



**EFPA**

**WORKING GROUP ON  
DISASTER AND CRISIS  
Convenor : SALLI SAARI**

**REPORT to the  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2003 in VIENNA**

To EFPA General Assembly VIENNA, July 2003

## Report on the activities of the working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology

### **The members of the working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology**

EFPA Executive Council asked me (Salli Saari, Finland) to form a working group on the field of Disaster and Crisis Psychology. I asked four specialists to join the group: Atle Dyregrov (Norway), Anders Korsgaard (Denmark), Eva Muenker-Kramer (Austria) and William Yule (United Kingdom). I have worked as the convenor of the working group. All the work of the working group has happened through e-mail. The first meeting of the group will take place during the European Congress of Psychology in Vienna.

### **Period of the working group**

The period of the working group has been two years from EFPA General Assembly in London July 2001 to General Assembly in Vienna 2003. Actually it took almost a year to get the initiative of EFPA Executive Council and to collect the group.

### **The tasks of the working group**

The working group on disaster and crisis psychology continues the work of the Task Force, which gave its final report in General Assembly 1999.

As a central task the working group decided to support the efforts of Member Associations on the field of Disaster and Crisis Psychology. The group worked with this task in two ways. Its purpose was to produce material and models on, what Member Associations can do and how they can work on this field. The second way was to help Member Associations by consultation on all questions they had.

### **Activities of the working group**

#### 1) Consultations

The working group got three questions for consultation. The Association of Greek Psychologists asked for professional help in negotiation of an agreement with the International Airport of Athens in order to provide psychological support during crisis situations such as plane accidents etc. The convenor of the working group sent a reply to the questions for comments to members of the working group and after comments to the Association of Greek Psychologists.

The second initiative came from the Slovak Chamber of Psychologists. They were interested to organise a competent training of psychologists in Crisis and Disaster Psychology. As the convenor of the working group I forwarded the initiative to Eva Muenker-Kramer, because I know Austrian Association of Psychologists has made excellent plans for training psychologists in this field and it has also organised the work in the association in a way, which can be taken as a good model. I also thought that many Slovakian psychologist know German better than English. There can also be other aspect supporting the collaboration of

Associations, which are geographically near each other. The collaboration and planning of training program has already started.

The third request came from the International Committee of British Psychological Society. The committee was interested to know from the EFPA Task Force on Crisis and Disaster, about current work, which is being done on a European level in relation to disasters. The Committee was particularly interested to know about work is being done, or is planned, around psychological contributions to conflict resolution, as well as on post-crisis management. The Committee was sent the final report of EFPA Task Force on Disaster and Crisis Psychology with the information that the working group has concentrated in disaster and crisis, which happen during the peace and has not made any effort for psychological contributions to conflict resolution or post-crisis management.

To make the work of the group still more effective the group sent a letter by help of EFPA Head Office to all Member Associations. In the letter we informed Member Association about the existent and work of the working group. We also hoped that Member Associations would send initiatives and questions to the group and informed them that the group will try to help them in all possible ways. After this letter there has not been any contacts from Member Associations to the working group.

## 2) Initiatives to European Congress of Psychology in Vienna

The working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology has made two proposals for symposium in European Congress of Psychology in Vienna. The idea of the proposals is to produce information, how psychosocial support and services for victims of disasters are organised in different countries and to give good working models in the field. One of the proposals concerns just in this topic. The convenor of the working group has asked for four persons or organisations to give their contribution to the symposium: Anders Korsgaard from Denmark, where the psychosocial support and services in disasters is organised through central hospitals, A team of crisis workers (Järnefelt et others) in town Nokia in Finland, which gives an example how to organise the services locally, Tuula Hynninen, researcher in National Research and Development Centre of Welfare in Finland, who has promised to represent results of a research on the work of local crisis teams in Finland and a presentation from Austria about the same topic.

The second proposal for symposium was on psychosocial support and services in major disaster with four presentations: Elizabeth Carll from USA, New York, who will tell about psychological work with victims of the terror attack to World Trade Center, Angelika Schrodtr from Germany will present a paper on the work with victims of the aircraft accident near lake Constance, Salli Saari and a head occupational nurse of Finnair will give a paper on work done in Finnair after September 11:th. The wish of the group was that the Association of Austrian Psychologists could arrange a presentation also to this symposium. It is the task of congress organisers to make further consideration of the proposals.

To collect these presentations into one report is one of the tasks of the working group.

## 3) Initiatives to European Union

One proposal of the Task Force on Disaster and Crisis Psychology, which gave its final report in London 2001, was that EFPA should make an initiative to European Union for organising

psychosocial support and services to victims of major disaster on European level. The working group made a proposal to EFPA Executive Council to take carry on with this proposal for example by finding the person who is responsible in European union on these matters. The work is going on in this matter.

#### 4) Collaboration with the Violence and Disaster Committee for International Division of American Psychological Association

The members of the EFPA Working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology have been invited to collaborate with the Violence and Disaster Committee for International Division of American Psychological Association by its chair Elizabeth Carll. The collaboration is just beginning and it will happen by e-mail.

### **Future tasks for EFPA and EFPA Member Associations**

The future tasks of EFPA and EFPA Member Associations formulated in the final report of the Task Force on Disaster and Crisis Psychology are still actual. They were:

#### Tasks of EFPA Member Associations

The aims of political actions:

1. To get a statute in the national laws or regulations stating that the victims and rescue personnel of disasters should receive psychosocial support and services.
2. To define which organisation has the responsibility for organising psychosocial support and services after a disaster.
3. To make action plans for major disasters. These plans should include:
  - Naming the parties responsible for organising psychosocial support and services
  - The way in which the services will be organised (methods, personnel resources etc.)
  - timing of the services.
4. To negotiate with insurance companies so that they would start compensating for the costs of crisis and trauma therapy for the victims of disasters (accidents, robberies etc.)
5. To take care of the specialisation training of psychologists in crisis and disaster psychology.
6. To take care of the quality standards for psychologists and other crisis workers and of the quality of the crisis work and traumatic stress management.

#### **The actions the EFPA will take in relation to the European Union:**

1. Do everything in its power to make the EU include psychosocial support and services in its civil crisis management plans.
2. Take actions in creating an emergency plan within the EU, which would include psychosocial support and services for major disasters in Europe.
3. To take care that enough financial resources are directed to this work.
4. To take care that in the case of major disaster in Europe there are enough trained personnel, who can be reached and used in psychosocial work after disasters.

### **The actions the EFPA will take in the field of disaster and crisis psychology:**

1. To support the National Associations in their efforts in this field
2. To organise workshops and symposia to make it possible for National Associations and their specialists to share experiences in organising psychosocial support and services, in training psychologists in this field and in different working methods and new applications in the field.
3. To support international training of psychologists in crisis and disaster psychology
4. To support on the European level the co-ordination and co-working of disaster and crisis psychologists in multinational disasters and crisis.

### **Conclusion**

The way the working group on disaster and crisis has worked has not been effective. The contacts with Member Associations have been too loose and there have been only few initiatives or consultations from the member Associations. There are many special organisations and congresses on the field of disaster, crisis and trauma psychology. There is no need for EFPA to compete with these organisations.

The important question is: Do EFPA or Member Associations have special tasks on the field of disaster and crisis psychology? Should they play an active role in this field? I think they should and then next question is how to organise the work in the way that it supports EFPA and Member Associations in most effective way.

My proposal is that the EFPA working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology continues its work as a “network” with one member of each EFPA Member Associations. The tasks of this member of the member Association in “network” are to inform the other members of the “network” of, what is going on the field in their country and association and to keep contact and inform their own association and psychologists active in this field in their country, what is going on in other countries and associations in Europe.

**Motion: EFPA General Assembly decides that the work on the field of Disaster and Crisis Psychology will be continued in EFPA by forming a “network on Disaster and Crisis Psychology”. Each Member Association can nominate a person to the “network”. The tasks of the “network” are the change of information and experiences and enhance the work of EFPA and EFPA Member Associations on the field of Disaster and Crisis Psychology.**

Salli Saari

Convenor

EFPA working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology