

Impressions of the XIVth European Congress of Psychology!

On Sunday evening the 5th of July, the EFPA staff arrived at the airport in Milan, to attend the 14th European Congress of Psychology “ECP 2015”, hosted in the University of Milano-Bicocca, given its track record in psychological research in Italy.

With its history of bringing together leading experts in psychology research, this international congress held the promise of bringing together worldwide perspectives on psychology. It attracted 3096 registered participants, and that number hit a few hundred more during the congress, of no more than 76 different countries. This staggering number of participants, with Italy, Japan, the USA, Spain and Russia as countries of provenance, made the ECP 2015 one of the biggest European congresses of psychology so far.

On Tuesday the 7th of July, the 14th European Congress of Psychology officially kicked off. This year the ECP2015 is guided by the motto “Linking technology and psychology: feeding the mind, energy for life”.

The spectacular opening ceremony in the Teatro degli Arcimboldi was opened by the president of the ECP 2015 Organising Committee Dr. Mario Sellini, and president of the ECP2015 Scientific Committee Prof. Dr. Gian Vittorio Caprara.



Teatro degli Arcimboldi

Professor Robert Roe, EFPA president, welcomed all participants and introduced the congress program that covered all different areas of contemporary psychology, with a special emphasis on psychology’s societal significance.

EFPA awards were presented during the ECP2015 by President Robert Roe:

Wilhelm Wundt – William James Award: The 2015 awardee, Dr Anke Ehlers, investigates psychological processes in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety disorders to develop effective treatments for these conditions.

The Aristoteles Award: The 2015 award is given to Professor José Maria Peiro for his outstanding work in the field of psychological climate theory.

The Comenius Early Career award: The 2015 EFPA Comenius award is awarded to Dr Pauline Jansen for her interesting research bidirectional relations of psychological phenomena, such as obesity and bullying. Unable to present her work at this year’s congress, she will gladly bring her research to next year’s ECP in the Netherlands.



A lecture on new frontiers in neuroscience by the president of the Italian Academy of Sciences was followed by a musical performance by famous soprano Clara Bertella that concluded the ceremony.

On Wednesday morning the 8th of July, the congress kicked off ...

After an intriguing pre-congress lecture on Tuesday the 7th of July at the Italian Stand at the international EXPO in Milan, which linked the Congress' theme "Feeding the mind, Energy for life" to that of this year's International EXPO "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", Bicocca's university doors opened for all congress participants and interested students.



Renowned scholars and practitioners, such as Professor Robert Roe, Saths Cooper and Philip Zimbardo mingled with the congress audience in the university halls and transformed the summer-dazed university campus in a buzzing metropolis of psychologists.

As the days went by, hundreds of poster presentations flanked the hallways, enabling the sharing of ideas and knowledge among many interested listeners and young researchers.

Diverse stands were spread out across the Bicocca halls, representing university campuses, providers of scientific and medical publications and many other relevant stakeholders, including EFPA.



EFPA's stand at the ECP

Many interesting key note speakers presented their work during the congress:



As immediately became clear from the congress programme, and in EFPA President Professor Robert Roe's key note "**How far can we get? A future perspective on diversity and collaboration in Psychology**"; even though psychology is a single science, the profession is highly diverse, which is reflected in the large number of current psychological specialisations.

Changing economic relations and movements of people across country borders, call for growing collaboration and progressive harmonisation in a diverse Europe.

The global character of the congress made it possible for psychologists to coordinate the wide range of excellent research being carried out by academia throughout Europe and to share knowledge and best practices.

The congress also offered attendees a programme of EFPA sponsored symposia and enabled learning opportunities for participants about EFPA and the Europsy. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend some of the EFPA symposia. So what was it that made this congress such a success? Here are some particular personal highlights of mine of the different EFPA sponsored symposia.

Particular Personal Highlights from the EFPA Sponsored Symposia at ECP 2015

Congress updates in the area of Health and Clinical Intervention

During the congress the opportunity arose for me to attend three different symposia that zoomed in on different aspects of the field of Health and Clinical Intervention:

The legal status of the profession was highlighted in the **Clinical psychology as a regulated Health Profession** symposium, which was convened by Koen Lowet. It described the current state of play in different Member States of the national legislation of the profession, with the aim of exploring and sharing best practices in the EU.



A key message that attendees took back from the session: "There is a need for coherence of relevant legislation across European countries, building on continuous education and scientific evidence. Furthermore, it became clear, that psychotherapy cannot be practiced without a firm base of (clinical) psychology." (Koen Lowet)

Dieter Ferring convened the EFPA Symposium "**Psychology and Ageing: findings and trends across Europe**". This session provided a forum to learn from the experiences and best practices of other European countries, in support of the establishment of geropsychology as a functioning discipline in Europe.



Key Message: "The ageing of society holds a challenge and an opportunity for (gero)psychology; given the variability of the ways of ageing across European countries, there is a need for research-based knowledge on the psychological processes underlying human ageing, as well as expertise about training, education and interventions tailored to the psychological needs of elderly people and their social networks as well as of the formal and informal groups providing care and support in case of dependency and illness. " (Dieter Ferring)

The **Prevention and Intervention across European Countries** symposium emphasised the need to have prevention of ill-health and promotion of wellbeing high on the agenda of governments and health systems. For the past two years, the EFPA Board of Prevention and Intervention focused on

the development of a framework for collaborative working to promote this area of psychological practice.

The main theme of this session, concerned the central importance of prevention as a central focus of psychologists work in future. This focus will significantly enhance the traditional model of seeing clients one by one.



Outcome of the discussion: "The examples in the symposium of effective work with children and young people provided inspiring examples of the benefits of prevention approaches. It included preventing 'social orphan hood' in children in Russia, the application of a psychological approach for trauma (EMDR) for children who have experienced trauma, and a European wide project on preventing suicide in young people." (picture: **Tony Wainwright**)

Congress updates in the field of Work & Organisation **Traffic Culture and Transportation**

The double symposium **about understanding road users** and **empirical field work** scrutinised various aspects of traffic psychology.

The first session highlighted the difficult task for traffic psychologists to deduce valid, reliable and objective information out of unstandardised verbal data, through theory and empirical evidence.

The second discussion concerned ways to empirically assess the functioning of traffic psychology, such as higher level factors and observational methods of road user behaviours and interactions.

Jens Schade (picture) explained in short the *two key topics that emerged from the discussions*.

1. The usefulness and validity of qualitative vs. quantitative data

How much progress will traffic psychology make if only relying on quantitative data? How can qualitative data contribute in developing valid traffic behaviour models? Both approaches are necessary, though still different views on the correct application remain.

2. Traffic is a complex system consisting of an array of social, economic and technical issues. In practice however, it is dominated by an engineering perspective. We emphasised the interdisciplinary approach of traffic behaviour analysis. Only by integrating the human factor valid models and effective countermeasures it will be possible to reduce accidents.



Congress updates in the field of Culture and Society

Culture and Ethnic Diversity – Current Issues for the Psychologists' Profession

The presentation and workshop of Alexander Thomas and Ulrike de Ponte (Regensburg) dealt with development of a training method for professionals in the field. The presentation of Carla Moleiro (Lisbon) discussed the ethical aspects of inter-culture communication. Sylvie Graf (Brno) presented research findings on ethnic diversity challenging majority's prejudice against negatively stereotyped minority groups. Ludek Kolman (Prague) presented an instrument (Short cultural assimilator) to be used in training of intercultural competency.



Take Home Message: "The basic idea that the Task Force on Culture and Ethnic Diversity tries to unfold is that the culture and ethnic diversity could be both a resource and a threat. And this, quite often, at the same time. To be able to develop a resource or counter a stress, specific knowledge should be acquired and appropriate procedures developed." (Ludek Kolman)

Third Ethics Track Series at the ECP 2015

The ECP2015 housed the **3rd ethics track series**, which took place for the entire duration of the congress.

EFPA and EFPA Board of Ethics highly values ethics and dissemination of ethical ideas all over the Europe. As a part of this understanding, EFPA Board of Ethics (BoE) organizes regularly Ethics symposia at member countries, Ethics Tracks and Panels at ECP congresses.

Beside Ethics symposia, at 2011, ECP Istanbul, BoE, first time tried a new activity: The 1st Ethics Track, brought together, many ethics experts from all over the world. In a separate hall, totally devoted whole day long only to ethics presentations, Ethics track program provided participants a possibility to come and follow many live ethics debates, presentations throughout the congress. The organizer of the program was Prof Dr Yesim Korkut, who was at that time the co-chair of the Congress. Please see: <http://ethics.efpa.eu/resources/ethics-track-european-congress-of-psychology-istanbul-2011/>

At the next congress, Stockholm, 2013, the same format was repeated, again with many rich panels. <http://ethics.efpa.eu/resources/ethics-track-european-congress-of-psychology-stockholm-2013/> . The organizer was Dr Nina Dalen.

This year, at 2015, ECP Milan, the 3rd Ethics track has been organized by BoE. With a very rich program, and challenging topics on ethics, expert again from all over the world took part in this activity. The organizer was Prof Dr Yesim Korkut, from BoE, and Vito Tummino from the ECP Organising committee.

Prof Dr Yesim Korkut organiser of the program shared the following message: "As EFPA Board of Ethics we highly value each opportunity to disseminate knowledge about ethics; to sensitize our members on various issues in terms of psychology ethics. We had the first ethics track at Istanbul ECP in 2011. I was the co-chair of ECP 2011, this allowed me to organize it with relative organizational ease. It was very successful in bringing people together who are specialized and interested in Ethics."

A key message from ECP 2015 Ethics track attendee and presenter **Vita Postuvan** (picture):

“Ethics is the core of psychologists’ work. Our field of work is expanding due to global changes, new technologies and environmental challenges. Therefore social responsibility of our profession and its implementation in action require more attention.”

Some stills of the different ethics symposia:

Alternative methods for ethics committees:

A close look on mediation and educative measures - Internet and Social Media: Ethical Challenges



Picture: Nina Dalen (NO), Yessim Korkut (TR), Pierre Nederlandt (BE), Henk Geertsema (NL), Edward Van Rossen (BE)



Picture: Miguel Ricou (PT), Vita Postuvan (SI), Henk Geertsema (NL), Karin Kalteis (AT), Nina Dalen (NO)

The Board on Human Rights organised a double symposium that focused on **Human Rights, Professional and Ethical Responsibilities of Psychologists**.

Polli Hagenaars, opened the meeting with a positive message: *“Psychologists have the capacities to make a difference to Human Rights. According to the Nobel Prize winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, psychologists can help people to develop and realize their capabilities”*.

The first session focused on the ethical and professional responsibilities of psychologists for the protection and promotion of Human Rights, especially in the light of the EFPA Model Code. The session’s core question revolved around what professional psychologists (as individuals), as well as EFPA Member Associations, can and should do about the promotion of Human Rights.

The second session underlined the need for education in Human Rights. Building on the assumption that Human Rights should be part of university education and professional training, including Continued Professional Development, the symposium aimed to contribute to the development of curricula and ways to transfer knowledge and experience.



“The relationship between Human rights and psychology is bi-directional. On the one hand, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a normative frame for psychologists and their associations. On the other psychologists and their associations can contribute to Human Rights. Societal responsibility is a task of psychologists and their associations according to their Codes of Conduct; so are human rights according to the EFPA Model Code (2015). So far they tend to be aspirational goals (e.g. APA Code of Conduct). However, they imply commitment! (Polli Hagenaars)

Interested to read more? <http://human-rights.efpa.eu/introduction/human-rights-at-ecp-2015-milan/>

What can psychology contribute to the defence and promotion of human rights?

The symposium, convened by Saths Cooper explored roles psychologists could play in the human rights discourse. Recommendations for psychologists' better understanding of violations, prevention, effective intervention and coordination were discussed.

One of the session's speakers, expressed her support for Dr Robert Roe's call for joint action to pose solutions for human rights issues. She emphasised the need for human rights education to be a core component in psychology, like ethics, as today this is not yet the case. Recommendations were offered to promote integration of human rights framework in the discourse of global psychology.

"The issue of human rights has become increasingly important in our society. This panel is unpacking the topic of the psychological response to Human Rights from various perspectives and voices that cover a large part of the world. Critical questions emerge in terms of migration, torture, xenophobia, economic inequalities, and impact of systems on our client population and consequences of Human Rights violations. This will become a more important issue with an increasing level of violence, poverty and distress people are facing." (Saths Cooper)



Picture : Saths Cooper, Yesim Korkut



Lastly, I got the opportunity to listen in to one of the **"EXPO 2015 Hot Topic" sessions**. This EFPA Sponsored symposium **"Because the way to the heart is through the stomach. Psychological prevention and intervention of eating disorders"**, convened by Professor Dr Christoph Steinebach, approached eating disorders as both a societal and individual problem. Different health promotion and psychotherapy strategies were explored to foster a policy change for appropriate health policies and decision-making procedures, in line with contemporary knowledge and practice, addressing all relevant health determinants.

Key message from the symposium:

"All presenters confirmed that Psychologists also have a mandate to act on and to address the community and society level". (Christoph Steinebach)

Conclusions of the European Congress of Psychology 2015

The closing ceremony took place after keynote lecture of Dr. Phillip Zimbardo. Prof. Caprara thanked all participants for attending the ECP2015. Edward Van Rossen made a speech on behalf of EFPA and Elly (President of NIP) made a short speech, introduced attendees to the next congress in Amsterdam in 2017.



With an exciting range of symposia, poster sessions, exhibitions, key notes and social events, such as the Gala evening dinner that was organised at the impressive Museum of Science and Technology “Leonardo da Vinci”, offered an excellent opportunity for networking and building new collaborations.



Unfortunately, since many symposia took place simultaneously, I was forced to choose between different sessions. I would gladly have attended all EFPA Sponsored symposia, but am very grateful to have been able to listen in to the ones I could participate in. With a head heavy of new insights on advances in theory and research as well as educational and professional developments in Europe, I headed back home.

In summary, drawing in the relationship between psychology and technology made it possible for attendees to learn so much more on latest advances in psychology and the potential benefit of exploring new technologies. I would like to thank the Italian Network of Psychologists Associations (INPA) and all ECP attendees for their contributions in making this congress a success.

As this year’s European Congress of Psychology has come to a close, we look forward to our Amsterdam Congress for 2017, where further integration of high quality research and knowledge will be instilled into the congress programme.

Joke De Vocht