

Editorial

The *European Journal of Health Psychology* – Health Psychology in Europe

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Dear Readers of the *European Journal of Health Psychology*, Dear Colleagues,

It has been 5 years in my role as Editor-in-Chief, and 2 years since the former *Zeitschrift für Gesundheitspsychologie* was converted into an English-language journal, targeting an international audience. It is time, therefore, to take stock and reflect on the progression of the journal, and to hand over to a new Editor-in-Chief.

Since its inception as an international journal, the *European Journal of Health Psychology* has seen a steady increase in submissions from European countries and beyond. Hand in hand with this internationalization came an extension of topics covered in these submissions. Both these developments bode well for the future, and we are confident that the *European Journal of Health Psychology* will continue to play an important role as a publication outlet for health psychology research across Europe and beyond.

We chose at the time to call the journal “European”, which is not meant as a limitation but an extension beyond national borders and adopting the WHO’s definition of the European Region, which comprises 53 countries, covering a geographical region from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. Along with its geographical dimension, this area represents a cultural, societal, and nature diversity, which – despite the far reaching and unifying effects of globalization – poses both challenges and opportunities for research on these factors, which impact people’s health and well-being. It is in this spirit that we chose to dedicate the journal to researchers and readers from countries in this area, which despite their diversity also share a variable history.

Diversity poses a challenge first of all for communication, that is, the central process through which health psychology research is implemented. Luxembourg as a country is a case-in-point as at least 4 different languages are spoken on a day-to-day basis, with all the potential for misunderstandings and interpretations, and their effects on behavior

and health. We are convinced that a far greater extent of cultural sensitivity in both research and intervention is necessary in the future to successfully contribute to healthier populations. The countries in the European Region, however, are not only characterized by their cultural diversity. Between but also within countries there is increasing social and economic inequality, which impacts negatively on people’s health and well-being. Health psychology research needs to take these developments into account and focus even more on marginalized societal groups, which are increasing in number.

Diversity is in most cases an issue only if and when communication is insufficient. This not only affects the research process but also the field of academic education in health psychology. The provision of evidence-based health psychology services is regulated by national laws, at least in cases where interventions are provided within the respective health care system. This impacts education and licensing procedures for the execution of health psychology practice. It is in this context of national laws that representatives of EU countries came together under the auspices of the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA) several years ago to harmonize standards of professional training in psychology, in particular in clinical psychology and health psychology, to contribute to quality assurance and to enable migration of professionals across European countries. While much progress has been achieved, recent developments at national level (e.g., introduction of a new law governing the training of clinical psychologists in Germany) seem to counter-act this process, and to increase the need for the development of professional training in health psychology.

Even a cursory review of professional trainings in health psychology across different EU countries shows a level of diversity in quality standards, which not only makes it all but impossible to compare qualifications, but – perhaps equally as important – reduces the potential impact of

health psychology in national health care systems. Much remains to be done, therefore, in terms of the development and harmonization of academic curricula and professional training in health psychology to help it achieve its potential to benefit the population in terms of better health care.

This journal provides a European platform for academic research and best practice in health psychology, to make a difference for health and well-being for the people living in the EU and beyond.

To further this process, the *European Journal of Health Psychology* now invites submissions for *conceptual articles* as a new article type along with original articles, reviews, brief reports, and commentaries. The *conceptual articles* are intended as a forum for conceptual pieces that initiate new lines of research and theory, or provide a coherent framework for existing theory and offer integrative theoretical formulations concerning work in any area of health psychology.

Increasing submission numbers from authors across Europe and beyond are encouraging and strengthen our belief that the *European Journal of Health Psychology* will become this envisioned platform. We – former Editor-in-Chief and newly assigned Editor-in-Chief – hope that readers, authors, reviewers, editorial team members, and publisher join in and continue to support this development.

We welcome your submissions electronically at <http://www.editorialmanager.com/zgp>. Detailed instructions to authors are provided at <http://www.hogrefe.com/periodicals/zgp/advice-for-authors/>

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