

## ESSPD Academy Newsletter, December 2024

### *A Letter from the President*

Dear Colleagues

It was wonderful to see so many of you in Antwerp. The congress was an enormous success – showcased elsewhere in this newsletter. I want to thank our outgoing President Ueli Kramer who has done such a magnificent job over the last two years. When he assumed the presidency, Covid still had a stranglehold, and our Society was in a difficult financial position making planning for a large conference challenging. Under Ueli’s leadership the ESSPD has gone from strength to strength making this an exciting time for taking over as President.



Michaela Swales,  
ESSPD  
President

Many of you will not know me and so I will take this opportunity to say something about my background and interest in personality disorders. I am a clinical psychologist by background and on qualifying in the early 1990s I began my career working in an inpatient psychiatric unit for adolescents. The unit catered for young people with a range of difficulties, many of whom had significant impulsive behaviour, self-harm and suicidal behaviours. My clinical training had not really prepared me for the challenges those young people faced.

I was fortunate that at the same time I was studying for my PhD under the supervision of Mark Williams PhD who went on to develop Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy with John Teasdale and Zindel Segal (as a side note I participated in one of their early pilot groups which were then called Attention Control Training. Had they stuck with that name, ACT would not have meant what it does now!). Mark had worked a year or so before at the Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge where he had met Marsha Linehan who was visiting on sabbatical. When I mentioned the challenges I was experiencing in my clinical work, Mark suggested that I read the draft of Linehan’s treatment manual which she had sent him for review. In those pages, for the first time, I found techniques and strategies that I could utilise with my clients that really seemed to help them.

Some six months later, Marsha contacted Mark to let him know about a training in Seattle for her new therapy – now named DBT – and Mark with his characteristic foresight found funds to send me to the DBT Intensive Training. From that training, along with a colleague, we established the first DBT programme in the UK. Mark and I were subsequently successful in obtaining a grant to study the implementation of DBT in the UK which enabled us to bring one of Marsha’s close collaborators on the first RCT, Heidi Heard, over to the UK. From there we developed a training programme for the UK. Since then, my team and I have trained thousands of therapists in DBT in the UK and further afield and established upwards of 500 programmes. Currently we run a two-year masters level training programme in DBT commissioned by NHS England to train practitioners in DBT.

Those early events shaped my career in ways I could not have anticipated at the time. For most of my working life I have worked in a joint clinical and academic role, teaching and training practitioners for part of the week and continuing to treat adolescents using DBT. I have benefitted from that close connection between my clinical practice in the UK NHS and the challenges of training therapists to deliver effective therapies for clients with a diagnosis of personality disorder with each aspect of my work reciprocally influencing the other. My research interests stemming from these experiences have always been in how to effectively implement evidence-based practices in routine clinical settings. Currently, we are investigating the outcomes in DBT programmes across the UK using an online benchmarking platform where teams compare their clinical outcomes with those obtained within the research literature. Those of you able to attend Shelley McMMain’s symposium at the congress in Antwerp will have seen how well our clinical teams in routine practice perform against these research benchmarks.

Over the years I have been fortunate to participate in the development of national guidelines in the UK on the Treatment and Management of Borderline Personality Disorder (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg78>) and the management of self-harm. More recently I was a member of the Working Group on Classification of Personality Disorders, reporting to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Advisory Group for the Revision of ICD-10 Mental and Behavioural Disorders, that was responsible for the recent changes in personality disorder classification in ICD-11. Unsurprisingly, I am excited by the prospects the ICD-11 changes bring, whilst being aware of the very real challenges this change brings to us both in research and clinical practice.

So, that was a little about me and what of my thoughts and plans for the ESSPD? First and foremost, the ESSPD is an academy of excellence led by a capable and diverse board. I will continue to harness the skills of the Board to deliver on the ESSPD core mission to deliver conferences and events that promote research in the field of personality disorders and develop the international community of researchers. Our plans for our 2025 events are well advanced. We have our Clinical Workshops in Riga, Latvia in June – more details are available on the website – and our Summer School in the hills around Parma, Italy in September. More information on the Summer School can be found in this newsletter. My first meeting for Lausanne 2026 is happening in the week before Christmas! Please follow us on social media for updates and developments.

Following on from the work of Babette Renneberg, our former President, on developing a research agenda for people with lived experience of personality disorder, we are working in close collaboration with our newly formed lived experience group. As a Board we are working to formalise our connections developing an official route for people with lived experience to influence the work of the Society. We will keep you updated of these developments as they progress.

A sincere thank-you to all of those who make the ESSPD a vibrant society and whose work you can see showcased in this newsletter.

Wishing you a peaceful holiday season, whether you are celebrating or not, and I look forward to connecting with you in 2025.

**Michaela Swales**  
*President of the ESSPD*



# Reflections on the 7th ESSPD congress « Treating Personality Pathology in a Time of Change”, in Antwerp in September 2024

The ESSPD is delighted by the participants' great interest, the excellent scientific and clinical contributions, the essential presence of persons with lived experience and the casual meetings that made up the fabric of Antwerp 2024! From the very first moment on, after I kicked off this congress until the last second, it became clear to me that something extraordinary was happening, - maybe the “magic of Antwerp” - thanks to everyone present! Some mentioned to me that the scientific inputs were particularly up to date, some cherished the variety of the food and drinks, some paid tribute to clinical excellence in the room, some loved to hang out at the poster sessions, and some crafted a new research proposal: my understanding is that all of the above coming together – and much more -, woven into a network of experiences and exchanges, made up the success many noted in their feed-back forms on ESSPD Antwerp 2024.



Many features of ESSPD Antwerp 2024 reflect the priorities the ESSPD board has been working on for the past two years and beyond. The voices of service users, persons with lived and living experience have found their ways to all levels of the scientific program of ESSPD Antwerp, and reflect the process the ESSPD has built since the 2022 conference with a dedicated group across Europe. We are proud about this evolution, and these voices are continuously here to stay to remind us about the deep meaning of our day-by-day work, and also to serve as advising voice to all of our activities. After three editions – and the fourth has just been advertised – of the ESSPD Summer School, attendance of early career researchers was particularly high at ESSPD Antwerp 2024: several symposia were led by early career researchers, in addition to a formally invited symposium. We cherish the fresh and sometimes bold questions early career researchers have and invite you all to join our growing early career section at ESSPD. The ESSPD has provided up-to-date information on the ICD-11 classification of personality disorders, and what this change in diagnosis means for researchers and clinicians, through webinars and a board paper published in *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation*: at ESSPD Antwerp, in addition to several well-attended symposia, there was a plenary session on what this change in classification means on several levels. And last but not least, beyond separated - sometimes siloed - types of evidence-based treatments, ESSPD Antwerp 2024 has initiated to lay an integrative methodological framework to address how psychotherapy works for all individuals undergoing treatment, in numerous research symposia spanning across models of treatment and in particular in the Presidential Debate.

Come thus far, the success of our 2024 congress does not mean that all work is done nor all questions are addressed, by all means, no. How shall clinicians work with the increasing diversity of clients with personality disorders? Which changes should be measured at which moment in time to address fundamental questions researchers ask? Which neurobiological changes are essential for recovery, which are byproducts? What impact do our clinical programs really have on a global scale and for those living with the disorder, and how can this impact be improved? Clinicians, researchers, together with persons with lived experience and supported by the creativity of the early career colleagues and students, will join forces now even more to address these and other questions, in the name of those in need of treatment. The ESSPD already looks forward to September 2026 and to delivering its 8<sup>th</sup> congress in Lausanne, Switzerland.



I hope to see you there,

**Ueli Kramer, PhD, Chair, ESSPD Antwerp 2024**

## Feedback on the 7th ESSPD congress « Treating Personality Pathology in a Time of Change”, in Antwerp in September 2024

Attending the 7th International Congress on Borderline Personality Disorder and Allied Disorders 2024 was an incredible experience! It was a fantastic opportunity to dive into the latest research and connect with experts in the field. The congress offered the perfect balance between discussing various conceptualizations of personality disorders and exploring the newest data on treatment approaches. It was incredibly engaging to see how different perspectives were presented, including the thought-provoking plenary on the shift towards dimensional conceptions of personality disorders, which raised important questions about implications for prevention and intervention. On top of that, it was deeply touching to see people with lived experiences included in the congress. I absolutely loved their musical number at the opening ceremony as a powerful reminder of the real-world impact of what we can do together to make lives more meaningful.



As a PhD Candidate and a member of the ESSPD Young Researcher's Section, it was amazing to present my own work in the field of personality disorders for the first time, especially coming from a country where personality disorder research and treatment are not widely available. I truly felt supported in my striving to delve into the exploration of adolescent personality disorders in the Serbian context—especially by my summer school community. And the fact that it all took place in the majestic city of Antwerp certainly didn't hurt!

I'm really proud to have contributed to the congress through my engagement in the ESSPD Social Media (SoMe) team. Aside from further developing certain online skills, I gained a friendly network open to exchanging professional ideas and experiences, but also ready to dance the night away to celebrate the congress' success. I'm thankful to everyone who made the congress such an amazing opportunity to learn and connect, and I'm excited to continue being part of the ESSPD community!

**Natalija Ignjatović, Research Assistant at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy (Belgrade, Serbia)**

During the ESSPD 2024 Congress, the Early Career Researchers Symposium was also held to provide young researchers the opportunity to briefly present their PhD research or projects they are currently engaged in. It was fascinating to see individuals from various countries and their interest in studying personality disorders. Additionally, some ideas were introduced that examine the characteristics of personality disorders from entirely new perspectives. One might say that this event was not only a platform for exchanging scientific knowledge but also a space where new questions were raised, fresh research was ignited, and our understanding of how to comprehend and treat these complex aspects of human psychology and psychiatry was broadened. Every conversation, every shared idea, carried a genuine commitment to a common goal: to understand and support individuals living with personality disorders, which is truly inspiring.



There was also a strong encouragement for people from as many countries as possible to participate, which proved to be both highly engaging and beneficial, especially as a tremendous support to those from developing countries. The opportunity to present at such a prominent and esteemed congress holds significant value. Moreover, as emphasised throughout the ESSPD 2024 Congress, the synergy between theory and practice was particularly highlighted, making a unique contribution to a deeper understanding of personality disorders.

On this occasion, I would also like to express my gratitude and congratulations to the “Early Career Researchers” section of the ESSPD for the outstanding organisation of this symposium. This symposium and the ESSPD 2024 Congress represented more than just a professional opportunity—it was a space where each presentation became fertile ground for new ideas and perspectives. My heartfelt congratulations, and I eagerly anticipate the continued organisation of such inspiring and valuable programs within ESSPD.

**Filip Mustač, MD**



## Section for the Study of Aggression and Antisociality

### Chairs: Carlo Garofalo and Steven M. Gillespie

The former ESSPD section for the study of antisocial personality disorder and psychopathy has been undergoing a process of revamping over the past year. A change in chairship has occurred with Dr. Steven M. Gillespie joining Dr. Carlo Garofalo as new co-chair of the section, replacing Dr. Luna Centifanti. We thank Luna for her work co-developing the section and her activities over the past years.

To expand the reach of the section, it has been renamed as the *Section for the Study of Aggression and Antisociality*. The change in name is intended to broaden the scope of the section beyond the study of specific personality disorders. A new Mission Statement has been approved by the ESSPD board and is presented below. The section currently counts 13 members from 4 European countries (United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, and Belgium). Earlier this year, a webinar was organized with an invited talk by Dr. John Tully, which took place on June 3rd and was well received. Further initiatives are being developed to gauge ESSPD members' interest in being involved with the section as well as to attract external scholars to join the section.

We intend to survey the ESSPD membership to understand how the section can better cater to the needs of clinicians and researchers, including doctoral level and early career, working in the field. In addition, we aim to broaden the section's coverage across Europe, especially from countries typically under-represented in academic research.

#### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Section is to advance knowledge, understanding, and effective interventions in the field of aggression and antisocial behavior. Embracing a global perspective with a focus on European contributions, our section brings together academics and practitioners from diverse disciplines to address both clinical and subclinical levels of aggression and antisociality across the lifespan.

#### **Key Aspects:**

*Holistic Exploration:* We are dedicated to investigating aggression and antisocial behavior at both clinical and subclinical levels, recognizing the continuum of these phenomena within society. Embracing both categorical and dimensional approaches, we acknowledge the nuanced nature of aggression and antisociality, seeking to capture their complexity within society.


*Diverse Settings, Lifespan Approach:* Our commitment extends to research and practice in varied settings, including prisons, hospitals, outpatient services, and the general community. We aim to explore aggression and antisociality across the lifespan, recognizing the dynamic nature, and the importance of developmental considerations, with respect to the emergence and maintenance of these behaviors.

*Global Collaboration:* The section welcomes members and contributions from across the world, emphasizing the integration of diverse perspectives to enrich our understanding of aggression and antisocial behavior, paying special attention to cultural and societal diversity.

*Interdisciplinary Approach:* Fostering collaboration across disciplines such as psychiatry, clinical psychology, neuroscience, and developmental psychopathology, we strive to promote a comprehensive understanding of aggression and antisociality.

*Translational Focus:* Our section uniquely combines basic research and treatment-focused studies, recognizing the importance of bridging the gap between fundamental knowledge and practical applications.

*Assessment Methods:* We are committed to advancing the field through the exploration and development of innovative assessment methods for aggression, antisocial behavior, and related constructs.



Sample topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

Developmental antecedents and trajectories of aggression and antisocial personality traits.

The role of socio-affective functioning (e.g., emotion, emotion regulation) in aggression and antisocial behavior.

Links between personality pathology – especially psychopathy – and dangerousness (including rule-breaking, general and sexual violence).

Through these endeavors, our mission is to contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for the assessment, understanding, and treatment of aggression and antisocial behavior, ultimately promoting the well-being of individuals and communities.

Anyone interested in joining the section or getting more information about the section should reach out to us via email:

Carlo Garofalo ([carlo.garofalo@unipg.it](mailto:carlo.garofalo@unipg.it))

Steven M. Gillespie ([steven.gillespie@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:steven.gillespie@liverpool.ac.uk))

## Call for Participation: Delphi Study on the AMPD Model



We are inviting ISSPD members to participate in an exciting Delphi study aimed at exploring the incremental validity of the Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) criteria in clinical practice. This study seeks to address one of the key questions in the field, “Do Criterion A (severity of personality functioning) and Criterion B (maladaptive personality traits) offer distinct and valuable contributions to diagnosing personality disorders?”, and aims to ask this question to clinicians directly. The AMPD has significantly advanced our understanding of personality disorders, shifting from categorical to dimensional classification. However, the two-fold classification process remains a topic of debate. Previous studies have however mainly approached this question empirically, leaving a knowledge gap for how the incremental and conceptual validity of each criterion is perceived in clinical practice. By gathering the insights of clinicians experienced with the AMPD, this Delphi study aims to assess the incremental validity of both AMPD criteria by soliciting input from a panel of clinicians familiar with the AMPD model or actively utilizing it in clinical practice.

### How the Study Works

The study consists of 3–4 survey rounds. In each round, participants will receive a link to a survey containing statements on the perceived unique value or lack of it of both criterion A and B in clinical practice. Each statement will be evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale or through multiple-choice options. Open-ended sections will allow participants to elaborate on their reasoning. After each round, consensus among the participants on the statements will be evaluated. Statements lacking consensus will be refined and reintroduced in subsequent rounds, with the aim to obtain consensus statements on the incremental validity of AMPD criteria in clinical practice at the end of this study.

### Join Us!

Participation is open to all ISSPD members. The ISSPD will kindly distribute the survey link of the first round, ensuring broad involvement. At the end of the first round, participants will be asked to provide their email address to receive links for the next round directly.

The first round of this study will start **end of January 2025**.

Your expertise is vital in shaping our understanding of this innovative model and its application in clinical settings.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact **Morag Facon** ([morag.flora.facon@vub.be](mailto:morag.flora.facon@vub.be))

## Call for Primary Studies: A meta-analysis on the comorbidity of personality disorders and other disorders, in relation to treatment outcome



We are conducting a meta-analysis on:

- a. The impact of comorbid disorders on the outcome of psychotherapy for personality disorders.
- b. The impact of comorbid personality disorders on the outcome of psychotherapy for other disorders (e.g., PTSD) and presenting problems (e.g., marital dissatisfaction).

We are reaching out to request your assistance in identifying relevant studies (published or unpublished) and in obtaining relevant data (either in raw form or as summary statistics). For example, studies examining treatment effectiveness that may have assessed for comorbidities could significantly contribute to our analyses, even if the data on comorbidity was not explicitly reported in the published article but could be extracted retrospectively.

We believe this project holds a potential to deepen our collective understanding of personality disorders and comorbid conditions, ultimately advancing the development of more effective and impactful treatments for individuals affected by these complex disorders. We would therefore like to include your work in our analyses and have as comprehensive data as possible!

Thank you very much for considering our request, and we would be grateful for any assistance or resources you might be able to provide.

Please contact us at: [yogev.kivity@biu.ac.il](mailto:yogev.kivity@biu.ac.il)

Warm regards,

**Yogev Kivity, Ph.D. and Shir Ada Basson**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Bar Ilan University**



## Invitation to Boston 2025



It is with great pleasure that I invite you to join us in Boston this November 2025 for our 19th International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ISSPD) Congress.

This is the preeminent personality disorder international meeting held every two years, where we gather from across the world to discuss and engage in this rapidly growing part of mental health. Congress gives us the opportunity to spend time with colleagues, to learn about new innovations and directions in the field, and to connect with leading researchers, clinicians, service leaders, policy makers, students, academics and importantly service users including their families and carers. We welcome you to join our lively and cutting-edge program with a mix of keynotes, symposia, workshops, short talks and posters. We will also feature master clinicians demonstrating clinical skills, and have invited leading speakers to come and present their work.

### **Abstract Submissions Now Being Accepted**

Here's your chance to present a thought-provoking session that will explore successes and shortcomings in bridging the research-practice gap, empowering participants to deliver innovative, evidence-based care.

[SUBMIT YOUR SINGLE PRESENTATIONS HERE](#)

[SUBMIT YOUR SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS HERE](#)



Scan for more information about the 2025 ISSPD International Congress and to share your interests

Questions? Please email: [ISSPD@meinet.com](mailto:ISSPD@meinet.com)



**Katja Bertsch,  
ESSPD  
Newsletter Editor**



**Mickey Kongerslev,  
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 Editors are Katja Bertsch and Mickey Kongerslev. Submissions should be emailed to at: [katja.bertsch@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:katja.bertsch@uni-wuerzburg.de) and [mkon@regionsjaelland.dk](mailto:mkon@regionsjaelland.dk)

# 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

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- 
- 

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