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# EFPSA'S CALL TO ACTION

## STUDENTS BUILDING COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

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## Preamble

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The European Federation of Psychology Students' Associations (EFPSA), represents highly diverse psychology students working voluntarily by and for psychology students of Europe. EFPSA takes serving psychology students, contributing to society, improving psychology and linking professionals, academics and students as its mission.

The Call To Action is an initiative started by the EFPSA Conference 21' Organising Committee and EFPSA's Advocacy team of 2021/2022. We were brought together by the Conference 21' theme of Community Psychology and our passion for an action-driven approach. We saw the EFPSA Conference as an event with a lot of potential to create change. The Conference is attended by over a hundred students interested in a specific field, and who are actively engaged in their local psychological communities and EFPSA. Therefore, as a team, our goals during the Conference were:

- To introduce the students to the field of Community Psychology to develop their critical knowledge and engage in meaningful discussions;
- To start building the ground for a change we found relevant for the field of Community Psychology and for the students we are representing;
- To empower the students by providing an opportunity to become agents of change.

On the last day of the Conference, we organised a roundtable discussion - "*What will you do about change?*" - along with experts from the field. During the roundtable discussion, the participants had an opportunity to raise their voices on common issues and provide recommendations on including community psychology in their curriculum. This session came as a first step towards addressing an issue we have identified, that of Community Psychology not being consistently present in the context of higher education in Europe. These recommendations, expert suggestions and meticulous research are all included in this document. We see this initiative as a starting point that will inspire international psychology students to take action and be the changemakers of their communities.

The aim of this Call to Action is to **advocate and encourage the inclusion of community psychology in universities curricula** and create opportunities for psychology students in this field. Within this document, we start by introducing the field and its development and move on to the current status of Community Psychology in educational institutions. Later we provide the reader with examples of curricula with integrated Community Psychology and case studies of different community psychology interventions. Finally, as the main purpose of this Call to Action, we summarise specific recommendations for the integration of Community Psychology in the curriculum on different levels of stakeholders.

## What is Community Psychology?

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Community psychology is a branch of psychology that emphasises understanding and enhancing peoples' behaviour and well-being within the context of the community environment and the social systems in which they live (Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman, Elias, & Dalton, 2012, p.12). Its specific goal is to deepen the effects of inequalities on social settings and among disempowered groups (Smail, 2010).

According to the [Society for Community Research and Action](#), community psychology shifts the focus onto the social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international factors composing one's environment to promote health and positive change at both the individual and the systemic levels. Unlike more traditional approaches in psychology, the field of community psychology focuses on prevention rather than on treatment, aiming to extend the reach of services to more vulnerable groups who had been under-represented in the past, thus involving community members in the change process. Therefore, besides promoting better health, it also adopts a social justice approach, where most of the social and health problems are understood from the perspective of disproportioned resource allocation and the subsequent effects of this. Social and economic inequalities such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, racism, sexism, exploitation and crime are well known to contribute to and maintain mental and physical health problems, due to the psychological and biological effects of chronic and repetitive stress (Rebouças, Falcão, & Barreto, 2021; Winchester, Baracaia, & Basnett, 2021; Wright, Jarvis, Pachter, & Walker-Harding, 2020; Albee, 1986).

We can very briefly summarise the main principles in Community psychology as:

- Individuals and their problems should be considered within their broader context of living;
- Positive change implies understanding and enhancing the quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies;
- The social and psychological problems can be solved through the application of scientific approaches (Levine et al., 2004) and preventive policies at the community level.

## History of Community Psychology

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### - Social and political context as precursors of Community Psychology -

The political and social context of the 1960s in the United States was a fertile ground for the development of Community Psychology. There were ongoing protests and demonstrations concerning the Civil Rights movement, the Feminist Movement and the Vietnam War. Society was becoming increasingly socially conscious and oriented towards social justice.

In the aftermath of World War II, new veteran centres and hospitals were established in the United States to provide care for those returning from war. There was an increasing need for mental health support and therefore the visibility of the field grew. In 1963, American president John F. Kennedy signed the Community Mental Health Act, thus contributing to a turning point in the delivery of mental health services first in the United States, and then on a worldwide scale. The Act helped limit the institutionalisation in mental health hospitals and contributed to integrating people suffering from ill mental health back into their communities. This paradigm shift was based on the consensus of the scientific community that not only there was a deficient availability of personnel in mental health settings in the United States at that time to accommodate the hospitalised treatment practises (Albee, 1959), but also that mental disorders could be treated more effectively and cost-effectively outside of psychiatric hospitals (National Council for Mental Wellbeing).

### **The Swampscott Conference as an important landmark**

Two years later, a few clinical psychologists gathered in Swampscott to discuss the role of psychologists in the developing social context. This conference is now recognised as the birthplace of Community Psychology, a new profession that aimed to educate psychologists in becoming "social change actors" actively involved in "solving the general problems in society" (Rickel, 1987, p. 511). A year later, in 1966, the field took a step forward along with the establishment of Division 27 (Community Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA). Soon after, many training programs developed in the US. Analogously, a series of preventive programs created by community mental health professionals started being implemented at a large scale (e.g.: the Fairweather Lodge program, Teaching Children Competencies or the Primary Mental Health Project).

After World War II, the need for clinical psychology increased and this field became more well-known. In parallel, after a conference in Boulder in 1949, the Boulder model was accepted for psychology education (scientist/researcher-practitioner). These improvements and the need for community health in clinical psychology are some of the reasons that supported the community psychology field to emerge

### - Community Psychology in the World -

As the field was growing, the distinction from clinical psychology became more obvious, as was the increasing need to bring more non-psychologists on board. Having to expand beyond these limitations, the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) was established in 1987. Later on, a search for the main orientation of Community Psychology began. Different voices in the field supported either a focus on prevention (Cowen, 1977) or empowerment (Rappaport, 1981), whilst others adopted a more

ecological approach (Trickett, 1984). Later on, all three orientations were acknowledged and integrated under the "big tent", which is how Torro referred to them in 2005.

Although there have been a number of precursors to community psychology before the Second World War in Europe, the influence of American academia was an important landmark for the emergence of Community Psychology as a science. For instance, the British Psychological Society (BPS) constrained all alternative approaches to psychology viewed as an individualist approach only (Burton, Kagan, & Harris, 2007).

Another important source of inspiration and root of Community Psychology emerged in Latin America. During the 1970s, a questioning of the dominant approaches to psychology emerged, and in Latin America, the result was directly related to community practice (Burton, Kagan, & Harris, 2007). Here the roots of Community Psychology are in social psychology with less emphasis on clinical tradition and a focus on poor communities of diverse settings. In this context, community psychology provides a methodological and empirical base for the psychology of liberation, inspired by Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy (Burton, 2004).

Community Psychology has increasingly developed on an international scale, and in 2005, the European Community Psychology Association (ECPA) was formed.

Today the field of Community Psychology is over 50 years old and is constantly developing. In the past 20 years, a great emphasis was put on the development of research methods, thus focusing on mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods and orienting towards participatory approaches to research (involving community members in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of research).

## State of the Art: Community Psychology in Higher Education

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A report by the Standing Committee on Community Psychology of EFPA (European Federation of Psychologists' Associations) published in 2020 (Roehrle et. al.) aimed to pinpoint the study programmes on Community Psychology offered by European universities, thus underlining the status of this discipline in higher education in Europe. The results report on universities from the 14 respondent countries and are grouped based on the level of education in which Community Psychology is integrated, as well as whether this discipline is integrated among others or there are stand-alone Community Psychology programmes.

Concerning providing any Community Psychology programme, 32% of all European countries provide some kind of Community Psychology education (32 universities in 12 countries), with two respondent countries reporting not providing any type of programme.

Concerning the level of education, two universities in two countries offer Bachelor's level studies specialised in Community Psychology, 20 universities in five countries offer Community Psychology courses at the Master's level, sixteen universities in three countries provide PhD programmes and four countries provide over five postgraduate programmes in this field.

Regarding the degree of integration of Community Psychology within these programmes, 6 countries offer stand-alone Community Psychology programmes, most of the universities (n. 12) being located in Spain. 12 of the respondent countries reported providing Community Psychology integrated into other fields of psychology: social psychology (four programmes), health promotion, prevention and mental health promotion (two programmes), clinical psychology (one programme), environmental psychology (two programmes), applied psychology (two programmes) and cultural psychology (one programme).

Based on the reported results and the relatively low response rate in this report, we agree with the authors' conclusion that Community Psychology in the European higher education system is yet to be standardised and developed more consistently. The few countries providing Community Psychology programmes indicate an imbalanced concentration in this field. We can theorise that, although highly relevant for tackling complex problems at multiple levels, Community Psychology interventions are the least requested and financed (Francesco & Zani, 2010), thus reflecting in the relatively low level of knowledge about the field and interest in integrating it that we see in most European universities.

Nonetheless, programmes offering a pure specialisation in Community Psychology are even scarcer and particularly concentrated in only one country (Spain). According to Roehrle et. al., there are too few programmes providing specialisation in this field compared to the current problems affecting the European context that would benefit from a Community Psychology contribution. Another significant deficiency is the low number of universities (only two) providing Community Psychology at the undergraduate level. Other than increasing the number of programmes providing specialisation in the field, we deem as equally relevant to first of all make the students aware of the existence and potential of Community Psychology starting at an early stage in their academic path.

## Case Studies of Universities' with Community Psychology Programmes

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Although Community Psychology in the European higher education system is yet to be standardised and developed in a more consistent manner, there are some good examples of its implementation that can inform a better integration of this subject in the European higher education system. During the EFPSA Conference, we were introduced to different study programmes and chose to present two of them with the purpose of illustrating how such programmes can be structured.

### South Africa Universities: An Overview

The emergence of Community Psychology in South Africa is indissociable from its historical context – the oppressive apartheid regime's treatment of the majority of people, during the 1970s and early 1980s (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011) – alongside a consequent questioning of the “relevance and appropriateness of the individualistic, decontextualised, apolitical nature of most Western psychological theory and practice” (Carolissen, in Reich et al., 2017, p.40). The first modules in Community Psychology appeared in particular SA university programmes during the 1980s (Carolissen et al., 2017).

### **Community Psychology in the Curricula**

Within the contours of the South African educational system, Community Psychology is included at different levels:

1. At the undergraduate level, Community Psychology appears as a full module or part of a module in many universities' bachelor's degrees. An example of this is a second-year module entitled “Community Psychology: Re-imagining Community” (Carolissen et al., 2017), which can be paired with Social Psychology, presented as part of a Psychological Interventions module or as an illustration of the expression of African Psychology. It may also have a link to service-learning initiatives.
2. At the bachelor's (Honours) level, a number of universities include a stand-alone module in Community Psychology, which is studied alongside other modules such as Developmental Psychology, Psychological Assessment, Psychological Counselling and Sports Psychology.
3. At the master's level, Community Psychology exists as a module in many universities' programs, although it is never a full stand-alone programme on its own.

Across all levels, there is a concern that the methodology is to be personalised, in-depth, focused on a critical engagement and, above all, immersed in the socio-political context, histories, power and material realities. It is also stated the relevance of the student's practice through Service Learning, through immersion in community organisations, at variable lengths.

### **Challenges**

A number of factors have mitigated against the rise of Community Psychology in South Africa. The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has decided that Community Psychology should be integrated as a module into professional training programmes, rather than formalising it as a separate registration category. Thus, learning about its application in practice is often linked to Service Learning and dependent on staff members having the requisite expertise. In addition, professional psychological practice in South Africa is still strongly allied to medical and bio-psycho-social constructs of mental health

and distress, contrasting with the more egalitarian approaches espoused by Community Psychology. Carolissen et al. (2017) also highlights how the community-based emphasis of the work, the lack of available resources and the limited associated rewards often lead to the research and practice supervision being done by young female academic staff, rather than being supported institutionally through well-funded programmes that include recognition of the time and emotional demands of such work.

In spite of these factors, Community Psychology is now embedded in many undergraduate and postgraduate psychology programmes (e.g. Akhurst et al., 2016); with the potential to make greater contributions if given further recognition by those in power, in various fields of health, education, employability, and in organisational settings. In SA, governmental policy frameworks may be forward-thinking and make provision for community-based interventions (e.g. through primary healthcare clinics), but actual delivery has often been stalled by challenges to their implementation.

However, looking forward it is believed that Community Psychology is gathering momentum again in universities in South Africa. Contributors have been the increasing agency of students who have protested, demanding that their curricula are transformed (Mbembe, 2016), as well as new generations of academic staff, who are critical of the lack of applicability of mainstream psychology.

### ISPA - Instituto Universitário, Portugal

ISPA - Instituto Universitário, in Portugal, has developed a multilevel strategy to integrate Community Psychology within general psychological sciences in its three cycles of studies. Marking the onset of its commitment to this field in 1987, with an advanced course on Community Psychology, it has already featured multiple programs throughout the years, such as a Postgraduate Program in Community Mental Health, and an Undergraduate Program on Community Development. ISPA's plan of action has been outlined with the purpose of being responsive to the University's requests, whilst entailing a Community Psychology focused strategy through National and Transnational cooperation and collaboration efforts in teaching, research and action.

#### **Community Psychology in the Curriculum**

Currently, ISPA's scientific programs list includes courses in which the syllabus is aligned with the field of Community Psychology:

- introduction to Community Psychology, embedded in the bachelor's degree (1st cycle);
- elective courses available for all Psychology Specialisations
  - Ecology and Mental Health; Crisis Intervention; Community Psychology (2nd cycle).

There is also a Master's degree in Community Psychology, in which specific themes are addressed in concrete disciplines: e.g. Coalitions; Migrations; Gender; Ethics; Urban Planning; Conflict Mediation; Development and Social Change; Ecology and Mental Health. Moreover, ISPA offers a thematic module related to Community Psychology in the Psychology Doctoral Program.

The students additionally have a myriad of options for Practice within University-Community long-standing partnerships, and Service-Learning experiences, which also receive international students every year (an average of 4 students per year).

#### **Beyond the curriculum**

In order to consolidate the discipline, ISPA employs further initiatives, such as congresses, conferences, seminars and short training with international collaborations. Since 2009, it has also been engaged in European projects, both as partners and coordinators, and following 2018, ISPA has led the APPsyCI - Applied Psychology Research Centre. These enterprises play a relevant role in the systematisation of the 3rd cycle of studies, on top of providing a more robust structure to support the research and practice of Community Psychology in Portugal.

### **Impact**

Regarding the national panorama on Community Psychology, this institution assumes a prominent position, considering that only one other institution provides a postgraduate program (ISCTE - a Master's Degree in Community Psychology and Child Protection) and that the teaching of this field in the rest of the country is scarce and unevenly distributed, being restricted to elective courses in few universities. ISPA also places great emphasis on its partnerships, which enable them not only to enrich the education of their students, but also to strengthen the role of community psychology across borders.

## Case Studies from Community Psychology Interventions

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A relevant aspect of Community Psychology is that it shifts beyond an individualistic perspective when considering how individuals, communities, and societies are interconnected. As a result, the context or environment is considered an integral part when trying to understand and work with communities and individuals embedded in them: family, neighbourhood, community, and policies at the national level (Jason et al, 2019). During the EFPSA Conference 2021, the chosen theme has the goal to highlight the philosophy, values and goals of Community Psychology but also the action-research approach with particular cases and examples. Having these specific goals, the illustrated case studies have been selected from the initiatives and projects presented during the Conference and can be good examples of the impact of Community Psychology in vulnerable populations and during uncertain times.

### Case study 1: Housing First Programme

Housing first is a Community Psychology approach to ending homelessness that focuses on providing permanent housing to homeless people, based on the principle that adequate housing is a precondition for a stable recovery. It originated in New York in the 1990s and soon started to be implemented at a wider scale in the United States and internationally. According to [Homeless Hub](#), Housing First is based on the principles that:

- housing should not be limited by readiness requirements (such as sobriety or abstinence) or acceptance of a certain service;
- beneficiaries can choose when to move and where the type of housing (group or individualised) as well as what additional services they start and when;
- a recovery and harm reduction approach is encouraged, with a focus on initiating and maintaining social, recreational, educational, occupational and vocational activities;
- the type and extent of support is catered to the client's needs;
- social and community integration is essential and should be promoted via engagement opportunities and non-stigmatising housing services.

More traditional approaches to homelessness usually imply that the beneficiaries are required to go through a series of other interventions and meet the criteria for sobriety and abstinence before being granted time-limited access to housing, as part of a linear intervention. Existing data comparing Housing First with traditional approaches indicate that, even though Housing First does not impose abstinence, there are no clear differences in substance use between people participating in this programme compared to those enrolled in a traditional treatment (Lachaud et. al., 2021; Baxter et. al., 2019; Tsemberis, Gulcur, & Nakae, 2004), and that the problematic substance use tends to decrease in both groups (Baxter et. al., 2019). However, beneficiaries of the two types of intervention do differ in other aspects. Compared to traditional services, Housing First beneficiaries obtain housing earlier, spend more time in their houses than on the streets and are more likely to be housed in the long term. This implies that there might be no deterioration or harm as a result of not bounding the housing access to abstinence, while people are more

quickly provided with a safe shelter they are more likely to stay in (Baxter et. al., 2019; Tsai et. al., 2010). In comparison, up to 36% of traditional services users never manage to move to stable housing (Lachaud et. al., 2021).

In addition, Housing First beneficiaries reported fewer emergency visits, fewer hospitalisations and less time spent hospitalised or incarcerated, compared to those enrolled in traditional services (Baxter et. al., 2019; Tsai et. al., 2010). In terms of health improvements, some studies indicate that there are no differences between Housing First and traditional services users (Baxter et. al., 2019), while some data indicate that the more stable housing trajectory provided by Housing First is associated with decreased chances of having psychosis-related disorders (Lachaud et. al., 2021).

Finally, Housing First beneficiaries report higher perceived choice during the programme (Greenwood et. al., 2020; Tsemberis et. al., 2004), a salient factor in maintaining stable housing. Moreover, since most Housing First beneficiaries choose to live independently, compared to congregate housing offered by traditional approaches, they reported a higher perceived quality of service. The housing quality predicted fewer psychiatric symptoms, which is a crucial indicator of health (Greenwood et. al., 2020).

While the existing data indicates that Housing First has beneficial results, there is still room for improvement. We are yet to establish who benefits most from Housing First and what are the necessary services to be provided in addition to housing (Tsai, 2020) to maximise the benefits. Given the potential to be as effective as traditional services in terms of decreasing substance use and health problems, while introducing the additional benefit of offering more stable housing, higher quality services and supporting the choice, satisfaction and community integration of the beneficiaries, this Community Psychology intervention provides a satisfactory case study underlining the potential of this field.

## **Case study 2: A Multi-level Advocacy Framework for Roma Health Justice**

The RoAd4Health Project (2016-2019)

The RoAd4Health project (Miranda et al., 2020) is a community initiative in which academic researchers are partnered with Roma communities to overcome health inequities. The main objective of RoAd4Health was to promote advocacy processes grounded in a Community-based Participatory Research approach, led by Roma agents of change. Community-based participatory action research involves community members participating in the process of collecting evidence, analysing it, and disseminating the results. This project wonderfully illustrates the use of community-based research approaches to determine the main issues within a community opposed to assuming them only based on prior research.

Community Psychology underscores the meaningful participation of communities in health policies, designing interventions to address inequities, and building collaborative capacity among multiple agents of change. As one of the pillars of Community Psychology is listening to the needs of the community this project assesses the pervasive failure of policies aimed at overcoming health inequities suffered by Roma communities in Seville, Spain. Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority and despite their national citizen status, 80% live in extreme poverty and have a much worse health status than their non-Roma counterparts. European institutions have identified the institutional discrimination targeted at Roma

communities—antigypsyism—as the underlying cause of the violation of their rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018).

The project's methodology was built in three phases and included **building local narratives of health inequalities, expanding social networks and building alliances**, and **implementing multilevel advocacy actions**. More specifically photovoice methodology was used to gather evidence through photographs, participants shared their narratives and articulated their health concerns through the photographs taken. Along with the photovoice method, they implemented community organising strategies to bring people together to build community power to solve local problems on their terms. Aligned with these strategies, they chose community asset mapping as a participatory method that would allow the agents to assess local relationships and resources, identify allies for advocacy, and engage in meaningful spaces to gain local support from others

According to Miranda et al. (2020), the results included defining four categories of concerns: (a) neglect by public services, (b) discrimination, (c) normalised undignified living conditions, (d) lack of Roma presence in decision-making spaces, and (e) psychological problems. The identification of these categories is a first step in the change-making process of addressing the issue of health inequity in Roma communities and will be used as a base for later interventions. It is relevant to highlight that the research process and methods used within the project facilitated the psycho-political empowerment of Roma communities to advocate for health equity in their neighbourhoods.

### Case study 3: Helplines during COVID-19 in Matosinhos City Hall

Isolation Support helplines is an initiative started in March due to the need for public health during isolation. Governments set quarantines to prevent the spreading of Covid-19. Pandemic happened suddenly and there was no definite ending for it which brought uncertainty with a result of anxiety and insecurity. Although quarantine was a necessity to stop the rapid rise of the rate of infected people, those restrictions had undesirable effects, such as social isolation, especially for risk groups. When experiencing social distancing and isolation, uncertainty about the virus, work, family and sudden life changes, people are expected to be anxious and insecure as a result of perceived lack of control. In the crises there might be results like domestic violence, substance abuse, worsening of pre-existing mental conditions, therefore psychological support is a necessity and so are health professionals. To provide and support the community, the isolation support helpline started in March with a team consisting of health professionals, community services and volunteers.

The isolation support helpline has 5 specific strengths;

- 1) It is **informative**. Since there was a lot of misinformation about Covid-19, providing clear, correct and objective information became a necessity, as well as normalising and validating feelings and promoting social and emotional adaptation.
- 2) It provides **psychological counselling**, thus facilitating emotional expression and adaptive processes, identifying problems and forming strategies to solve them, as well as promoting psychological resilience.

- 3) It provides **referrals**, thus directing the people to specific and specialised services after exploring alternatives to respond to situations presented by telephone calls.
- 4) It facilitates **psychological interventions**: offered by psychologists in specific areas and responsibility willing to respond to psychological problems via a call.
- 5) It offers an **ageing support response**, by providing regular contact, adjustive responses, listening to people's stories, instilling hope, and offering health recommendations.

The helpline has the purpose of identifying and addressing socially vulnerable people who might need any type of support like food, medication etc. It is either for people who are financially struggling or people who can't go out because of their risk conditions and therefore need support.

The project started in Matosinhos Municipality on the 10th of March and the first wave of it continued until the 30th of June. The project team consisted of 18 psychologists and one sign language entrepreneur, the team worked with people who required psychological and social support and also people who were diagnosed with cancer. Interventions are planned to be ongoing, especially for the latter.

At the end of the first wave the isolation helpline team has reached out to 2325 contacts, 1556 people got psychological support and 780 people got other types of help like food supplies, medication etc. People who were covered by the systematic psychological support held in 86 systematic, specialised and frequent interventions. These interventions happened with weekly contacts with volunteers. By the end of the first wave, 26 people were discharged and ten remained in ongoing therapy.

Email contact was created to address the questions related to social support needs. This contact was used either by professionals or by community services to find people who need social support. The team had 455 responders with specific requirements, 136 families from these requirements have been identified as especially vulnerable, 240 people were provided with food supplies and medication, 96 people were provided with food baskets, fourteen with cooked meals, 20 with medications and 28 with waste collection services.

The second wave of this project started in November 2020 and continued until July 2021. The main goals were psychological referrals, psychological responses and social support for community members. By the end of this term, 372 people and 136 families were directly supported through these means.

People who worked in this project have described their experiences in terms of feelings of fulfilment, being useful to the community and feeling united. They added that this was a great opportunity to touch people's lives.

## Arguments for the Inclusion of Community Psychology in the Psychology Curriculum

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Although Community Psychology adopts a systemic and ecological perspective that allows interventions that target several levels (e.g. individual, family, community and even societal), that requires the integration of disciplinary competencies and collaborative approaches and encompasses values that produce more collective and individual well-being (Francescato & Zani, 2010). Training individuals on community psychology principles leads to the enrichment and expansion of psychology students' grasp of psychology. Consequently, it will broaden the scope of psychology's action and intervention even in non-traditional areas of psychology, having a constructive impact on our environment.

Although community psychology has been growing in the last decades both as an academic and professional field, this branch of psychology still has a marginal status among psychological disciplines in all countries where it exists (Reich, Riemer, Prilleltensky & Montero, 2007). Throughout this paper, we have outlined various aspects of Community Psychology that can be considered as arguments for its inclusion in the Psychology Curriculum. In this section, we will summarise the main arguments and present them as *outcomes* or *benefits* that students, universities and communities would gain if community psychology were to be included in their curriculum.

Community Psychology offers principles and methodologies that allow interventions that target several levels (e.g. individual, family, community and even societal) and encompasses values that produce more collective and individual well-being (Francesco & Zani, 2010). Educating individuals on community psychology principles leads to the enrichment and expansion of psychology students' grasp of psychology consequently developing the field itself and having a constructive impact on our surroundings.

### Arguments regarding Individual Students and University Programmes

- Engaging young people in their community not only contributes to transforming it however it also empowers them by promoting critical awareness about structural factors and active involvement (e.g.: Youth participatory Action Research - YPAR).
- The students get an opportunity to bridge the gap between the classroom and community while approaching issues from an ecological perspective and becoming agents of community change. Thus, actively illustrating the relevance of academic work in an applied setting.
- The students will acquire marketable competencies (according to the Standing Committee for Community Psychology of EFPA.; Roehrl et. al., 2020), such as:
  - The ability to communicate in various ways in cross-cultural contexts
  - The ability to think reflectively and ethically
  - The ability to design and implement interventions based on the ecological model and resource-oriented
  - Research skills that integrate qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g., action research, or participatory action research, structural modelling multilevel analysis). Another frequently taught skill is program planning and evaluation.

- The ability to adapt to the user's needs, advocate for their human rights and adopt a value-oriented approach to their work
- The ability to consider and attend to the social roles of people in different groups within a community (e.g., gender-discriminated people, minorities, disadvantaged or disabled people, and those who are neglected culturally or suffer from age discrimination).
- There are many career opportunities for community psychologists in diverse settings (e.g., non-profit organisations, healthcare, education, government, foundations, consultation, business) that offer opportunities to be involved in positive social change.
- Highlighting the importance of an action-driven, system thinking and interdisciplinary approach across the whole curriculum by discussing topics such as public health and mental health system reforms.
- Educating students on public policy processes, evidence-based policy-making and encouraging them to take an active role in these change-making processes. With these steps, we are consequently contributing to the visibility of psychology as a science.

### Arguments regarding the Community-level

- Trained Community Psychologists will be able to assess and respond to the needs of their specific local communities thus starting a collaboration between academicians, policymakers and the community.
- Community Psychologists will assist in shifting the focus on the very necessary preventive policies. The limited capacity of mental health services can be answered with this approach (less than 50% of people suffering from a mental health disorder benefit from treatment).
- The social justice approach of Community Psychology can help reduce inequalities at the community/ society level, thus indirectly contributing to improvements in terms of health and quality of life at an individual level.
- The complexity of societal challenges has to be tackled with interdisciplinarity, as most issues are a result of a complex interplay of various factors.
- Public policies are, by definition, meant to serve the public, therefore these should be developed with a sensitive consideration of the perspective of the targeted population and with them as partners throughout the process. (public engagement means co-constructing with the community).
- As the whole world, including health services, has now shifted towards the widespread use of technology, we still need to make these environments more inclusive and decrease the problems that we are still facing in virtual environments (e.g. cyberbullying, hate speech and extremism etc.).
- Community Psychology approaches to social issues can instil a more sustainable change process because it seeks to understand and target root causes and complex maintaining factors underpinning these problems (see the case studies included in this document).
- A wider scale adoption of community psychology-based research methods can in and by itself contribute to connecting with marginalised communities as informal research methods humanise the research process.

## Recommendations

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### Recommendations for the inclusion of Community Psychology in higher education curricula in European higher education institutions

There are many ways to include Community Psychology in the curriculum. While we advocate for a wider inclusion of this topic in European universities, we do not believe that there is a universal way of implementing this change. Rather, we would like to stress that each institution should integrate our recommendations with consideration of their structure and practises, and keeping in mind their resources and needs. However, we have formulated a range of possible alternatives and would like to encourage taking small, however consistent steps towards a sustainable integration of Community Psychology in higher education.

- Introduce a stand-alone introductory course in Community Psychology at the Bachelor level to introduce the students to the field's activity and principles at an early stage in their education;
- Integrate the topics and principles of Community Psychology in other subjects, such as introduction to psychology, methodology and research, social psychology, developmental psychology, anthropology, clinical psychology etc., regardless of the level of education (e.g. Bachelor, Master, PhD);
- Integrate the topics and principles of Community Psychology in Masters, PhDs, PsyDs and other programmes training clinical psychologists, counsellors and therapists to introduce them to community interventions and to support and encourage interdisciplinary approaches.

### EFPSA's call on stakeholders

#### EFPSA calls on European universities...

- to initiate the integration of Community Psychology in their curricula starting with the aforementioned recommendations and to adapt those according to their structure and current needs;
- to seek to get international recognition for their Community Psychology courses and programmes;
- to collaborate with other universities in the endeavour of creating or updating Community Psychology syllabi, thus ensuring a systematic and more uniform approach to teaching and conducting research in this field across Europe.
- to ensure a diverse representation of staff teaching Community Psychology (e.g. racial, ethnic, gender diversity);
- to seek alternatives in case of shortage of local teaching staff with appropriate expertise in Community Psychology, such as by contracting international teachers with appropriate qualifications to teach modular/ online lectures;
- to establish partnerships with Community Psychology professionals and research institutions to provide internship opportunities to the students;

- to build the study programmes based on the needs of the local community and facilitate the connection of students and academicians to the local bodies and initiatives involved in the social sector, thus increasing the relevance of the subject and to encouraging active participation of the students in their community.
- to create a joint European or international study programme on Community Psychology which could be accredited as a 'Diploma Supplement' or similar.

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### **EFPSA calls on EFPA (and EuroPsy, EFPA Board of Education and EFPA Board of Community Psychology)...**

- to encourage EFPA's Member Organisations in supporting the recommendations formulated in this call to action;
- to organise Community Psychology-related events, such as conferences, lectures, seminars/webinars, roundtable discussions;
- to further develop the EuroPsy Guidelines by assuring that the minimal standards of every training programme in European universities' psychology curricula will include Community Psychology elements, in line with the recommendations formulated in the report from the Standing Committee on Community Psychology of the European Federation of Psychological Association;
- to provide educational materials such as undergraduate and graduate syllabus templates, recommended literature, class activities and different teaching resources that would support universities and professors interested in developing community psychology courses;
- to organise specialist seminars for University staff willing to educate themselves in the field of Community Psychology, thus providing them with necessary skills and knowledge to integrate Community Psychology within their curriculums;
- to explore and promote grants, funding opportunities and shared European grants supporting international research projects in the field of Community Psychology.

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### **EFPSA calls on ECPA (and all CP professional associations)...**

- to create a database of Community Psychology teachers and practitioners and share it with universities and students to facilitate:
  - universities' access to teaching staff with appropriate qualifications;
  - the mobility of teaching staff;
  - the organisation of Community Psychology scientific events.
- to empower and disseminate European Manuals on Community Psychology already existing in different languages (English: Kagan et al. 2019; Portuguese: Ornelas et al. 2008; Italian: Arcidiacono, et al., 2021; Francescato et al. 2022) as well as European Journals (Community Psychology in Global Perspective; Rivista di Psicologia di Comunità; Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology);
- to better disseminate, events, webinars, initiatives proposed and other relevant information and initiatives that could contribute to the promotion of the field of Community Psychology (see: [www.ecpa-online.com](http://www.ecpa-online.com))
- to create and provide internship opportunities to psychology students and collaborate with universities to promote these opportunities;

- to provide educational materials such as undergraduate and graduate syllabus templates, recommended literature, class activities and different teaching resources that would help support universities and professors interested in developing community psychology courses;
  - to organise webinars, seminars and educational events specifically targeting undergraduate and graduate students, introducing them to the field of Community Psychology, informing them of recent developments in the field and career opportunities.
  - to determine common research/educational goals and specific areas of focus in the field of Community Psychology, thus encouraging young researchers towards a more sustainable and action-driven approach.
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#### **EFPSA calls on the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)...**

- to establish and maintain contact with European Universities and Community Psychology organisations to extend the implementation of the *Society for Community Research and Action 2016-2018 Strategic Plan*;
  - to create and provide internship opportunities to psychology students and collaborate with universities to promote these opportunities;
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#### **EFPSA calls on national professional psychology organisations, including national Community Psychology organisations...**

- to support the recommendations formulated in this call to action at any level and by any means that are feasible and accessible given their structure, resources and area of activity;
  - to establish and maintain contact with universities and support them in their endeavour of including Community Psychology in their curriculum;
  - to establish and maintain contact with students organisations and support them in their endeavour of organising Community Psychology-related events and activities;
  - to contribute to increasing the visibility of the field of Community Psychology.
  - to support the process of community psychology being endorsed as one of the recognized psychological specialisations among the health professions.
  - to use EU projects to create stronger exchanges of students, practices and projects (see Erasmus calls).
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#### **EFPSA calls on national and international research institutions working independently or contractually connected to governments and decision making bodies (such as Council of Europe's European Research Area and European Research Council)...**

- to highlight the importance of Community Psychology research by aiming to integrate its elements within their research projects and support PhD students and young researchers willing to develop research projects in the field.
- to encourage two-way communication between researchers/community psychologists and policymakers, assuring that the experiential and empirical knowledge base of community

psychology is used to make substantive contributions to contemporary policy debates at the state and federal levels. (*As stated in the public policy missions of SCRA*)

- to create opportunities for training and to encourage academicians and others who lack policy expertise to familiarise themselves with the policy process through both traditional (classroom) and field-based (internship/externship) training experiences. (*As stated in the public policy missions of SCRA*).

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### **EFPSA calls on its Member Organisations and other European, national and local students organisations and groups...**

- to advocate for the inclusion of Community Psychology in the curriculum at the level of the university they are part of;
- to encourage students to actively participate in consultation initiatives organised by their universities about the structure and content of the curriculum and to recommend the inclusion of Community Psychology in the curriculum;
- to organise Community Psychology-related events, such as conferences, lectures, seminars/webinars, roundtable discussions, informal sessions, journals, book and research clubs etc.

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### **EFPSA calls on individual students...**

- to exert influence on the curriculum and syllabus of their universities by making suggestions to their professors in terms of the content they would like to study, including Community Psychology;
- to refer to and present content related to Community Psychology when they have the liberty to do so, such as in assignments with a flexible choice of topic, research projects, theses, presentations and extracurricular activities;

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### **How is EFPSA Contributing?**

The Call to Action initiative was established to create a viable and action-driven outcome from the EFPSA Conference of 2021 taking place in Porto, Portugal. The Conference titled: *Community Psychology: Breaking Walls, Building Bridges* introduced over 100 international students to the recent developments in the field. Students were able to immerse themselves in the lectures and workshops as well as participate in the roundtable introducing the Call to Action and allowing them to formulate recommendations and open a discussion on the future of Community Psychology. These recommendations have been included in this paper.

EFPSA has chosen the topic of Community Psychology for EFPSA's Research Programme of 2022/2023. EFPSA's Research Programme is a twelve-month programme connecting six PhD or PostDoc students and thirty-six undergraduate or graduate students. The outcomes of the programme are six international research projects that will contribute to the development of the field, advocate for the importance of community psychology and enhance its visibility.

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