

EHPS report

Psychology and the EHPS present at the United Nations

by Irina Todorova

On October 10th, 2007, the United Nations organized the *First Annual Psychology Day*, which took place at the UN Headquarters in New York. With its title, the event promised to be the first of a regular yearly series of meetings, devoted to acknowledging the contributions of the discipline of psychology and its representatives at the UN to fostering the agenda and values of the international organization and its many programs worldwide. The event was initiated by several psychology associations, which have official NGO status with the United Nations and several of its committees. It began with an introduction of the agenda and goals of the meeting, followed by several panels during October 10th and October 11th 2007. The first panel focused on the role of psychology and psychologists at the United Nations, and included a presentation of the participating psychology associations, which included the *American Psychological Association*, the *Association for Women in Psychology*, the *International Association of Applied Psychology*, *International Council of Psychologists*, *International Union of Psychological Science*, *International Psychoanalytic Association*, *International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*, *Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues* and the *World Federation for Mental Health*.

The topics of the following two panels were: *Peace and Conflict Resolution* and *Human Rights and the World of Work*. October 11th was devoted to the Celebration of World Mental Health Day with the theme of *Mental Health in a Changing World: the Impact of Culture and Diversity*. It included a briefing from the UN Department of Public Information on the topic of *Psychological Response to Disasters*. Speakers during these two days included Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary General of the UN and Special advisor on gender issues and the advancement of women; Helene Gosselin, UNESCO representative to the United Nations; Norman Anderson, CEO of the American Psychological Association; Florence Denmark, Chair of the Planning Committee for Psychology Day, and many other psychologists and United Nations representatives.

An overarching theme which cut through many of the presentations was that of reciprocal transaction between the UN and the accredited psychological associations – psychology contributes its perspective, theoretical considerations and practical recommendations to UN events and resolutions; and at

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the same time the philosophy of the United Nations comes to be represented in the activities of the psychological societies. As Norman Anderson pointed out, such a partnership leads to a contribution of psychological knowledge to furthering the mission of the UN. Psychologists participate in many of the NGO committees, such as the NGO Committee on Ageing, on Children's Rights, on HIV/AIDS and on Mental Health. Examples of several recent forums, at which psychologists were central speakers are: the panel discussion on Creating Preventive Measures to Eradicate Violence against Women and Girls at the Individual, Community, and State Level; AIDS: Eliminating Stigma and Discrimination; The Psychological Impact of Natural Disasters.

Acquiring NGO status with the United Nations happens through a lengthy application process through the NGO section of the Department of Public Information at the UN. Detailed information about the UN NGO section is available at www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/index.asp. Through this process, the European Health Psychology Society could join the group of psychological associations affiliated with the United Nations. As an initiative undertaken by Susan Michie, past president of EHPS, the Executive Committee is currently exploring this possibility and asking all EHPS members to share their views, as well as their experiences working with UN programs and projects, such as with the World Health Organization. With official NGO status at the United Nations, the EHPS would be able to have a say in shaping international policy on health through appointing EHPS representatives, participating in the

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deliberations of different NGO committees at the United Nations, and informing and implementing UN decisions.

Members of the EHPS have had collaborations with several United Nations institutions though the years. For example, several EHPS members and member countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Switzerland and others) are involved in the longitudinal WHO collaborative research, health promotion and policy project *Health and Behavior in School-Aged Children*, which has been collecting data and providing policy recommendations on school health since 1986. Our research team at the Health Psychology Research Center in Bulgaria has collaborated with the UNFPA office in Bulgaria on programs for prevention of cervical cancer. Adriana Baban, past secretary of the EC and other EHPS members from Romania have consulted with UNICEF on topics of prevention of domestic violence, child trafficking and alcohol use among adolescents in Albania. Suzanne Skevington, an EHPS member, is currently Director of the WHO Centre for the Study of Quality of Life. She and other

EHPS members from the United Kingdom have worked on projects for: *Improving cross-cultural assessment of quality of life in health and health care* (WHOQOL Group 1992- date) Division of Mental Health WHO, Geneva; *Active ageing and quality of life in older adults* (WHOQOL-Old Group); WHO European Regional Office, Copenhagen (2001-2004); *Assessing quality of life in HIV/AIDS* (WHO Geneva and UNAIDS 1998-2003); *AIDs-competent communities* (UNAIDS, Geneva, 2000-2004); *Biodiversity, health and quality of life* (UNESCO Paris, 2005); *Child-friendly schools* (WHO Geneva, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse 1999).

With its broad international network of psychologists, its commitment to improving health and well-being in a global context and its devotion to developing health policy, the EHPS can actively contribute to the work of the NGO committees at the United Nations. We hope to be able to develop further partnerships with the United Nations and the NGO's affiliated with the UN.

Dear EHPS members, we look forward to your opinions, suggestions and recommendations regarding EHPS affiliation with the UN. For the application process, it would be very helpful if you could send us examples of past and current projects and activities that you have undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations and its programs, such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and others. Please send such information to Irina Todorova, and let us know if we can include it in the EHPS application to the UN.

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EHPS 2007 Conference Poster Awards

Poster Award Winners

Cristina Neculai Simmelweis University, Hungary	Living in institutional care predicts cardiovascular risk factor sin adulthood
Gyöngyver Salavecz Simmelweis University, Hungary	The effects of work and marital stress on depressive symptoms
Lukasz Kaczmarek Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland	Induced positive affect, resiliency and cardiovascular reactivity and recovery

Runners-up

Amelie Wiedemann Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany	Intentions, planning and health behavior change: evidence for moderated mediation
Martin Dempster Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland	Response shift in quality of life assessment during cardiac rehabilitation
Iman Elfeddali Maastricht University, The Netherlands	Smoking cessation and abstinence within a quit an win contest
Andries Oeberst Jacobs University, Germany	Stereotypes as warrants of apprehension in HIV-risk perception