



Communications of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Presidential Column

Building a community

Ruud Minderaa

One of the first actions undertaken by the Board of ESCAP, at the beginning of my Presidency, has been the establishment of our goals and purposes. Re-reading the Bylaws [1] today convinces me more than ever that building a community of European mental health professionals must have been our underlying drive during the last few years. Our official mission and purposes seem steeped with words and meaning that refer to the importance of a real connection between child and adolescent psychiatrists all over Europe. Improving the mental health and well-being of children, adolescents and their families is the overall mission that binds us. I am convinced that the stronger the bond, the greater the effectiveness of this strive will be. We clearly stated in 2012 that ESCAP should be more than a bi-annual conference. Let me summarize some of our great goals: fostering the best clinical practice, based on scientific evidence, supporting research and research training, encouraging and supporting educational programs. These are no small matters to solve during one long weekend every 2 years. Rightly so we also added that enhancing collaboration between members of the Society would be the way to get there [2].

Joining forces

The Board, the Assembly and several committees have discussed how to achieve closer relationships between professionals in youth mental health. Some of us came up with ambitious ideas like increasing the frequency of

conferences even further—this already had been doubled after Florence 2007—and start organizing smaller in-between events. Others pleaded for important projects such as setting the standards for European diagnostic and treatment guidelines and protocols [3], or even for ESCAP to raise an army unit of knowledge logistics to improve child psychiatry [4]. I cheer to all these ideas. I applaud to all who call for joining forces.

Sustainable relationships

In the meantime we had to be realistic and take up these ambitions step-by-step. Starting with the exchange of youth psychiatric knowledge on a more modest scale seemed wise at the time—without forgetting about the greater goals we may reach after taking more and more of these small steps. Budget and staffing constraints forced us to adjust short-term goals, but also inspired us to be creative. Last year, before the Dublin 2013 Congress, we decided that we had to set up a grid, a structure that would allow us to start the step-by-step development of a European community. We needed a platform that would facilitate closer cooperation and exchange. A vision on how to improve international, sustainable relationships in child and adolescent psychiatry was published in the ESCAP Journal last February [5]. This article was adopted by the Board as the ESCAP policy for the implementation of alignment [6] and internet technology as a way to make our network work. The article concluded that an online meeting platform for professionals in all three ESCAP divisions (care, research and policy) should be the place where everyone may make use of the network—and contribute to it. This is indeed

about *giving and taking*. Provided that many of us will actually take an active part in the online platform, this platform may get the knowledge out of our office drawers, into the network. This platform brings a sound reputation and a boost to realize our mission within reach.

Substantial in-depth content

Today, many of those modest first steps have been taken to set up our own ESCAP Online. It is up and running now and not without success. Slowly it begins to show the achievements we were after. The first step, initiated by our Board Member professor Çuhadaroğlu Çetin, included some 33 web pages with member information, indispensable for getting acquainted with each other's most important strengths and weaknesses [7]. We simplified the rather cryptic URL from the past into the much easier www.escap.eu and developed the website from scratch. Before being able to gather knowledge from our member countries, we thought we had *to give* first. Aiming for a reputation as a credible and reliable online branch of ESCAP, a large quantity of substantial content was developed and published, together with a number of practical service items (congress agenda, news pages, ECAP Journal contents and many ways to get into contact with colleagues and other experts). Today the substantial, often in-depth content includes full documentation of the last congress (abstracts, presentations, etc.), extensive interviews with some of the best experts in child and adolescent psychiatry including the keynote speakers at our next Madrid conference [8], previews of the newest research publications, and much more.

More functionality is on its way or already online. The new Twitter stream (@ESCAPonline) is a very quick and compact way of staying updated on international youth psychiatry news; the complete programme of the Madrid 2015 Congress is accompanied by a treasure of background information and a special section for international job and research opportunities is being developed now.

Taking part

Personally I get more and more enthusiastic about ESCAP Online as an instrument that strongly supports our mission and purposes. The next Presidency will represent a younger generation and will, no doubt, introduce even more state-of-the-art (and I'm sure *online*) techniques that will help us develop our ESCAP community.

So we will continue building, step-by-step—there is one activity though, that has to be done by our colleagues and knowledge holders everywhere in Europe and that is joining ESCAP Online. Start with paying us a visit at escap.eu and you will almost certainly be tempted to take part in *giving and taking* in the interest of the children and their mental health.

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