

EHPS application for NGO status with the United Nations

By Irina Todorova*, EHPS President

The European Health Psychology Society has a broad international network of health psychologists, a strong commitment to improving health and well-being on a global scale and to developing adequate health policy. We can further these objectives of our society by expanding our partnerships with the United Nations, the dozen psychological societies and the 3000 other non-profit organizations affiliated with the UN. The EHPS can actively contribute to global health and health policy by becoming affiliated with the United Nations and becoming involved in the work of the NGO committees within this international organization. Psychologists are members of many of the NGO committees, such as the Committee on Ageing, on Children's and Women's Rights, on HIV/AIDS, and on Mental Health, many of which have direct or indirect relevance to health psychology. As a Society with UN NGO status, the EHPS would be able to express its voice at the UN through appointing EHPS representatives, participating in the discussions of different NGO committees at the United Nations in Geneva, Vienna and New York, and informing and implementing UN decisions.

The contributions of psychology to UN activities are broad and are being highlighted through a new initiative – the *Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations*. The first such Day took place on October 10th, 2007, and is discussed in the December 2007 issue of the EHP. Recently, a second Day was held on November 19th, 2008, and was entitled *Psychology and Social Justice Related to the UN Global Agenda*. Participants were individuals or representatives of the UN affiliated psychological societies such as The International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), The International Council of Psychologists (ICP), the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS), International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), The American Psychological Association (APA) and others.

To give you a sense of the topics addressed by psychologists at the UN, the following describes the three panels convened at the Second Psychology Day. The first panel was entitled: *Human behavior and climate change: A social justice issue*, chaired by Peter Walker, representative for SPSSI at the UN. Speakers were David Uzzell and Inka Weissbecker,

representative of the IUPsyS at the UN. They covered topics related to participatory approaches to environmentally supportive behaviour and the mental health aspects of climate change, particularly in low income settings. The second panel was on the topic of *Poverty reduction and social justice: The role of psychology*, chaired by Mary O'Neil Berry and Walter Reichman, UN representatives from the IAAP. The speakers were Anthony Lemieux and Anthony Marcella. They addressed the social justice aspects of the existence of immense poverty in the context of immense wealth. The third panel was on *Psychological perspectives on the abuse of power*, chaired by Deanna Chitayat, UN representative for the APA. The speakers were Susan Opatow, Stacey Sinclair, and Rita Chi-Ying Chung and covered the topics of exclusion, implicit prejudice and human trafficking.

We are aware that many members of the EHPS have worked with UN organizations through the years, some of which were described in the December 2007 issue of the European Health Psychologist. At this point in time, the EHPS Executive Committee is asking all EHPS members to share their views as well as their experiences of working with UN programs and projects. To acquire NGO status with the United Nations we will be following the application process at the NGO section of the Department of Public Information at the UN www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/index.asp. We have formed a working group for the UN application currently made up of Irina Todorova, Susan Michie and Suzanne Skevington, which will advance the application process. If our application is successful, we will make a call to members for nominations for EHPS UN representatives.

Dear EHPS members, we look forward to your opinions, suggestions and recommendations regarding EHPS affiliation with the UN. Please let us know if you would like to join the working group; also, for the application process, it would be very helpful if you could send us examples of past and current projects and activities that you have undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations and its programs, such as the WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and others. Please send such information to Irina Todorova, and let us know if we can include it in the EHPS application to the UN. ■

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