EFPTA - the European Federation of Psychology Teachers’ Associations: supporting pre-university psychology education in schools & colleges across Europe

What is EFPTA?
EFPTA is a federation of national and regional associations of psychology teachers in schools and colleges in European countries. Members are mainly involved in teaching psychology at ISCED levels 2 - 4, to school students aged c.13-19 years.

Aim: To promote pre-university psychology education in Europe by facilitating co-operation amongst Psychology Teachers’ Associations.

History of EFPTA: The Federation was established in March 2004 in Helsinki, and became an Affiliate of EFPA in July 2009. Two events/meetings are held every year in European cities. Every member of each member association is entitled to attend all events.

EFPTA Board: The Board (or Committee) includes representatives of all member associations.

EFPTA members: Members comprise teachers’ associations – Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Scotland, Slovakia and individual members and affiliated organisations (in Austria, Belgium and Spain).

National psychologists’ societies support EFPTA: EFPTA receives support from member countries’ psychologists’ associations, including Suomen Psykologi Liitto (Finland) and the British Psychological Society (UK). Modest financial support is also provided by educational institutions in various countries.

Links with EUROLAT: EUROLAT conferences are organised by the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network (UK). HEA / EUROLAT’s focus is on university level psychology education, but the network also supports pre-university teaching.

Website and Newsletter: You can keep up with EFPTA activities via the website - www.efpta.org – which includes the Newsletter.

EFPTA research
An EFPTA online survey of pre-university psychology education in nine European countries in 2009 found:
• All responding countries teach 15-19s (ISCED 3-4), but under-15s (ISCED 2-3) are taught psychology in only three countries - Finland, Germany, Scotland.
• Students typically have 2 - 5 hrs of classes per week.
• A wide variety of assessment methods is used.
• Psychology courses are mostly academic, but some are vocational, or form part of a personal wellbeing course.
• Almost all countries teach cognitive, developmental, social psychology & individual differences, plus research methods & practical research skills.

Are YOU a pre-university psychology teacher? Is there a psychology teachers’ association in your country? Do you train teachers for pre-university psychology? Do you want to promote pre-university psychology education in your country?
Join EFPTA! Contact us: see www.efpta.org, or email hans.reynierse@hz.nl.

EFPTA events since 2004
Conference-style events are held twice yearly, normally in spring and autumn. Programme items include talks by practitioners, workshops for sharing good practice in psychology teaching, and research presentations, as well as the Board meetings.

These events offer teachers unique potential for networking, and also provide school psychology students with a rare opportunity to present in a professional context; student presentations are always a highlight for delegates.

Three main areas of EFPTA activity
Promoting/sharing good practice in pre-university psychology education, through EVENTS & PROJECTS

Research in psychology learning & teaching at pre-university level in Europe

Debating / campaigning on ISSUES in pre-university psychology education

Some key issues:
• In many countries, psychology is not taught in schools at all – should it be taught to ALL young people?
• Where psychology is taught in schools, should it be optional (as in most countries currently) or compulsory, as in Finland?
• Teacher qualifications vary between countries - how can we ensure that psychology teachers are well qualified?
• Should psychology be taught from 12-13 years, or is 15-16 years a more suitable age to start?
• Should a pre-university psychology qualification be made a pre-requisite to gain entry to a university psychology course?

EFPTA projects – examples:
• Teacher and student exchanges – eg Denmark / Scotland
• Student collaboration online, on practical research activities – Iceland / England
• Student contributions to events & Newsletter
• Visiting speakers at national association events, including Germany / Scotland, Finland / Scotland
• Contribution by teachers from several countries to a book on pre-university psychology teaching – Italy
• Numerous new contacts/networks across Europe, online or in person, eg. for specialist interest groups.

Teacher and student exchanges
Trainee Psychology teachers from Dortmund gained workplace experience at a school in England, mentored by Dorothy Coombs (2007)