



**EFPTA**

**European Federation of  
Psychology Teachers' Associations**



Getting off to a good start in psychology:  
benefits and limitations of pre-tertiary education in psychology

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# Abstract



- Psychology is taught as a secondary school subject in many European countries, in various types of schools and with diverse content.
- Psychology teachers believe that: studying psychology at pre-tertiary (or pre-university) level contributes to students' preparation for studying psychology and other disciplines at university; it helps students develop critical thinking skills, understanding of self and others, life skills, mental health and overall psychological literacy; it also has a potential to bridge social studies, STEM and personal development subjects.
- On the other hand, the teaching of psychology faces many obstacles: the subject often receives limited support with a shortage of qualified teachers.
- The European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA) was established in 2004 to support pre-tertiary psychology education and teachers' networking and professional development.
- EFPTA invites colleagues interested in school psychology and cooperation between schools and universities to discuss their experiences and expectations about pre-tertiary psychology.

**The round table will start with a brief overview of EFPTA research and activities followed by a semi-structured discussion.**

# A few words about EFPTA:

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**EFPTA was formed in 2004** and it is a federation of national and regional associations of psychology teachers in schools and colleges in European countries.

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Members are mainly involved in teaching psychology courses at lower and upper secondary levels at schools to students aged from 13 to 19. **EFPTA's focus is on pre-university psychology education**, and in the spirit of the Bologna Process it has established a network of psychology educators across Europe.





## goals:

promote psychology  
education at pre-  
university level

share knowledge and  
experience of  
teaching and learning  
in psychology

consider curriculum  
and assessment issues

share teaching  
methods and  
resources

consider issues of  
teacher education and  
professional  
development

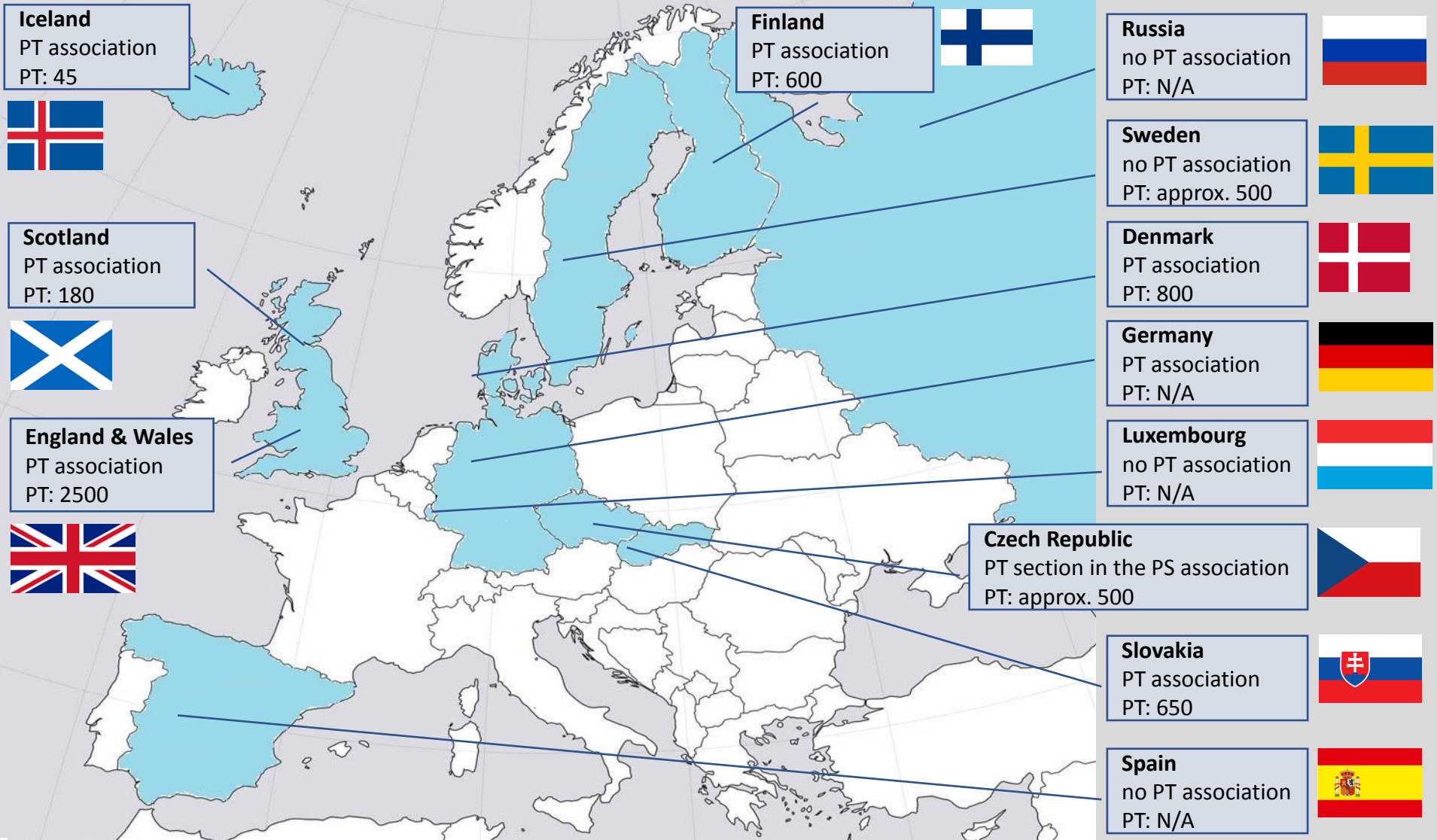
promote exchanges  
and joint projects

support teachers to  
establish associations  
in their countries

influence policies on  
psychology education  
at European level

increase psychological  
literacy amongst the  
population

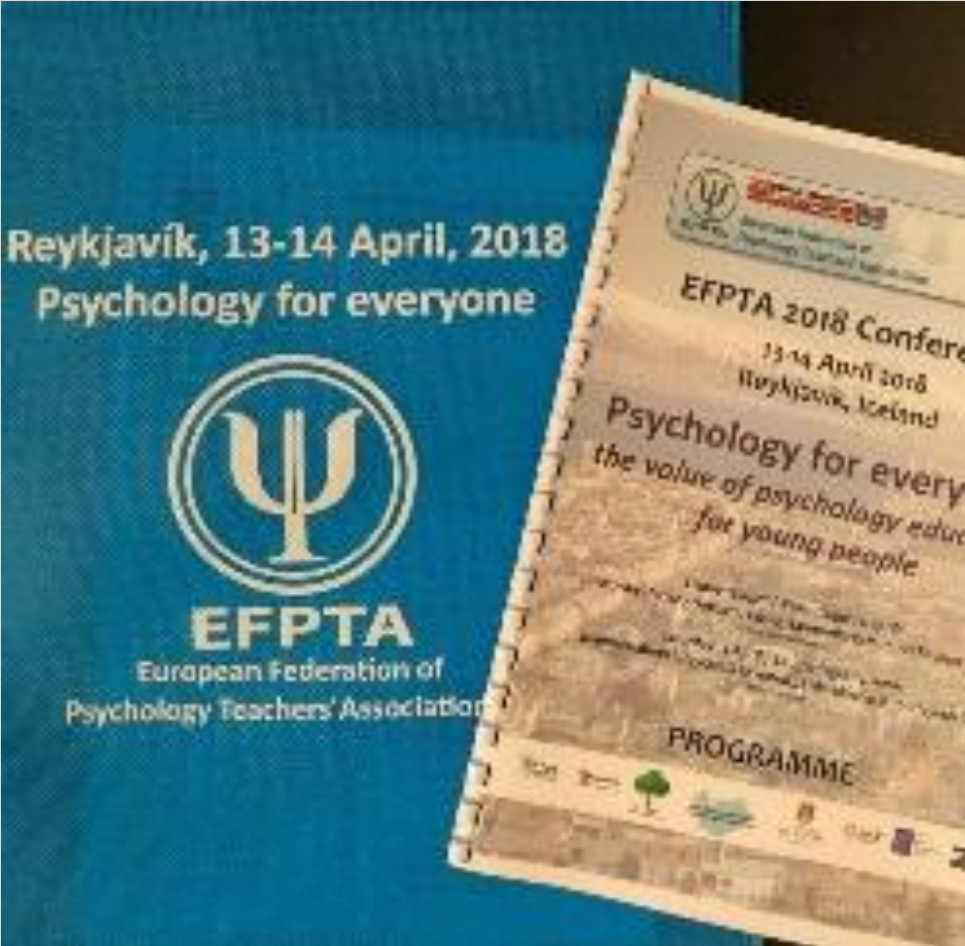




# EFPTA member countries







## Main EFPTA activities

- networking and collaborative projects
- international seminars and conferences
- research activities
- promoting and discussing pre-tertiary teaching of psychology

# EFPTA textbook project

Jock McGinty

ESPLAT 2019

# Aims

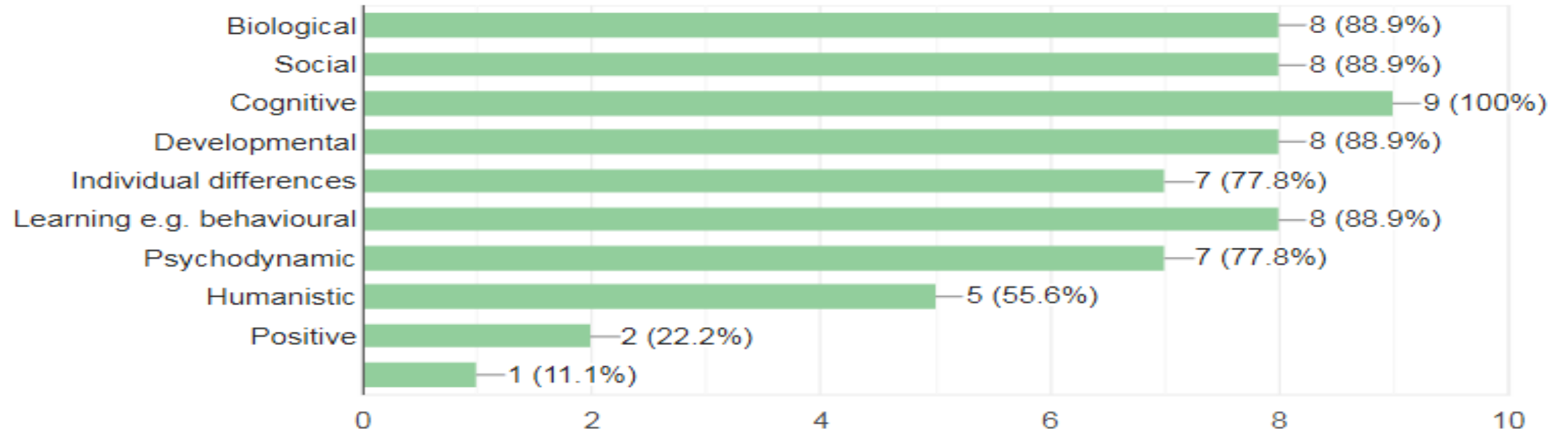
- To compare school-level psychology textbooks from different European countries
- Responses from England & Wales, Slovakia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark



# Focus

- Curriculum content
- Key features
- Terminology
- Areas in psychology
- Research methods

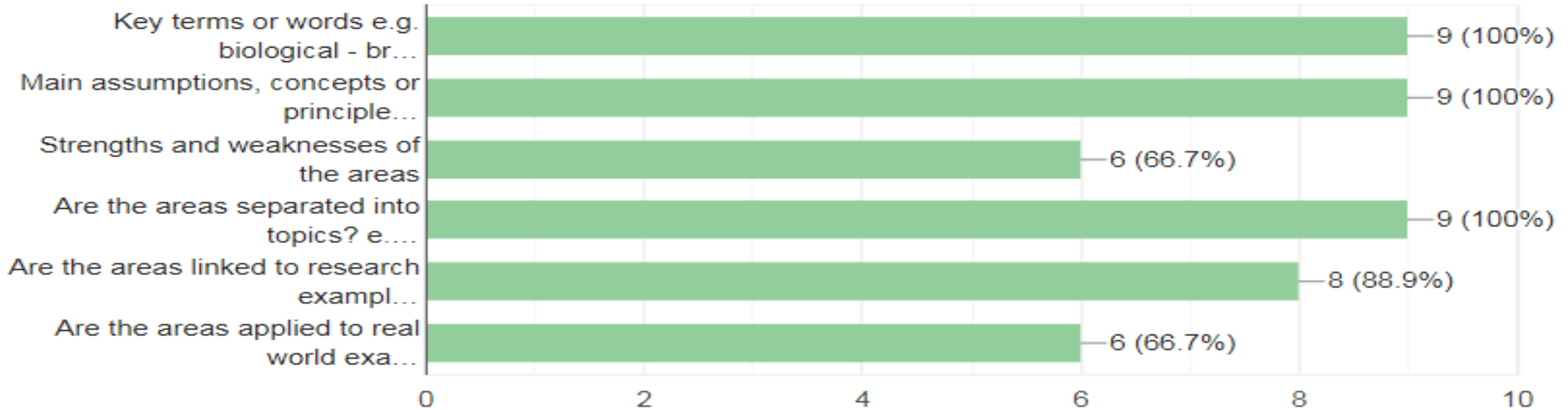
# Areas of Psychology



# Popular topics

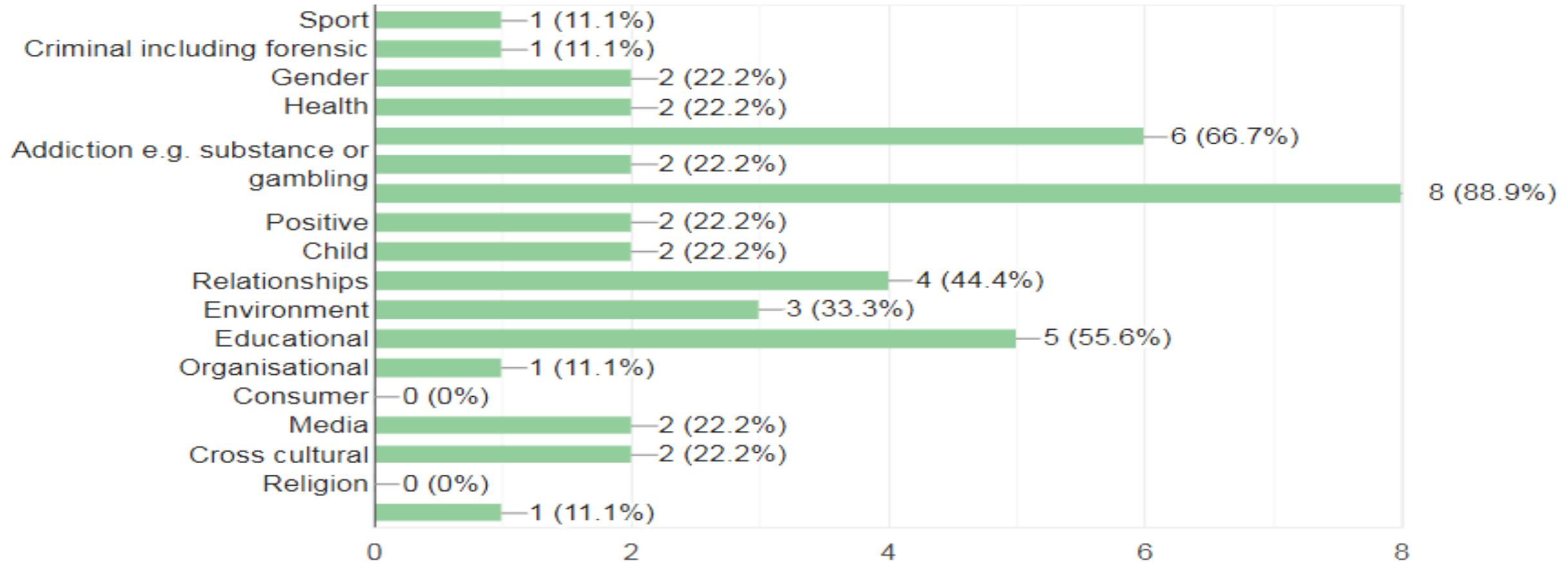
- Obedience, interpersonal relationships
- Brain and neurotransmitters
- Memory and intelligence
- Childhood and attachment
- Personality and mental health

# Areas of Psychology

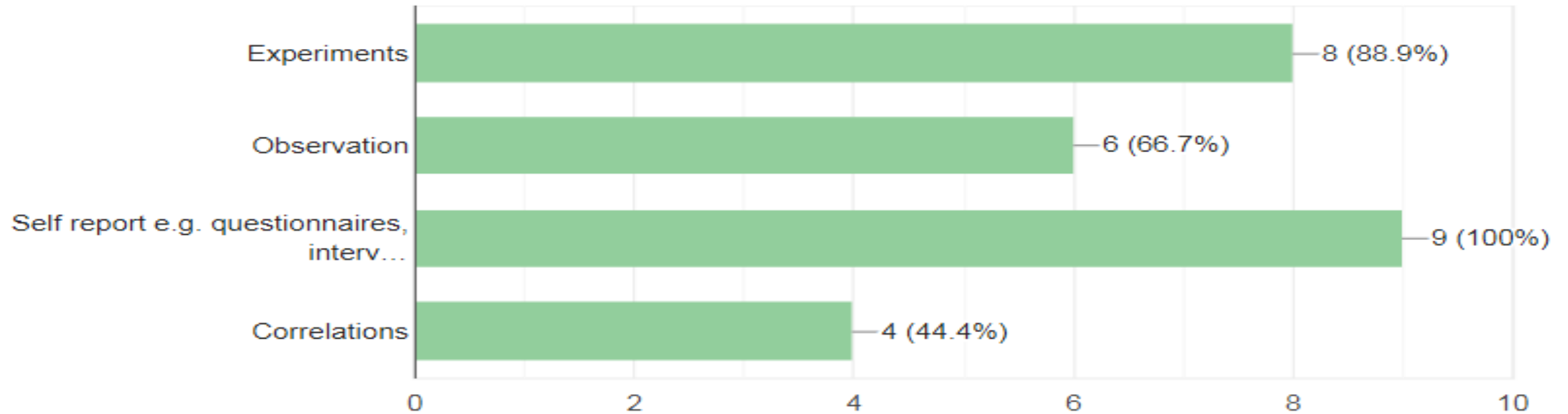




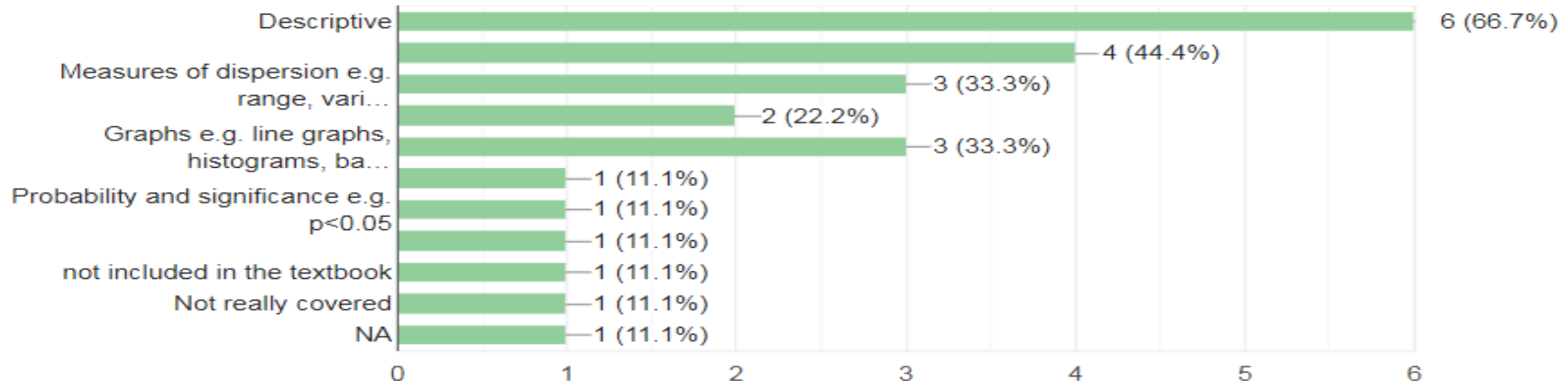
# Applied topics



# Methods and techniques



# Statistics



# Summary

- European school textbooks provide a framework for students to learn psychology
- They all cover the main areas of psychology
- Topics in applied psychology vary widely but mental illness studied in every country
- Teaching of research methods varies considerably
- Inferential statistics only appears in England & Wales
- Not all countries use native language textbooks e.g. Iceland



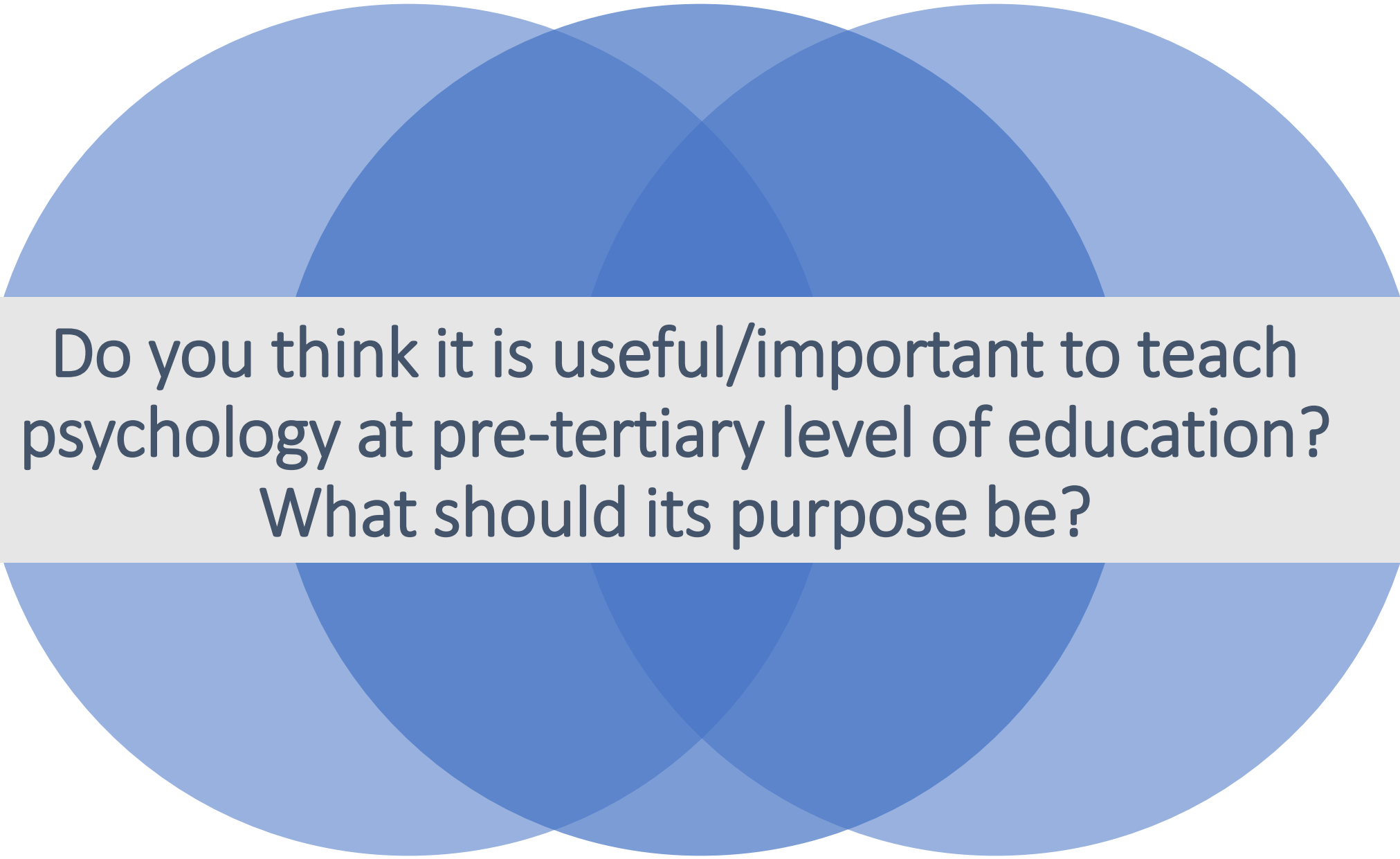
# Wider points

A cross section of European school psychology curricula suggests all students need to show

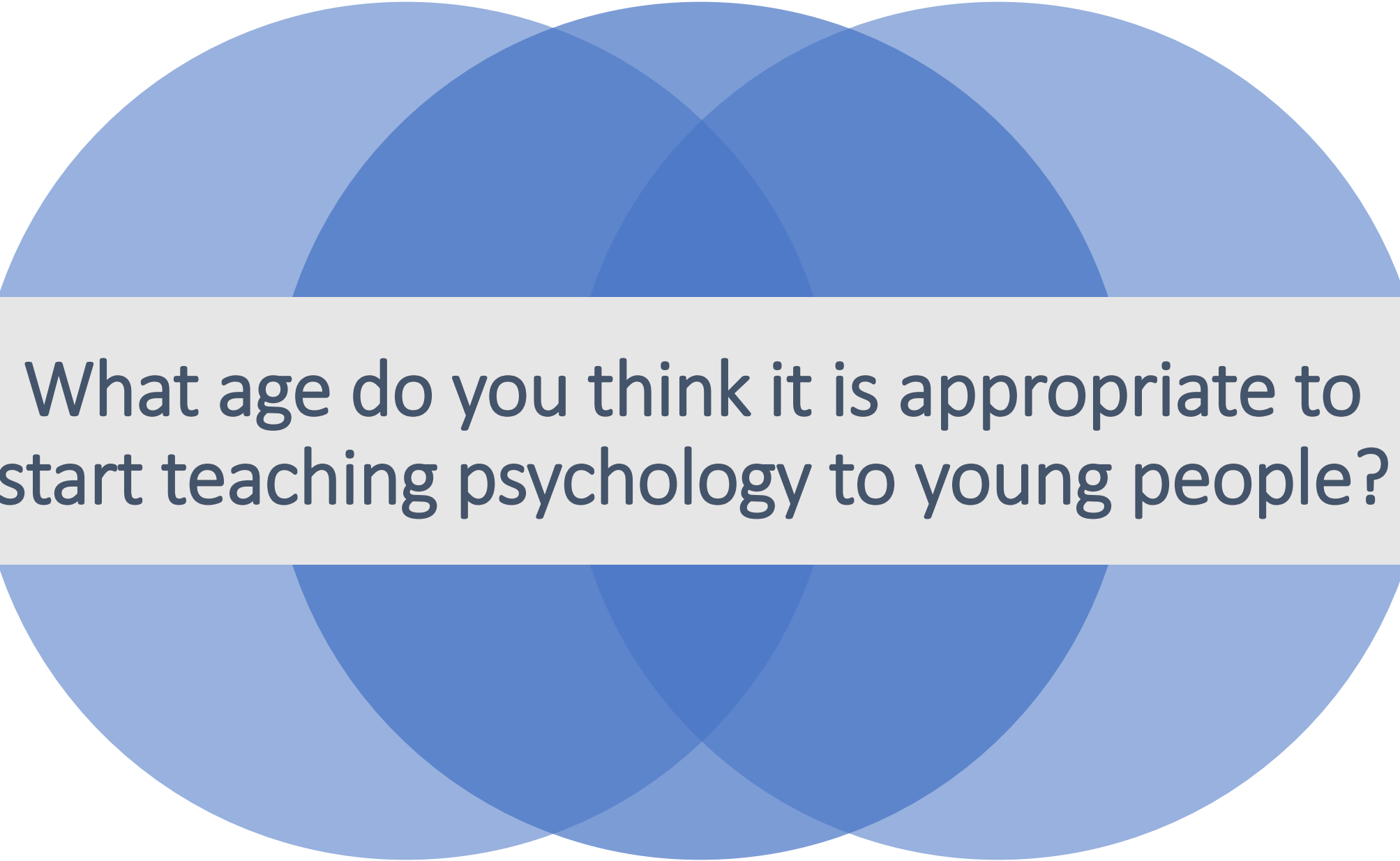
- Knowledge and understanding of psychology
- The ability to critically examine, compare and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of different psychological perspectives.
- The ability to use and apply psychological understanding

# Other considerations

- Are textbooks available electronically?
- Do they contain activities for students to do that are wider than the curriculum?
- Do they provide exam advice and practice?
- Style of writing and presentation?



Do you think it is useful/important to teach  
psychology at pre-tertiary level of education?  
What should its purpose be?

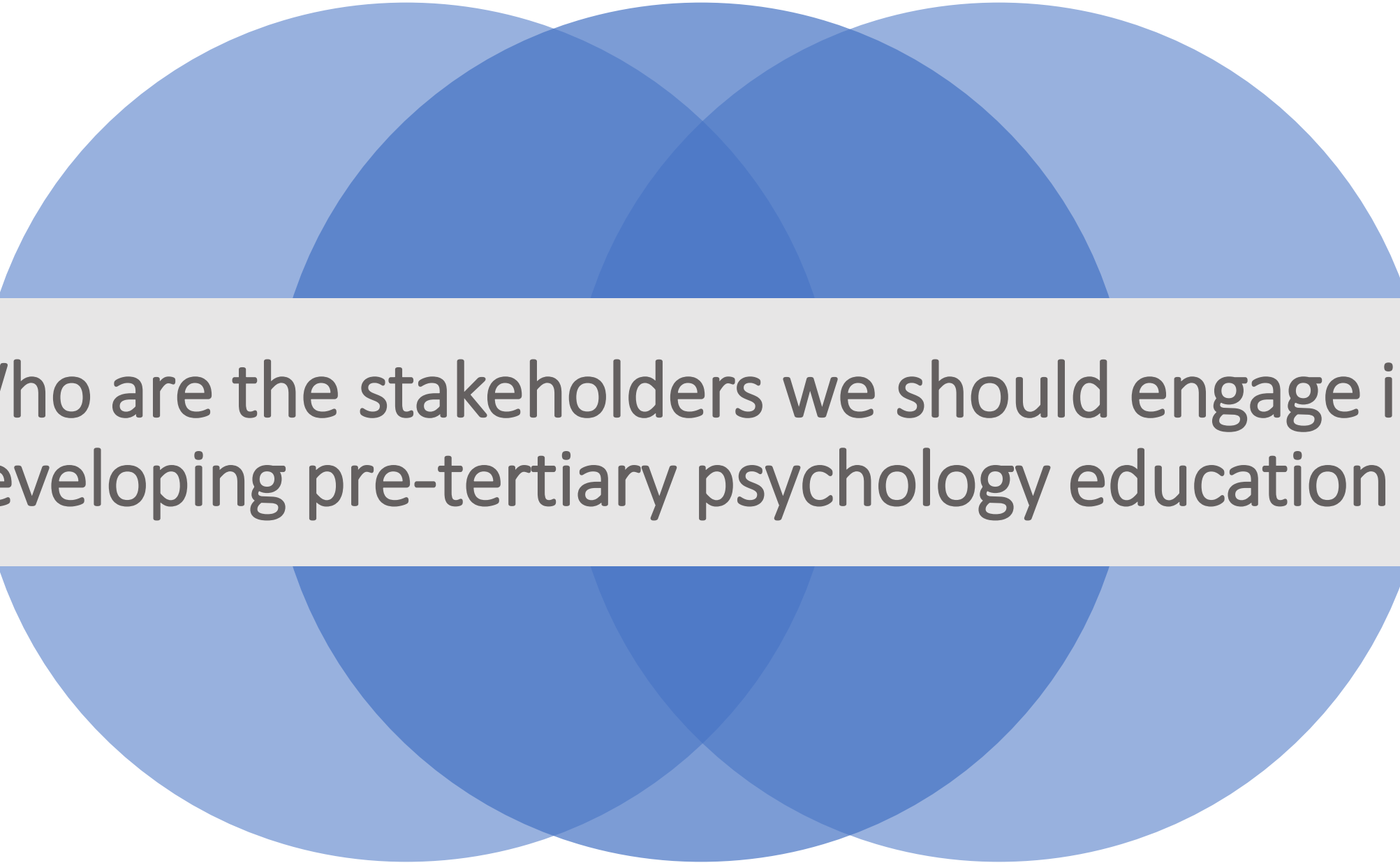
Three overlapping circles in shades of blue, arranged horizontally. The central circle is a medium blue, while the two flanking circles are a lighter shade. They overlap in the center, creating a darker blue intersection.

What age do you think it is appropriate to start teaching psychology to young people?




Three overlapping circles in shades of blue, arranged horizontally. The central circle is a darker shade of blue, while the two flanking circles are a lighter shade. They overlap in the center, creating a darker blue intersection.

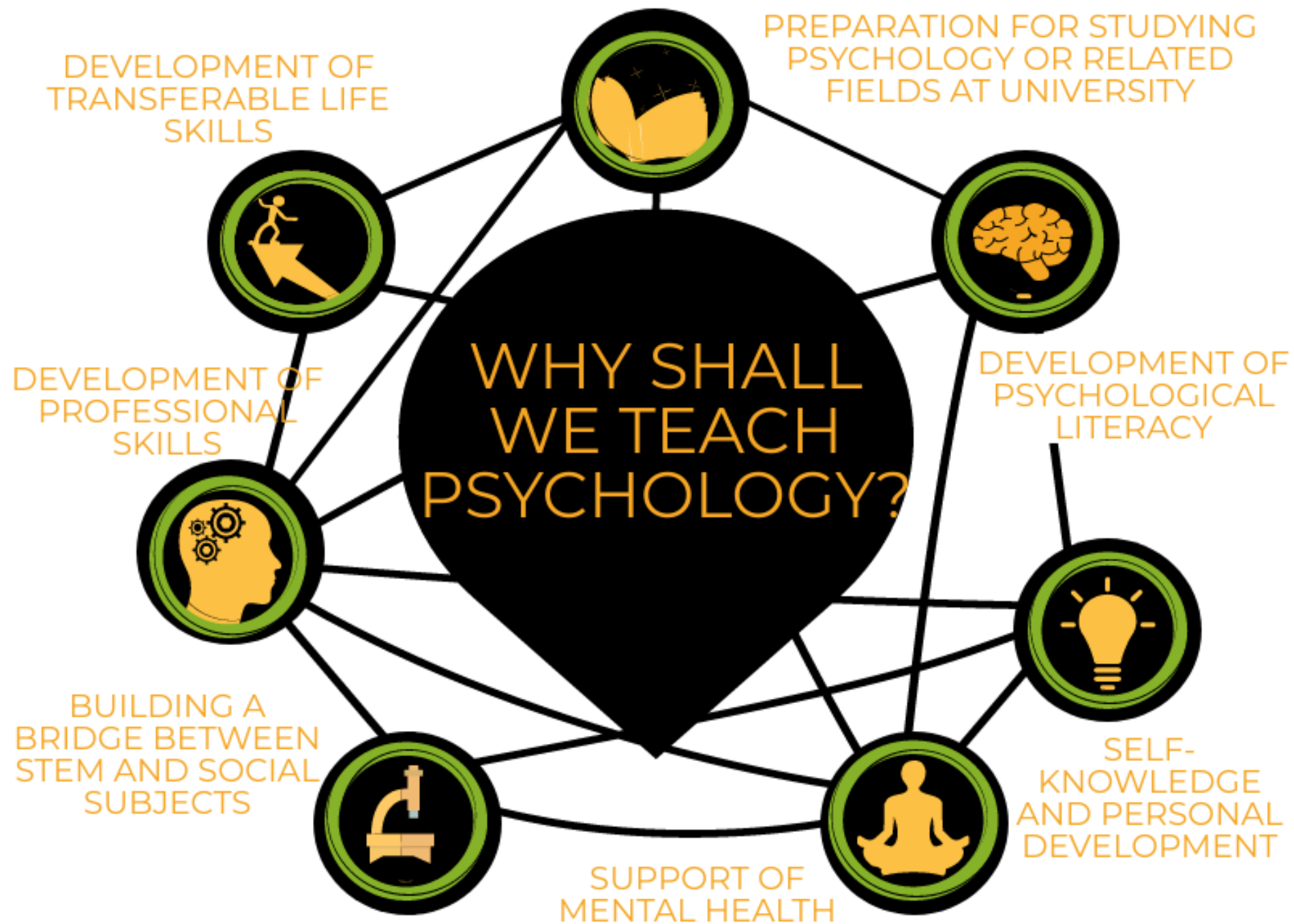
What pitfalls might pre-tertiary  
psychology education have?

Three overlapping circles in shades of blue, arranged horizontally. The central circle is a darker shade of blue, while the two flanking circles are a lighter shade. They overlap in the center, creating a darker blue intersection.

Who are the stakeholders we should engage in developing pre-tertiary psychology education ?



How shall we promote qualified and effective  
pre-tertiary teaching of psychology at both  
national and European levels?







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