

The EHPS and the UN: How are European Psychologists engaging with the sustainable development goals?

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on behalf of the EHPS UN Subcommittee, University of Manchester

The EHPS has special consultative status in the Economic and Social Council at the UN (ECOSOC). Consultative status with ECOSOC is enjoyed by only 5,083 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which is not many world wide, and ECOSOC has good systems for facilitating meaningful contributions. ECOSOC coordinates the economic, social and related work of the 14 United Nations specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions¹ and is the central forum for formulating policy recommendations to the UN member states. There are 54 member states in ECOSOC, including 14 African, 11 Asian, 6 Eastern European, 10 Latin American and Caribbean and 13 Western European and other states. The bidirectional relationship between ECOSOC and the NGOs means that NGOs can help raise awareness of relevant issues, play a role in advancing UN goals and provide expert analysis of issues, as well as networking and lobbying at UN conferences and events.

What does that mean?

Since gaining special consultative status, in 2015, the EHPS UN sub-committee has been exploring links with the UN, gathering information and advice from colleagues involved in the UN and developing strategy for how EHPS can make the

most of its status for the benefit of the UN and EHPS members. Activities have included involvement in the Psychology Coalition at the UN (PCUN), which organises psychology professional organisations and NGO contributions and holds an annual day to highlight psychology at the UN. EHPS representatives join monthly coalition virtual meetings. This year, at the annual EHPS conference in Galway, we decided that one of the most valuable activities we could undertake would be to gather intelligence about how EHPS member activities are related to the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs)².

The SDGs are the way that the UN articulates what are the global challenges we face which we need to tackle to provide a better and sustainable future for all. The aim is to achieve 169 targets within 17 goals by the year 2030. (figure 1). Each goal is quite broad, but linked to each goal are a set of targets, which are more specific. Goal 3, good health and well-being, is the most obvious goal to which health psychology has a crucial contribution³ (figure 2). Other goals, such as Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation) are also areas where health psychology can, and does, play an important part. The UN has an interest in improving assessments for tracking the achievement of these goals, an area to which health psychologists (for example through the PCUN) can contribute. Indeed, looking at the targets for each goal, it is possible to see where the work of the EHPS members has, and could have, an

<http://csonet.org/content/documents/Brochure.pdf>
<http://sdg.iisd.org>
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>



Figure 1. The Sustainable Development Goals (will need checking for permissions)

impact on achieving SDGs.

What now?

- Raising the profile of the SDGs within EHPS is a key goal, since if we wish to maximise our consultative status, we need to be aware of how our work impacts on SDGs and be able to mobilise our members to contribute to ECOSOC and broader UN consultations. We will be asking members to think about how their work relates to SDGs when submitting abstracts for EHPS conferences in the future.

- Another key aim is to bring together EHPS members who are working, or would like to be working, in low and middle-income countries, as often these activities are more explicitly focused on the sustainable development goals. We will be developing a special interest group in health psychology in low- and middle-income countries within EHPS and will be asking members if they

would like to join.

- Thirdly, health psychologists often struggle with the balance of research, practice and impact and we aim to encourage more conversation between members, at conference and in other fora, about how we manage the tensions between practice and policy development and the conduct of high quality research that contributes to the science of psychology.

Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing

This goal includes a number of targets that focus on changes in lifestyle, uptake of screening and vaccinations, and improvements in the delivery of health services, all of which are key parts of the role and research of health psychologists.

Figure 2. Goal 3 alignment with health psychology

We will be in touch with EHPS members about our work over the next year. In the meantime, if you have comments or questions about the EHPS UN Sub-committee you can contact our chair lucie.byrne-davis@manchester.ac.uk

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