

Conferences in Europe

The Experience of a CREATE and EHPS Grant Recipient

*for the 19th EHPS Conference
‘Enhancing individual, family and community health’,
Galway, Ireland, August 31st - September 3rd, 2005*

As one of the first EHPS members from Bulgaria, I had the opportunity to attend the 2004 CREATE Workshop “Predicting and changing health behaviour: Conducting and publishing theory-based research”, in Helsinki, Finland. It was a unique chance for me for gaining knowledge and experience and becoming a part of a very friendly and open community of young health psychologists. It was an important experience for me since there is no training for young researchers in the field of health psychology in Bulgaria. The only course in health psychology was recently introduced at the bachelor’s curriculum, but there are no specialized Master or PhD programs. My first participation in the CREATE workshop convinced me that young researchers can benefit greatly from attending international events, facilitated by experts in the area and providing high quality training. I realized I had a great chance in international training in health psychology, my interest in the field being inspired through my work in the Health Psychology Research Center in Bulgaria.

When I learned about the 2005 CREATE workshop: “Designing and Evaluating Theory-Based Interventions” (Galway, Ireland, August 28th – 30th 2005) I realized it would expand the knowledge and skills gained in the 2004 CREATE workshop. I saw the task for designing theory-based interventions as a complicated and challenging issue, which I would particularly need in my near future work.

I had just started my PhD on personality and media influences on body-image and health behaviors in 2005 as a full-time PhD student at the Institute of Psychology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Unfortunately the scholarship for PhD students in Bulgaria is quite low, the Institute also has very limited funds to support conference or workshop participation – even in Bulgaria, and certainly not abroad. I applied to EHPS and was awarded a hardship grant for assistance with traveling expenses and workshop fee. Unfortunately when I checked the sums for traveling and accommodation I realized I cannot cover the difference by my own finances (since it was 2-3 times the monthly income of a Bulgarian PhD student). Despite all my endeavors I couldn’t find additional financial support and I had to write to the CREATE and EHPS committees that I had to refuse the grant and give the opportunity to some other participant. I was very surprised when I received an answer with the decision of the EHPS committees to award me a second grant, which had remained un-claimed.

I would like once again to express my tremendous gratitude to CREATE and EHPS committees for giving me the opportunity to attend and participate actively in both the CREATE workshop and EHPS conference. Thus they highly contributed to my professional growth and experience not only through the training of the CREATE workshop, but also by giving me the chance to make my first presentation at an international forum abroad – by presenting the poster “Women’s and providers’ voices on cervical cancer prevention: conflicting or complementary?” I greatly appreciate the commitment of EHPS and CREATE to support Eastern Europeans’ attendance at international conferences.

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