ECP meetings and criteria for their evaluation

A document has been produced and discussed extensively at all of the committee's meetings. It has been posted on the EFPA website (Appendix C) and the Committee hopes that this will be adopted by EFPA, for information to future ECP organising committees. Copies have been sent to (and used by) the organising committee of the Istanbul ECP, and have been sent to the organisers of the 2013 ECP in Stockholm. However, the specific criteria are to be revisited and comments of MAs are welcome. Our committee received a report from a sub-committee (RL, NS and Lars-Goran Nilsson) on the Oslo ECP. A sub-committee (JYB, NF, JHK) has been set up to use the criteria to evaluate the Istanbul ECP and produce a report for our Committee soon after the end of the meeting.

4. Monitor progress on ECPs

The Committee has received comprehensive reports at each of its past three meetings from the organisers of the ECP Istanbul and is confident that the meeting will be a great success. A problem in Oslo, relating to the distances between venues, is not an issue in Istanbul, since venues are in close proximity. Concerns were raised about the high cost of hotel accommodation posted on the congress website.

5. Funding issues for Psychology in Europe

Concern was recently expressed over the difficulty of locating suitable calls for research proposals. The EU would be well advised to revisit the FP websites and find ways of clarifying the suitability of particular calls for specific research projects and activities. The Committee aims to develop links with the European Research Council in order to monitor the level of funding and research activity undertaken by Psychologists within the EU.

6. European Psychologist

At the time of the last report to the EFPA General Assembly, a search was being undertaken for a new Editor in Chief of the journal. The Committee was delighted that Alexander Grob was appointed to the position. Since then various discussions have taken place between EFPA, the publisher, the journal's Editor in Chief and the chair of CSA, regarding the future direction of the journal. Meetings and teleconference discussions have taken place, the results of which were presented as proposals to the CSA at its meeting in Brussels. Further discussions are scheduled and more information will be provided to the GA. The Committee is pleased to support the current proposals, which are intended to maintain (and enhance) the scientific quality and impact of the publication while providing a conduit for information among the EFPA membership.

7. EFPA website

The Committee has adopted the principle that full details of its members and meeting discussions, plus working documents arising from discussions will be posted routinely on the EFPA website. It is hoped that discussion fora will be used in future, enhancing communications among Committee members but particularly to provide feedback from MAs to the committee on posted documents, enabling the latter to be amended and up-dated as necessary.

8. Awards

The Committee is involved in selecting winners of awards, proposing members to serve on the relevant committees (Wundt-James, Aristotle: both JHK and NS).

9. Wikipedia

The Committee has been asked to consider ways in which the content of postings on the Wikipedia website can be verified and corrected where inaccuracies are detected. The Association for Psychological Science (APS) has instituted an initiative to encourage its members to access materials in their own areas of expertise and ensure the accuracy of the content. The approach of APS is to exhort members to contribute but to provide links and support. The Committee has suggested a dual track approach: first, to contact MAs to suggest that they encourage their members to undertake this responsibility, in the interests of good science. Second, EFPA is asked to prompt its members to do the same, via reminders in EFPA News Sheets. The Committee will contact APS to determine what could be usefully done to enable EFPA members to

support efforts being made already (eg. *psychology WikiProject* and the APS initiative). EFPA could decide to set up a dedicated portal and recruit editors responsible for particular areas of the discipline, but resources would need to be allocated to this. APS has been contacted and the Committee will undertake any useful function in relation to the setting up of an equivalent expert editorial list equivalent to that assembled by APS. It was noted that Wikipedia is by its nature a bottom-up process and EFPA cannot afford to appear to sanction or guarantee any particular source outside its immediate control.

CS drew the Committee's attention to a European Psychology Publication Platform, which is intended to foster the visibility of European Psychological Research (www.psychprints.eu/participation.php).

10. Expert database

The Committee has been asked to propose names of suitable experts to contribute to discussions involving EFPA with the EU on psychology-related policy matters. EFPA Head Office is assembling a spreadsheet covering all major areas of Psychology. Names have been forwarded and MAs have been asked to suggest contributors. We propose that additional names might be gathered via prompts to MAs in EFPA News Sheets, Presidents' Council meetings and from the GA in Istanbul.

Supported Conferences

Consensus conference in Psychology 2008-10: Psychological Assessment and the Uses of Measurements in Child Psychology: The Committee was asked at its Berlin meeting to approve and support this 2-year programme and concluding meeting, in France, on Psychological Assessment. The Committee gave its full approval and support and has recently received a positive assessment, details of which are given in the minutes of the CSA's Brussels meeting. VT also alerted and invited the Committee to Psychology Days conferences in Zadar.

Acknowledgements

The Committee is extremely grateful for support provided from EFPA Head Office; to all those who have facilitated our meetings, including the organisers of the European Congress of Psychology in Istanbul 2011; also EFPA and the British and Swedish Psychological Associations who have generously hosted our visits and provided meeting rooms.

Appendix A: Euro-PhD (minimum standards)

Appendix B: Ethical Approval of Research

Appendix C: Criteria for ECP evaluation

Annex

Members of the Committee 2009-2011:

Nigel Foreman (UK), Convenor
Marek Blatny (Czech Republic)
Ulrike Ehlert (Switzerland)
Odd Havik (Norway)
Boris Velichkovsky (Russia)
Barbara Juen (Austria)
Vedran Lesic (EFPSA representative)
Torun Lindholm (Sweden)
Paul O'Donohoe (Ireland)
Christoph Steinebach (Germany)
Jose M. Prieto (Spain)
Nebi Sumer (Turkey)
Mojca Vizjak Pavsic (Slovenia)
Remo Job (Italy)
Rita Zukauskiene (Lithuania)
Vladimir Taksic (Croatia)
Knud-Erik Sabroe (Denmark)
Edward Van Rossen (Belgium)
Jan Henk Kamphuis (Netherlands)
Georgia Panayiotou (Cyprus)
Ivan Sarmany-Schuller (Slovakia)
Jean-Yves Baudoin (France)
Roger Lecuyer (EC Liaison Officer)

The areas of expertise of the members of the Committee have been assembled and posted on the EFPA website; this information is intended to assist MAs when selecting suitable nominees to serve on the Committee.

The Committee is aware of its selective representation and would encourage all MAs to nominate members in future, [these might include formal nominations of Presidents of MAs], ensuring that all MAs receive meeting minutes. Clearly, it may not be possible for all members to attend all meetings, but since the business of the Committee might be conducted more often electronically in future, this would reduce the cost of meeting attendance in person.