

Brussels, 15 February 2024

The European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) endorses the request of the Dutch Association of Psychologists (NIP) to appropriately account for, in legislation and practice, the broad range of scientific knowledge and the diversity of expertise required for those who work in the role of 'healthcare psychologist-generalist'.

EFPA is the umbrella organisation in Europe for national psychologists' associations, with thirty-seven European countries represented including all EU nations and a network of some 350,000 psychologists. EFPA has a long tradition of developing psychology (by enhancing scientific and professional standards), contributing to society (by using psychological knowledge and competences in support in particular of the UN sustainable development goals) and serving psychologists (by advancing, promoting and protecting the profession of psychologists at the national and European levels).

NIP's emphasis on the need for practitioners to be able to account for the development, context and system of an individual is strongly in line with best practice in the profession of psychology and in keeping with policy directions on European and international levels. Practising psychology in health care (in all stages of life) is much more than treating individual disorders. Knowledge about the influence of context, system and relationships (within families, at school, at work and in society) is an essential part of the professional practice of psychology.

On a policy level, this context-sensitive psychosocial approach can be seen in EFPA's seven points of mental health advocacy (1), which emphasise:

- 1—Commitment to mental health in all policies
- 2—Mental health as a core part of societal crises responses
- 3—Community-oriented mental health services
- 4—Mental wellbeing in the workplace
- 5—The impact of climate change on mental health especially for the young
- 6—Mental health training standards and regulation
- 7—Equality of access to mental health including digitalisation

These points were considered in 2023 by the European Commission, along with similar submissions from other stakeholder organisations leading to the official launch of the Commission's Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health (2).

Other initiatives, like WHO-Europe's Pan-European Mental Health Coalition (3) and Mental Health Europe's Mental Health in All Policies stakeholder network (4)—both of which EFPA is a member of—emphasise this same core approach.

Recent additional support was also given to this approach in the European Parliament resolution "Own Initiative: Report on mental health" (5) and the EPSCO Council Report: "Conclusions on mental health" (6).

In a significant international policy step, the UN last year approved the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support resolution (7).

The common theme throughout these frameworks is the necessity of moving beyond a narrow view of mental health as being based on the treatment of a disorder occurring just on an individual level, and instead an emphasis on recognising and addressing the social determinants of mental health.

An appropriately equipped psychologist in the year 2024 and onwards will have training that ensures competencies with this type of context-sensitive approach, in line with the above policies. Healthcare psychology cannot be carried out effectively without the broader perspective of this context and—with it—psychologists can contribute to a strong, resilient society from youth to old age.

References

- 1) <https://www.efpa.eu/mental-health>
- 2) https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en
- 3) <https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/the-pan-european-mental-health-coalition>
- 4) <https://www.mentalhealtheuropa.org/>
- 5) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0457_EN.pdf
- 6) <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15053-2023-INIT/en/pdf>
- 7) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4014613>