



ESSPD

European Society for the Study
of Personality Disorders

ESSPD Academy Newsletter, June 2025

Editorial



Katja Bertsch and Mickey Kongerslev, ESSPD Newsletter Editors

Dear readers and members of the ESSPD. Welcome to our summer 2025 ESSPD newsletter. As new editors we are humbled to undertake the task to edit the newsletter for our many scholars members. We are also very much grateful to the new ESSPD secretary Fiona Greenly-Jones for formatting and introducing a more modern layout of our newsletter for the first time. We do hope that you enjoy it and find it easily accessible in this format. We wish you all a good read and nice summer.

Presidential Address

Michaela Swales, ESSPD President



ESSPD 8th International Congress, Lausanne. **7–9th September 2026.**

Conference Webpage <https://www.borderline-congress.org/>



This newsletter provides an excellent overview of the work of the ESSPD in recent months. A strong focus for development since Antwerp has been our work with our Lived Experience group. We have developed Terms of Reference for the group, have the spokesperson for the group on the Board and also have representatives from the group involved in other aspects of the ESSPD. So, we have lived experience members involved with the Chapters, the Conference Organising Committee, the Social Media group and are forming a new group focusing on connecting people with lived experience with researchers. Currently our group has members from several European countries, however, we are seeking to increase the diversity and representativeness of the group, so if you have people with lived experience who would be keen to be involved please do contact us via our info@esspd.eu email and we can connect you with the group.

In recent months we have formed a new section on Perinatal Personality Disorder and Parent with PD led by Charlotte Rosenbach. This section aims to understand the needs of parents with Personality Disorder (PD), their offspring and other family members, and to develop interventions addressing their specific needs. Additionally, the section wants to enhance the

visibility of already existing projects in this area and hopes to enlarge professionals' interest and motivation to work with this high-risk-group. You can find out more about the section later in the newsletter.

We have been busy organising our programme of events for 2025 and 2026. The Riga workshops organised by us in collaboration with a local organising committee, ably led by Professor Ieva Bite of Latvia University and Inta Zile alongside our very own Andres Kaera, were a huge success. We had over 100 participants from counties across eastern Europe and further afield. At the request of our Latvian hosts we delved into a specific topic – therapeutic alliance ruptures. You can read more about this exciting event in Andres Kaera's report later in this newsletter.

We are looking forward to the Summer School in the late summer. This is a magnificent opportunity for young researchers to meet with more experienced researchers to discuss their evolving research ideas and to learn about methodology and the practicalities of conducting research into personality disorder. This year the 20+ participants will be joined in the hills above beautiful Parma in Italy by Katja Bertsch, Joost Hutsebaut, Rasa Barkauskiene, Paolo Ossola, Filip d Fruyt and our President Elect and organiser Chiara de Panfilis. Luca Sasdelli will bring a lived experience perspective. This will be a wonderful time of learning and growth dedicated to the development of our field. Our Early Career Researcher Group are actively planning events to continue the support and development of those early in their study of personality disorders that will follow on from the Summer School, see the invitation to contribute later in this newsletter, and will also lead into themed events at the conference next year.

Speaking of which, we are actively working on the conference programme for our 8th International Congress in Lausanne that we are running with the generous support of the Department of Psychiatry-CHUV, University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The dates are **7-9th September 2026** – please reserve them now! Our theme is Transforming Futures – both for our client and our discipline. This will be an exciting event combining the best of the research in the field with vital clinical developments alongside opportunities to network internationally in a stunningly beautiful location. Do check-out our conference webpage <https://www.borderline-congress.org/> for more details and the list of confirmed speakers and workshop leaders. We look forward to seeing you there.

Short News from Members

This section contains information that members would like to share with the ESSPD community. We hope that it will grow and encourage all of you to provide us with news (publications, awards, new studies) that could be of interest to other members.

New publications on personality disorders:

Bach, B., Hopwood, C.J., Simonsen, E., & Krueger, R.F. (2025). *Practitioner's Guide to the Alternative Model of Personality Disorders*. Guilford.

Fioravanti, G., Dimaggio, G., & Sand, L. (2025). Treating patients with comorbid eating disorder and personality disorders: a rationale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23803>

Pincus, A.L. & Hopwood, C.J. (2025). *The Interpersonal Situation: Contemporary Integrative Interpersonal Theory, assessment, and psychotherapy*. American Psychological Association.

Sterna A., Sakakibara E., & Moskalewicz M. (2025) Time perception and lived experience in personality disorders: differences across types, dimensions and severity. *PeerJ* 13:e19403

<https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.19403>

Sterna, A., Moskalewicz, M. & Fuchs, T. (2025) Borderline Personality as a Disorder of Temporality—A Phenomenological Meta-Synthesis. *Human Studies*.

News from the Sections

Parenthood and Personality Disorders: Challenges and interventions

Valérie Giroux & Charlotte Rosenbach

Parenting is a significant and often overwhelming transition, but for individuals with personality disorders (PDs), the perinatal period—pregnancy and the postpartum phase—as well as parenting per se can present unique and intense challenges. Aspects such as emotional instability, interpersonal difficulties, and maladaptive coping strategies can significantly impact the ability to navigate pregnancy, childbirth, and (early) parenting. Despite its importance, research on parenting in the context of PDs within both personality disorder and perinatal psychology fields has only gained attention in recent years.



Individuals with PDs often struggle with emotional regulation, self-identity, and interpersonal relationships—key requirements for effective parenting and secure attachment. The perinatal period introduces hormonal fluctuations, sleep deprivation, and increased emotional demands—all factors potentially exacerbating PD symptoms. Furthermore, individuals with PDs often have limited or strained relationships, which make the perinatal period harder to manage.

Many individuals with PDs, particularly borderline personality disorder (BPD), experience intense mood swings and difficulties managing stress. This can lead to heightened anxiety, depression, or episodes of rage, making it challenging to provide consistent and nurturing care to a newborn. A heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection or abandonment can strain relationships with partners, medical professionals, and support systems during pregnancy and postpartum, leading to social isolation. Additionally, the relationship to the newborn can be disturbed by high levels of rejection sensitivity (e.g., the baby's refusal to cuddle is interpreted as rejection) and therefore lead to attachment difficulties.

Some PDs are associated with impulsive and risk-taking behaviors, which may manifest in reckless decision-making regarding prenatal care, childbirth, or parenting choices. PDs can also be associated with exposure to risky social environments, including conjugal violence and financial precarity.

Child protection services are often involved to protect the children from abuse and neglect. Nevertheless, mothers with PDs often hesitate before reaching out for help due to feelings of shame, guilt, and fear of losing custody of the child. On the other side, members of the youth welfare system often assume that BPD excludes the possibility of a healthy motherhood. These concerns on both sides often lead to a lack of adequate help and support, which in turn enhances the risk of child maltreatment.

Low self-esteem and feelings of guilt in e.g., individuals with avoidant or dependent personality traits, lead to feelings of inadequacy as parents, fearing they are not “good enough” for their child. This can contribute to postpartum depression and anxiety. Attachment difficulties can lead to struggling with inconsistent caregiving, alternating between emotional withdrawal and over-involvement, and hostility, which can impact the child's emotional development.

Next to emotional and behavioral problems of mothers with PD, there is evidence for negative medical outcomes for mothers with PD: this group is at heightened risk for obstetrical complications such as pre-eclampsia and preterm birth, and their newborns are at increased risk of neonatal complications such as low birth weight. They are also at risk of emergency visits and hospitalizations in the perinatal period for suicidal crisis.

It is not surprising that children of parents with PDs have a high risk for maladaptive mental health outcomes. Already at an early stage, children of mothers with BPD show difficulties in emotion regulation, high levels of fear of abandonment, and low self-esteem. They show a higher prevalence for mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, and symptoms of BPD.

Next to the direct effect of the PD symptomatology, parenting strategies of individuals with PDs are often rather dysfunctional. Parenting of mainly mothers with BPD has been investigated, indicating a tendency to engage more often in maladaptive parenting strategies such as hostility, inconsistency, and parentification—but as well maltreatment, abuse, and neglect. At the same time, we know that maladaptive parenting constitutes a major risk factor for negative mental health outcomes in children, including a higher prevalence of mental disorders. The intergenerational transmission of psychopathology, maladaptive parenting, and the consequences for child development is evident.

Despite these challenges, many parents with PDs can provide loving and capable care for their children—some of them needing the right support. Thereby, early intervention is key to supporting parents with PDs and limit the intergenerational transmission of trauma and personality disorder. Healthcare providers, family members, and community resources play a

crucial role in ensuring these parents receive appropriate mental health care, parenting education, and emotional support. Encouraging self-awareness, therapy, and positive parenting strategies can help mitigate the impact of PDs on both the parent and child.

All over the world, researchers and practitioners are dealing with different aspects of perinatal/parental PD—either in the process of understanding the dynamics between PDs and parenting or in the development of interventions on different levels. Some global areas have already included recommendations regarding the treatment of parents with PDs (e.g., Australia, Germany), whereas in other areas a general understanding of the difficulties of parents with PD is still missing.

An international cooperation and collaboration, as well as mutual enrichment in terms of research and intervention opportunities, is yet to be realized. When Valérie started to reach out to other researchers in the fall 2023, it became obvious that different stages of perinatal/parental PD management in different countries represent the possibility to benefit from each other. After creating a network, we realized how many researchers and practitioners worldwide are addressing different aspects of perinatal/parental PD and how little the visibility of these attempts is.

Therefore, we are very excited to announce that ESSPD has agreed to support a section of “Perinatal Personality Disorder and Parenting with PD”. This is a great opportunity for researchers and practitioners to share their efforts on the investigation of challenges and opportunities in parents with PD and to develop and distribute interventions for this population.

To better understand the periods of perinatal PD and parenting with PD regarding risk and protective factors as well as the needs of parents with PD, longitudinal studies are needed. Therefore, e.g., Valérie Giroux (Canada) and her team are working on a prospective cohort study on mothers with BPD and their children, from pregnancy to age 6. Isabella Schneider (Germany) analyzes behavioral and (neuro-)biological factors and mechanisms of disrupted mother-child interaction in BPD.

Interventions for parents with PD have been developed worldwide. Some of them address pregnancy and/or early parenthood, some of them parenting in childhood and/or adolescence. To give a few examples from our section:

- In Brazil, Caroline Uchoa has developed an adaptation of the generalist approach GPM for the perinatal period, designed for mothers with BPD.

- Anne Sved Williams (Australia) has developed Mother-Infant DBT (MI-DBT) for mothers with BPD and their children up to 2 years old; a longer adaption (MIDBT+) adds 10 sessions of Attachment and Biobehavioral Catchup (ABC) mother-infant therapy, and a shorter 10 session program integrates elements of both MBT and DBT (with thanks to Lighthouse).
- In the Netherlands, a specialized day-treatment program for pregnant women with personality disorders has been developed, integrating mentalization-based therapy (MBT) with perinatal care; its effectiveness is currently being evaluated in a multicenter prospective cohort (Carlinde Broeks, Roos de Graaf, Jasmijn de Vos).
- In Germany, a DBT based parenting training for mothers with BPD (children aged 6 months to 6 years) has been developed and is now evaluated in a large multicenter trial (Charlotte Rosenbach, Babette Renneberg).
- Emilie Hestbaek (Denmark) has developed an adaptation of the Lighthouse MBT Parenting Program for parents with mental disorders in adult mental health service, the majority of whom present with personality pathology. Hestbaek is also currently conducting a systematic review with meta-analysis examining the effect of preventive interventions on a variety of offspring outcomes.
- In the UK, Karen Yirmiya has been involved in several multisite RCTs evaluating attachment- and mentalization-based treatments, particularly in perinatal mental health services and among individuals with personality disorders and complex PTSD.

With his section, we aim to promote visibility of and knowledge about this high-risk-group and disseminate existing intervention programs to ensure adequate identification occurring as early as possible. Researchers and practitioners aiming to join this network are welcome to contact Valérie: valeriegiroux@montfort.on.ca or Charlotte: charlotte.rosenbach@hmu-erfurt.de

References:

Steele KR, Townsend ML, Grenyer BFS (2019) Parenting and personality disorder: An overview and meta-synthesis of systematic reviews. *PLoS ONE* 14(10): e0223038.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223038>

Gjøde ICT, Laursen TM, Müller AD, et al. Association of maternal and paternal personality disorders with risk of mental disorders in children: A nationwide, register-based cohort study of 1,406,965 children. *Acta Psychiatr Scand.* 2024; 149(3): 195-206. doi:[10.1111/acps.13648](https://doi.org/10.1111/acps.13648)

News from Early Career Researchers



Dear Early Career Researchers and Members of the ESSPD,

We're excited to announce that the ESSPD is developing a new professional development path designed specifically for early-career researchers in the field of personality disorders — and we would love to hear your input!

We kindly invite early-career researchers to share their thoughts and ideas by completing a

short form. Feel free to suggest anything you think would be valuable — we want to make sure this initiative truly reflects the interests and needs of early career researchers ✨, so spreading the word in your network, would be highly appreciated!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScN-RW0aa5Kj9ODvyNi3RWDM9jahqZyDf3eH8wmi0fr-j4dcQ/viewform?usp=sharing>

If you have any questions or would like to share more, don't hesitate to reach out. We'll keep you updated as the project develops!

Thank you for helping us shape the future of ESSPD together!

Best wishes,

Natalija Ignjatovic and Mariana Mendoza Alvarez

ESSPD Social media group representatives and ESSPD Early Career Researchers Section
Research Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University Of Belgrade

ESSPD workshops in Riga, Latvia – Dealing with alliance ruptures

Since 2015, the ESSPD has organised its clinical workshops in Eastern Europe to disseminate evidence-based treatment approaches. After successful events in Tallinn, Krakow, and Budapest, this year's gathering took place from 5–7 June in Riga, Latvia.

Organized in close cooperation with University of Latvia and hosted at their modern House of Science, the event brought together local and international clinicians for a deep dive into one of the most challenging aspects in treatment of personality disorders: dealing with alliance ruptures.

The topic was introduced on the first afternoon with a theoretical lecture by Dr. Anna Babl from Leiden University. The lecture already inspired lively conversation in the audience, which was continued in the panel discussion, chaired by Prof. Michaela Swales. Here the workshop leaders discussed cases submitted by participants describing their experiences with alliance ruptures, offering a rare opportunity to compare and contrast the diverse clinical approaches.



Over two intensive days, participants engaged in 4 four-hour workshops, gaining practical, hands-on experience through analysing (video) demonstrations, and participating in discussions and role plays. The sessions offered a unique breadth of perspective.

Prof. Joost Hutsebaut introduced the Dutch Guideline-Informed Treatment (GIT-PD) and its approach to working with ruptures. The meta-level approach focused on common factors that underpin all effective care, and gave some practical principles on therapist and team level to make sure the alliance factors improve the care given.

Svenja Taubner equipped participants with the tools to 'mentalize' a rupture, exploring the thoughts and feelings of both client and therapist to foster repair. The participants learned and practiced recognizing and repairing different ruptures with a Mentalization-Based Therapy (MBT) compatible stance.

Amy Gaglia Essletzbichler demonstrated how Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) addresses interference in therapy, anchored to behavioural definition of ruptures. She highlighted the often-overlooked relational elements of this highly practical model.

Tennyson Lee discussed the strategies, tactics and techniques from Transference-Focused Psychotherapy (TFP) for anticipating, planning for, and managing the rupture by looking at how the past relationships play out in the therapy room.

Chris Korevaar explored using Schema Therapy's limited reparenting for creating corrective emotional experiences for the unmet childhood needs within the therapeutic relationship.

Finally, Babette Renneberg and Charlotte Rosenbach's workshop on rejection sensitivity provided cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT)-informed insight into how to deal with the anxious expectations and perceptions of rejection that can strain the therapeutic bond, and have implications for therapeutic alliance and therapy in general.

Beyond the formal sessions, the vibrant atmosphere continued during lunch breaks and a social evening in the beautiful Botanical Gardens of the University of Latvia, where participants and speakers could network and share insights.



The event has received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 85% of responses indicating the attendees found the workshops useful or extremely useful for their clinical practice. Based on the feedback, the event's success was built on a foundation of high-quality, clinically relevant content delivered by expert speakers. This was amplified by a highly interactive and practical workshop format that fostered engagement, learning, and valuable

networking in a well-organized and friendly atmosphere.

Even more importantly, it also strengthened the collaborative spirit of the local clinical community dedicated to advancing the treatment of personality disorders.

Fourth ESSPD Summer School 2025

Fourth ESSPD Summer School for early career researchers

“Investigating psychosocial dysfunction in Personality Disorders”

The ESSPD is excited to announce that twenty-six early investigators from fourteen European countries, including six Eastern Europe countries, have been selected to participate in the 2025 ESSPD Summer School. The intense, interactive 1-week program explicitly aims to encourage this next generation of early-career researchers to fill significant gaps in the research on psychosocial (dys)function in PD.

The topic of investigating psychosocial functioning and recovery in PD will be addressed from multiple perspectives, with the goals to promote high quality research that can overcome existing challenges in this area of investigation and to initiate and strengthen research cooperation across Europe by defining the future of this research line. The multidisciplinary faculty comprises researchers in developmental trajectories of psychosocial functioning, occupational/work adjustment, experimental psychopathology and neurobiology, computational psychopathology, PD treatment as well as experts by experience.

From as well an individual as a societal perspective, major health and economic benefits may be achieved when the impact of PDs on psychosocial functioning may be prevented or reduced. Thus, research on the course of psychosocial functioning in PD and the risk and protective factors associated with successful social and occupational adaptation will be addressed from a longitudinal perspective encompassing the entire life span (adolescence, emerging adulthood, adulthood).

Research on the processes underlying self and interpersonal dysfunction will also be described, within the frameworks of experimental psychology and computational psychopathology. Elucidating the neurocognitive correlates of the various processes involved in social interactions is key to implement domain-specific interventions and, thus, may allow for more targeted interventions, in line with the goals of “precision” or “personalized” psychiatry, to promote successful psychosocial adaptation.

Furthermore, the relevance that clinicians and researchers attribute to self and interpersonal functioning might not parallel consumers’ and carers’ major concerns about real-life, daily dysfunction in PD. In particular, the clinicians’ perception of recovery might not align with the perspective of the consumers, who rather emphasize the experiential quality of recovery as a “journey” or “progress”, with multiple and multifaceted personal goals, rather than a

dichotomous understanding of recovery. Therefore, the importance of including the perspective of persons with lived or living experience in research on psychosocial functioning will be highlighted.

Finally, participants will be introduced to treatment research on how to effectively address self and interpersonal functioning, not only during structured psychotherapies but also in the context of broader, large scale structured generalist treatments for PD. A clear clinical implication of the impact of psychosocial dysfunction in the course of PD is the need to extend treatment outside the individual psychotherapy consultation room by including interventions based in external reality (i.e., being engaged in a meaningful activity, attention to finances and housing).

This fourth ESSPD Summer School 2025 represents the development based on three previous successful editions in Switzerland (Lausanne) in 2019, 2021 and 2023, organized by ESSPD and the Department of Psychiatry, University of Lausanne, with the support of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (2019) of the Swiss National Science Foundation (2021,2023). The 2025 edition is organized by the ESSPD and the Department of Medicine and Surgery, University of Parma, with the support of the Cariparma Foundation and of the Personality Disorders Lab. The Summer School will take place near Parma (Italy) the first week of September (<https://www.esspd.eu/summer-school/>).

The 2025 Summer School coordinators:

Chiara De Panfilis
Joost Hutsebaut



Faculty:

Rasa Barkauskiene (Lithuania)
Katja Bertsch (Germany)
Filip De Fruyt (Belgium)
Chiara De Panfilis (Italy)
Joost Hutsebaut (The Netherlands)
Paolo Ossola (Italy)
Luca Sasdelli (Italy)

Nomination Procedure

Membership nominations should be made by either two ESSPD members or one ESSPD Board member, and can be made here

[ESSPD Membership Nomination Form](#)