About the Authors

Ingrid Lunt is Professor of Educational Studies at the University of Oxford, and Vice Principal of Green Templeton College, University of Oxford. She is a Past President of the British Psychological Society (1999), the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (1993–1999), and the United Kingdom Inter-Professional Group (1998–2001). She is currently Chair of the European Awarding Committee for EuroPsy. Her main research interests are higher education, in particular doctoral education and higher professional learning, comparative postgraduate education, and work-based learning.

José María Peiró is Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology at the University of Valencia, Director of the Research Institute of Human Resources Psychology (IDOCAL), and Senior Researcher at the Research Institute of Economics (IVIE) Valencia, Spain. He is President of the International Association of Applied Psychology and a Past President of the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology. His main research interests are occupational stress and well-being, youth labour market entry, and climate and leadership in organisations.

Ype Poortinga is Emeritus Professor of Cross-Cultural Psychology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, and at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He has been president of the International Test Commission, the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), the Dutch Psychological Association (NIP), and the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations (EFPA). His most consistent research interest has been in the conditions under which psychological data obtained in different cultural populations can be meaningfully compared.

Robert A. Roe is Honorary Emeritus Professor of Organizational Theory and Organizational Behavior at Maastricht University (The Netherlands) and former Leibniz Professor at University of Leipzig (Germany). He is President of the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA) and was founding president of the European Association of Work & Organizational Psychology. His publications cover a broad range of topics related to work and organization. In his recent work, the emphasis is on temporal facets of behavioral and organizational phenomena, on research methodology, and on the interface between psychology and other disciplines.
EuroPsy

Standards and Quality in Education for Psychologists

Ingrid Lunt, José María Peiró, Ype Poortinga, & Robert A. Roe
Foreword

Psychology is a global profession. Like many other such professions, there is significant variability in how psychology is defined and regulated throughout the world. The challenge for internationalists is to understand how individual countries construct and implement systems of education, training, credentialing and regulation to conform to the local definitions of the profession, and devise ethical codes that meld universal and local contexts. In addition to languages spoken, the historical and political diversity in countries make comprehensive comparisons difficult. Multiple professional gatherings aimed at understanding psychology’s global diversity have attempted to map similarities and differences over the past 20 years, with some success.

The United Kingdom (UK), along with the United States (US), has been one of the primary exporters of global psychology. Many psychologists emigrated to the UK and US for education and training and returned to their home countries to develop similar systems. Initially this educational export then import was seen as helpful, but with time countries also became concerned that UK/US perspectives were not consonant with their own socio-political perspectives, cultural issues or preferences for community service. This is particularly true in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and other parts of Europe. Now, as universities in these regions have created their own graduate programmes and incorporated their local customs, there is less dependence upon education and training taking place elsewhere.

Psychology in these countries has flourished. Internationalists have great interest in learning how these countries educate, train and credential psychologists, primarily because of a need to promote mobility. Stevens and Wedding (2004) in their comprehensive coverage of numerous countries argue that international psychology should also address issues of global importance. Hall and Altmaier (2008) in their focus on quality assurance stress the importance of promoting an international culture of accountability.

Over 30 years ago in 1981 European psychologists began to systematically and collaboratively develop the structures of European psychology when 12 national psychology organisations signed the enabling statutes and formed the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations (EFPPA). Since then, EFPPA General Assemblies have met every 2 years. The four authors of this book have been centrally involved in the development and organization of psychology at European level for most of this period.

At about the same time, the European Union (EU) became interested in fostering mobility of professionals across Europe for economic reasons. This necessitated the development of a European standard of education and training for each of the professions. To support psychology’s efforts, the EU funded two projects proposed by Ingrid Lunt (1999–2005) under its Leonardo da Vinci programme to develop a framework for training psychologists and also a recognition system, via the creation of a European Diploma. EFPA, now named the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations, agreed to take over these extensive efforts in 2005 and to support the diploma’s implementation. The European Diploma became the EuroPsy and the European Register was officially
initiated by EFPA in 2010, listing psychologists who were determined by their National Awarding Committee (NAC) to meet the EuroPsy standards. Thus in 2010 the European Register joined the efforts by the National Register of Health Service Psychologists (US) and the Canadian Register of Health Service Psychologists to identify qualified psychologists who voluntarily applied for credentialing.

In addition to publishing journal articles and book chapters, these four authors have regularly presented the EuroPsy at meetings of EFPA at its European Congress of Psychology, the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) at the International Congress of Psychology (ICP), the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), at its Congress (ICAP), and numerous other national regional and international meetings. However, this book brings together in one volume all the streams of activity related to creating input and output standards for European education, competency identification, assessment, and revalidation, addressing supervision and training, and developing meta- and ethical codes, all positioned and interpreted within the diverse European sociocultural context. There is much to learn about how the EuroPsy was conceptualised, negotiated and implemented, and where it is going. These authors are some of the people who know it best and first hand. The book’s significance is that it is not just about EuroPsy and EFPA but how psychology organisations and psychologists come together to create systems and standards to reach consensus on national and regional levels and to further mobility. So the Europeans have arrived with their book describing the EuroPsy as a benchmark and quality standard for the 36 member countries of EFPA. Perhaps it is more relevant to today to use the more inclusive term of international. This is what Europe has done for its region, taking the necessary first steps to becoming truly international.

It has been a personal pleasure for me to witness the efforts made by the Europeans over the past 22 years and to learn from their different perspectives. By reading this book, I am certain you will agree.

Judy E. Hall
Executive Officer
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
1200 New York Avenue, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005, USA
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The EuroPsy project is the product of the commitment and efforts of a large number of people whose contributions should be acknowledged. First of all, we are appreciative of the commitment and work of all those who worked in the project teams (listed in Appendices 1 and 2). As is evident from Chapter 2, the EuroPsy project has spanned a number of years, involving considerable effort, debate and discussion, negotiation and finally consensus. To benefit from continuity and experience, members from this team agreed to form the first phase membership of the European Awarding Committee (EAC); this has now been extended as further members join this important committee: to all members of EAC our appreciation and acknowledgements. There is now a National Awarding Committee (NAC) in 20 countries; their contribution to the success of the EuroPsy endeavour is acknowledged. EuroPsy began as a research and development project, and was handed over for implementation to EFPA in 2005 at the European Congress of Psychology in Granada, Spain. We are enormously grateful to the head of the EFPA staff, Sabine Steyaert, and to her colleagues, Ivana Marinovic and Valérie Boni, who have worked so hard to effect the implementation of EuroPsy and to enable the EuroPsy Certificate to be accompanied by a Register and an effective administrative system which contributes to enhancing the quality of psychology education in Europe. Finally, we would like to mention Dr. Judy Hall, a loyal supporter of the project over all its years, who generously agreed to write the foreword, and Robert Dimbleby at Hogrefe Publishers who patiently allowed repeated delays in the agreed date of submission of the manuscript. Beyond those mentioned we greatly appreciate the support and interest from our colleagues in the wider international community of psychologists and we are grateful to the large number of individuals and organisations that have contributed to making EuroPsy a reality.
Preface

There are a number of challenges – and opportunities – facing the profession of psychology as we move through the early years of the 21st century. The implications of a rapidly changing world, with increased globalisation and internationalisation, the expansion of new technologies and concomitant developments, changes in demography, economy, and in the relationship between the professions and the state, create new challenges for the profession of psychology. While psychology both as a science and as a profession has a relatively short history, it has achieved remarkable success and significance over a period of less than 150 years, contributing substantially to understanding and explaining human behaviour, and improving human welfare.

The changing context of the 21st century poses new challenges for the profession of psychology. On the one hand there appears to be a greater need than ever before for psychological interventions in a range of fields: hospitals and clinics, schools and education, companies and organisations, and a growing number of other contexts. There is an increasing demand for psychological services to address mental health problems, disaster and crisis situations, trauma of all kinds, stress in the workplace, the well-being of those incarcerated in prisons, or those migrating as refugees, as well as the challenges created by demographic changes, such as ageing, family breakdown or the adverse effects of poverty, unemployment and other social problems. This demand is fuelled in part by psychology’s success and the contribution that psychology has made, as well as the promises made to improve human welfare and well-being in a wide range of contexts. We should note here, too, the importance of psychology’s contribution to health and well-being in preventing distress as well as developing successful curative interventions.

These societal changes have been accompanied by changes in the role, status and position of professions, and a proliferation of other groups offering similar services in the different areas of practice that are also covered by our profession. The push for greater accountability and the changed relationship between the state, professionals and the client, demands for greater protection of the recipients of psychological services and increased transparency have all had an impact on the position of psychologists in society and the ways in which they provide services. The recent economic crisis and financial arrangements linked with welfare state reforms in European countries equally are affecting the provision of psychological services in various countries.

Psychology is a science-based profession, committed to a scientific perspective towards professional activity and the scientist practitioner approach to education and practice. In its purest form this means a commitment to hypothesis-testing and data-gathering in search of evidence that disconfirms or validates theories, models and interventions and the use of scientific evidence to inform professional practice. This commitment is frequently held up as a feature that distinguishes psychologists from other allied professions. Evidence-based or evidence-informed practice is increasingly held up as the gold standard. This quality standard demands professional aspirations for rigour, for a robust and reflexive interaction between the science and practice of psychology, and for a striving for continuous evaluation and improvement of interventions and professional practice.
Nevertheless, given the complexity of the demands, the scientific evidence available needs to be complemented by other sources of evidence, such as those arising from professional experience, stakeholders’ demands and clients’ experience. A wise combination of all these sources of evidence may help to contextualise the theoretical models inspiring professional interventions in specific environments and for specific individuals and groups.

Although education and training routes for professional psychologists showed some common features in the second half of the 20th century, there continued to be notable national differences across European countries. These are understandable and reflect the considerable diversity in history, politics, culture, languages and so on found in this region. Such differences have been a matter of concern to the European Union since the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, when its founders articulated a vision of free movement of professionals across the region. The European Union itself has attempted to address this concern through European Directives promoting mobility, and through funds supporting exchange and collaboration across the Member States. The balance between pressures for greater “Europeanisation” and impulses by nation states towards nationalism creates a tension which is also reflected in a balance between top–down and bottom–up initiatives to foster greater convergence and harmonisation.

This European regionalism is developing within the wider context of internationalisation. Globalisation means that students, researchers, practitioners and clients are becoming more mobile. The differences in education and training routes across European countries are also evident across other parts of the world. The past 20 years have seen a number of initiatives seeking to explore greater convergence or comparability across regions of the world. International organisations of psychology, such as the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPSyS), the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) and the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), have held regular congresses and fostered international collaboration, capacity building and exchange. A recent and focussed initiative of this kind has been the IUPSyS initiative of 2012, the so-called Dornburg Conference, which aimed to examine psychology education and training at a global level (Silbereisen, Ritchie, & Pandey, 2014). At about the same time (2013) the 5th International Congress of Certification, Licensing, and Credentialing was organised to consider the possibility of identifying core competences of psychologists at a global level. These initiatives reflect a wide interest in comparing systems of education and training for psychologists, making these transparent and comprehensible, and seeing how far it might be possible to develop over-arching frameworks such as those already achieved for ethical principles through the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists, which was accepted by the major international organisations in 2008 (Universal Declaration, 2008).

This book is about the development of EuroPsy, a European standard and benchmark for psychologist practitioners, which achieved consensus across European countries in 2005. Originally designed as a project to improve transparency and comparability of psychologist qualifications, it quickly became seen as a means for enhancing the quality of psychology education and training across European countries and thus improving services to the public. More recently, and with the modernisation of the EU Qualifications Directive, it has become a potential tool to aid mobility. Europe provides an example of

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powerful regionalisation and is therefore a fertile context for the development of an international standard. Early on EuroPsy adopted the definition of the key role of the professional psychologist originally formulated by the British Psychological Society (1998), which states that their main role is “to develop and apply psychological principles, knowledge, models and methods in an ethical and scientific way in order to promote the development, well-being and effectiveness of individuals, groups, organisations and society” (italics added here). This commitment to an “ethical and scientific way” demands a robust form of accountability to individual clients, to organisations, to colleagues and to the profession and the public at large.

Like all professions, psychologists commit to abide by ethical codes (see also Chapter 8). As stated above, psychology is a science-based profession, underpinned by the scientist-practitioner model of training (see Chapter 4). Although there are methodological challenges in evaluating the efficacy and effectiveness of psychological interventions and their adaptation in different contexts, it is essential that we use the methods and tools available to seek to ensure the robustness of the methods used by practitioners and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. Randomised control trials are difficult to organise and often inappropriate for psychological interventions, yet there is a need for transparency and accountability in relation to the methods used by psychologists. This issue is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

EuroPsy has been developed over the past 15 years or so within the context of the European Union and the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA; see Chapter 2). EuroPsy has been accepted by the 36 member associations of EFPA, which includes all European Union Member States. EFPA is currently working towards acceptance by the EU of EuroPsy as the basis for a Common Training Framework facilitating automatic recognition of qualifications across Europe (Chapter 3).

As is often the case, the book cannot address all the topics that could have been included. In the course of writing the book, the authors (who have extensive experience both of EuroPsy and of psychology in Europe and its organisation) had a number of productive and informative discussions about the different opinions held within the group. Beyond a description of EuroPsy it is possible to take a view on its long-term development, which can be outlined only when there is a perspective on where psychology as a profession should be heading. The team of authors discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the profession and the science behind it; the mutual relations between science and practice; and different mechanisms of quality assurance for the profession across the different countries of Europe, including their current state and aspirations for the future. Our shared vision includes the future development of a common education framework and of standards for practice rooted in the scientist-practitioner model, a common model of competences, and the generalisation of supervised practice and continuing professional development as strategies to build the core competences of all psychologists in Europe. Last but not least, we unanimously and strongly endorse that psychologists have to be guided by ethical principles in their practice as formulated in professional codes.

We held somewhat differing views on the risks and threats that the profession may be facing in a mid-term future and how these might be pre-empted. A focal point in these discussions was the continued use of methods which empirical evidence has suggested are obsolete. Undoubtedly, this and other issues will need to be addressed in the future.
development of *EuroPsy*. However, they are beyond the horizon of the present book, which aims to describe professional standards and competences, where they come from, and where they are today, for the profession of psychology in Europe.

**Outline of the book**

We start in Chapter 1 outlining the historical context and background to *EuroPsy*. This is followed by Chapter 2 which provides a description of the process of creating *EuroPsy* within this context. Chapter 3 moves on to describe what *EuroPsy* is and how it works. It is followed by five chapters providing detailed information about the major components of *EuroPsy*. Chapter 4 deals with *EuroPsy* in relation to the psychology curriculum. Chapter 5 addresses the use of competences to ensure that professionals perform well and safely. Chapter 6 gives a view of supervised practice and professional education while Chapter 7 discusses the issue of continuing professional development in relation to the revalidation of *EuroPsy* certificates. Chapter 8 reviews the ethical base of professional practice. The remaining two chapters “zoom out” somewhat, with Chapter 9 discussing *EuroPsy* in the current context of the psychological profession in Europe and Chapter 10 providing a conclusion by presenting a perspective on the future of *EuroPsy*. 