

# **Brief report\* of a survey of the member associations of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), on pre-tertiary (pre-university) psychology education in their countries' schools.**

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## **Survey aims and method**

The EFPA Board of Educational Affairs and the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations jointly carried out an online survey of EFPA member associations (MAs) in early 2017. Findings were reported in a Symposium<sup>1</sup> at the Europlat 2017 conference in Salzburg in September 2017, and disseminated online and in print as a poster infographic<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the survey was to discover the extent of pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) in European countries. EFPA invited its 36 member associations (MAs) to respond to a questionnaire. One response per MA was requested, and 28 responses were received from 20 EFPA member countries, a response rate of 56%. Participants were asked about various aspects of availability of psychology as a school subject in their country, and about the extent of the MAs' involvement in the provision of psychology as a school subject. Questionnaire responses were subjected to quantitative analysis in the form of descriptive statistics and some free text responses were also recorded.

## **Findings**

### **Availability of psychology as a school subject**

This is very variable: although psychology is taught in 18 of the 20 European countries which responded, it is compulsory in none.

### **Examinations / qualifications at the level required for entry to university (Abitur, Matura, A-level etc.)**

These are available for psychology in half of the responding countries where psychology is taught ( $n = 9$ ).

### **Psychologists' associations' policies and involvement in PTPE**

- three MAs report that they have a stated policy for pre-tertiary psychology,
- three are developing such policy,
- four MAs are involved in developing the school psychology curriculum,
- five MAs are involved in developing teacher training programmes and/or professional development for psychology teachers,
- two respondents are currently aiming to do so.

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<sup>1</sup>Sokolová, L., Williamson, M., & McGinty, A. (2017, September 28). *Journeys to psychology: Different perspectives on pre-tertiary teaching of psychology in Europe*. Retrieved from [osf.io/4n3rh](https://osf.io/4n3rh)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efpta.org/docs/efpa\\_efpta\\_survey-infographic-LS-M-561202-16-11-2018.pdf](http://www.efpta.org/docs/efpa_efpta_survey-infographic-LS-M-561202-16-11-2018.pdf)

### **Published research on PTPE**

Research into PTPE has been published in eight countries.

### **Psychology teachers' associations or committees**

MAs reported that these exist in only six countries. Some are standalone associations, others are sub-committees of psychologists' associations. In all the countries where an association does exist, MAs have formal or informal links with teachers' associations.

### **Overall conclusions**

Taken together, our findings show that in Europe, PTPE teachers and students make very diverse journeys into the discipline of psychology. However, qualitative responses suggest that there is substantial cross-border consensus amongst teachers about the value of the subject in the high school curriculum, and high demand from students.

However there is great variation in the psychology community, amongst psychologists, psychology academics and researchers, in their attitudes to, and level of involvement in PTPE, especially in relation to curriculum and teacher education. So it appears that pre-tertiary psychology teachers and students are not always well nurtured along their journey into the discipline.

### **Recommendations**

- encourage all members of psychology communities in Europe to recognise and celebrate the value of pre-tertiary psychology and its place in the overall range of psychology education,
- encourage involvement of psychologists in developing high school curricula,
- improve availability of teacher education and professional development for psychology teachers,
- encourage communication and collaboration amongst schools, universities, teachers' associations, psychologists' associations - EFPTA and EFPA BEA can help to facilitate.

In sum, there is a need to provide support for PTPE and its teachers and students; those who have already made their successful journey into our discipline are ideally placed to offer such support.