

ISSUE – DECEMBER 2025

The ESSPD Newsletter

European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders



EDITORIAL

A word from the editors

**Mickey Kongerslev**

EDITOR

**Katja Bertsch**

EDITOR

As 2025 draws to a close, we know that this is one of the busiest times of the year for many of you. Nevertheless, we hope that you will find a quiet moment to enjoy our biannual newsletter. As the following pages show, 2025 has also been an eventful year for the ESSPD, marked by highlights such as the meeting in Riga, the Summer School, and the growing anticipation surrounding the upcoming ESSPD Congress 2026 in Lausanne. We were delighted to welcome Emanuele Preti and Charlotte Rosenbach to the Board, and we take great pride in launching our new sections on Perinatal Personality Disorder, Parents with Personality Disorders, and Lived Experience Group.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the positive feedback on the new newsletter format – and especially to Fiona Greenly-Jones, whose commitment and creativity made this innovation possible.

We wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and we very much hope to see you next September in Lausanne!

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

A message from the President

**Michaela Swales**

PRESIDENT, ESSPD

Dear ESSPD Members and Colleagues,

As we close 2025, our focus turns to an exciting milestone ahead – our 8th Congress of Borderline Personality Disorder and Allied Disorders, taking place in Lausanne, Switzerland, September 7–9, 2026. Under the theme "Transforming Futures: Integrating Lived Experience, Research, and Practice," this event will spotlight the remarkable progress shaping personality disorder research and treatment.

Our congress will offer a dynamic scientific program, enriched by master clinicians, innovative research, and opportunities for one-to-one exchanges with leaders in the field. We warmly invite you to submit your work – whether groundbreaking studies, fresh theoretical models, or proof-of-concept projects that pave the way for lasting change. The submission deadline is February 27, 2026 via our platform. You will find the flyer and the call for submissions within this newsletter. We invite you to circulate information about our congress to your networks.

Beyond congress preparations, we celebrate recent achievements: a paper on psychosocial functioning in adults, led by Ueli Kramer and Chiara de Panfilis, has been published (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-025-00326-y>) and another on adolescents, led by Rasa Barkauskienė and Svenja Taubner, is nearing submission. Our lived experience colleagues continue to make invaluable contributions, from shaping the conference to developing a research dashboard that connects teams with participants eager to advance our field.

Together, let's embrace this moment of transformation – building bridges between research, practice, and lived experience to create meaningful futures.

Warm regards,

Michaela

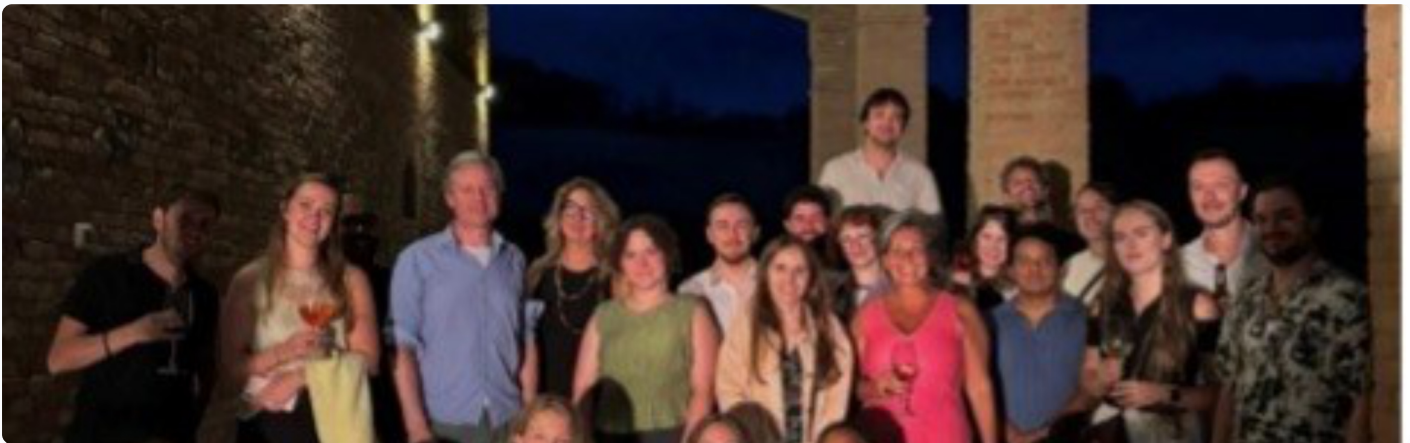
President, ESSPD

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

News from Early Career Researchers

ESSPD Summer School 2025 – Reflections from Parma

The Early Career Researchers collected feedback on the ESSPD Summer School which we would like to share with you...



The Summer School 2025 group

Rosie Kidane

PSYCHOLOGIST AT DE VIERSPRONG AND PHD RESEARCHER AT TILBURG UNIVERSITY AND GHENT UNIVERSITY – THE NETHERLANDS

The ESSPD Summer School 2025 took place in the stunning village of Fidenza near Parma, Italy. If the view was any indication of how the week would unfold, it promised to be an inspiring one, and it certainly was! The theme “Psychosocial Functioning in Personality Disorders” sparked many engaging discussions about the difference between recovery and remission and how the field can continue (and already is!) improving psychosocial and vocational functioning for those living with personality disorders. In many ways, the theme also reflected the broader spirit of looking toward the future, reflecting on where our field is heading and how we as early career researchers can continue to strengthen it.

Each day concluded with a beautiful sunset talk, during which an esteemed colleague shared their personal and academic journey. It was truly invaluable to hear how even the most accomplished researchers have, at times, doubted their fit within academia, yet how their passion for the study of personality disorders continuously fueled the perseverance and dedication needed to flourish in this field.

Against the backdrop of Parma's rolling hills (and fueled by delicious Italian food), we participated in a series of captivating workshops. Professor Katja Bertsch illuminated the complex neurobiological correlates of social interactions with remarkable clarity and enthusiasm. Dr. Paolo Ossola introduced us to computational psychiatry as a novel and exciting lens for understanding the socio-cognitive mechanisms underlying PDs. Professor Barkauskienė shared some fascinating findings on the trajectories of personality functioning in adolescence and dazzled us with the enormous number of participants her team manages to include in their studies. Professor Filip De Fruyt presented the latest insights into challenges, but also opportunities of people with personality difficulties in workplace functioning. Finally, our hosts, Professor Joost Hutsebaut, Professor Chiara De Panfilis, together with Mr. Sasdelli, challenged us to critically evaluate research related to treatment outcome in personality disorders and emphasized the importance of incorporating lived-experience perspectives. A very compelling personal account of Mr. Sasdelli further underlined the need for family involvement in both research and treatment.

All in all, the summer school was an unforgettable experience and I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend it! It highlighted the importance of connecting with ideas, with colleagues, and with the shared passion that drives our field, in order to grow into truly versatile researchers.

Christel Bomhof

PSYCHOLOGIST AND PHD CANDIDATE AT VIERSPRONG INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES ON PERSONALITY DISORDERS (VISPD) AND TILBURG UNIVERSITY (THE NETHERLANDS)

What a pleasure it has been to attend the ESSPD Summer School in Parma! I feel genuinely privileged and grateful to have shared this inspiring week with fellow early-career researchers from across Europe. Our group stayed at the beautiful Alba del Borgo, where we were warmly welcomed and thoughtfully looked after.

The program's focus on psychosocial functioning offered a rich variety of perspectives and research approaches. What struck me most was the sense of how much there is still to explore and discover in this area. The carefully designed schedule encouraged meaningful connection and collaboration – from the group projects to the lively discussions over coffee, lunch, and dinner, and even the relaxed moments at the spa or on the terrace, sometimes until late in the evening.

It was truly a joy to meet so many dedicated, passionate, and fun colleagues who share a commitment to advancing research in personality disorders. These interactions have not only sparked ideas for future collaborations but have also led to lasting connections and a vibrant network that continues to stay in touch.

I have returned home with a renewed sense of inspiration, curiosity, and commitment. This energy now feeds directly into our P-DAET projects, and I am eager to see how our ongoing psychotherapy trial will contribute to deepening our understanding of psychosocial functioning.



Dinner at Alba del Borgo



Alba del Borgo

Răzvan Hugianu

As a psychiatry trainee that has been most of the time involved in clinical work, having the research as a personal passion and endeavour, I found the ESSPD Summer School as a stepping stone towards who am I to become as a researcher. I got the opportunity to meet leading experts in the field of personality disorders, who were not only passing on valuable information to create a framework in line with the current level of knowledge, but also sharing their enthusiasm and challenging us to find our path in this field. There were many things that were excellent about this experience, but one is standing out from afar, and that is the networking opportunity that it created, I felt integrated between participants and facilitators from various backgrounds, with various knowledge and individual strengths. This created a wonderful process of passing on ideas, information, solutions that answered many of the questions I had before, but also drove my curiosity even higher and gave me the hope that no matter of the starting point, if connections formed through ESSPD Summer School are kept close, nothing is impossible.”

Thank you for the opportunity to speak up my mind and hope I was able to express my opinion in a way that reaches you and future readers. If you find that the text should be adapted, please let me know and I will do my best to tailor it accordingly.

Martin Blay

MD, MSC

My experience at the ESSPD Summer School was very positive, both professionally and personally. The setting was incredible: Alba del Borgo is a beautiful and peaceful place, surrounded by nature, which immediately created a relaxed but stimulating atmosphere. Being in such environment made it easy to connect with others, focus on learning, and enjoy being fully immersed in the experience.

What I appreciated most was the quality of the people I met. There were so many interesting, kind, and engaged participants, from students to senior professors. Everyone was approachable, without competition, open to discussion, and genuinely willing to share their ideas and experiences. There was no hierarchy or sense of distance between participants and faculty, which made conversations feel natural. It was easy to start discussions, exchange perspectives, and build real connections, both during the sessions and in more informal moments.

The conferences themselves were very rich and stimulating. I found the diversity of themes particularly valuable, as it allowed for a broader understanding of current issues and emerging perspectives in the field. Some sessions really sparked ideas and reflections that I will take back into my own clinical and research work, especially regarding dimensional models of personality disorders. Overall, the scientific level was high, but still accessible and engaging.

Another major strength of the summer school was the networking opportunity. The residential format, shared meals, and informal discussions created the perfect conditions for building professional relationships in a natural way. I had the chance to meet people from different countries, diverse academic backgrounds, and various stages of career development. These exchanges were not only enriching but also encouraging, reinforcing a sense of belonging to a wider community working around personality disorders. It definitely opened doors for potential future collaborations.

If I had to suggest one area for improvement, it would concern the group research work. While the idea of working in groups is great, the structure could perhaps be more cohesive. It might be even more beneficial if all participants worked on a single common research project, using real data, with the goal of producing a joint scientific output – for example, a “Summer School Group” paper. This could strengthen the sense of collective work and provide a more concrete learning experience around research design, data analysis, and academic writing.

Overall, the ESSPD Summer School was a very enriching experience. It combined high-quality teaching, genuine human connection, and a unique atmosphere in a beautiful location. I leave with new ideas, new contacts, and – more importantly – a renewed motivation for my work in the field of personality disorders.

Alessandro Lisco

MD – OSPEDALE PRIVATO ACCREDITATO MARIA LUGIA, MONTICELLI TERME (PR)

I'm currently a clinician and I was always interested in the world of personality disorders and research, so attending the Summer School had many objective: firstly to address the thematic expertise and advancement, understanding the modern conceptualization of personality disorders and the way research is going; then, to gain valuable knowledge in methodological and conceptualization approaches in order to stimulate critical thinking and broadening my vision of the subject.

What I was able to reach with this experience went way beyond that. The symposiums, without exception, were all stimulating and gave both a further understanding of the state of the art while also addressing all the different approaches and thematic advancement in act. The professors all had a very clear exposition while also maintaining a down to earth attitude that helped the discussion, fostering questions and inspiration. And yet, what I found really amazing of the whole experience, beyond the beautiful accommodation and the program, was the ambient and the opportunity of sharing experiences and views with both attendee and speakers. Occasions like the sunset talks and all the possibilities of confrontation was able to make us see all the humanity of this world, all the struggles that people that delve into research must confront themselves, the possible doubts, but also the drive and the passion behind every step, that are not to be taken granted. And yet, it all felt incredibly inspirational, helping to understand how such difficulties can be common, while at the same time highlighting the importance of being persistent. Moreover, having the possibility to confront people from all Europe was the perfect opportunity to see how, despite the different background, we all shared a common ground, both in our aspiration and in our excitement regarding the subject, and all helped foster networking possibilities.

I left the Summer School inspired, with a renewed and sharpened excitement for both research and clinical advancement, and I look forward to next conferences and symposium, hoping to stay in touch with all the wonderful people I was able to meet.

TRANSFORMING
FUTURES

8th International Congress on Borderline Personality Disorder and Allied Disorders



7-9 September 2026 | Lausanne, Switzerland



8TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Call for Papers: ESSPD Lausanne 2026

"Transforming Futures: Integrating Lived Experience, Research, and Practice"

Michaela Swales, PhD

ESSPD PRESIDENT

Chiara de Panfilis, PhD

CHAIR, SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ESSPD LAUSANNE
2026

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We are very pleased to invite you to submit your work to the upcoming "8th International Congress on Borderline Personality Disorder and Allied Disorders", on the topic of "Transforming Futures: Integrating Lived Experience, Research, and Practice". We will meet in Lausanne (Switzerland), from Monday, September 07th until Wednesday, September 09th, 2026.

Transforming Futures – for clients as well as for the field of personality research and treatment – will serve as an expansive theme for highlighting the exciting progress emerging across our discipline. This includes the challenges and opportunities related to timely identification of personality disorders across the lifespan, advances in differential diagnosis, and the delivery of effective interventions. We warmly welcome contributions that showcase innovation in assessment, diagnosis, theoretical models, treatment approaches, clinical outcomes, and everyday practice.

The 8th Congress of the European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders will reflect on these topics – as well as many other shifts currently shaping our field – and explore how they offer opportunities for learning and advancement. ESSPD Lausanne 2026 will feature a dynamic, cutting-edge scientific program enriched by the insights of master clinicians and opportunities for one-to-one exchanges with leaders in the field.

This call for papers encourages innovative contributions that address the evolving contexts in which treatment for individuals with personality pathology is delivered. We welcome fresh ideas that push the field forward and open pathways to meaningful, lasting change. We also invite proof-of-concept studies that can lay the groundwork for the next generation of research – projects that can be tested, expanded, and refined over time. Finally, we encourage submissions that recognize the multi-level complexity of personality pathology and its treatment from different perspectives.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

February 27, 2026 – midnight CET

SUBMIT VIA

<https://esspd.mymeetingsavvy.net/>

Formats of Submission

Research Symposia

Research symposia should include four to five presentations focused on a common theme or various aspects of a large-scale research project. Presentations should come from at least two different institutions. The symposia will last 90 minutes, with a minimum of 15 minutes for open discussion with the audience. Each symposium should have a chair (normally the organizer of the panel or another relevant person). We encourage to include the perspective of users and family members in the symposia.

The panel submission portal is set up for one person (in most cases the chair) to submit the panel abstract AND each paper abstract together. Thus, before submitting, this person should collect all abstracts from the panel speakers and then proceed with the provided link. Overall and individual paper abstracts have a maximum of 300 words.

Individual Papers

Individual papers are suited for presentations of completed research, or projects that have not been submitted as part of an organized thematic research symposium. They will be a maximum of 15 minutes, and the Scientific Committee will organize papers of similar topics to be presented during the same time slot. The Scientific Committee will assign a chair to each Paper session. Abstracts have a maximum of 300 words.

Posters

Poster presentations are appropriate for a range of research reports, including completed studies, pilot data, and work-in-progress. Posters offer the unique opportunity for the audience to see detailed graphic output. There will be guided poster tours with a designated moderator. The speaker should also bring print-outs of the poster in format A4. Abstracts have a maximum of 300 words. Of note, the best three posters will be awarded at the Award Session at the 2026 ESSPD congress.

Format of the Congress

After the outstanding 2024 conference in Antwerp, Belgium, we are already looking forward to meeting again in 2026 in beautiful Lausanne, Switzerland. Together, we will continue and deepen our discussions on how to improve treatment for individuals with personality disorders – drawing on new scientific findings as well as the experiences shared by those affected, their families and friends, and clinicians. We are eager to bring together diverse perspectives and expertise to gain deeper insights and inspire innovative ideas for future research.

At the same time, we recognize that circumstances have evolved, and some colleagues may prefer or need to participate virtually. As an Academy of Excellence dedicated to advancing expertise in personality disorders, the ESSPD is committed to facilitating broad and accessible knowledge sharing. For this reason, we are offering a partially hybrid format: all speakers will attend in person in Lausanne to deliver their presentations, while select sessions will be live-streamed worldwide to reach participants in every region.

Awards

As Academy of Excellence, the European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ESSPD) is very pleased to send out a call for two awards.

ESSPD Early Career Investigator Award 2026

The European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ESSPD) established the Early Career Investigator Award in order to stimulate early career researchers to perform innovative research in the broad field of personality disorders. The selection criteria for the award jury will be:

- The research idea has to be original, innovative and methodologically sound
- It has to connect different domains of research, resulting in a new perspective
- The research has to be the applicant's own project, is not part of a larger institutional project and has to be adequately presented and discussed.

ESSPD Excellence Award 2026

The European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ESSPD) invites researchers to submit their work for the ESSPD Excellence Award 2026.

The ESSPD aims at recognizing an idea, a concept, a method – in the form of a published paper – which clearly pushes forward the field of personality disorders worldwide and makes a breakthrough contribution to the understanding and treatment of individuals with personality disorders.

<https://www.borderline-congress.org/awards/>

AWARDS SUBMISSION DEADLINE

March 31, 2026

SUBMIT TO

info@esspd.eu

Travel to Lausanne, Switzerland

For our colleagues from Central Europe, ESSPD encourages you to consider your carbon footprint and to travel by train to beautiful Lausanne. You can find details about how to travel to Lausanne here: <https://www.lausanne-tourisme.ch/en/access-to-lausanne/>

Details of hotels will also be available shortly on the website. Last but not least, an exciting Social Program and a casual Network Dinner is awaiting us in Lausanne.

Please visit our website for further information related to ESSPD Lausanne 2026:

www.borderline-congress.org | www.esspd.eu

For specific questions, please send an e-mail to info@esspd.eu

We very much look forward to receiving and reviewing your submission, and then to welcoming you to Lausanne, Switzerland, in September 2026.

For the Scientific Committee of ESSPD Lausanne 2026,

Michaela Swales, PhD

ESSPD President

Chiara de Panfilis, PhD

Chair of the Scientific Committee ESSPD Lausanne 2026



Lausanne, Switzerland – Host City, ESSPD 8th International Congress, September 2026

HOST CITY

An introduction to the beautiful city of Lausanne

Yannick Heim

From September 7 to 9, 2026, Lausanne will host the next ESSPD Congress. The local community of researchers and clinicians is delighted to welcome so many experts in the field of personality disorders. Although the regional scientific landscape is already rich and active – with frequent seminars, exchanges, and symposia – the opportunity to host hundreds of professionals from across Europe and around the world is both unique and inspiring.

The congress will offer an invaluable chance to update one's knowledge and to discover new therapeutic approaches. Its lectures and seminars will enrich daily clinical practice by providing concrete tools and innovative perspectives drawn from the latest research.

In addition, the event will foster a stimulating space for dialogue among clinicians, researchers, and psychologists from different countries and disciplines – an ideal setting for building connections and perhaps even developing new collaborations.

Lausanne, host city of the congress

Compared to other European cities, Lausanne is a relatively small city with a population of 140,000. In terms of population, it is the fourth-largest city in Switzerland, after Zurich, Geneva, and Basel, and ahead of the capital, Bern. Located on the shores of Lake Léman, Lausanne, despite its small size, boasts a rich

historical heritage and a vibrant cultural life, with numerous museums, theaters, concert halls, and festivals. The city is also full of interesting anecdotes:

- Did you know that it is the smallest city in the world to have a metro system?
- Did you know that its cathedral, one of the first to adopt the Gothic style (1170–1235), hosts a living tradition that has been ongoing since 1405? Every evening, between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., a night watchman announces the time by shouting it out from the four corners of the Belfry.
- Did you know that Lausanne officially holds the title of “Olympic Capital”? It is home to many international sports organizations, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Finally, from a scientific perspective, Lausanne is a city that hosts numerous students, with several campuses and faculties, including one of Switzerland’s two polytechnic universities (EPFL). Due to its geographic location, it also offers visitors a wealth of excursions nearby, such as the famous terraced vineyards of Lavaux, which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage. For more information: <https://www.lausanne-tourisme.ch/en/>



MEMBERSHIP

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](#)