

On the eve of the first year of EHPS association with the United Nations



Irina Todorova

EHPS past president

On April 29th 2011 we received the good news that the EHPS has been associated with the United Nations – specifically with the Division of Public Information (DPI)/NGO section,

at UN Headquarters in New York. Our initial association is for a trial period of 2 years (which is standard), during which time we will be solidifying EHPS' relationship with the UN and its activities, attending the NGO meetings and discussions, connecting especially with other professional psychological societies who are associates (such as: American Psychological Association (APA), the International Association for Applied Psychology (IAAP), the International Council of Psychologists (ICP), the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS), and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI).

To ensure presence at the United Nations, in the summer of 2011 the EC appointed several EHPS members as representatives to the UN. Several other members expressed interest to be involved in this aspect of EHPS and we have formed a subcommittee with members: Alden Lai, Jessica Lake, Marta Marques, Susan Michie, Nihal Mohamed, Efrat Neter, Golan Shahr, Suzanne Skevington, Irina Todorova and Sebastian Wagner. Three of the representatives are currently working in New York City, and can attend monthly briefings and other activities at UN headquarters. The committee went through a

process of priority setting, clarifying directions in which to develop the association. Through a survey of UN committee members and EC members the six most important goals they identified for the next year were: Keeping the UN informed about EHPS; Being informed about EHPS members' activities and research projects that are relevant to UN philosophy or are in collaboration with UN institutions; Keeping EHPS members informed about UN activities; Developing contacts with other psychological organizations at the UN; Participating in the organization of the annual "Psychology Day" at the UN; Developing contacts and EHPS presence at WHO.

In order to share all important information regarding the EHPS UN affiliation, Manja Vollmann developed a section in the EHPS website. Please visit it and share your ideas: www.ehps.net/index.php/EHPS/ehps-at-the-united-nations.html. Additionally, to stimulate active discussion and sharing of ideas regarding health psychology's contribution to global health and health policies, Alden Lai has developed a new blog at <http://ehpsattheun.wordpress.com>. You can get in touch with him to login and contribute to the discussion: ehpsattheun@gmail.com.

Annual Reports to the United Nations are submitted for each calendar year by associated organizations, in order to continue association. We submitted our first Annual Report to the UN in January 2012, covering the period of April – December, 2011. Many EHPS members shared information about their recent involvement in

UN related projects and institutions, such as the WHO, UNESCO and others. Thank you for your contributions, illustrating members' diverse ties with United Nations research and health promotion activities and contribution to research in global health!

Two EHPS representatives participated in the 64th Annual UN DPI Conference in Bonn, Germany in 2011: Alden Lai and Golan Shahar. Their joint report from the conference was published in the December 2011 issue of the *European Health Psychologist*: "Connecting the Dots": EHPS and the United Nations" (Lai & Shahar, 2011). The authors present five conclusions from this UN DPI/NGO Conference and propose that EHPS members consider them and discuss how to put them into action. Their more detailed individual reports are also available at: www.ehps.net/index.php/EHPS/ehps-at-the-united-nations.html.

At the start of our second year of association with the UN, we can begin identifying the most important next steps which we will be embarking on.

Continued exchange of information between EHPS and the United Nations, including on-going updates of EHPS members' research projects and contacts with United Nations institutions.

Preparing for Consultative Status at the United Nations: An association with DPI is mainly information based—keeping the UN informed about EHPS and sharing information about the UN with EHPS members, and can be considered a first step of a larger process. While this exchange of information will continue, an organization can have palpable input on international policies and priorities when it has consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) <http://csonet.org/?menu=83> and with the World Health Organization. Then, these organizations

can call on EHPS for relevant consultations or EHPS can be proactive in submitting proposals and recommendations to them. Acquiring such consultative status can be achieved through separate application procedures, both to ECOSOC and WHO. Luckily, the EHPS UN committee has many dedicated members who are committed to furthering this process, and we will be initiating preparations for applying. Marta Marques has started working on our application for association with WHO, through their Civil Society Initiative.

Psychology Day at the United Nations: At the start of our second year, the EHPS UN representatives in New York will be attending the Fifth Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations, which is on the topic of "Human Rights for Vulnerable People: Psychological Contributions and the United Nations Perspective". It is organized by the psychological organizations at the UN. The Day will be on April 19th and will have panels on: Mental Health and Sustainable Development; Refugees and Psychosocial Wellbeing; Poverty Eradication in the Lives of Women and Children. At this Annual Psychology Day the EHPS will participate as a member of the audience; however this will also be the start of our contacts with the psychology organizations at the UN and we can be actively involved in the planning of the next, the Sixth Psychology Day at the UN in 2013.

Roundtable on the topic of United Nations Association in Prague, 2012: To ensure communication about these issues among EHPS members and friends, we have submitted a proposal for a roundtable to the 26th Conference of the EHPS in Prague, to be held in August 2012, "EHPS association with the United Nations: How can health psychology influence global health policies?" During this roundtable, we can discuss our future activities related to the UN/WHO, and in particular we will elucidate

the purpose, strategies and substance of what the contribution of health psychology and EHPS can be to global health policies. Please join us at the roundtable to share your ideas and opinions, including ideas for similar events at future EHPS conferences.

Integrating all contributions so far regarding the EHPS vision and strategy about what it means for health psychology to have an impact on global health and health equity through UN institutions (Lai & Shahar, 2011); how EHPS can constructively contribute to UN policies, projects and resolutions and putting these into practice. The progress so far has been possible thanks to

the input and contributions of many EHPS members (Todorova, 2010). We invite all interested EHPS members to continue to share your perspectives at the roundtable in Prague, on the EHPS-UN blog and all possible forms of communication. ■

References

- Lai, A., & Shahar, G. (2011). "Connecting the Dots": EHPS and the United Nations. *The European Health Psychologist*, 13(4), 76-80.
- Todorova, I. (2010). EHPS President's Message. *The European Health Psychologist*, 12(3), 28-29.