

Editorial

European Psychologist's 25th Anniversary

Developments and Perspectives

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This year marks the 25th anniversary of the launch of *European Psychologist* (EP). The journal was started in 1996 as the flagship journal of what was then known as the European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Associations (EFPPA), with Kurt Pawlik serving as the first Editor-in-Chief. To celebrate this milestone, we have invited all of *European Psychologists'* past and present Editors-in-Chief to reflect on the journal, sharing their unique perspectives, visions, and stories about changes and growth throughout the years.

Kurt Pawlik 1996–2003

Rainer Silbereisen 2004–2009

Alexander Grob 2010–2015

Peter Frensch 2016–current

Kurt Pawlik

Since the 1960/1970s, psychology saw a fast development in international exchange and integration, as a science, as a profession, and on a global scale. In my Editorial as outgoing Founding Editor of *European Psychologist* (Pawlik, 2003) I took a retrospective view on this development in the European context, at the time of Europe's way towards the later European Union. It was a period abundant in novel visions, also in and for psychology, with the start-up of the European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Associations (EFPPA) and an increasing awareness of the possible benefits for psychology as a discipline that might arise in the course of European integration. Change became even more pressing when *Psychological Abstracts* decided to limit its coverage to English-language publications only, having been overwhelmed by the steep world-wide increase of

psychological publications, in terms of both numbers and linguistic diversity.

How will psychology in and from Europe stand up in this situation? A growing urgency, and a timely opportunity, became obvious to many of us – to myself already in the International Union of Psychological Science, to the German Society of Psychology when setting up a special committee on the matter, in the publishing field to Jürgen Hogrefe of the Hogrefe Publishing Group, in the Academia Europaea and, last not least, in EFPPA. The idea of a novel pan-European journal of psychology evolved, that could function in Europe in a similar way to the *American Psychologist* in North America. But Europe had no equivalent to the American Psychological Association (APA) that might develop such a project – a pan-European association of psychology that also covered psychological science was lacking (until EFPPA later changed into EFPA). At this point, broad consultation seemed called for to sound out practicable ways and means for conceiving such a journal. A long process of exchanges followed, with EFPPA, in the Academia Europaea, on the initiative of the publisher and – not to forget – at the occasion of European Congresses of Psychology at that time (1991 in Budapest, 1993 in Tampere, 1995 in Athens). Discussions finally led to what looked like a viable (and affordable) structure for such a journal: to serve as “English-language voice of psychology in Europe”, devoted to “psychology in its full breadth”, published “in cooperation with the EFPPA and supported by other organizations of psychology in Europe” (see the mission statement in Pawlik, 1996). The number of these supporting organizations, each represented by an Editorial Consultant, rose quickly from an initial 23 up to 35 at the time of my final volume 8. An Editorial Board of (seven, later nine) Associate Editors from differing regional and topical backgrounds

completed the editorial structure, apart from one significant additional feature: A cooperation agreement with *American Psychologist* foresaw an exchange between the two journals, also at the level of Associate Editors. In this spirit, Raymond D. Fowler, Chief Executive Officer of the APA and Editor-in-Chief of *American Psychologist* (later followed by his successor Norman Anderson) held the position of an Associate Editor of *European Psychologist* (as I had been offered the same for the *American Psychologist*). This arrangement proved very fruitful in the years to come.

From its first issue, *European Psychologist* followed an editorial policy of publishing essentially three categories of contributions: (i) original articles and reviews (with preference for topics of wider thematic breadth and relevance, written for a non-specialist, general readership in psychology); (ii) reports on issues and topics pertaining to psychology in Europe; and (iii) news and announcements. With the exception of (occasional) invited papers, manuscripts submitted in the first category all had to go through anonymous peer review for acceptance or revision. This editorial scheme was handled flexibly though to also allow for special thematic issues and thematic sections, such as on the life-work of Ivan P. Pavlov (100 years after his seminal work on the digestive glands; with a “parallel” thematic issue in *American Psychologist*); on the state of psychology in Europe at the turn of the millennium (30 selected tele-interviews with leading European psychologists); on modern interactionism, on the contribution of genetics to psychology, on education and teaching for psychologists in Europe, or on the psychology of aging in Europe. Starting with volume 5 (2000), the editorial scheme was extended to include interactive topical discussions in the first category of papers. Already the first one, starting with a lead article by Carlo Umiltà on psychological thinking about neuropsychological bases of conscious experience (Umiltà, 2000), set a good example to be followed. A final one, on doctoral studies in psychology, appeared in issue 1 of my concluding volume 8 in 2003 (Rudmin, 2003).

European Psychologist was readily accepted in the psychological publishing world. Indexed since 1996 in PsycINFO, the full text of the journal became available online in the APA’s database PsycARTICLESTM in 2000. Starting 2002 it was indexed in PASCAL, and from 2003 onwards in the Social Science Citation Index SSCI and in Current Contents (Social and Behavioral Sciences). The first impact factor (0.69) was released in 2004.

Raising a journal of this kind was a multi-actor endeavor and I want to take this opportunity to thank once again all those who gave me their never tiring support: the authors and reviewers, the Associate Editors and Editorial Consultants, EFPPA, and – above all – the publisher Jürgen Hogrefe, aided by Robert Dimbleby, at that time in his role as Production Editor for *European Psychologist*.

Rainer K. Silbereisen

I was Editor-in-Chief of *European Psychologist* from 2004 to 2009. During this period, the journal established itself as the true official organ of the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA), supported by all member organizations. I played a role in the relevant decisions, first as chair of the Scientific Committee, and then as member of the Executive Council. My argument overall was that EFPA should represent the practice and the science of European psychology alike – what now sounds like a self-evident truth, at that time was not at all clear. Many member organizations understood psychology as a helping profession rather independent of academia. This changed over time, certainly in part due to the emerging success of *European Psychologist* as a vehicle for an integrated view of science-based European psychology. I especially found the support of the then President of EFPA, Tuomo Tikkanen, and *European Psychologist*’s publisher, Jürgen Hogrefe (CEO). The shared view was that in order to pursue this goal in full, the journal deserved improvements.

Subsequently I was charged with this task, and based on my background as previous editor of international journals, in conjunction with others, I developed a set of aspirations for the journal that as a guideline became real in a rather short period of time. These aspirations included making *European Psychologist* a source of information regarding both research and application, increasing the visibility of European psychology, promoting scientific and professional cooperation among European psychologists, and increasing the visibility of EFPA in Europe and beyond.

In order to achieve that, a number of organizational prerequisites had to be resolved first. We established a reporting system, addressing all those involved, including regular editorials, extensive annual reports to EFPA, and meet-the-editor sessions at European congresses. Further, we formed a group of Associate Editors, representing diverse fields and regions of psychology, and established an Editorial Board comprising two dozen eminent psychologists. Over time we also formed a group of about 1,000 reviewers. An editorial manager and assistant helped the journal operations, supported by a web-based manuscript handling system, a first in the *European Psychologist*’s history. For authors, all this enabled us to guarantee a short time until reaching a first editorial decisions of, on average, 50 days. This included a thorough review process, resulting after revisions in an acceptance rate of about 20%.

Concerning the representation of science and practice in the journal, we of course had unsolicited submissions of research papers. Over the period of my editorship their number doubled and the quality increased. Beyond such contributions, we established a number of alternatives: Special Sections on a topic of current interest with an Action

Editor and multiple papers (same rigorous review as usual), contributions by eminent psychologists on their life work, and peer commentaries on more controversial papers.

The Special Section papers tended to be the highest in number and immediacy of citations. This form of journal content has since then become a steady feature of *European Psychologist*. Reviews were scarce, because at that time all editors of premier journals were competing for such contributions.

European Psychologist received its first impact factor ever in 2004. From a modest start at 0.69 it grew steadily, and had doubled by 2008 with 1.48, including a move up in the rankings of similar general international journals. This success was probably due to the more professional organization of the journal, and the scope and quality of its content. The best news, however, was for authors, because publishing in a journal with the standing of an impact factor above 1.0 was deemed relevant when competing in the career-related processes in academia. As far as outreach is concerned, papers in *European Psychologist* were contributed by first authors from more than 30 countries in 2008, mainly Europe, but also the Americas. Of the more than 400 contributions overall, quite a number had an applied or policy-oriented view.

All of the above was achieved during a time of rapid change in the publishing world. The web-based handling of manuscripts was but one innovation, and also enabled a timely judgment of editorial policies and the success of editorial teams. Foreshadowing current debates on making the results of scientific work freely accessible, “open access” was already an issue during my term, and EFPA as well as the publisher had a proactive stance. Another aspect of change was the declining importance of traditional subscriptions by libraries for the economic success of a journal. The number of downloads accessed through web-based offerings better indicated the relevance of a scientific outlet, and after a while during my term, the *European Psychologist* was seeing downloads in the tens of thousands.

My time as Editor-in-Chief was both exciting and exhausting. Previously, I had already worked hard for the improvement of another international journal, and after my term I was asked to do it for yet another international journal (three different publishers involved). If the scientific community is right, none was a failure. This underscores my view that of utmost importance for a journal are an efficient, author-friendly organization, and a policy that looks for quality work by authors who tackle basic and applied issues of relevance for the human condition.

Alexander Grob

I served as Editor-in-Chief for *European Psychologist* 6 years, beginning in 2010. I felt then as I still do now: it was a

privilege to serve the European Federation of Psychologists' Association (EFPA) in general, and *European Psychologist* in particular. I began my editorship with a vision to further advance *European Psychologist* as a high-ranking overarching outlet for quality psychological research. At that time, the journal was already well-established, due to the tremendous commitment of my two predecessors, and was already serving as a unique voice of psychology in Europe. One of the great strengths of *European Psychologist* was that it disseminated research from both basic as well as applied fields within psychology. In my having two academic hearts, one as a researcher in basic science, and one as a director of a graduate program in school psychology, and hence working closely to train practitioners, I sensed that one of the biggest challenges facing such a broad journal as *European Psychologist* was to both inform our readership about basic research and simultaneously to touch on relevant questions for practitioners and society at large, addressed using state-of-the-art approaches. In line with the responsibility to both scientists and practitioners, I saw *European Psychologist* as having enormous potential to shape and impact the knowledge and findings of the scientists in academic fields, as well to serve our societies by informing practitioners working with both community and clinical populations, as well as stakeholders ranging from educators, to health care providers, to policy-makers at the governmental level.

With thought toward realizing this vision, I, along with Managing Editor Kristen Lavalley, discussed reshaping the journal's focus with many colleagues, including, among others, Rainer Silbereisen (my predecessor as Editor-in-Chief), Verona Christmas-Best (former Managing Editor), Robert Roe (EFPA president at that time), Jürgen Hogrefe (CEO, Hogrefe Publishing Group), Robert Dimpleby (Publishing Manager, Hogrefe Publishing), Gary VandenBos (Managing Editor at the time, *American Psychologist*), various members of the EFPA Board of Scientific Affairs, and many colleagues in psychological science and professional fields. With almost unanimous positive support, and codified in a vote of the EFPA Board of Scientific Affairs at the European Congress of Psychology in Istanbul 2011, we transformed the overall mission of *European Psychologist* to broaden and deepen the content of the journal. The cornerstone of this plan was to reshape its aims and goals away from publishing single empirical studies and toward a focus on contemporary reviews and meta-analyses that provide carefully written state-of-the-art insights on research trends and developments across all fields of psychology. These reviews provide researchers with a deeper understanding of developments in the field, and with our diverse array of readers in practice with broad knowledge across the spectrum of psychology. Further, we invited colleagues to compile special issues, including reviews and integrative commentary across issues on topics of broad public appeal,

often with a unique European perspective and focus. For example, we compiled issues on topics such as migration and social change across Europe, poverty and developmental outcomes, public trust during pandemics, environmentally-sustainable behavior, costs and benefits of modern family structures, and individual loneliness in a globally communicating world. We believed these integrated topics would be relevant to both scientists *and* practitioners in emerging and traditional psychological fields within and across the disciplines. The first complete issue fully in-line with the new publishing aims and direction was published in 2013.

In parallel with the thematic realignment, we strengthened the review process. First, proceeding in a new direction for *European Psychologist*, we adopted a double-blind masked review process, in accordance with APA standards. Literature shows that a masked review process contributes to a fairer evaluation of manuscripts, increasing gender equity, and reducing biases for both unknown authors and institutions as well as more prolific authors. Beginning in 2010, manuscripts were sent out for review with author names, affiliations, and the author note removed. Further, authors were responsible for removing identifying information from the body of the manuscript.

Second, we introduced a systematic evaluation tool that aided us in evaluating manuscripts in accordance with new focus. Reviewers were invited to rate manuscripts on several dimensions in addition to providing their written comments. These dimensions included overall contribution to the given field, innovativeness of the manuscript/review, completeness of the literature, strength of the study/review design, methods, and analytical approach, implications for further research, potential value to society, and clarity of presentation.

It goes without saying that these major changes on two levels, journal focus and review process, respectively, were only achievable with a strong team of associate editors, an excellent editorial board, and ad-hoc reviews from across Europe. Amid all the changes, some keystones stayed the same. The length of manuscripts continued to be limited to 7,500 words, even as we switched over to reviews. We also sought to continue the prior editorship's work around giving feedback to authors within a reasonable timeframe, and providing authors with high-quality and fair feedback from multiple reviewers.

Since the beginning, the relevance of *European Psychologist* has risen steadily, both in attractiveness to potential authors, as well as in influence in the field. While the journal impact factor metric is not necessarily the most important criterion for evaluating the standing of a journal, it is nevertheless a clear-cut, accessible, and standardized indicator. When we started this major change we intended to further increase in the six years, and hoped to venture across the threshold of 2.0. We had a vision and took on

a major challenge. With the support of many psychological scientists, EFPA representatives, the Hogrefe Publishing team, and the professionals in psychology from across Europe and the globe, we reached our goal and exceeded it. In 2015, *European Psychologist* reached an impact factor of 3.34 and was listed as a Q1 journal in the category "Multidisciplinary Psychology."

I started with a vision and was honored and privileged to have the possibility to edit *European Psychologist* in the middle of the second decade of its life. I thank all those who made this journey a pleasure.

Peter Frensch and Kristen Lavalée

When I took over editorship in 2016, Kristen had already been the Managing Editor of the journal for some years and had, together with the previous editors, been responsible for steering the journal into highly successful waters. The two of us thus were in a strong position to build on the strengths of the previous years. The aim of our editorial policy in the past years has therefore been to continue the strategy of broadening the appeal and impact of the journal. In particular, we continued to focus on integrative and review articles on topics of wide appeal and immediate relevance for research as well as for policy and practice on issues of global scale. The new direction, voted on in Istanbul in 2011, was reaffirmed at a meeting of the scientific affairs board at the European Congress of Psychology in Amsterdam in 2017. The publication of the first issues to publish articles solely in line with the new direction was in 2013, so the full impact of this new direction was first seen in the 2015 impact factor, which was issued in 2016, and showed a significant rise.

Since then, we have continued to publish multiple special issues each year on current and diverse topics in the field. For some time, we were separating the coordination of the issues and the editing of the issues, but have now, since 2018, reverted to having the same person serve as both coordinator/inviter and editor. In 2016, we published specials on non-invasive brain stimulation (coordinated by Carlo Miniussi, edited by Giovanni Galfano; see Miniussi, 2016) and co-development in personality in close relationships (coordinated by former editor Alexander Grob, and edited by Katariina Salmela-Aro; see Grob, 2016). 2017 saw special issues on controversies in human sexuality research (coordinated by Justin Lehmiller, edited by Peter Frensch; see Lehmiller, 2017) and a special section on adaptation (coordinated by Rui Mata, edited by Alexander Grob; see Frankenhuis & Fraley, 2017; Mata & Hertwig, 2017). In 2018, we published special issues looking at youth and migration (edited by Frosso Motti-Stefanidi and Katariina Salmela-Aro; see Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018), recent advances in criminal psychology (edited

by Ruth Mann and Alexander Schmidt; see Schmidt & Mann, 2018), and the multifaceted nature of identity (edited by Elisabetta Crocetti and Katariina Salmela-Aro; see Crocetti & Salmela-Aro, 2018), along with a special section on introspection (led by Ulrich Weger, 2018, see Ziegler & Weger, 2018). Two special issues appeared in 2019, the first on adjustment to chronic illness (see Figueiras & Neto, 2019) and the second on human rights and psychology (see Söderström et al., 2019). Others that have appeared this year or are in the pipeline include: understanding, predicting and preventing violence (issue 2, edited by Carlo Garofalo and Rannveig Sigurvinsdóttir, see Garofalo & Sigurvinsdóttir, 2020), the psychology of aging (issue 3, edited by Frieder Lang, Matthias Kliegl, and Isabelle Albert; see Lang et al., 2020), early responses to trauma (edited by Birgit Kleim, see Kleim, 2020) political extremist identification (edited by Catarina Kinnvall, in progress), climate change (Tony Wainwright and Katariina Salmela-Aro, in progress), creativity (Todd Lubart, in progress), and now also of course psychology and the COVID-19 pandemic (Berndt Roehrle and Nicola Gale, in progress).

The news section of the journal has always intended to present current news and announcements from EFPA member associations and from other relevant sources, with the aim of establishing ties to the membership, fostering communication between countries, and informing membership of relevant EFPA activities and policies. This section has been called EFPA News and Views since 2013, and includes relevant news as well as archival documents, reports on activities of member countries, and policy and position statements from EFPA task forces. With the increasing popularity of new media that are able to communicate more quickly to potential readers than a journal possibly can, we will need to re-assess which EFPA news are best communicated through which channels in the very near future. Initial discussions with the current president of EFPA, Christoph Steinebach, are already underway.

The impact factor when we took over in 2016 was at a strong 3.42. Though it dropped slightly in the following 2 years, this was largely due to one particular issue on the history of EFPA, which while important and interesting, was not cited in the same way that our usual scientific content is. The 2019 impact factor has risen again to 2.91 (5-year impact factor is 3.79), and *European Psychologist* currently ranks 26/138 among interdisciplinary psychology journals. The acceptance rate calculated for all submissions that met the journal's basic criteria (i.e., reviews) in 2019 was 31%. We continue to receive submissions from scientists hailing from all over Europe and the world. Based on the available data on country of affiliation of the first author, new manuscripts were submitted and reviewed from 22 countries in 2019, primarily in Europe. Further, we continue to benefit from great diversity on the editorial

board, which in 2019 comprised 47 scientists from 26 countries. We are currently operating with two associate editors, and are extremely grateful to both of them for helping us guide *European Psychologist* into the 2020s with fresh perspective and invigorated vision. The journal has come a long way from its strong start in 1996. We look forward to seeing where the next 25 years will take the journal, along with the field and society, during this era of growth, change, and both continuing and yet unknown technological advances.

Signed

Kurt Pawlik, Rainer Silbereisen, Alexander Grob,
Peter Frensch, Kristen Lavallee

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