

# Reflections of the 2022 CREATE workshop and EHPS conference

## Anila Allmeta

*University of Bayreuth,  
Germany*

## Márcia Carvalho

*University of Galway,  
Ireland*

## Jennifer Dunsmore

*University of Aberdeen,  
Scotland*

## Sarah Labudek

*Heidelberg University,  
Germany*

## Alea Ruf

*Goethe University  
Frankfurt, Germany*

## Charlene Wright

*Griffith University,  
Australia*

## Introduction

Two and a half years on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS) 36th annual conference was finally held in Bratislava, Slovakia. We were fortunate to be awarded the Collaborative Research and Training in the European Health Psychology Society (CREATE) grant to attend 2022 CREATE workshop and the EHPS annual conference. We are six female researchers from

different countries, continents, career stages, and research areas, and were excited to learn, network, and enhance our research skills in the fun and collaborative settings of CREATE and EHPS.

## Scientific programme

The number of great posters, oral presentations, state-of-the-art-presentations, symposia and roundtables at this year's EHPS conference was incredible. On the first conference day, Esther Papiés gave an inspiring state-of-the-art presentation on "Health Psychology and climate change: Time to address humanity's most

existential crisis" (slides available [here](#)). Her key messages were: "Climate change is a health emergency. Health psychologists are needed". We do not only have to take on responsibility as individuals, but also as health psychologists and as a scientific society. Health psychologists have key skills which are needed to change individuals' behaviour as well as systems to address this crisis. Therefore, it is great to see EHPS discuss and take action to be more sustainable. A position paper on "How to make EHPS conferences more climate friendly" was published in the March Issue of [The European Health Psychologist](#). To show the dedication to sustainability at EHPS 2022, one vegetarian/vegan lunch was announced on twitter. Unfortunately, the vegetarian/vegan lunch turned out a bit 'fishier' than expected. We agree with Maya Braun's tweet: "We need to be better next year". Why not try a completely meat-free EHPS in 2023? And provide clear food labels? Why not team-up with interrail instead of Lufthansa for EHPS 2023 as suggested by Christiane Büttner on Twitter? We couldn't agree more with Esther's final thoughts: "Let's not be part of the problem. Let's not be the silent majority, the inertia, the status quo. When, if not now?"

As the conference progressed, the poster sessions offered a wide range of topics where everyone could find a spark of inspiration or new perspectives to an already familiar subject. On the third day of the conference a very interesting roundtable took place: "Mind the digital divide - How to reduce social inequalities in digital health promotion?". Based on their research and expertise, Laura König, Max Western, Eline Smit, Efrat Neter

and Falko Sniehotta presented their views on the topic and then opened the floor to input from the numerous attendees. Not only was the current evidence on social inequalities in digital health promotion presented, but also possible reasons for the digital divide including potential psychological mechanisms and digital health literacy. In the following small group discussion, attendees had the opportunity to discuss future research and action-oriented solutions with the panelists. The results of these discussions are planned to be summarized in a white paper in order to not only stimulate discussion within the health psychology and public health community, but also the development and implementation of the solutions in practice. As early career researchers, we are looking forward to such inspiring collaborations on this highly relevant topic. The next opportunity to discuss this topic will be at next year's workshop "Understanding the digital divide in health promotion" (more information here: <https://twitter.com/DigiDivideNet>).

## Meet the expert

There is no EHPs conference without meeting the experts. This year, four keynote speakers (Zuzana Dankulinová, Susan A. Murphy, Urte Scholz, Falko Sniehotta) were invited to meet with early career researchers and discuss scientific as well as career-related topics.

Falko Sniehotta holds the Professorship of Public Health, Social and Preventive Medicine at Heidelberg University since January 2021 after having worked at New Castle University (UK) and University of Twente (Netherlands). He has conducted innovative research in the field of weight loss management and contributed to advancing health psychology theory, for example, a position paper arguing that it's 'time to retire the theory of planned behavior'. Christine Emmer, Thomas Gützlöw, Claire Riley, and Sarah Labudek

met Falko Sniehotta in a small café in Bratislava, right next to a national ceremony that was under way (including the performance of a brass band). Right from the beginning, Falko insisted to call the meeting 'experts' meeting' and appreciated the work of everyone. During the meeting, an inspiring discussion about the possibilities and challenges for public health promotion in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK evolved. Falko also gave some insights into the task of setting up a new professorship. As well as hiring a diverse and skillful team of researchers, he also wants to bring research to people (instead of the other way around), which is why he bought a van which will be equipped to conduct research within hard-to-reach populations. We thank Falko again for his time and the opportunity to share our thoughts.

Susan A. Murphy is an American Professor of Statistics and of Computer Science and leader in constructing adaptive interventions for use in informing clinical decision making and constructing just-in-time adaptive interventions delivered by mobile devices. Meeting up in the afternoon Bratislava sun, Matthias Aulbach, Maya Braun, and Charlene Wright pulled up a seat outdoors with Susan. Susan gave a lot of time to speak with each of us and getting to know our background and interests. During the meeting, we chatted about all things data, personalization, and digital health. Specifically we talked about i) the potential for collaboration between behavioral and computer science researchers and at what stage of the research progress computer scientists are best to be involved in such projects, ii) challenges of Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) and if it requires burden on the individuals to collect information, iii) the combination of passive sensors/objective data and self-report data and iv) methods for more potent digital health interventions including the multiphase optimization strategy (MOST) and the sequential multiple assignment randomized trial (SMART). It was such a pleasure to have such insightful yet genuine conversations

with Susan and we thank her again for her time and shared wisdom.

## Networking

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for some of us, this was the first opportunity to attend a workshop and an international conference in person since embarking on our PhD journey. For a PhD scholar, the opportunity to network with fellow PhD scholars, meet international researchers and disseminate research findings are among the most important activities to improve our research and potentially enhance our career prospects.

While participating in the conference was invaluable to disseminate the findings of our PhDs, the conference also provided a unique opportunity to develop our professional networks. The coffee breaks allowed us to follow up with the audience members who asked questions about our presentation, meet fellow PhD scholars from across the world, and approach senior researchers with expertise in the field of our PhDs. These informal and more relaxed moments allowed us to engage in intellectually stimulating discussions about our PhDs, future research avenues, potential future research collaborations and research visits. We learned never to underestimate the more informal and social moments of a conference.

In addition to the professional benefits of attending and networking in person, the conference also provided opportunities to socialise and make new friends. We met at a CREATE mixer on the Sunday before the conference, which included a game to establish who were 'dog' or 'cat' people and two truths and a lie, which, for some got weird very quickly! Talking about the 'normal' stuff and sharing more about our research projects and career aspirations became easy – especially, if you had just been engaged in a bizarre conversation about webbed feet or finding out who played competitive e-sports.

Meeting other early career researchers at the CREATE workshop before the conference was beneficial. Throughout the week, having people that would always be happy to chat, or grab a coffee made the conference experience better. CREATErs attended talks together, sat in the sun and shared opinions on the topic of the day and supported each other by visiting presentations and posters of fellow members. Many of us continue the friendships created at the conference. Twitter and email have allowed us to share academic and personal stories since our meeting. We will continue to grow these friendships across the world and strengthen them every year at future CREATE workshops and EHPS conferences.

## Conclusion

The CREATE workshop and the EHPS conference were unique opportunities to network, learn and discuss our research. We expanded our professional network and fostered collaborations that will improve our current research and contribute to our future professional careers. Furthermore, discussing our research with other researchers inspired us and left us looking forward to contributing to the development of health psychology in the years to come.

Attending the CREATE workshop and the EHPS conference was a privilege, and we are deeply grateful to the EHPS for granting us this opportunity. We thank the CREATE and EHPS committees that made this possible. We look forward to using the knowledge and experience we acquired during our PhD and research careers and making the most of the opportunities this grant has given us.

**Anila Allmeta**

Faculty of Life Sciences: Food,  
Nutrition and Health, Department of  
Public Health Nutrition, University of  
Bayreuth, Germany

[anila.allmeta@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:anila.allmeta@uni-bayreuth.de)

**Charlene Alice Valerie  
Wright**

School of Applied Psychology and  
Menzies Health, Griffith University,  
Queensland, Australia

[charlene.wright@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:charlene.wright@griffithuni.edu.au)

**Márcia Filipa Carvalho**

Health Behaviour Change Research  
Group, School of Psychology,  
University of Galway, Ireland

[M.Carvalho1@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:M.Carvalho1@universityofgalway.ie)

**Jennifer Dunsmore**

Academic Urology Unit, University  
of Aberdeen, Scotland

[j.dunsmore.19@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:j.dunsmore.19@abdn.ac.uk)

**Sarah Labudek**

Heidelberg University,  
Germany

[science@sarahlabudek.de](mailto:science@sarahlabudek.de)

**Alea Ruf**

Goethe University Frankfurt,  
University Hospital, Department of  
Psychiatry, Psychosomatic Medicine  
and Psychotherapy, Germany

[alea.ruf@kgu.de](mailto:alea.ruf@kgu.de)