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STANDING
COMMITTEE OF
SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS
CONVENOR : NIGEL FOREMAN

REPORT TO THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY JULY 2009 IN OSLO

EFPA
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Report to the General Assembly, EFPA, Oslo, July 11-12, 2009 from the Standing Committee on Scientific Affairs

Members of the Committee are:

Nigel Foreman (UK), Convenor [NF]
Ivo Cermak (Czech Republic) [IC]
Lars-Goran Nilsson (Sweden) [LGN]
Jose M. Prieto (Spain) [JMP]
Nebi Sumer (Turkey) [NS]
Mojca Vizjak Pavsic (Slovenia) [MVP]
Odd E. Havik (Norway) [OEH]
Remo Job (Italy) [RJ]
Rita Zukauskiene (Lithuania) [RZ]
Vladimir Taksic (Croatia) [VT]
Knud-Erik Sabroe (Denmark) [KES]
Edward van Rossen (Belgium) [EVR]
Jan Henk Kamphuis (Netherlands) [JHK]
Michele Carlier (France) [MC]
Roger Lecuyer (EC Liaison Officer) [RL]

The Committee on Scientific Affairs has held three meetings since the July 2007 GA 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. Edward van Rossen has taken minutes and circulated a draft copy for all of the meetings except the Ankara meeting where Seniz Celimli (Turkish Psychological Association) did so.

What the EC expects of the Committee: The responsibilities of the CSA remain unchanged from previous years, with the addition of the following items from EC added following the 2007 GA:

1. With Publications and Communications WG, influence funding priorities of European bodies by issuing expert statements on achievements of psychology and policy programming applications.
2. Identify grant opportunities and facilitate contacts between potential partners for other SCs and WGs including funding for training workshops as well as for research, particularly applied and translational research [...], promoting European research collaborations with EFPA as a participant. (Aims and Tasks 2007-9).

(1) The first meeting was held in Ankara, Turkey, 25th-26th January 2008 at the invitation of Nebi Sumer and the Turkish Psychological Association. The Committee met officers of the Turkish Association including the President, Gonca Soygut. Present were NF, OEH, VT, MC, KES, JHK, JMP, NS. 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. Procedures for selecting a chair [in advance of the first meeting following a GA] were also discussed. Proposals on both of these issues were subjects of subsequent dialogue between the Committee and the EC.

(2) The second meeting was held in Berlin, Germany, 24th July 2008 to coincide with the International Congress of Psychology, 2008 [in the conference venue, the International Congress Centre] at the invitation of the conference organisers. Present were NF, EVR, JMP, KES, LGN, MC, MVP, NS, OEH, RL, RZ, VT. At this meeting, it was decided, following a suggestion from the Chair, that six sub-committees would be established to continue the CSA's work between meetings, liaising via e-mail and reporting to subsequent meetings. The sub-committees are (convenors underlined):

EFPA Website (EVR, LGN, NF)

Communications (KES, MVP, RJ, JHK, NF)

Ethics (EVR, JMP, VT, NF)

Euro-PhD (NS, JMP, MC, RZ, NF)

ECP Evaluation protocol (NS, MC, OEH, IC, JHK, NF)

Funding Opportunities (NF, LGN, JHK)

(3) The third meeting was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, 13th/14th March 2009 at the invitation of Rita Zukauskiene (Mykolas Romeris University) and the Lithuanian

Psychological Association. Present were all members of the Committee with the exception of IC. The Committee had a formal meeting with representatives of the Steering Committee of the Lithuanian Psychological Association, Robertas Pouilaitis [LPA President], Evaldas Kazlauskas and Albinas Bagdonas. Details of this and other meetings (above) are available from the CSA pages of the EFPA website.

Ten main topics have been discussed in the three CSA meetings. Progress on each across the 3 meetings is described below, and areas in which the Committee hopes to make progress in 2009-2011:

1. Selection of venues

It was felt that the cost of attending CSA meetings might deter delegates from the less affluent MAs. The Committee contacted the President/EC, expressing concern and asking about the possibility of partial funding support for representatives of such MAs. In a reply from the EC, the concerns were noted and it was suggested that CSA might consider its choice of venues according to flight and accommodation costs. Since then one meeting was held in Vilnius, Lithuania and one in Ankara, Turkey, although it is not easy to identify any venue as especially cost-effective.

2. Minimal standards for PhD programmes in Europe and the concept of a Euro-PhD qualification

Discussions took place on the various forms that the PhD could take, *inter alia* national differences, new routes, the need for masters training prior to embarking on a PhD, suggestions regarding the need for publication of theses in English, minimum numbers on supervisory panels. Data collected by NS and MC at the ECP in Prague, 2007 were considered. It was decided that the essential issue, related to European mobility, is to know what skills a PhD graduate will have minimally acquired. A list of criteria has been developed, which is due for discussion in an invited symposium at ECP Oslo [contributors: JMP, NF, KES, EVR; chair: NF].

3. Research Ethics

Work on this topic is, pro tem, completed. The Committee discovered a wide range of practices regarding ethical approval procedures across MAs, some asking approval for all data collection, some none, and others requiring approval only for “medical” psychological work. NF produced a comprehensive document based upon British Psychological Society ethical requirements. This was embellished by EVR, and circulated for discussion. Contact was made with EFPA’s Ethics Committee. This topic will be debated at ECP Oslo in an invited symposium [contributors: JMP, NF, EVR and Geoff Lindsay, the chair of EFPA’s Ethics Committee; chair: EVR]. The Committee feels that there is an urgent need to have such a document on the EFPA website, which can be improved upon in due course.

4. Guidelines for ECP meetings and criteria for their evaluation

As a result of the diligence of NS, a document has been produced and discussed extensively at all of the Committee’s meetings. EFPA needs a list of criteria against which the success of each ECP can be gauged. However, there was discussion as to whether this should comprise a list of bipolar criteria, or alternatively a list of items to be considered. For example, take the issue of rejection rates for submissions. Clearly, running an ECP is not like running a journal. High rejection rates might benefit a journal as evidence of the maintenance of prestige and standards. Rejection of large numbers of papers and abstracts submitted to an ECP would result in potential delegates becoming ineligible, within their own country, for financial support, it may be regarded as prejudicing potential delegates for reasons of language, and would limit the benefits of the ECP as an academic community. Therefore, it was felt that

while contributions must have serious merit for acceptance, an initial stage might involve advice to contributors to improve abstract quality prior to rejection. A document has been circulated to the organisers of the ECP Oslo, and the Committee expects to return to the criteria when data from Oslo have been analysed, and when further evaluation of the procedures can be conducted. Data collection in Oslo will be undertaken by a sub-committee of CSA consisting of NS, RL and LGN.

5. Monitor progress on ECPs

CSA has received reports from the organising committees of the 11th ECP meeting in Oslo, July 2009 and the 12th in Istanbul, July 2011. Note that representatives of CSA serve on organising and scientific committees for all ECP meetings. Issues have been discussed within CSA and raised with organisers. Gerd Kvale, chair of the Scientific Committee for the Oslo 2009 meeting, gave a presentation to the Committee at its Berlin meeting. Particular issues may be worthy of note. The inclusion of sessions in particular languages other than English was not felt to be helpful, for example. It was suggested that better use might be made of reviewers (on scientific committees) from outside the host countries. One of our Committee members was concerned that despite her membership of the scientific committee for Oslo she had not been asked to undertake reviewing. Also, recently, there was concern about the small proportion of women invited as keynote speakers to the Oslo meeting. However, the Committee has been delighted with the high quality of materials submitted and fully expects a highly successful Oslo meeting. For Istanbul, issues such as meeting theme and logo were discussed by CSA and comments passed to the organising committee.

6. Funding issues for Psychology in Europe

This topic has been the subject of much discussion but the Committee's progress in this area has been slow. There were differing opinions on how to achieve the goals set by the EC. Funding sources are available via websites; those intending to apply are likely to be aware of suitable organisations, including funders (such as the Jacobs Foundation) who are keen to support younger researchers and training activities. We debated how best new information could be drawn to the attention of MAs. We have been in contact with the EFPA communications group, also with MEPs with psychology qualifications. Members of our Committee pointed out that it would be useful (but time consuming, and too time consuming for the CSA to volunteer to undertake it) to discover such things as how many FP applications are made from psychology compared with other disciplines, how much is typically requested and what proportion are successful by comparison with other disciplines. It was agreed that the modus operandi was something which should be returned to the GA for comment. In many cases the pursuit of such information does not require the involvement of researchers and can be achieved via secretarial or Intern support. The Committee felt that links need to be developed with the European Research Council in order to monitor the level of funding and research activity undertaken by Psychologists within the EU.

7. Improving the dissemination of psychological knowledge throughout Europe

The Committee was asked to attempt to find ways of drawing major research findings in psychology to the attention of the European community. We intend to work in future with Hrvoje Gligora, Publications and Communications Working Group of EFPA and News Editor of *European Psychologist*, to achieve this end. The Committee has been unclear as to how this can be achieved given the limited resources available. All of the Committee are busy researchers and it would be foolish for the Committee alone to take on responsibility for identifying and making widely

available important pieces of research. Individual MAs might be encouraged to provide such information; indeed, in July 2008, delegates to a Presidents' Council meeting of EFPA "...agreed to play an active role in sending articles to Hrvoje Gligora"; we look forward to discussing with the Publications and Communications Committee how well this system is currently working and implement an alternative system if necessary. The Committee has contacted one MEP who is a psychologist, in an attempt to discover in what form it would be most useful for MEPs to be appraised of new developments in psychology.

8. Correspondence with the Editor-in-Chief of *European Psychologist*

The Committee has been pleased to fulfil its responsibility to oversee the publication and development of *European Psychologist*. We have liaised with the Editor-in-Chief (Rainer Silbereisen) and the publishers (Hogrefe), commenting in detail on the last letter sent by the Editor-in-Chief to up-date the Committee on developments with the journal. A call was put out in 2008 for an additional Associate Editor, and although several applications were received, no candidate was deemed suitable and no appointment was made. The Editor-in-Chief pointed out that strictly, there was already a full quota of Associate Editors who could cope with current activities. As a consequence of his becoming President of IUPsyS, the Editor-in-Chief made it known that he would retire from office. A call was issued for a successor. Few applications have been received. Rainer is perceived as a hard act to follow; the Impact Factor for the journal has increased dramatically from 0.65 to 1.18 in recent years, which is a credit to the Editor-in-Chief in particular. At the time of writing, a search for a new Editor-in-Chief is being undertaken, with close cooperation from the publisher.

9. EFPA website

The Committee discussed what materials relating to its activities should appear on the EFPA website. In order to encourage coverage of all psychology sub-disciplines, it was suggested that cv's be included, to give MAs an indication of the areas not currently covered by CSA members. This need became clear when we were approached by Marianne Kant-Schaps (N.E.P.E.S, Network of Psychologists in the Educational System) on 14 Feb 2008, asking whether the Committee could assist with a project on Schools Psychology. We had to admit that no current member of the Committee was an expert in that area. It was decided to include brief cv's of all members. Having such cv's available might also be helpful to MAs when deciding on nominations to CSA, since they are able to see the typical profile of current CSA members, and the areas in which current members have expertise.

10. Awards and Nominations

RL suggested that the CSA should have a more prominent role in proposing possible recipients of awards made at ECPs (Comenius, Aristotle, Wilhelm Wundt-William James). The Committee was reluctant to adopt this role since it does not have representatives from all MAs. It is concerned that some potential recipients may be overlooked because they have not been "sampled". The Committee suggested that all MAs should have at least a corresponding member of the CSA even if they do not attend meetings. Searching for award recipients tends to occur rather late in the day and on a rather opportunistic basis. Each MA might be encouraged to keep a list of possible recipients and submit one name in response to the call for each ECP. In that case, CSA would be happy to act in an advisory capacity (indicating, for example, whether no candidate reaches the necessary standard, or whether particular candidates show special strength). Regarding nominations of contacts in universities to CEPLIS (European Council of the Liberal Professions), Pierangelo Sardi, the President of CEPLIS, spoke to the Committee at its Berlin meeting, and the Committee was up-

dated by RL at its Vilnius meeting. It was proposed that EFPA should clarify what expectations CEPLIS has of EFPA as a member, and that MAs should be asked directly to nominate contacts to the CEPLIS Academy, individuals "...who know the relationships between universities and society".

Meeting Support

Consensus Conference in Psychology 2008-9 on Psychological Assessment and the Uses of Measurements in Child Psychology. The Committee was asked at its Berlin meeting to approve and support this meeting, in France. The Committee gave its full approval and support to the meeting, and was up-dated on progress at its Vilnius meeting.

Membership

In addition to any changes that might occur to the reconstructed committee after the 2009 GA, Michele Carlier has indicated at the Vilnius meeting that her colleague, Jean Yves Baudoin would replace her as the French representative on CSA in future. The Committee is most appreciative of MC's past substantial contributions to its work.

The Committee is extremely grateful to all those who have facilitated our meetings, including the organisers of the International Congress of Psychology in Berlin, 2008 and the European Congress, 2009, also the Turkish and Lithuanian Associations who have generously hosted our visits and provided meeting rooms. A meeting of CSA will take place in Oslo in the course of the ECP.

The Committee hopes that through the work carried out in the above meetings it has largely fulfilled the tasks allocated to it by the GA in 2007, or made substantial progress toward addressing them.

Middlesex University, London, UK
May 15th 2009
Nigel Foreman, CSA Chair