

Update on the EHPS Affiliation with the United Nations

Nihal Mohamed This update includes information regarding the EHPS-UNDPI members' activities during the past four years. The following sections delineate our status and activities related to the UNDP.

It has now been four years since EHPS was formally associated with the Division of Public Information/ NGO section at the United Nations (since April 29th 2011). During that time the EHPS – UN Committee has been in discussion with EHPS National Delegates and all members about the role of health psychology in contributing to global health research and policy, to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and currently, to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We have recently had a major success (April 2015) when the EHPS was accredited for ECOSOC consultative status. This means, given our dual status (UN-DPI & ECOSOC status), we can have a significant influence on global health and well-being policies.

During the past four years we have initiated several activities and many contacts within the EHPS and the UN-DPI community. Two of the committee members, Golan Shahar and Alden Lai, attended the 64th UN/NGO Conference (September 3rd- 5th 2011 in Bonn). The conference along with the 65th UN/NGO Conference that our members attended at UN Headquarters in New York, have created more effective dialogue to build on the momentum generated by the MDGs and carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda in order to provide concrete

steps for delivering the promise of sustainable development”.

<http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/conference-2014/>

The EHPS-UN committee organized a roundtable for the EHPS Conference in Prague in 2012: EHPS association with the United Nations: How can health psychology influence global health policies? - Marta Marques and Irina Todorova were the convenors, Efrat Neter, Suzanne Skevington, Alden Lai and Susan Michie were contributors. The purpose of the Round Table was to establish the vision and strategies for the contribution of health psychology and EHPS to global health policies, through the affiliation with the UN/WHO. Through these associations, the EHPS can have an important role in global health policies, reinforcing the importance of psychology in health and illness prevention. The contributors presented their viewpoints in relation to ongoing activities and future goals, such as the recommendations for action drawn from the UN/NGO conferences, the strategies for the affiliations with the UN/WHO and the rationale for EHPS involvement in global health policies. In order to enhance the potential of the EHPS to contribute to global health policies, we have designed and are currently collecting feedback from our EHPS community regarding the best ways to engage with the UN and what their current engagements are via [a survey to EHPS members](#).

Members of the UN Subcommittee who are located in New York frequently attend UN briefings and other events. Nihal Mohamed, Irina Todorova, and Lisa Wu have attended UN 2014

and 2015 Psychology Day, and published a separate piece about the 2014 event in our online EHPS Bulletin, and will soon publish the brief description of the 2015 event. Nihal Mohamed and Lisa Wu have attended the 2014 65th Annual UN DPI/NGO conference which was also published in our online EHPS Bulletin. Lisa and Irina also went to a meeting of the Psychology Coalition and are in the process of writing a separate piece on the event for a publication in our online EHPS Bulletin. Unfortunately, the EHPS-UN is not currently involved in the organization of the Psychology Day, even though its topic is right in our area. The main reason for this is that it is organized mainly by the Psychology Coalition in the UN. The coalition is doing lots of other great work at the UN, such as intensively lobbying for the inclusion of wellbeing and for the first time mental health in the new Sustainable Development goals. Thus, we believe it is crucial for EHPS to become a member of this coalition.

Additionally, Marta Marques has explored possible EHPS collaborations with WHO (Civil Society Initiative). The first step was to contact the WHO civil initiative department in Geneva to express our interest in collaborating with WHO and ask for the procedure required to be eligible to the "official relations status" of the EHPS <http://www.who.int/civilsociety/en/>. The WHO expressed an interest on the potential areas of collaboration between EHPS and WHO, and we informed them what we see as some potential areas (e.g. evidence-based health policies, health promotion projects, prevention and intervention in non-communicable diseases, mental health, health monitoring, health inequalities). Marta Marques and Angelos Kassianos are working now to further in establish the initial informal relations with WHO.

EHPS members have been informing us about their on-going collaborations with UN Organizations and we are grateful for the

interaction with members. Some examples include the following: Several EHPS members and member countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Switzerland and others) are involved in the longitudinal WHO collaborative health promotion and policy project (supported also by UNICEF), Health and Behavior in School-Aged Children, which has been collecting data and providing policy recommendations on school health since 1986. EHPS members from Romania (Adriana Baban) have consulted with UNICEF on topics of prevention of domestic violence, child trafficking and alcohol use among adolescents in Albania. Suzanne Skevington is Director of the WHO Centre for the Study of Quality of Life. EHPS members from the United Kingdom have worked on projects for: Improving cross-cultural assessment of quality of life in health and health care (WHOQOL Group 1992- date) Division of Mental Health WHO, Geneva; Active ageing and quality of life in older adults (WHOQOL-Old Group); WHO European Regional Office, Copenhagen (2001-2004); Assessing quality of life in HIV/AIDS (WHO Geneva and UNAIDS 1998-2003); AIDs-competent communities (UNAIDS, Geneva, 2000-2004); Biodiversity, health and quality of life (UNESCO Paris, 2005); Child-friendly schools (WHO Geneva, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse 1999). Dr. Roger Ingham has worked with WHO on reproductive health methodologies and has contributed to the WHO publication Sexual Behavior and AIDS in the Developing World.

EHPS had a broad international network of psychologists and commitment to improving health

and well-being in a global context and thus is positioned to have a positive impact on global health through its association with DPI, WHO and hopefully ECOSOC. We are looking forward to developing further partnerships with the United Nations and the other professional psychological organizations affiliated with the UN. Currently,

an effort led by Alden Lai, is directed toward preparing a workshop on UN involvement for EHPS 2016, to explore venues and strategies to use in our overarching goal of making a significant impact on global health and well-being policies.

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