

NEWSLETTER

ENPP 2014 Q1



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Dear Members of ENPP!

Positive psychology has never been stronger, but probably neither ever as diverse an endeavor as it is today. With positive psychology associations all over the world united by a shared interest in human development and wellbeing, there is no doubt about the need for what we are doing. But it has also become ever clearer how our field can and should not only contribute at the individual level but also at the organizational and societal scale. Indeed, the latter may be even more important than the first as we are witnessing a mass of research basically agreeing that at the individual level “good comes from good”. Like medical science is finding that sound organs in the body, all else being equal, benefits everything else in the body, positive psychology overall tends to show that well developed individual capacities tends to benefit all others, and that wellbeing is both a precondition and an effect hereof.

In philosophy, sometimes a distinction is made between what is called the easy and the hard problem of consciousness. The easy problem regards how the brain works, and how it interacts with the body. Of course this takes time and we are by far not there yet. But it certainly looks as if we will be in the not too distant future. However, whether we will be able to solve the hard problem is much less certain, for the hard problem regards the problem of how the billions of simultaneous interactions in the brain create consciousness – how the body creates psyche, if you will.

I see an analogy to this within positive psychology, where we may also distinguish between easy and hard problems. The easy psychological problems are basically related to the task of finding out how the mind works once it is there. Questions like “How does self-determination affect learning?” or “How important is the experience of educational success for a child in order to gain high self-efficacy in later life?” are examples of such easy questions. To be sure, much sophistication and work has to be invested in designing the research capable of answering such questions, but apart from that it is fairly straight-forward because intra-individual variables

GREETINGS!

Dear Members of ENPP,

Well into 2014 and only three months away from our seventh European Conference I hope this finds you all well.

Take care out there,

*Hans Henrik Knoop
President of ENPP*

tend to obey the “good-comes-from-good-rule”, an inherent psychological win-win scenario. A much harder kind of psychological questions are those related to application of psychology, because so many other interests than those of the individual play out in practical application at competitive workplaces and complex societies fueled in part by zero-sum and even minus-sum games between individuals and groups. Consider for example a perfectly legitimate question like this regarding application of positive psychology in schools: “How do we enable sufficient success for each pupil in 1st grade to improve their academic self-efficacy, acknowledging that every pupil is biologically, economically and politically prompted to strive for success at the cost of others?” It’s a perplexing question, but a perfectly legitimate one, that is in perfect line with the educational policies of every country I know of, all proclaiming the genuine wish for human educational rights for every child.

For centuries theory has been looked upon as having a higher status than practical matters, alienating millions of children from the day they enter school. As if good practice was easier than good theory. As if easy questions were harder than hard ones.

Thus, while positive psychology is sometimes rightfully criticized for superficial (easy) application, we should not lose sight of the almost contrary (hard) challenge, namely the reform of practice in ways that really benefit people and the world in which they live.

As concerns educational practice, the result of American school reforms over decades has ironically been summarized in three conclusions: 1) School reforms have often had an effect, 2) though rarely the intended, and 3) never at a foundational level. Unfortunately, something similar could be said of many a European effort, evidencing but one example of how hard it can be to improve practice.

Yet, positive psychology gives us all new hopes and tools to work with. And the most important of all may be 1) the research that tells us how individual thriving is both a precondition for and a result of individual achievement, and 2) the political and organizational systems that have sufficient intelligence to apply this research humanely.

May this 4th quarterly Newsletter of ENPP bring you inspiration as spring embraces the Northern Hemisphere.

And don’t forget to register for a great conference in Amsterdam:
www.ecpp2014.nl

With all good wishes,
Hans Henrik Knoop
President of ENPP
(2010-2014)

Upcoming events

European Conference on Positive Psychology 1st – 4th July 2014 in Amsterdam

Almost nothing can go wrong now for the seventh European Conference on Positive Psychology. We are delighted to announce that John Helliwell, Dora Gudmundsdottir, Nic Marks and Robert Vallerand will now be sharing their expertise with us, in addition to the plenary presentations by Barbara Fredrickson, Hans Henrik Knoop, Carmelo Vazquez and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi that we've reported earlier.

The invited symposia are also taking shape. All symposium organizers are doing their utmost to ensure interesting, compelling sessions. These will be highly varied in nature – some built around case examples, such as resilience at the Shell company, others involving transfers of knowledge, and others resembling workshops. We are also pleased to have received over 500 abstracts, mostly of high quality. As we had hoped, large numbers of people will be attending the conference to exchange ideas under the inspiration of positive psychology.

Our social events program is also being planned. It will include a festive event with dinner and dancing, as well as a cultural evening entitled 'A Positive Utopia?' with an engaging talk by James Pawelski. From varying perspectives such as film, philosophy and art, we will explore the question of 'What's so positive about positive psychology?'

Fortunately for us, the city of Amsterdam doesn't need any further organization on our part. It's already there, with its canals, abundant cultural events and exciting nightlife.

We look forward to welcoming you!

News from Netherlands

Linda Bolier¹ and Jan Auke Walburg²

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This year, from the 1st to the 4th of July 2014, the seventh European Conference on Positive Psychology will take place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Trimbos Institute (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction) will be hosting the conference in a consortium with the University of Twente and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research. The organization of this



conference does not happen unexpectedly for the Netherlands, as for many years positive psychology is gaining momentum in our country. In this short article, we will outline some of the accomplishments and developments that were taken place in the last few years.

A research tradition of thirty years

Positive psychology research in the Netherlands starts obviously with a closer look at Ruut Veenhoven from Erasmus University. As a sociologist and emeritus professor of 'Social conditions for human happiness', he searches for over 30 years now to the secrets of our well-being. In his World Database of Happiness, reliable research from around the globe relating to life satisfaction is gathered and made available on the Internet for fellow researchers, students and well-being seekers. A second major influence stems from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research. As a national research institute focusing on 'the state of mind', health and wealth of the Dutch people, there has been a focus on life satisfaction and quality of life for many years, next to national indicators of health and economic prosperity. People like Crétien van Campen and Jeroen Boelhouwers were and are still involved. These developments gave a receptive ground to set the stage for positive psychology interventions in different settings in the Netherlands.

In 2008, the book of Jan Walburg, 'Mental capital – The investment in well-being' meant for the Trimbos Institute a paradigm shift (Walburg, 2008). Before and roughly spoken, the focus was on healing and curing diseases and disorders. After the book was written, a gradual shift was happening, extending the focus from disease and problem solving, to health, well-being and prevention/solution-based thinking. The Dutch government is stimulating this way of thinking by promoting empowerment and the own responsibility of its citizens. In this shift, it was not the intention to dismiss or to deny suffering and trouble. Rather, this view would accept the fact that mental illness is part of human life, but for people suffering from mental illness it is just as important (and sometimes even more important) to promote well-being and make them flourish within their own boundaries, as it is to cure their illness. Also are health promotion and prevention in this vision very important. People can do a lot themselves to enhance their mental fitness in order to stay healthy and happy. Just as people have a physical condition which enables them to perform their tasks better and engage in sports at a higher level, they also possess a mental condition which refers to emotional, cognitive and social skills. It enables people to develop their own talent and potential, to be productive and creative and to build up personal relationships. And not of the least importance: it may prevent problems or disease at a later stage. This view is used in many of the interventions that were developed in the years after the book was published.



Various people concentrated on applying the principles of positive psychology in various settings. Jacqueline Boerefijn, a school teacher at a high school in the Rotterdam area, developed lessons in happiness for schools (www.lesseningeluk.nl). Ad Bergsma, one of the first true positive psychologists in the Netherlands, cooperated with Onno Hamburger to write a book and perform projects at the workplace (Hamburger & Bergsma, 2013), in various settings and especially in healthcare.

Gradually the group of people involved in positive psychology broadened and we estimate that at least a thousand professionals of all backgrounds are involved in positive psychology in some way or another. In 2010 and 2011 two working conferences were held under the umbrella of positive psychology coordinated by some pioneers in the field. As a result of that, in 2012 a collection of essays were published under the name of 'Steering on happiness' (Van Campen et al., 2012). In November 2013 a big conference was organized by the University of Twente in cooperation with the Trimbos Institute and the Dutch Association of Psychologists. The conference was sold out with more than 500 people stemming from all kinds of backgrounds and professions attending.

Centers of knowledge

Several centers of knowledge are involved in developing knowledge and interventions for all kinds of settings. This is a non-exhaustive overview; we realize that many institutions and organizations are not mentioned here.

The *Trimbos Institute*, the national Institute of Mental Health and Addiction, is involved in the development, dissemination and implementation of knowledge and interventions based on the principles of positive psychology. Books, articles and information sheets have been developed on themes like positive psychology and school, work, care, aging, and chronic diseases. At the Trimbos Institute special attention is directed at resilience and mental fitness as these are important prerequisites for good mental health and many institutes in The Netherlands are interested in the improvement of these concepts in their setting. Linda Bolier coordinates this field of expertise within the Trimbos Institute. It is also the Trimbos Institute that organizes in cooperation with the University of Twente and the SCP the 7th European conference on positive psychology.

The *University of Twente*, the department of Psychology, Health and Technology is chaired by Prof. Ernst Bohlmeijer. He and a group of researchers are involved in research on positive psychology. Special attention is being paid to narrative interventions, acceptance and commitment therapy and interventions mediated by the internet, using the principles of persuasive technology. The group has a good past performance on research in the field of chronic care and pain. Prof. Gerben Westerhof,



Sanne Lamers and Linda Bolier are part of this research group that recently attracted Prof. Jan Walburg as first professor of positive psychology in The Netherlands.

At the *Erasmus University* in Rotterdam, a group around prof Ruut Veenhoven is involved in research of a more sociologic nature. He established the institute 'Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization' (EHERO, <http://www.eur.nl/english/ehero/about/>) which main aim is to contribute to greater happiness of a greater number of people. EHERO is a both a research organization and a center of expertise. It conducts research but also synthesizes research (which comes together in the World Database of Happiness), for example around happiness & illness, and happiness and economic growth.

At the *Utrecht University*, the department of work and organizational psychology, is involved in research concerning employee well-being, work engagement and work-alcoholism. Prof. Wilmar Schaufeli is in charge of the positive psychology research line of this department.

At the *Delft University of Technology* a group of researchers concentrates on positive design in de Delft Institute of Positive Design (DIOPD, <http://studiolab.ide.tudelft.nl/diopd/>), design that contributes to the long term well-being of the user. Pieter Desmet, the first professor in the field of positive design, is in charge of this group.

The *Nothern College of Higher Education* in Leeuwarden offers a full course on positive psychology to its students. Djoerd Hiemstra is a policy fellow at the school and has started a talent development program, not only for students at the school, but with a national scope and aura (see <http://www.talentedwijzer.com/>).

Some examples of positive psychology projects in the Netherlands

These are just some of the examples that illustrate the vivid field of positive psychology in the Netherlands:

Well-being on prescription is a project of a healthcare center in the center of the Netherlands, in Nieuwegein. The idea is that primary care, the general practitioner, can prescribe a well-being intervention in case of minor mental health problems, instead of medication or other treatments. It is based on *social prescribing* in which people are linked with non-medical resources of support to improve mental health and well-being. Well-being interventions are for example befriending courses, exercising or doing volunteering work. The project needs a strengthened link between health care providers, social work and other community or educational services.



The *Happiness Route* is an innovative intervention that uses a happiness-based approach for people with an accumulation of risk factors for low well-being: socially isolated people with health impairments and a low socioeconomic status. The goal of this intervention is to improve well-being by engaging participants in intrinsically motivated activities with methods from positive psychology. Started in the Dutch municipality Almelo, the intervention is now disseminated all over the country. Currently, a randomized controlled trial is conducted to examine if the intervention is effective (Weiss et al., 2013).



Psyfit, mental fitness online (www.psyfit.nl) is an online unguided self-help intervention based on positive psychology principles that aims to enhance well-being and helps to reduce depressive symptoms. Designed for the general population, it can also be used within a stepped care approach (i.e., offering minimal care first and more intensive care if warranted) for the prevention and treatment of depression. Participants tailor the intervention program to meet their personal needs and monitor their progress through self-administered tests. The program consists of six modules with 4 lessons each. The modules are (1) mission and goals, (2) positive feelings, (3) positive relationships, (4) living in the moment, (5) optimistic thinking, and (6) mastering your life. In a randomized controlled trial the intervention was found to be effective in promoting well-being and reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety (Bolier, Kramer, et al., 2013). There was also a book published (*Mental fitness, investing in your mental condition*, Bolier et al, 2010), and a course was broadcasted at national television in 2010.

We hope that the reader has obtained a clear picture of some of the positive psychology activities in the Netherlands. You can contact us of course if you have questions or need any more information. Please contact Neeltje Vogels in case you need more information about the European Conference in Amsterdam this year (nvogels@trimbos.nl).

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News from Romania



Positive psychology research in Romania

The Romanian specialists are very committed to develop a consistent scientific background for the deep understanding of the positive psychology concepts. They are very interesting in the cultural and context-specific of life satisfaction, happiness, psychological well-being, optimism, and meaning in life. Professor Adriana Băban, the Head of the Psychology Department, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj; member of the executive council of European Health Psychology Society, has an important contribution to the positive psychology research in Romania. She adapted the most known positive psychology instruments, being one of the authors of the Romanian Version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, Jerusalem & Băban, 1996). Professor Ana Munteanu from the Department of Sociology, University of West, Timisoara focused on the study of psychological resilience. She searched also the factors and mechanisms of resilience during the communism period. Professor Valeria Negovan from the University of Bucharest explored the dimensions and correlates of psychosocial well-being, adapting frameworks promoted by Diener (1984), Seligman (2002), Ryff (1989) and Keyes (2007). Professor Elena Stănculescu from the University of Bucharest studied: teachers' subjective well-being; the relations between optimism and resources of the self in adolescence; psychological correlates of college students hardiness. Another research themes developed by the Romanian specialists include also: meaning in life in adolescence (Brassai, Piko and Steger), antecedents and psychological effects of well-being (Muntele-Hendreş), socio-demographic variables of children's well-being (Bălţătescu), emotional intelligence (Ignat),

perception of family support (Popa), relation between well-being, personal temporal perspective and motivation (Roşeanu and Drugaş).

Positive psychology application in educational settings

Danish experts Erik Hygum, Vice-rector, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education VIA University College, and Peter Nielsen Wellendorf, Director of the International Relationships Department, VIA University College initiated an innovative project with the Educational Sciences Department, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest, in order to increasing the students' and teachers' happiness. On June 2013 has been founded at Bucharest the Institute for Happiness. It is the meeting place for the specialists who want to explore the factors and facilitators of the happiness, emphasizing the role of positive mentality, the importance of balanced and harmonious life, optimism, empathy, trust, tolerance, and solidarity. The Institute for Happiness promoted The National Program of Education for Happiness, consisting in a series of meetings and debates organized in six Romanian cities (Bucharest, Iaşi, Timișoara, Craiova and Baia Mare). The beneficiaries of this programme were 1800 high-school students, 800 university students, and 2100 members of communities. Professor Valeria Negovan has been introduced at the license level (Psychology Department, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest) a course of Positive Psychology (beginning with the 2013-2014 university year). In the first semester of this university year it has been taught the course of *Positive Psychology in the schools* (master level), at the Teacher Training Department, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest. The course was proposed and sustained by the Professor Elena Stănculescu, being focused on the theoretical approaches in positive psychology and their application in educational settings. The master students were encouraged to maintain a positive outlook in approaching their personal and professional life. They found also how to stimulate students' school engagement, achievement, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being.

Romania's involvement in some major international research projects related to psychological well-being

The international project "Promoting Psychological Well-Being Globally"(2007), initiated and conducted by the Professor Bonnie Nastasi, from the Tulane University, under auspices of the International School Psychology Association and The Society for the Study of School Psychology, included a Romanian sample, being involved specialists from the University of Bucharest (Professor Valeria Negovan and Professor Elena Stănculescu) and University of Aalborg (Associate Professor Vlad Glăveanu). This explicit study of the children and adolescents positive aspects of psychological



functioning was focused on the development of a unified conceptual framework of psychological well-being. The results were presented in the *Handbook of Psychological Well-Being in Children and adolescents: International Perspectives and Youth Voices*, edited by the Professor Bonnie Nastasi (to be published by Springer). Romania participated also in a several large-scale studies such as: “Opinion Survey of children and young people in Europe and Central Asia” (UNICEF, 2001), “The 3rd European Quality of Life Survey (Anderson *et al.*, 2012), “Social determinants of health and well-being among young people, The Health Behaviors in School-aged Children HBSC (Currie *et al.*, 2009), “KIDSCREEN-10 Index (Erhart *et al.*, 2009). The main topics investigated in these studies included: children’s perceptions regarding their rights and key areas in need of improvements and change; analysis of the multidimensional nature of quality of life; key protective factors of mental health and well-being.

Association

On 18th December 2013 a group of psychologists from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași signed the constitutive document for the Romanian Association of Positive Psychology (ARPP). The main purposes of this association are: promotion of scientific research programs in order to contribute to the drafting, detailing and validation of the models and instruments used in positive psychology field; publishing scientific and educational material that explores and explains the principles of positive psychology; organization of scientific and public events for communication and dissemination of positive psychology in Romania; skills training for the positive psychology application in professional and personal life.

Romania’s country representative is Professor Elena Stănculescu, University of Bucharest.
E-mail: elistapsy@yahoo.com.



Miscellaneous



International Positive Psychology Coaching Training

Lisbon, 26 – 30 May 2014

Trainer – Dr. Ilona Boniwell

In what way can coaches usefully incorporate positive psychology into their practice? How can a business coach frame the validated positive psychology interventions in a context that is appropriate for a corporate client? What new can positive psychology offer to an experienced coach?

Both coaching and positive psychology are natural allies in sharing an explicit concern with the enhancement of optimal functioning and well-being.

This training course aims to introduce and practice new positive psychology based tools and models developed specifically for coaching practice. Thus, it will offer coaching practitioners a tangible 'toolkit' that enables them to translate concept to action in a 'nuts and bolts' way.

Who can attend?

Coaches and coaching psychologists who are looking to expand and develop their current practice through positive psychology; Experienced one-to-one professionals interested in moving into coaching.

Programme

Module 1 – Coaching for happiness and emotional balance

Module 2 – Coaching for strengths and engagement

Module 3 – Coaching for psychological capital

Module 4 – Coaching for time satisfaction

Module 5 – Coaching for lasting change

Information/Registration

E-mail – coaching.positivo.2014@gmail.com

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/coaching.positivo.portugal>

POSitivitiES: a European Project to promote Wellbeing and Positive Development in Education

Several theoretical models and applications have been proposed in Positive Psychology to facilitate the integration of interventions and activities that effectively promote wellbeing, engagement and positive climate in the classroom and in schools. However, although a growing number of European schools and organizations have started training activities in positive psychology, there is a risk of fragmentation and lack of common criteria and quality. The need of harmonization of contents, criteria and quality level is a crucial issue, and it can be achieved by the development of a common European reference training course and related activities. This effort could facilitate cooperation, mobility of individuals, and promotion of European common skills and values.

In order to address these issues, the project POSitivitiES was launched in 2013. It is a Comenius Multilateral Project developed with the aim to help European teachers learn, practice, apply and share experiences of Applied Positive Psychology in Education.

The partners of the project come from three different countries: Denmark (University of Aarhus and N.J. Fjordsgades Skole, Aarhus), Italy (University of Milano and Comprehensive Institute of Iseo and Paratico) and Spain (Fundacion Fluir and Universidad Publica de Navarra).

PositivitiES is based on three main pillars:

- Learning (acquiring competence) and creativity (using competence) is more effective in a context facilitating autonomous regulation, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment and engagement. Educational strategies based on Positive psychology can influence the learning outcomes through the development of positive intrapersonal and interpersonal resources that favor optimal experiences, intrinsic motivation, positive emotions and control of own attention and awareness.
- Teachers can apply positive psychology in their teaching more effectively if they first experiment themselves, in their personal and professional lives the healthy habits, methods and interventions of positive psychology
- Pedagogical and didactical resources specifically designed for application in the classroom or in tutoring classes may represent helpful tools to start in the day-by-day practice.

Moving from these premises, three main products were developed in the project: (a) a training course of applied positive psychology in education; (b) a coaching oriented practical training for teachers to experiment themselves with the methods of positive psychology and adopt healthy skills; and (c) a resource database of interventions, training material, and evaluation tools, to help teachers integrate positive psychology methods in their teaching. All three products are now web-based, to facilitate access to teachers throughout Europe.



The second version of the training course and coaching practice has been tested with over 450 teachers in the three countries. In April and May 2014 teachers will use the pedagogical and didactical resources derived from the course with their students, and provide their evaluation and feedback on the whole program, thus allowing the partners to further implement the materials and refine the third and final version of the course.

The project results will be used to establish the basis of a future European network of schools applying Positive Psychology, aimed at the exchange of experiences, resources and research. The main goals of the future platform will be to stimulate synergies between schools, European research organizations, promote public-private partnerships, to coordinate more effective transnational research activities, to define a European Strategic Research Agenda for PP in Education, and to become a consultancy organization of the European Commission for Positive Psychology and Education.

Conference in Bhutan

Note from Changa Dorji , Royal University of Bhutan: We are pleased to inform you that the 3rd Creative University Conference called "Creative Economy, Creative University and Creative Development: Ideas, Knowledges and Paths towards Sustainability, Happiness & Wellbeing" will be jointly organized by the Institute for GNH Studies (iGNHaS), RUB, International Creative University Network, Global Studies in Education (CGSE, Waikato University, New Zealand), and Future Education Groups & Organization Studies, University of Marburg, Germany, from **14 to 16 April 2014**. The Conference will be held at the University Convention Centre, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Thimphu.

We will appreciate if you could disseminate the Joint Call for Papers amongst University researchers and scholars and encourage submission of abstracts/workshop proposals that address any of the four thematic forums/workshops described in the Joint Call.

http://www.kyoto-bhutan.org/en/news/71_2013-11-05.html



Certificate in Whole Person Positive Psychology

London. UK: Ashridge, **July 2014- August 2015**

A whole-person approach to positive psychology and optimal well-being developed and taught by one of the leading experts in the field, Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar. This year-long online and onsite course offers an in-depth, integrated exploration of the science and direct application of positive psychology—the study of individual and societal flourishing—in all aspects and all stages of life. Learn More: www.wholebeinginstitute.com/cipp/uk

Oslo Summer School in Comparative Social Science Studies 2014

University of Oslo is proud to announce a Ph.D course in Positive Psychology in week 30 (**July 21th – 25th**) 2014 at the University of Oslo, Norway. The title of the course is: Positive Psychology and the Challenge of Diversity in Well-being Promotion. The course is given by Antonella Delle Fave from the University of Milan. Delle Fave was one of the contributors to the seminal millenium issue of American Psychologist (edited by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi) in which positive psychology was launced and she has served as president for the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA).

You find all relevant information about the Summer School and the course in positive psychology here: <http://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/doctoral-degree/summer-school/index.html>

