

Stan Maes: the founder of EHPS

Marie Johnston

University of Stirling

Dear EHPS members

It is with great sadness that I write of the death of Stan Maes.

Stan will be remembered in many spheres of life - for his science and practice in health psychology, for his success in developing health psychology in the Netherlands, for his contributions to health and social care, for his active representation of European health psychology in the wider international context - but here I write about his enormous gifts to members of EHPS.

Stan Maes as the founder of EHPS

We in EHPS owe Stan a great deal as this society would not exist without Stan's phenomenal initial work. In the early 1980s, several of us were working in health psychology, often as lonely but enthusiastic isolates within our own country and watching developments in the USA. Stan gathered us together - from Finland, Switzerland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Spain, the UK and the Netherlands - giving us an identity as European health psychologists and a focus for our professional and scientific endeavours. In 1986 he held an outstanding conference in Tilburg bringing together health psychologists from many parts of Europe and the USA and EHPS emerged from that first meeting. Over the following years and many meetings in Tilburg, several of us worked with Stan to turn this embryonic gathering into the society we know today. With Stan as President we held annual meetings in Trier (1988), Utrecht (1989), Oxford (1990), Lausanne (1991) and Leipzig (1992)

and published proceedings. Meanwhile we worked to develop the rules, articles and legal status of EHPS with an amusing lack of skill. In 1992 I was honoured and flattered that Stan supported me in becoming the second President. He continued as an active member of the EC until 1996 and a keen attendee at conferences until limited by poor health. He delivered many papers at our conferences including his most recent invited keynote in Bordeaux in 2013.

Stan succeeded in developing EHPS because of his outstanding vision, scholarship and energy. He was generous and sociable, fluent in many European languages and able to enthuse those around him. His leadership was fundamental not only to the existence of EHPS but also to its ethos of sharing and inclusiveness, supporting young careers and enabling health psychology to thrive within and between the countries of Europe.

Stan Maes as the supporter of young international careers

From the very beginning Stan was keen that EHPS would not only be a vehicle for those already established in their careers but that we would develop early careers. At a very early stage we held a workshop in Rome programme and continued to run annual postgraduate training workshops for several years. Following these Erasmus funded programmes, Stan obtained funding to run advanced workshops in Greece for graduates of the previous workshops and they in turn went on to create CREATE.

The workshops had a spirit and character that

owed everything to Stan. They lasted up to 2 weeks, involved intensive 9 to 5 working, were delivered and attended by the founders and senior members of EHPS and each closed with presentations by each attending participant. But it was not only hard work. We had evenings of entertaining performances by students including flamenco from Spain, a performing 'haggis' from Scotland and an international rendering of 'singing in the rain'. We had our own version of 'Blind Date' and were astonished to discover that the theme tune was known to all Europeans. We had local outings, splendid meals and beach bonfires. All of these diverse experiences resulted in a wonderful cadre of young health psychologists, with lasting collaborations and friendships who constitute a large tranche of current members, attenders and leaders of EHPS.

Stan's emphasis on young careers was exceptionally far-sighted as it not only ensured the future membership, it built relationships between the early and more senior members. The spirit of work, fun and conviviality contributed to the friendly cooperative atmosphere that continues to characterise EHPS meetings.

Stan Maes and national representation

Right from the start Stan involved health psychologists from many different nations of Europe. His first committee had people from many parts of Europe. He personally visited many countries, giving talks, supporting postgraduates and enabling the development of national societies. He was particularly keen to facilitate members from Eastern European countries and created financial systems that allowed them to participate in EHPS activities. From very early days we had national delegates and our newsletter had regular items on the developments within countries. He encouraged the emergence and

welcoming of delegates from each country. However, in several countries delegates did not know other delegates from their own country and on occasions we had more than one national delegate from a country. Starting with these unsystematic but enthusiastic beginnings we now have a very successful, active representation of the nations of Europe.

As with all the early developments of EHPS, national representation was ensured by Stan's foresight, organisation, social skills, goodwill and persuasiveness – and in no small way by his facility with languages, his understanding and appreciation of different cultures and his charismatic character.

Finally Thank you Stan

Stan has meant an enormous amount to EHPS but he has also meant a great deal personally and professionally to many members. For me personally, he has been an outstanding influence on my career, enabling me to be part of something I could never have anticipated. But beyond that he has been the most generous, delightful friend in ways too important and numerous to mention. We all owe him so much in so many ways for so many things within and beyond EHPS. Thank you Stan.

Marie Johnston

Aberdeen, October 2018





Marie Johnston

Emeritus Professor of Health,
Psychology, University of
Aberdeen

m.johnston@abdn.ac.uk