



European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA)

Information for the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) Board of Educational Affairs (BEA)

EFPTA promotes and supports psychology as a subject in secondary schools in Europe. In the following information we outline EFPTA's aims and activities and show how they reflect the strategic aims of EFPA and the BEA Workplan. We describe EFPTA's future priorities, and we identify areas for potential co-operation and support.

1. Background information on the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA, www.efpta.org)

EFPTA was formed in 2004 and is a federation of national and regional associations of psychology teachers in schools and colleges in European countries. Members are mainly involved in teaching psychology courses at lower and upper secondary levels, to students aged c.13-19 years. These are predominantly academic courses, in which psychology is taught as a discrete subject, including qualifications conferring eligibility for entry to university (eg Abitur, A-levels etc).

EFPTA's focus is on pre-tertiary (pre-university) psychology education (PTPE), and in the spirit of the Bologna Process has established a network of psychology educators across Europe. There are currently 12 member countries where psychology is taught at pre-tertiary level; eight of these countries have psychology teachers' associations.

An Affiliate of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations since July 2009, EFPTA is represented on the EFPA Board of Educational Affairs (BEA).

The importance of pre-tertiary psychology has been highlighted by Robert Roe, President of EFPA, who told the European Parliament in 2011:

'psychology is for EVERYONE.....a worthwhile aim for the future is to promote EU citizens' psychological literacy through teaching psychology in secondary schools'

(Psychology: a contribution to EU policy-making, 9 November 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/od883kq>)

EFPTA's aims are:

- To promote psychology education at pre-university (pre-tertiary) level.
- To share knowledge and experience of psychology teaching and learning.
- To consider curriculum and assessment issues
- To share information on teaching methods and resources
- To consider issues of teacher education and professional development
- To promote exchanges and joint projects for teachers and students
- To increase psychological literacy amongst the population

2. To achieve these aims we need to understand *what* psychology is taught, and *how*, in schools in Europe. This is why EFPTA members have carried out a range of research projects:

• Survey of pre-university psychology education in Europe (2009)

An EFPTA online survey of teachers in nine European countries found:

- All responding countries were teaching psychology to 15-19 year-olds, and under-15s were being taught psychology in three countries - Finland, Germany, Scotland
- Students typically had 2 - 5 hours of psychology classes per week
- A wide variety of assessment methods were used
- Psychology courses were mostly academic, but some were vocational, or formed part of a personal development / wellbeing course
- Almost all countries taught elements of cognitive, developmental, social psychology & individual differences, plus research methods & practical research skills

See: Williamson, M., Coombs, D., Schrepf, R. & Sokolová, L. (2009) *Survey of pre-university psychology education in Europe*. Presentation to EFPTA Conference, Bratislava, April 2010. <http://tinyurl.com/lrz3k58>

• Teacher education & professional development for pre-tertiary psychology in Europe (2011)

A total of 15 psychology teachers from eight European countries took part in interviews and focus groups. This small-scale initial exploration of a still under-researched topic showed many areas of similarity, as well as some major differences in teacher education (TE) and continuing professional development (CPD) for PTPE. There was much variation in the funding of CPD for individuals, whether by school heads or government agencies. There was also great variation and concern over the following:

- poor access to initial teacher education courses for PTPE in England, Scotland and some German states
- deployment of non-specialist staff to teach psychology in the 15-19 age band was unusual and undesirable in some countries but very common in others, indicating variation in the perceived value of psychology teachers' specialist subject expertise.

The implications for practice are clear: in some countries / regions there are major obstacles to TE and CPD which must be addressed, in order to enhance the quality of PTPE to the levels that obtain in other European countries and in other subjects. In doing so, psychology graduates' career opportunities will also be increased.

See: Williamson, M., Coombs, D., Schrepf, R. & Sokolová, L. (2011). *Pre-tertiary psychology education in Europe: a survey of approaches to teacher education and continuing professional development of school psychology teachers*. Poster presented to British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Glasgow, 5 May. <http://tinyurl.com/jvtfwj>

• European pre-tertiary students' views of studying psychology (2012)

Students from 12 countries responded to an online survey (n = 1495):

- 86% found psychology a 'useful' or 'very useful' school subject
- 78% found psychology to be an 'important' or 'very important' subject
- 92% found it an 'interesting' or 'very interesting' subject
- 83% found it to be 'helpful' or 'very helpful' in understanding others.

See: Augustin, W. (2012) *What do our pre-tertiary students think of studying psychology? Online survey: interim findings*. Presentation to EFPTA Conference, Copenhagen, 21 April. <http://tinyurl.com/md9ry7n>

• A cross-cultural collaborative teacher-student research project on student motivation for, and perceived outcomes of, studying psychology (2012)

An online questionnaire revealed similarities and differences between British and Slovak psychology students (n = 430). Some of the biggest differences were in perceptions of difficulty of the subject, and in the extent to which studying psychology helped develop scientific and critical thinking.

See: Sokolová, L. (2012) *A cross-cultural collaborative teacher-student research project on student motivation for, and perceived outcomes of, studying psychology*. Presentation to EFPTA Conference, Copenhagen, 21 April. <http://tinyurl.com/mn6lx19>

- **Focus groups of teachers on the pre-tertiary psychology curriculum in Europe (2013)**

47 teachers of psychology from 10 countries took part. Qualitative analysis of audio-recorded discussions revealed a range of views on the purpose and content of the psychology curriculum. The most marked variations were found in the way curricula are determined, and by whom: some teachers experience a high degree of centralised 'top-down' control while others enjoy a more inclusive, democratic approach in which teachers, students, and psychologists participate in decisions on curriculum.

See: Williamson, M., Sokolová, L. Coombs, D. & Schrempf, R. (2013) *Whose curriculum is it anyway? Preliminary findings from focus groups of teachers on the pre-tertiary psychology curriculum in Europe*. Presentation to EFPTA Board, Brussels, 20 April. <http://tinyurl.com/nfoun5e>

- **PTPE bibliography**

As well as conducting empirical research, EFPTA has identified a body of literature about PTPE. See **Pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) – a bibliography**. <http://tinyurl.com/pis2erj>

Finally, we also gather and document information more informally at meetings and events, much of which is available on the EFPTA website.

3. EFPTA provides practical support for psychology teachers & students in the following ways:

Networks and projects

- We have formed a Europe-wide network of psychology teachers; this is an active community of practice, supported by well-maintained channels of communication.
- We facilitate co-operation amongst psychology teachers' associations, for example by sharing journals and magazines, and by reciprocal participation in national associations' events.
- We facilitate student and teacher collaborative projects, such as 'Twinning Classes' and exchanges.
- Members engage with their national psychologists' associations on pre-tertiary issues informed by EFPTA's work.
- We engage with educational organisations internationally (eg APA-TOPSS, two Russian pedagogical universities)
- We present papers and posters at international psychology events: ICAP (Paris, 2014), ICPS (Amsterdam, 2015), EuroPlat (Vilnius, 2012), ECP (Oslo, 2009).

Events

We have organised major conferences or seminars every year since 2004, in 11 countries, involving about 20 to 100 teachers and students each time. Major conferences are bi-ennial, the most recent being in Berlin (April 2014) and Copenhagen (April 2012). These events offer:

- For Teachers – professional development, opportunity to present practitioner research and projects, sharing of ideas and good practice in teaching and learning
- For Students – a unique platform to present their projects, and opportunities to make cross-European contacts and be involved in a range of activities.

Communication

- The EFPTA website is basic but informative, and is well-maintained and updated. See www.efpta.org.
- News dissemination: the Annual Newsletter is published every September, and there are regular e-newsletters. Both are disseminated via EFPTA representatives to members of their national associations, reaching around 3000+ psychology teachers across Europe.
- EFPTA uses social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- Members write for various publications eg journals / magazines of national psychology teachers' associations, ATP Today (Finland, Denmark), Europlat Newsletter, APA-TOPSS

Resources

Many conference presentations and other downloads are available (open access) on the website.

See www.efpta.org.

4. Future priorities

EFPTA is making considerable progress towards achieving its aims. For example:

- Number of conference participants, both in terms of individuals and countries represented, has increased at every event, including the number of students actively contributing to events (c.100 total participants at Berlin 2014). Feedback on conferences has been excellent in every case
- EFPTA supported the establishment of new psychology teachers' associations in Switzerland (Association Vaudoise, 2012) and in Slovakia (2013)
- Number of website hits has increased year on year, from all member countries and beyond
- There appears to be increased awareness of poor availability of teacher education in some countries / regions, and some signs of improving provision.

To continue to increase our impact the following activities are planned:

- Produce a flyer about EFPTA to be disseminated among teachers and academics at national and international events
- Produce info leaflet / booklet for young people, to promote value of psychology at school; to be translated into languages of member countries
- Obtain further evidence on the extent of access to psychology education for young people in Europe, and the nature of psychology education in different countries
- Support teachers in their endeavours to establish a psychology teachers' association in countries where none so far exists
- Influence policies on psychology education at European level, with a view to expanding provision and influencing curricula.
- Address specific issues, including:
 - status of psychology v. other school subjects
 - embedding of psychology in school curriculum
 - provision of teacher education and professional development
 - psychology-specific pedagogical skills
 - psychology teacher / school psychologist relationship
 - PTPE for younger learners
 - students' perceptions of PTPE
 - student transition to university study / employment / training
 - PTPE curricula, and how they are determined

5. How can the EFPA BEA best support pre-tertiary psychology education in Europe?

We are aware that all of the above will require a significant investment of time and resources. Below are some ways in which EFPA BEA could help to achieve the above.

Firstly, we would like the BEA to **enlist the support of psychologists in every EFPA member country** via their **national associations, university departments and research institutes**, to engage in various ways with psychology teachers in their own countries:

- Urge national psychologists' associations to provide significant, consistent support to teachers' associations, eg support for events, publicity, funding attendance by teacher and student delegates
- Showcase models of good practice by psychologists' associations in supporting teachers, eg by providing speakers or workshops at events, writing magazine and journal articles, providing funds, etc.
- Use EFPA members' networks to find potential research partners to work with EFPTA members / psychology teachers on research projects into pre-tertiary issues, including identifying suitable research funding opportunities. See Section 4 on 'Future priorities' for specific potential areas of research.

Secondly, we seek **direct assistance from the BEA for EFPTA**, since support for the Federation is an effective means of supporting psychology education across Europe:

- Ensure an EFPA BEA presence at EFPTA events, eg sponsor a speaker, give a workshop, hold a stand / display, give award(s), etc
- Publicise EFPTA via a link on the EFPA website and other communications
- Resource the production of information leaflets, for example by providing graphic design, translation, printing, distribution etc.