

ESSPD Academy Newsletter, December 2021

Dear ESSPD members,

Why don't you take a few minutes to read the news at ESSPD?

In this newsletter Svenja Taubner and Alessandro Talia write about conspiracy theories, a highly debated issues in times of the pandemic.

For the past few months, we are working to increase our virtual presence. Next to our [website](#), our social media and science communication task force is active on twitter: [@ESSPD](#). Members interested in contributing to the channel are encouraged to contact Ueli.Kramer@chuv.ch

We continue to promote early career researchers in several ways:

- We are supporting careers in the field of personality disorders with the ESSPD Summer Schools (please find the report this years' summer school in the newsletter (link)). The planned summer school in 2023 will focus on developmental and family perspectives of personality disorders.
- The next ESSPD Early career investigator award will be awarded in October 2022 at the Antwerp conference.
- We are promoting the Early Career Investigators' (ECI) forum. Early Career Researchers are welcome to become Junior Members of the ESSPD. **Please spread the word that ESSPD encourages early career researchers to join our [ECI group](#)**



**Babette
Renneberg**

ICD 11 webinar

As board members we are discussing the upcoming ICD-11 Classification of Personality Disorders – currently, we are planning a webinar on the changes in ICD 11 in 2022 and you will receive the announcement in a separate mail.

6th International Congress on Borderline Personality Disorders and Allied Disorders

We are very much looking forward to our next congress, the 6th International Congress on Borderline Personality Disorder and Allied Disorders to be held in Antwerp, Belgium from October 10-12 2022.

The overarching theme of our conference is: "Change for a better future: Perspectives beyond symptoms ". We hope to extend the limits of traditional thinking in science and clinical care by creating a platform for an innovative discussion among researchers, clinicians, members of health care systems, as well as patients and relatives. Core topics of our discussions will be positive psychology and what we have learned from suicide prevention to promote a life worth living. We are planning a "users day", and are welcoming ideas to involve users and patient representatives more. Like in our successful previous conferences, our aim is to open the floor for contributions from different disciplines and fields of research with a specific focus on patients' well-being. You will also find more information on the activities of the ESSPD sections in the newsletter!

With best wishes for the upcoming holidays and a joyful, healthy and happy new year!

Babette Renneberg
President of the ESSPD

6th International Congress on Borderline Personality and Allied Disorder in Antwerp, October 10-12, 2022



We are planning the **6th International Congress on Borderline Personality and Allied Disorder in Antwerp, October 10-12, 2022**. The purpose of the ESSPD International Congresses is to encourage creative and innovative research efforts, stimulate theoretical reflections and cross-cultural interchange, and suggest new research directions, which can contribute to and enhance the understanding of the borderline personality and allied disorders.

With the title of our conference in 2022, **Change for a better future: Perspectives beyond Symptoms - Helping patients to build a life worth living**, we want to expand traditional ways of thinking in science and practice. Planned plenary sessions focus on “Perspectives from Positive Psychology: Determinants of Well-Being” and “A life worth living. Lessons learned from working with suicide prevention in high risk clients”. In our presidential debate we will discuss “What does Change for a Better Future Mean in Borderline Personality Disorder?”

In addition to our usual program, we are planning a session for users: patients, relatives, patient’s representatives.

At this time, we are positive that we can meet in person in Antwerp and are very much looking forward to a stimulating conference and a fruitful exchange among researchers, clinicians and users.

We are looking forward to meeting you all in Antwerp!

Babette Renneberg on behalf of the conference team

ESSPD Research Update

This newsletter is focused upon the themes of *over-valued ideas* and *conspiracy theories in relation to personality disorders, psychopathology, demographics, and individual differences*. It contains a review of the four most innovative contributions to the recent literature.

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Sophie Liljedahl

Over-valued ideas: a conceptual analysis

Veale, D. (2002)

Behaviour Research and Therapy, 40, 4, 383-400.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967\(01\)00016-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(01)00016-X).

Aims: To propose a cognitive-behavioural model of over-valued ideas, with a focus on distinguishing beliefs from values, towards the goal of treatment development and evaluation.

Background: Over-valued ideas have not received sufficient attention in mental health research. Discrepancies in international definitions hamper standardized formulation of over-valued ideas which in turn limits contemporary understanding of how they fit within diagnostic classification systems. Over-valued ideas tend to be refractory to treatment in contrast with other problematic thought patterns such as delusions or obsessions that are often targeted by CBT and medication.

Conceptual analysis: In this conceptual analysis, the author describes the philosophical difference between a belief and a value. The former is characterized by generating hypotheses and testing them for evidence whereas the latter is characterized by how good or important they feel to the individual. Attitudes and judgements in turn are associated with values. Although separate, values may influence beliefs and vice versa. Cognitive theories of affect are utilized to develop the proposed model of over-valued ideas.

Conclusion & Discussion: The author's proposed model states that over-valued ideas are linked with idealized values which have become so essential to the individual that they may represent their core identity or sense of self. Idealized values are defined by their inflexibility, and by the tenacity with which individuals maintain them without reference to context and despite losses associated with doing so. A table with disorders listed by idealized values, reference to self and beliefs is populated with examples of each. Finally, the author proposes the measurement of over-valued ideas and idealized values with treatment strategies to be implemented in the form of novel interventions.

How paranoid are conspiracy believers? Toward a more fine-grained understanding of the connect and disconnect between paranoia and belief in conspiracy theories

Imhoff, R. & Lamberty, P. (2018)
European Journal of Social Psychology, 48, 909-926.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2494>

Aim: To describe the associations between paranoia and belief in conspiracy theories, how these concepts are alike and how they are distinct via three separate studies evaluating aspects of both.

Background: There is research supporting an association between sub-threshold clinical paranoia and conspiracy beliefs. Broadly, these phenomena appear to be quite similar. Both concepts make the prediction that others have malevolent intentions and are characterized by the individual having low trust and a sense of less control than desired over their circumstances. However, paranoia is more generalized from everyone else towards oneself whereas conspiracy theories are often particularly focused upon powerful others. Despite the similarities between the two constructs, this paper is dedicated towards a more nuanced understanding of how conspiracy beliefs and paranoia are distinct. The authors propose that a “conspiracy mentality” is akin to an attitude towards politics, whereas paranoia has to do with the individual and their mental health, since paranoia has the potential to affect every aspect of how the individual perceives and interacts with their environment.

Methods & Analyses: Three original investigations were conducted to demarcate how conspiracy theories and paranoia are similar and distinct. The first study was a meta-analysis evaluating correlations between the two constructs. The second study used a multi-trait-multi-method procedure to evaluate differences between the two constructs. The third study was similar to the second but took place in an English/North American context, whereas the second study was conducted in German/Germany. All research materials, inclusion and exclusion criteria, power calculations, data collection details and exclusions, analyses and measures are available via open source.

Results & Discussion: The meta-analysis included 11 studies on paranoia, with sample sizes ranging from $n=50$ -269. A total of 2,006 participants were included in analyses. Results of analyses indicated a significant association between conspiracy theories and paranoia (mean effect size of Fischer's $Z = .38$, $p > .001$, 95% CI [0.30; 0.46]), indicative of an intermediate effect. The authors interpreted this finding as evidence of a moderately strong relation between paranoia and conspiracy beliefs. However, they desired more construct validity prior to concluding that paranoia and conspiracy beliefs were substantially overlapping constructs, which was the purpose for conducting studies 2 and 3. In study 2, factor analysis testing three different models demonstrated the best fit with conspiracy beliefs and paranoia as separate but related constructs. Study 3 replicated and extended Study 2 in an American context. Findings from Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated that there are specifically distinct associations between conspiracy theory beliefs and paranoia. Conspiracy theory beliefs are related to a sense of targeted threat from powerful others not just to the individual but to greater society at large. This may give rise to political activism. Belief in conspiracy theories is associated with a sense of uniqueness in that these individuals may feel they have special insight that others are lacking. Paranoia is best understood as the experience of a sense of threat from all sources. Paranoia is also associated with uniqueness but for paranoia it is in a bleak sense. That is, the experience of being the one that is sought for persecution. Future research is tasked with further elaborating to what constitutes core similarities and refining key differences between these two correlated constructs.

Conspiracy beliefs in the general population: The importance of psychopathology, cognitive style and educational attainment

Georgiou, N., Delfabbro, P., & Balzan, R. (2019)

Personality and Individual Differences, 151, 109521

Aim: To test whether belief in conspiracy theories (CT's) is best explained by vulnerability to symptoms of mental illness, full-blown disorders such as delusions and schizotypy, or whether belief in CT is best explained by limited training or use of analytic thinking. Hypotheses testing these possibilities were conducted in a population-based study across three geographic regions.

Background: Belief in CT involves endorsement that occurrences in society or the world at large are caused by powerful others with ill-intent for specific and sometimes secret purposes. While some CTs have been substantiated, pervasive CT beliefs can introduce doubt and fear into efforts intended to benefit society, such as medical and scientific development. Understanding what gives rise to the belief in CTs is a vital research and public health matter. The majority of CT research has been focused upon determining mental health risk factors that generate CT endorsement. The prevailing perspective is that those with CT are in distress or have desire for control over their experience in the world. These researchers contend that schizotypy is a specific risk factor due to the schizotypy's features of difficulty distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic information coupled with uncommon sensory experiences. Another common view based on community (outpatient) samples is that lower rates of analytic reasoning give rise to beliefs in CT. A final view is that CT beliefs are associated with lower rates of formal education whereby the use of analytical reasoning would not have been an acquired, rendering the individual as less able to distinguish facts from CTs.

Method & Analyses: A total of 358 adults (210 males and 148 females) were recruited from the United Kingdom, North America, and Australia via an international online recruitment website that included remuneration for participation. Study participation was comprised by completing online measures of thought patterns and processes including measures of delusionality, schizotypy, stress, formal education and cognitive processing tendency. The design was cross-sectional and employed correlational, ANOVA and Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses.

Results & Discussion: There were no age or sex differences in belief in CT. Both broad and focused CT beliefs were greater in those with higher vulnerability to mental illness, stress, lower levels of formal education and those who less often used analytical reasoning. The best predictors of CT that emerged via multiple regression were schizotypy and delusionality. Because these key findings relate to mental illness and levels of formal education authors concluded that the field of CT research would be benefitted by no longer utilizing student samples.

Predictors of belief in conspiracy theory: The role of individual differences in schizotypal traits, paranormal beliefs, social dominance orientation, right wing authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality

Dyrendal, A., Kennair, L. E. O., & Bendixen, M. (2021)

Personality and Individual Differences, 173, 110645

Aim: To test a theoretical model of factors associated with belief in conspiracy theories (CT) validated by previous research. Predictors tested include aspects of schizotypal personality, beliefs in paranormal phenomena or occurrences (PB), conspiracy mentality (CM), right wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO).

Background: The authors wished to extend existing research by considering individual differences in aspects of well-validated predictors of belief in CT. They utilized a large student sample from Norway, a nation described as a gender egalitarian, suggesting that the likelihood of gender differences would be less pronounced than in samples generated from countries with low gender egalitarianism.

Method & Analyses: The convenience sample was comprised by N=883 university student participants (62% female) completing course work in the autumn term of 2016. Surveys were administered at lectures across academic departments at a Norwegian university. Path analysis using SEM was used to test the effects of the predictors upon belief in CT.

Results & Discussion: The effects of Odd Beliefs and Paranoid Ideation components of Schizotypal Personality on belief in CT were completely mediated. These two aspects of Schizotypal personality also were associated with different mediators within the model tested. The other factors of CM, PB, RWA and SDO independently predicted belief in CT. Endorsement of CM contributed the most explanatory value within the model tested by sex, although the model was not equivalent for men and women. The best indicators of CT beliefs amongst males were CM and PB whereas best indicators for females were CM and RWA. Further investigation of CM is warranted given its predictive capacity for belief in CT.

Should we trust skepticism? A reflection on conspiracy theories from a mentalizing-based perspective

It is tempting to consider conspiracy theories, which are now at the center of political and social discourses, as psychopathological formations. Conspiracy theories are systems of beliefs according to which certain events are manipulated by hidden yet powerful forces with malevolent intentions. Conspiracy theories suggest that nothing happens by accident and that everything is connected. They scapegoat some individuals and groups. Altogether, these features may bring to our minds the claustrophobic *Weltanschauung* of patients with a tendency to develop paranoid thinking.

Voices have been raised in academic circles to suggest that such pathologizing views may have limits. First, we know that belief in conspiracy theories is fairly common, with some reports indicating that nearly half of Americans believe in one conspiracy theory or other (see e.g., Oliver & Wood, 2014; Vermeule & Sunstein 2009). Second, historians agree that believing in conspiracy theories by far predates the social media era. Influential scholars like Michael Butter and Karen Douglas claim that believing in conspiracies has been in fact perfectly normal throughout human history, especially in times of crisis. In fact, only since the 1960s conspiracy theories have become stigmatized, and even then mainly in the Western world (Butter & Knight 2020; van Prooijen JW, Douglas, 2017). Third, there is little evidence that the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories is linked to any personality factor in particular or any diagnosed mental disorder (Bowes, Costello, Ma, Lillienfeld, 2020; Goreis & Voracek, 2019). Though individuals with a specific tendency towards paranoid thinking may play a pivotal role in initiating a particular conspiracy theory, such theories then spread through cultural transmission because they serve core human psychological needs (as well as sometimes being exploited by authoritarian leaders, because they may serve their political needs).



Svenja Taubner



Alessandro Talia

Indeed, there are reasons to view conspiracy theories not only as widespread, but also as evolutionarily adaptive. Trusting information communicated by others is of vital importance, but it is also rife with risks, as it entails the risk of being misinformed or deceived. It enables us to depend on others—for guidance, for learning, and for love—yet it involves the danger that people we trust may be wrong or may deceive us intentionally (Talia, Duschinsky, Mazzarella, Hauschild, & Taubner, 2021). Considering these dangers, Sperber and colleagues (2010) proposed that humans have evolved a suite of unconscious cognitive mechanisms of epistemic vigilance, which automatically adjust their level of epistemic trust, so that communication remains, on average, advantageous. Conspiracy theories seem to serve a similar function, because they offer more intuitive accounts for some hard-to-believe events (such as Moon landing, or the State being concerned for its citizens' health).

Additionally, it is plausible that our epistemic vigilance mechanisms have evolved to be especially attuned to the risk of others forming alliances against us, especially given the importance of coalition formation during human evolution (Mercier, 2017). Not only, in contrast with paranoia, most conspiracy theories are intellectually compelling. They also seem to serve the function of increasing social integration, and thus they promote the formation of new coalitions against potentially dangerous enemies. We know for example that experiences of ostracism can cause people to adhere to conspiracy theories more strongly (Graeupner & Coman, 2017). A paradigmatic example is offered by the “Querdenker” movement, which has recently gained a lot of attention in Germany and gathered a large and diverse following comprised of marginalized groups such as extreme rightwing, evangelical, and anthroposophic factions, all unified by the protest against a purported “Corona dictatorship” enforced by a state-driven conspiracy (though presumably disagreeing about the specific malevolent plots of conspirators).

The concept of psychic equivalence, developed in the context of mentalization-based interventions (Bateman & Fonagy, 2016), may offer a useful analogy with the type of thinking involved in conspiracy theories. Psychic equivalence can be defined as a mode of thinking, experienced by all of us at least sometimes when we are distressed, where one draws no distinction between the contents of one's mind on one hand, and the

Should we trust skepticism? A reflection on conspiracy theories from a mentalizing-based perspective (continued)

external world and other people's mind. The key element to notice is that psychic equivalence is not defined on the basis of the nature of one's beliefs, but on the certainty with which such beliefs are entertained. Interpersonally, this might unconsciously serve the function of coercing the listener into agreeing with the speaker, by presenting oneself as a possessor of true, certain, and sometimes rare knowledge. Conspiracy theories seem to fulfill a similar fantasy.

Perhaps the decisive factor that gives rise and holds in place psychic equivalence (and, tentatively, conspiracy theories) is low mentalizing. Through mentalizing, one may begin to question one's beliefs, or at least wonder whether and to what degree the beliefs held by oneself are shared by others and why. This may eventually lead to moderate such beliefs or abandon them altogether. Psychic equivalence, on the contrary, rests on low or absent mentalizing, where others' actions, feelings, and beliefs are not explained on the basis of their underlying mental states. The malevolent actions attributed by conspiracy theorists to the "conspirators" (Big Pharma, Bill Gates, etc.) are not viewed as motivated by other internal states, such as feelings or beliefs. The conspirators are not portrayed as acting out of fear, anger, jealousy, or even self-interest or greed, but most of the time by evil itself (when their motives are not entirely disregarded).

With our analogy between conspiracy theories and the psychic equivalence mode we do not wish to suggest further pathologizing of conspiracy theorists, but we would like to indicate a possible way to enter in relation with them. Mentalization-based therapists are trained to recognize how futile it is to challenge or contradict a patient who is "in psychic equivalence". They are also trained to offer empathic validation to such a patient, empathizing with the affects - fear, anger, or other - that they may be experiencing. This is tantamount to indirectly showing the patient that the therapist has at least some degree of epistemic trust in the patient. At this point, mentalization-based therapists are invited to make their mind transparent to the patient, including sharing their difficulties in fully endorsing what the patient is saying, as well as their self-doubts directed to their own epistemic perspective. It is remarkable that this therapeutic approach seems diametrically opposed to what many end up doing when discussing with or about a conspiracy theorist, including scientific communicators and mainstream journalists. In such debates, conspiracy theorists often end up being belittled, pathologized, or unceremoniously shown to be wrong. Also, scientific communicators and journalists often come to show excessive certainty in their positions, overstating their certainty (sometimes even beyond what they would do among colleagues), as if the truth were a hammer with which to open the heads of skeptics. Mentalization-based treatment considers this stance to be a natural consequence of psychic equivalence, which tends to elicit in listeners the same low level of mentalizing demonstrated by the speaker. Thus, if we lose our patience slightly when discussing with a conspiracy theorist, we deserve empathy, but let's not forget that our interlocutors deserve it too.

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Svenja Taubner and Alessandro Talia

Waivers for BPDED Submissions

The ESSPD supports publications in the Society's online journal, *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Regulation (BPDED)*, a high-quality journal with an impact factor of 3.297. We therefore encourage all our members to submit manuscripts to the Secretary of the ESSPD (secretary@esspd.eu). On a first-come-first-served basis, three eligible papers will be awarded a waiver. Priority is given to members from Eastern European countries and young researchers from all countries.

Christian Schmahl



Christian Schmahl

ESSPD Social Media and Communications Task Force

Social media is a crucial method of communication nowadays. The ESSPD recently decided to take an advantage of social media to reach colleagues, other international societies and researchers through the creation of a Twitter account and a Social Media Task Force. Dissemination of scientific papers in the field of personality disorders may help debates and information. Furthermore, spreading information about symposia and congresses may increase interest and participation of those interested in the field. Please stay tuned and follow us [@ESSPD](https://twitter.com/ESSPD)

Ester di Giacomo, MD, PhD

ESSPD Early career investigator representative and social media task force member



**Ester di
Giacomo**

The Communications Task Force of the ESSPD is investing in a more focused communication strategy using primarily the ESSPD twitter account, in addition to the information classically found on ESSPD's website. The aim of our more engaged twitter activity is to communicate about relevant, and particularly high-quality, studies in the field of personality disorders and to attract attention to ESSPD's leader role in the field. If you are interested to join the ESSPD Social Media and Scientific Communication Task Force, help with tweeting, or if you have further suggestions on how to communicate more effectively within the field, please contact

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Follow us on twitter: [@ESSPD](https://twitter.com/ESSPD)

Ueli Kramer, President Elect of the ESSPD and Andres Kaera, Secretary of the ESSPD



Ueli Kramer



Andres Kaera

My kaleidoscopic experience at the 2021 ISSPD Conference

The title of the ISSPD 2021 conference, which virtually took place in Oslo, on October 11-13th, was “Kaleidoscope Perspectives”. No title could have ever been more appropriate to define the experience provided to us by the organizers, who were able to put together different angles on major domains of clinical practice and research on personality disorders (PD), as well as open new and multifaceted perspectives on future steps in the field. It is obviously beyond the scope of this contribution to provide a comprehensive review of all the topics covered by the Conference; rather, I will just share my personal experience about some of the presentations I was fortunate to attend to.



**Chiara De
Panfilis**

To begin with, one of the -many- major innovations was broadening the focus of the conference beyond the Borderline PD area. In his presidential opening speech of the Vancouver 2019 ISSPD conference, the past ISSPD President Stephan Huprich had pointed out that while dozens of presentations addressed BPD, only one, for example, was about obsessive-compulsive PD (...and I remember that very well, as it was my presentation...and the attendees were really few!).

Thus, he encouraged more research and attention to the phenomenology and treatment of non-BPD populations. The ISSPD 2021 conference couldn't match more that goal. For instance, one of the -several- outstanding keynote lectures was on Avoidant Personality Disorder. Theresa Wilberg presented a thorough overview on the core psychopathology issues of this complex disorder, including treatment implications, and provided a coherent and well-articulated picture of all the -often sparse- research findings in this field. Along this line, several other symposia addressed the issue of the more “overcontrolled” PD populations, both from a social-cognitive and treatment perspective. Overall, mental state unawareness, or alexithymia, emerged as a defining and specific feature of the “anxious” PD patients, and we could learn that emerging evidence strongly indicates that it can be successfully targeted by novel psychotherapy approaches, with encouraging quantitative and qualitative data reported by Giancarlo Dimaggio, Sebastian Simonsen and Kristine Dahl Sørensen in two diverse symposia on the topic. Further, the Conference also proposed two symposia on Narcissistic Personality Disorder, respectively chaired by Elsa Ronningstam and Rossella Di Pierro. We all have this -sad- memory that Narcissistic PD had run the risk to be excluded from DSM-5 for the inconsistency of previous research findings; the Conference, thus, accepted the challenge to fill this gap and promoted the dissemination of a deeper understanding of the phenomenology, daily functioning, diagnostic boundaries and treatment difficulties of this often “controversial” PD.

The Conference took another important step forward in focusing more into PD patients' strengths, rather than just difficulties and limitations. The key-note lecture by Dan McAdams encouraged us to evaluate how PD may be understood within the framework of a tripartite model of the development of normal personality. This approach inspired us to think of our patients in terms of their unique features as “social actors” (i.e., their individual dispositions to react to environmental stimuli), “motivated agents” (i.e., their unique values and life goals), and “autobiographical authors” (i.e., their unique, developing views of themselves within the social world). By maintaining this focus on the continuity with normal development, areas of preserved functioning are more likely to be identified even in the context of personality pathology, and treatment could aim not just to decrease symptoms or dysfunctions but to foster patients' unique ways to -adaptively- navigate the world. In the same vein, the Conference also included a symposium on resilience, chaired by Patrick Luyten and Peter Fonagy, which promoted a much-needed shift from research on vulnerability to PD versus research on factors fostering resilience to PD. Throughout the Conference, special attention has been paid to the social-cognitive and neurobiological features underlying PD, with several symposia (chaired by Corinne Neukel, Anthony Ruocco and Inga Niedtfeld) and even free talks sessions addressing these topics. Further, and remarkably, Inga Niedtfeld, who developed an original and impressive line of research on social cognition, won the ISSPD early career award. This testifies an increasing – and very welcome- interest of the field in the relationship between clinical observations of PD patients' social (dys) function and the empirical study of the underlying mechanisms involved.

My kaleidoscopic experience at the 2021 ISSPD Conference (continued)

Last, but not least, the virtual format that the organizers of the Conference set up was surprisingly effective in facilitating communication and discussion among participants and speakers. Even in these challenging times of social distancing, the conference was able, through its efficient live Q&A format, to remind us the pleasure of discussing scientific issues and to sustain our enthusiasm for novel research findings, which were both greatly threatened during this prolonged emergency condition. Of course, we all look forward to going back to the in-person format for future Conferences; but even in its virtual format the ISSPD 2021 Conference donated to the audience a much-needed feeling of social connection and a renovated sense of belonging to a lively community of PD clinicians and researchers.

Chiara De Panfilis

Sections within the ESSPD

As an Academy of Science, the ESSPD pursues the explicit goal to foster clinical and research advancements in the field of Personality Disorders (PD). The ESSPD Sections are central to this effort. Sections provide platforms to study various specific areas in the wide field of PD, even on a long-term basis, with the aim to clarify previously controversial or neglected topics in research or clinical practice. In doing so, Sections represent an intrinsically collaborative initiative, as they comprise a network of scientists and/or clinicians who actively work on the topic of their Section. Importantly, this provides an unique possibility for the ESSPD to initiate and sustain international collaborations. While the Section chairs are ESSPD members, other international colleagues and non-ESSPD members are very welcome to join the Sections based on their specific interest and expertise in the Section topic. This ensures that the work of the Sections is representative of world-wide efforts in that particular field and encourages the creation of lively and evolving research networks, beyond the boundaries of countries, societies or theoretical orientations. The ultimate goal of the Sections is to disseminate the results of their work to the scientific community and to provide colleagues with up-to-date advancements in the field. This can be accomplished through joint papers on the Section topics or dedicated workshops at the ESSPD conferences.

Currently, two Sections have been established within the ESSPD: the *Section for the study and treatment of Antisocial personality disorder and psychopathy* and the *Section for the Study of Interpersonal Functioning and Social Cognition in PD* (see [here](#) for more information on the two Sections aims). Both Sections are eager to welcome new members and look forward to continuing and expanding their work. Colleagues can ask to join the Sections simply by contacting the Sections chairs.

The ESSPD Board also encourages the formation of new Sections by all ESSPD members who are interested in developing a scientific cooperative network to work on a particular theme in the area of PD in general, or on a specific PD. As such, the creation of new Sections is an intrinsically bottom-up initiative that captures what is deemed most important or urgent to study and clarify by the PD scientific community. The proposals for establishing new Sections can be submitted directly to the ESSPD President (click [here](#) to learn more).

We look forward to more and more ESSPD members and non-ESSPD colleagues joining the ESSPD Sections initiative, inspiring our society with their work, and open new research and clinical perspectives in the field of PD!

Chiara De Panfilis

Second ESSPD Summer School for early career researchers in Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland



For the second time, in August 2021 after the first edition in 2019, ESSPD organized a Summer School for early career researchers. The event took place in picturesque Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland, in collaboration with the Department of Psychiatry, University of Lausanne, and the generous support of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). In a group of approximately 15 participants and five teachers, we focused on the topic of the future of psychotherapy research for personality disorders and discussed methodologies related to outcome, mechanisms of change, idiographic approaches, dimensional conceptions and neurobiology in the context of psychotherapy research. Thanks to the grant from the SNSF, ESSPD was able to fully sponsor six early career researchers, based on their competitive application, from countries from Eastern Europe. We hope that this second edition of the ESSPD Summer School will, again, have a lasting impact on our field, and we are looking forward to the third edition in Summer 2023 (information to be followed next year).

Ueli Kramer and Lars Mehlum

My experience at ESSPD summer school, Crêt-Bérard, August 2021:

I had the opportunity to participate in the second Summer School of the ESSPD, which took place in the beautiful and peaceful place – Crêt-Bérard. Attending summer school at such a place really is an inspirational experience for both mind and soul. I could also say that it was a forming experience thanks to all the up-to-date lectures, lively discussions, and valuable feedback. Having the opportunity to spend days and evenings with top-level researchers and young aspiring researchers from basically all over the world is an invaluable experience. It helped me broaden my views on personality disorders as well as psychotherapy research, come up with new ideas, make new friends, and extend my professional network. The summer school



**Nikola
Doubková**

Second ESSPD Summer School for early career researchers in Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland

helped

me find the courage to be braver in my ideas and research projects while also showing me approaches and methods that I could use in my future research (and, frankly, which also need to be facilitated in the Czech Republic)

Nikola Doubková, PhD candidate, Charles University, Czech Republic

We had a very inspiring week at Crêt-Bérard in an atmosphere in which ideas and questions were discussed and answered openly, critically and always in an appreciative way. I enjoyed the exchange with other researchers so much – especially after the COVID restrictions in the last year – and am grateful for the vitalizing discussions. The excellent workshops delivered by the teaching faculty provided us with up-to-date scientific input and, thus, extended and deepened my understanding of change, particularly the methodologies to assess change in psychotherapy for patients with personality disorders. I appreciated the opportunity to learn, ask and think about design aspects of new research projects that I aim to incorporate in my future work. In all, the ESSPD summer school provided me with an opportunity to discuss ideas with other researchers and experts in the field and shaped my thinking on new research project designs in a very motivating way.



**Corinne
Neukel**

Dr. Corinne Neukel; Department of General Psychiatry, Center for Psychosocial Medicine, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany

The 2021 ESSPD Summer School was not just an educational program but also a program for connecting with people from all around the world to enrich our ways of thinking on personality disorders and to create new collaborations for future projects. We had great seminars from the pioneers of the field on the ways in which we can most accurately formulate research questions on mechanisms of change in individuals with personality disorders, examine them in neat designs and discuss their applicability. The project that we created in a week with our colleagues and its presentation to the whole group was another unique chance which provided us with hands-on experience and feedbacks from our supportive supervisors. We also had special moments in which our professors and colleagues shared their personal paths in becoming a researcher of personality disorders, and that was one of the most enlightening parts of the summer school which leads us to reflect on our own paths and create new ones.



**Meltem
Yilmaz**

Meltem Yilmaz, PhD Student, Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome



Svenja Taubner,
ESSPD
Newsletter Editor

ESSPD Academy Newsletter Submissions

Submissions to the *ESSPD Academy Newsletter* are accepted on an ongoing basis. Subject areas may include issues from clinical practice, views and comments on current development within PD, reports from affiliated societies, member information, national and international events and conferences, research updates on personality disorders and more. We are interested in submissions from practitioners and researchers from within and outside of Europe. The length of submissions should be from 300-800 words and formatted in Word. We suggest that the authors limit their use of references. Please enclose author photos with the text.

The Newsletter Editor is Svenja Taubner. Submissions should be emailed to at: svenja.taubner@med.uni-heidelberg.de

The corresponding scientific writer is Sophie Liljedahl, Ph. D.,
Email: dr.s.liljedahl@gmail.com



Bo Bach, ESSPD
Editorial Board



Matilde Elices,
ESSPD Editorial Board



Michaela Swales,
ESSPD Editorial Board

Membership Nomination Form

Nominee's name:		
Title:		
Affiliation:		
Email:	City:	Country:

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND (psychiatrist, psychologist, nurse, social worker, other):

NOMINATION CATEGORY (*mark with X*)

Researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinician	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/>
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MAIN FIELD(S) OF INTEREST (NEUROSCIENCES, ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT, PREVENTION, OTHER)

ACHIEVEMENTS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, INNOVATIONS, DISCOVERIES (*list 3 most important*)

-
-
-

PUBLICATIONS (*list 3 most important last 5 years*)

-
-
-

HONORS, AWARDS (*list 3 most important*)

-
-
-

leadership roles (*list 3 most important current or past roles*)

-
-
-

What you believe nominee will be able to contribute to the ESSPD

-
-
-

Names of two nominators (printed letters):	Signatures of two nominators:
Place	Date