

EHPS engagement with international bodies on health policy: current contributions and future opportunities

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Introduction

In recent years, the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS) has participated actively in several international NGOs and other UN organisations. This participation increased the potential to contribute to distinct health policy initiatives targeting important challenges for our global society. It has also allowed us to showcase and represent EHPS members in multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary contexts and raise awareness of the value health psychologists can bring to problem solving of the wicked issues faced by humanity. Active participation with different organisations has led to knowledge translation for the benefit of evidence-based decision-making, using knowledge already generated within our discipline and generalising it to emerging societal issues that require health policy decisions. The Roundtable organised on August 25th during the EHPS 2022 conference in Bratislava aimed to inform attendees of some of the recent contributions and discuss how the EHPS can continue and expand these activities in future. The following sections are summaries of each of the contributions to the roundtable:

The role of the EHPS at the United Nations

Lucie Byrne-Davis

Since 2011, the EHPS has been formally associated with the United Nations, an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1945 to promote international diplomacy and dialogue for peace, security, sustainable development and uphold fundamental human rights, justice and law. At present, the UN has 193 member states and holds offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. One part is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which coordinates international policy on topics such as work, poverty, health, education and human rights. In 2015, the EHPS was granted Consultative Status at the ECOSOC. In 2017, the EHPS UN Committee¹ developed a strategy for its contributions to the UN. The main goal is to support EHPS to collaborate in the application of health psychology to meet the global challenges of the UN agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To pursue this strategy, the committee has led on several internal EHPS and external initiatives. Internally, a Special Interest Group was created on Equity, Global Health and Sustainability², focusing on low and medium income countries (LMIC), SDGs,

¹The EHPS UN committee members as of August 2022 were: Lucie Byrne-Davis (chair), Vera Araujo-Soares (Past EHPS President), Jo Hart, Benjamin Ambuehl, Josianne Kollmann, Jennifer Inauen, Maria Karekla, Efrat Neter, Lucia Rehackova, Vica Tomberge, Philipp Kadel.

²<https://ehps.net/equity-global-health-and-sustainability/>

disadvantaged groups and environmental health. Several initiatives were started to showcase EHPS work aligned to the SDGs, such as tagging EHPS conference submissions, organising dedicated symposia, and including more colleagues from LMIC. The committee has also been working on internal organisation (membership, roles) and liaising with the EHPS Executive Committee. Externally, its members have been contributing to: a) meetings with key organisations that aim at sharing psychological knowledge at the UN (including the Psychology Coalition at the UN, detailed in the next section); b) working towards increasing health psychology representation at the Psychology Day at the UN³; c) communication on social media and EHPS website, and; d) collaboration with other psychological societies. An important part of the activity is complying with the special consultative status at ECOSOC, which allows us to write advocacy papers on our expertise on health-related topics.

The EHPS at the Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) at the United Nations (PCUN) having Consultative Status with ECOSOC

Vera Araújo Soares

The PCUN⁴ is a network of representatives of NGOs active in psychology or psychology-related fields and accredited (via consultative status at ECOSOC) or affiliated with UN entities. PCUN members collaborate to apply psychology to UN global challenges by advocacy, research, education, policy and program development. Since 2004, PCUN members have been active in two main entities: the ECOSOC Chamber and the Department of Global Communications (DGC), in particular in relation to NGOs - the DGC/NGO Relations Section, now the DGC Civil Society Unit. The DGC Civil Society Unit

organises annual conferences across the world to raise awareness on current global challenges and solutions⁵ and, when possible and relevant, psychological NGO's contribute to these. Psychology has had an important role in setting the UN agenda across the years. One of the most notable achievements was setting the SDG3 on Good Health and Well-Being and advocating for the importance of mental health and well-being.

The PCUN participates in many UN initiatives but the one that has more public international visibility is the Psychology Day at the UN, usually occurring in April and co-sponsored by countries' missions (e.g. Mexico and the Dominican Republic). This Psychology Day at the UN celebrates psychology in the context of the UN and provides an opportunity for psychology to share knowledge and practice with UN Permanent Missions, UN Agencies, NGOs and the private sector. During this yearly event the role of psychology in addressing concerns of global importance is highlighted. The Psychology Day brings together science and practice of psychology to discuss the latest psychological research on a specific topic. The aim is twofold: to share evidence-based strategies that can assist the UN and other groups to deal more effectively with a key challenge, on the one hand, and disseminate SDGs and global challenges within the psychological community on the other. The active engagement by EHPS UN committee members in the organisation of the Psychology Day at the UN has allowed the proposal of contributions from Health Psychology experts (and EHPS members) on core issues and current global challenges such as: multilateralism (2020, Prof. Susan Michie); building back better in a post-pandemic world (2021, Prof. Molly Byrne), and; climate action (2022, Prof. Ann DeSmet, Panel moderator Prof. Efrat Neter,

³<https://www.ehps.net/ehp/index.php/contents/article/view/3399>

⁴<https://psychologycoalitionun.org>

⁵<https://www.un.org/civilsociety>

Discussant Prof Vera Araújo Soares).

The PCUN, through its advocacy group, writes advocacy papers with the aim of raising awareness and collective action on key topics that are part of the UN agenda and often signalled by International Days and Decades, such as World Health Day (April 7), International Day of Happiness (March 20), or World Mental Health Day (October 10). One recent example of such a paper was the one issued on Psychological Perspectives on One Health and Planetary Health written to be released on World Environment Day (5 June 2022)⁶ and that was led by an EHPS member (our colleague Philipp Kadel) and co-sponsored by the EHPS. In this paper PCUN proposes practical recommendations to policy makers for enacting a one health approach to planetary health. Members of the EHPS, through their active participation at the PCUN, have also collaborated in organising events targeting issues such as the integration, health and support of refugees and migrants, indigenous peoples, or the status and participation of women in global issues. Since 2017, the EHPS, via the EHPS UN Committee, co-sponsored several events within these initiatives.

The active participation of the EHPS in the several activities led and enacted by the PCUN has increased the visibility of the EHPS and the reach of the society's messages and outputs, leading to an increased potential for impact. It has also led to collaborations with other fields of psychology and other societies (e.g. American Psychological Association - APA; SPSSI - Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues). These collaborations are crucial to share and generalise knowledge created within health psychology to other areas of psychology.

Contributing to the World Health Organisation health goals: examples from Romania

Adriana Băban

As a long-term WHO collaborator and EHPS member, the Health Psychology Research group at the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, has been contributing for many years to data collection and policy recommendations in several WHO initiatives. One example is the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, a WHO collaborative cross-national study of adolescent health and well-being. Romania joined the HBSC network in 2003 and contributed to several data collection waves, which have led to national reports on adolescents' health and proposals for health policy. Romania has also participated in the European child maltreatment prevention action plan led by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, which has set up monitoring of prevalence across countries via instruments such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaires, as well as research into the determinants and consequences of child maltreatment and ways to take action at the policy level. The group has also delivered invited conferences and workshops to discuss evidence-based pathways to strengthening childhood immunisation, to inform concerted action on this topic.

Other contributions consist of methodology consultancy and support on study protocols for WHO, or national projects linked to international emerging challenges. One recent example is a project initiated at the start of the COVID19 pandemic to support rapid response of hospitals and health professionals. The project assessed the impact of an intervention on improving doctors'

⁶https://m.box.com/shared_item/https%3A%2F%2Fapp.box.com%2F%2F8infiwq0olsdhagfganm000vsuv2rp2k

self-efficacy and promoting adherence to recommended public health measures in the community. Two studies initiated in 2022 deal with assessing health needs of people fleeing to Romania due to the war in Ukraine. A rapid assessment of needs and healthcare access is complemented by a qualitative study to assess health service perceptions, experiences, barriers and drivers of health service uptake among Ukrainian refugees. The results are used to inform health policy in Romania and at European level concerning the organisation and delivery of health services to this population.

The EHPS involvement with the WHO initiative on the International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI)

Alexandra Dima

A more recent initiative has been reaching out on behalf of the EHPS to the WHO group developing an international classification with direct relevance to health psychology: the International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI)⁷. A newer addition to the WHO Family of International Classifications, ICHI has been under development since 2007. It was preceded by the International Classification of Disease (ICD) and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), both now routinely used by health systems for recording diagnoses and health states, determinants and outcomes, for both research and practice. The ICHI vision is to develop a shared language for collecting data routinely on health interventions across health systems, for monitoring performance, knowledge transfer and training. Practically, it consists of more than 7000 terms and definitions for describing a broad range of interventions, from surgery procedures to public health interventions. Health psychology

assessment and interventions are included in ICHI and classified and coded in a standardised manner to indicate the action performed, its target, and the manner in which it is performed.

The long-term ambition of ICHI is to facilitate routine data collection on topics of global importance such as health system performance, patient safety and quality, universal health coverage and sustainable development - topics on which health psychology has a central contribution to evidence generation and practice. The EHPS can contribute to the development of ICHI by giving feedback on terms relevant for the discipline, as well as making ICHI known to health psychologists and working towards its effective implementation. An EHPS ICHI committee has been set up in October 2020 (Vera Araujo-Soares, Lucie Byrne-Davis, Jo Hart, Marie Johnston, Alexandra Dima) and a first contact has been established with the WHO ICHI development team around initial feedback on terms for health behaviours, determinants and behaviour change techniques. Further plans for continuing this collaboration have been drawn up, and several EHPS members have expressed their interest in contributing to this work.

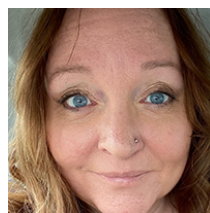
Discussion and perspectives

Jo Hart and Marie Johnston

The contributions to this roundtable demonstrated that the EHPS has actively engaged with several international bodies to increase knowledge dissemination and translation reach. A stronger voice can lead to a more sustained contribution to international health policy. Other initiatives within the EHPS, such as the 2022 Synergy Expert Meeting on Behavioural Science and

⁷<https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/international-classification-of-health-interventions>

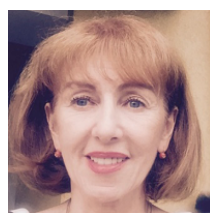
Public Health, facilitated by Marta Marques and Angel Chater, and the EHPS Working Group on engaging effectively with policy, chaired by Julia Allan and set up in 2022, add substantially to these efforts. Discussions included reflecting on what we have learnt from experiences to date, and considering how we have contributed through theory, methods of investigation and intervention development as well as with evidence for interventions (e.g. on mechanisms of change and behaviour change techniques). Attendees were keen to work collaboratively and be part of ongoing developments. As PCUN is now aiming to increase its representation on other European organisations, the EHPS UN committee is engaged in realising this aim by planning to engage with different UN agencies spread across Europe. An enabler is that members of the EHPS are based around Europe and Central Europe. EHPS members may contact the authors of this brief report if they are interested in volunteering to represent the society and actively contribute to activities such as those presented at this roundtable.



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