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# The value of teaching psychology at secondary school level (=pre-university)

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## EFPTA

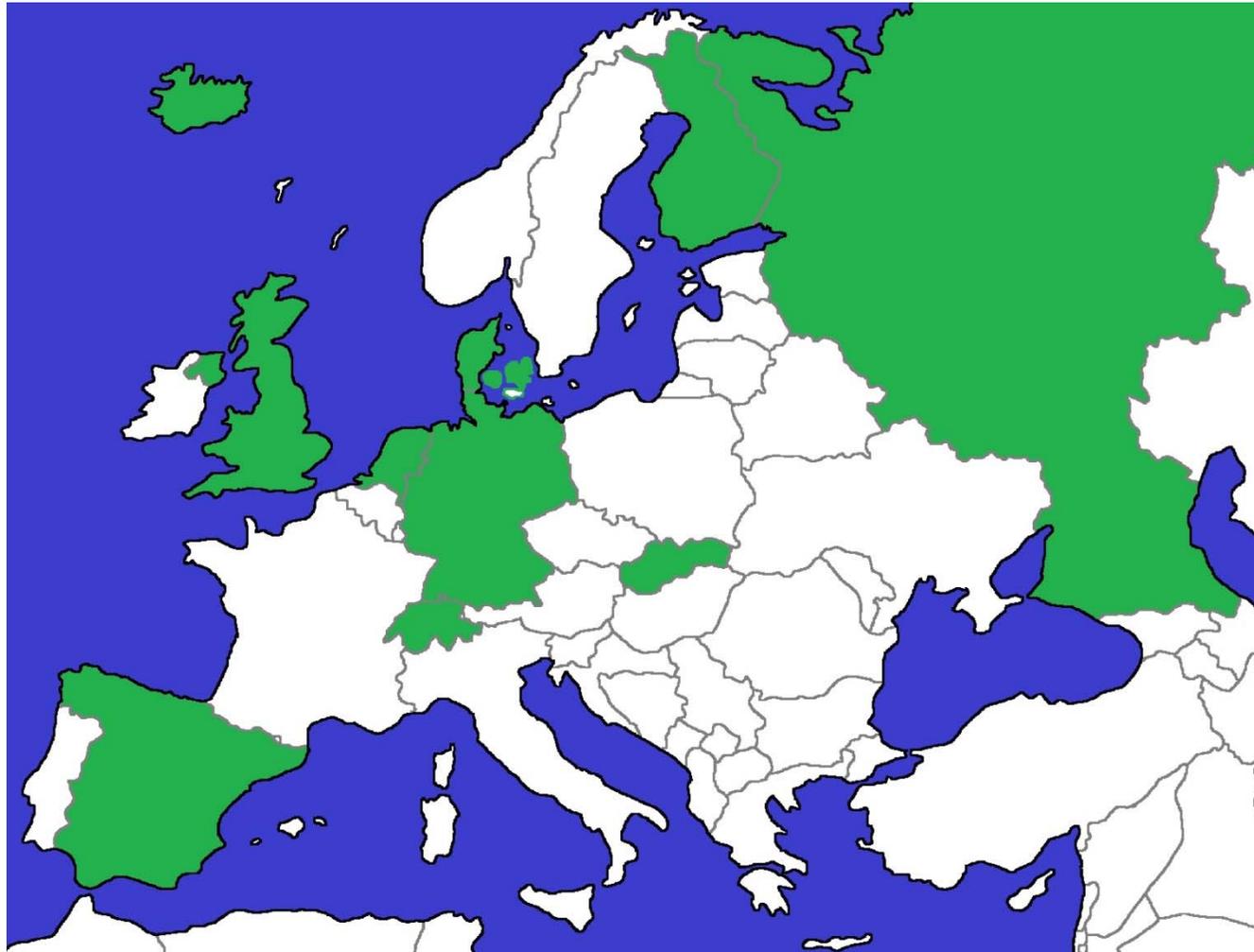
European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations

[www.efpta.org](http://www.efpta.org)

= national and regional **associations of psychology teachers** in schools and colleges in **European countries** (at present 11 countries) since 2004

Cooperation with the EFPA Board of Educational Affairs

EFPTA Members are mainly involved in teaching pre-tertiary psychology at **lower and upper secondary levels**, to **school students aged c.13-19 years**





Psychological findings are used in most areas of peoples' lives – be it private, professional or social.

Therefore we are convinced that all students at school have a right to get a realistic insight in what psychology is about and what it can tell people about themselves and their actions.



*“a worthwhile aim is to promote EU citizens’ psychological literacy through teaching psychology ..... people learn the basics of physics and biology at school but have to learn the basics of human behaviour by themselves, often at high personal and social costs”*

Robert Roe, EFPA President, at a conference of psychologists and European MPs in Brussels in November 2011



Since then EFPA has been actively promoting education in psychology and making psychology available to the citizens of Europe.

EFPA also “feels responsible for stimulating the teaching of psychology at secondary schools throughout Europe as to educate the general population.”<sup>1</sup>

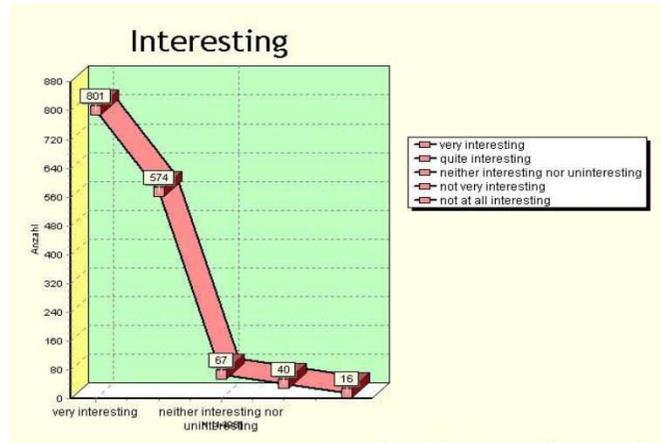
<sup>1</sup>*EFPA Today and Tomorrow - Follow-up on the 2011 Vision and Strategy Document, p. 11*



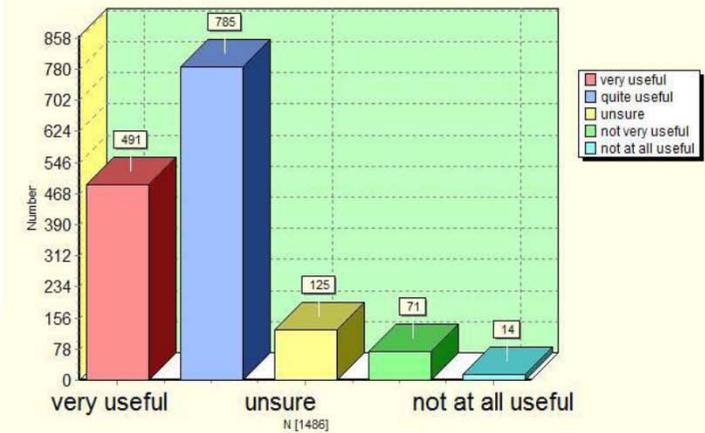
## More good reasons for psychology at school

Teaching psychology at secondary level has the potential to **improve the psychological literacy of citizens** and thus reduce the costs incurred as a result of a failure to **understand basic human behaviour** and it can contribute to more psychological wellbeing and to reduce the barriers to seek help if needed.

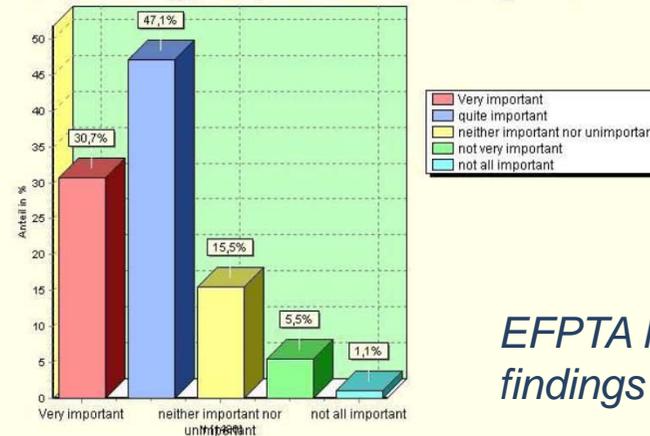
## Students are interested and love the subject



### useful school subject?



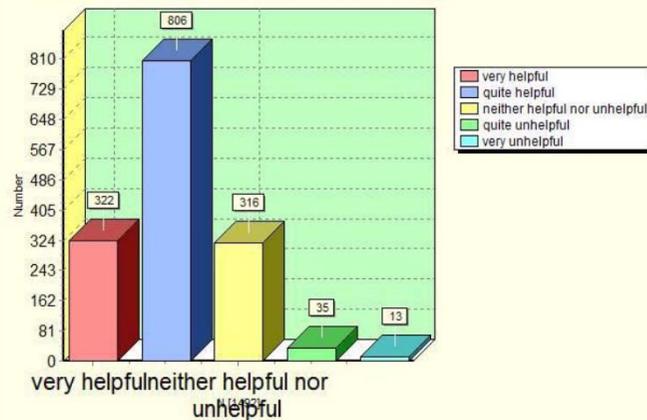
### Psychology important as a subject?



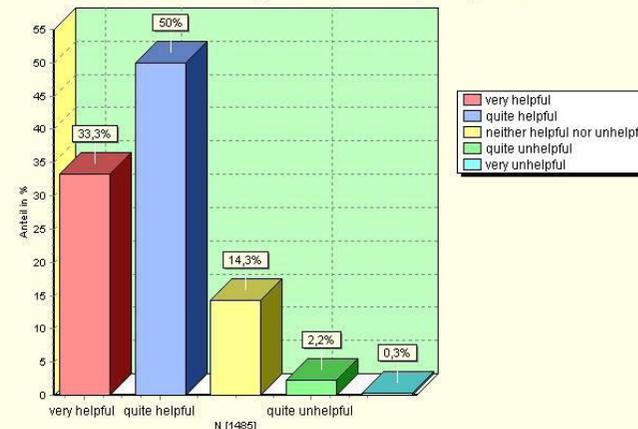
EFPTA long term online student survey, interim findings 2012 [www.efpta.org](http://www.efpta.org)

If students learn the basics of human behaviour it can lead to better understanding of their own behaviour, and that of others, and so help in various contexts..

### self-understanding



### Understanding of other people





Another major benefit of studying psychology at school may be that it could reduce the drop out rate at university.

We are aware that some universities report a high drop out rate on psychology courses.

Could this be because the students have the wrong expectations of what psychology is?

If students studied psychology at school they might be better prepared for higher education **in general** and for psychology in particular.



## EFPTA research

- Where psychology is taught
- At what level
- Duration of courses
- Optional or compulsory
- Content of courses / curricula
- Teacher education (ITE and CPD)
- Students' opinions
- Issues concerning the above



## Content of courses

(according to EFPTA research)

Most courses are **academic**, some are vocational and others form part of a personal wellbeing course.

Almost all countries in Europe, where we know psychology is taught, **teach cognitive, biological, developmental, social psychology & individual differences, plus research methods & practical research skills.**

So, despite the huge variety of educational systems in European countries, the **course content is amazingly similar.**



Apart from their psychology courses, psychology teachers often engage in programs at their schools such as:

- learning strategies
- regulating emotions
- coping with stress
- communication
- group processes and teamwork



## Issues we are working on:

### Availability of teacher education

There are various forms of **initial teacher education**, and routes to becoming qualified to teach psychology, in Europe and the majority of those who took part in our research were satisfied with the provision.

However, we found problems in terms of provision of ITE in some countries, eg: England, Scotland and Germany, where the availability of appropriate training for psychology teachers is inadequate.

*Williamson, Coombs, Schrempf & Sokolova (2011)*



## Professional Development

In respect of **Continuing Professional Development**, our findings suggest that:

In most countries the availability of CPD for psychology teachers is at least adequate, and participants from several countries felt that the **best quality CPD was provided by their psychology teachers' association.**



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*Robert Roe 20011*