



EFPA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
DISASTER AND CRISIS
Convenor : SALLI SAARI**

**REPORT to the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2007 in PRAGUE**

Report of EFPA Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology

Working period of the Standing Committee

Since the General Assembly meeting in Dublin, July 1997, EFPA has had a Task Force or working group on Disaster and Crisis Psychology. After the General assembly in Granada, July 2005 a Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology was established. The working period of this Standing Committee is from July 2005 to July 2007.

Scope of the Standing Committee

The past years have seen a rapid development in the field of disaster, crisis and trauma psychology. Catastrophes such as the tsunami in South-Eastern-Asia 2004, which also affected many European countries, and the terror attacks in Madrid and London have posed great challenges for disaster and crisis psychology in Europe. These disasters have raised the political interest in the need of psychological support and services for the victims in many European countries

Development in this field has been somewhat uneven in different parts of Europe, depending on local circumstances and actual existence of disasters and crisis situations. Also the role of psychologists in this field differs among European countries.

When the EFPA Executive Council nominated the former Task Force in disaster and crisis psychology, it also asked the Task Force to produce a report to EFPA Executive Council for the Council of Europe. "The Task Force will prepare a proposal to EFPA to be presented to the European Council concerning matters that European authorities should consider in prevention and handling of crisis and disaster situations. This would include

- 1) a basic statement on the importance of professional and scientific Disaster and Crisis Psychology in today's Europe
- 2) a short outline of conclusions from scientific research and professional practice relevant to this field
- 3) concrete proposals concerning the European and national legislation, organisation and training in this field."

The Task Force completed this work before the EFPA General Assembly in Granada 2005 and this report was sent to officials of the Council of Europe. This was the starting point of the Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology and of the work described in this report.

During this period the work of the Standing Committee can be divided into three areas:

- 1) Developing the organisation and status of disaster, crisis and trauma psychology in Member Associations of EFPA
- 2) Collaboration projects with Council of Europe
- 3) Following the development of the field in different European countries and in different national and international disasters and catastrophes.

Meetings and work of the Standing Committee

At the General Assembly in Granada 2005, the Task Force asked the large European countries and Associations to nominate members to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee has had 19 members from 18 European Countries (one member was nominated from EFPSA) and all large Associations in EFPA nominated a member in the Standing Committee. This has been a very important factor in the work of the Standing Committee. The membership in the Standing Committee has appeared to be so important that our Committee suggest that there should be a possibility for Member Associations to nominate a substitute member in the case that the member of the Standing Committee is unable to take part in the meeting and work of the Committee.

The Standing Committee has had four two day meetings and one three day joint meeting with the officials of Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The participation of members in the meetings has been very active. To achieve our aims we have used a strategy of nominating persons in charge of different areas and forming subgroups on essential topics and tasks of the committee. In this way we feel that the work of the Standing Committee has been fruitful and successful.

Developing the organisation and status of Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology in Member Associations

1) Network in disaster and crisis psychology

One of the aims of the former EFPA Task Force was to form a network in the field of disaster and crisis psychology. This aim was supported by the officials of the Council of Europe.

The Task Force started this work and the Standing Committee has continued with it first by clearing up the different ways to organise this work and expertise in the Associations. Some Associations have a division in the field of disaster and crisis psychology, some have an expert group of psychologists working in various tasks in this field, but there are still many Associations where there is or has not been any such organisation. The Task Force and also the Standing Committee chose a strategy where the first step in forming a network was to form a workgroup on disaster and crisis psychology within the Association. The former Task Force sent a letter about this to member Associations. At the European Congress in Granada a meeting was organised by the Task Force on this matter and the Standing Committee sent a new letter of the same topic to Member Associations.

From our meetings in the Standing Committee we know that great progress has been made on this topic in many countries. Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain and Turkey had such an organisation already in 2005. Norway, Greece, Italy and United Kingdom were inspired to organise it by the work of EFPA group. We have also made contact with such a group in Switzerland. But there are still many countries and Associations which do not have such organisation. This means that this work will continue and the Standing Committee will organise a meeting with delegates of EFPA Member Associations on this topic during the European congress in Prague.

The wish of the Council of Europe is that the end product of forming a network on crisis and disaster psychology would be a list of expert psychologists in each European country/Association, which can be mobilised for crisis work when such services are needed in the home country or abroad.

2) Basic training of psychologists in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology

The former Task Force recommended that each Member Association ensures that every psychologist has a basic knowledge in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology. This is an aim we are still working to achieve. The Standing Committee has decided on a recommendation of the content of the training in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology, which every psychologists should get, included in the basic training programme organised for example by the Psychological Association in the respective countries. We would like more activity from the Member Associations on this topic and will address this further in the meeting of delegates of Member Associations organised by the Standing Committee during the European Congress in Prague.

The proposal of the standing Committee for the content of the basic training in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology is found in appendix 2.

Collaboration with Council of Europe

Delegates of EFPA and Council of Europe met on October 20th, 2005 in Strasbourg to discuss collaboration and EFPA's contribution in planning and producing psychosocial support and services in the aftermath of disasters and crisis. The President of EFPA Tuomo Tikkanen, member of Executive Council Pierangelo Sardi and convenor of EFPA Task Force on Disaster and Crisis Psychology Salli Saari, were members of EFPA delegation and the Executive Secretary Eladio Fernandez-Galliano from Euro-Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement and Francesc Pla Castellort from the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage represented Council of Europe. We had also a possibility to meet a lawyer that works with terrorism matters during the meeting. Also Riccardo Venturini, a psychologist from the republic of San Marino, took part in the meeting.

The EFPA Task Force on disaster and crisis had prepared a report for the Council of Europe and this report was accepted at the EFPA General Assembly in July in Granada. This report was sent to the delegates of Council of Europe before the meeting.

As a result of the meeting some concrete agreements were made:

- 1) On the basis of the EFPA Task Force report a printed publication will be produced in collaboration with the EFPA Standing Committee on disaster, crisis and trauma psychology and the Council of Europe. The delegates of Council of Europe had a specific wish that the report should include good and bad examples of crisis interventions. They promised to send us a list of detailed requests with which the report will be completed.
- 2) The EFPA Standing Committee on disaster, crisis and trauma psychology was invited to have their next meeting in Strasbourg with delegates of the Council of Europe. This meeting would take place during the spring of 2006. In this meeting the collaboration of EFPA and Council of Europe will be discussed in detail.
- 3) A broader meeting or seminar with delegates from all European countries (The Council of Europe has 46 member states) could take place next autumn. The aim is to form a European network of psychologists with expertise in disaster, crisis and trauma area.
- 4) We also discussed also the need for a training program for those countries where there is lacking knowledge in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology. This is the case especially in former East European countries. The meeting made plans to

organise the first training days next year. There were even discussion of where this training could take place and Prague was proposed to be an excellent choice.

- 5) In the meeting we also learned about how Council of Europe works with different matters. Standard setting and then monitoring is their common way in promoting important matters. There were even discussions to set standards in psychosocial support and services in disasters and crisis and that EFPA Standing Committee could take part in the preparation of such standards. Then after some years the Council of Europe could monitor what member states have done in the field and the EFPA Standing Committee could act as a watching and consulting group in this monitoring process. This procedure takes many years and that will mean a close collaboration between EFPA and the Council of Europe for many years.
- 6) EFPA as a Federation is not a wealthy organisation and aspects of finance were raised by the EFPA delegates. The Council of Europe has limited financial resources, too, but they promised to study possibilities and sources to get financial support from the European Union.

These conclusions were discussed in the EFPA Standing Committee and many of the ideas were accepted and further prepared. In May 2006 the EFPA Standing Committee had a joint meeting with Eladio Fernandez-Galliano at the Council of Europe. In this meeting members of the Standing Committee presented various papers and proposals:

- bullet points of the content of psychological support in different stages of crisis and how the help should be organised
- proposal of aims, objectives and content of the training needed in different tasks in the field of disaster, crisis and trauma psychology
- material collected from different European countries on lessons learned in major disasters
- training of trainers in those countries in need for training in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology
- developing an agreement of assessment and screening methods in the field
- proposal of forming a review team in psychosocial support and crisis work
- the stage of forming a network of crisis psychologists

The proposals of the Standing Committee got a warm reception from the officials of the Council of Europe and the preparation of these proposals has continued in the meetings of the Standing Committee and meanwhile by members or group of members of the Standing Committee. The next the stage of the preparation is described in more detail.

1) Psychosocial support and services for victims of disaster. Council of Europe Recommendations (wish list)

Executive secretary Eladio Fernandez-Galliano asked the Standing Committee to prepare a “wish list” of what kind of regulations on psychosocial support and services that each state should fulfil in its crisis organisation. This wish list was prepared in the Standing Committee first by collecting the proposals of each member of the Standing Committee and then by developing a common proposal following a thorough discussion. This proposal was sent to the EFPA Executive Council for decision and then on to the Council of Europe. The proposal is found in appendix 3.

The reaction from the officials of the Council of Europe was that the text is indeed a very useful guidance for states. The official of the Council of Europe promised to transform it into a draft recommendation for the attention of governments, to be possibly adopted by the Committee of

Permanent Correspondents (CPC) of the Agreement. Delegates from the Standing Committee will be invited to present the proposal in this meeting in the end of September 2007 in Bucharest.

2) EFPA Psychological Review team

Aim

In order to more systematically gather psychosocial lessons learned from disasters the EFPA Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis, and Trauma Psychology propose to create a review team that can travel to disaster areas. This team will gather and evaluate the lessons learned from the psychosocial intervention and make these lessons available for all nations in the event of new disasters. It is important to review both positive and negative learning. A structured protocol should be developed for data collection

Composition of the team

The team will be composed of a small group of psychologists from the EFPA Standing Committee on Disaster and Crisis Psychology with broad experience from previous disasters. The team may be supplemented by other experts or professional groups. The team will have two permanent members, while one member is seconded based on the situation at hand. The review team will aim to collaborate with local professional organizations.

Time frame

The team aim to visit the area within the first 6 months after the disaster, but not within the first month. This will make it possible to both evaluate the immediate psychosocial intervention efforts, and the planning and first phase of the long term intervention.

Method

To be able to achieve the aims mentioned above, the following data gathering will be undertaken:

- Interview key personnel involved in disaster management and psychosocial follow-up, including NGOs
- Interview key persons in support groups formed by survivors and bereaved
- Interview community leaders
- Gather written reports including self-report data

Foci for review

The review will gather information on several aspects of the psychosocial intervention:

- Immediate intervention
- Short-term intervention
- Plans for long-term intervention

Among the aspects evaluated will be:

- Assessment methods used
- Structure of psychosocial follow-up
- Overview of organisations involved in follow-up
- Training and background of those involved in service provision
- Transnational challenges
- Use of professional resources
- Financing of follow-up
- Turf issues and problems of coordination, communication and command

Result

The review should result in the following

- Brief reports that list lessons learned and implications for
 - Disaster preparedness and prevention
 - Immediate and long-term intervention
 - Collaboration between helpers within and across borders
 - Assessment
- Reports to be put in bullet point form on EFPA and European Council webpages

Reports will be made available for personnel involved in disaster planning as well as professionals involved in psychosocial disaster work.

A proposal with this content and exact budget has been sent to the Council of Europe. The feedback from the Council of Europe was that “as this is a “disaster dependent” activity, the proposal will be presented to CPC for discussion in September. Most of the finances will have to be found after an event, as they exceed the usual funds devoted to such service, but money is always easier to find after a disaster.”

3) Document “lessons learned, European countries”

Members of the Standing Committee have produced a document called “Lessons learned”. This document consists of 16 descriptions of major disasters in Europe. The crisis work after each disaster has been described by early interventions, long-term interventions and evaluation and implication for future including also a summary and chapter of conclusions.

This document is ready to be sent to the Council of Europe. If they find it appropriate and useful they have promised to print it as a Council of Europe publication and they also provide funding for it. Meanwhile they propose to print it as a “working paper” and distribute it to states. The idea is that the work done receives a wide publicity and is made available to states, specialists and the general public.

4) Training of trainers

The development in the field of disaster, crisis and trauma psychology varies a lot in European countries. There are countries that lack knowledge and training, which also means that the victims of disaster do not get appropriate help. One project the Standing Committee has worked actively with is an international training project; training of trainers.

The idea in this training is to choose countries where there is need for such training and then invite at least two delegates from each country to the training. The proposal is that the Council of Europe takes the responsibility of financing this training so that both training and travelling will be free of charge for the participants.

The main target group should be psychologists, but we have to recognise that things may be organised differently in different countries. In any case we are committed to multiprofessional responding. Therefore we suggest that if two people attend from a given country, at least one should be an experienced psychologist. Part of the training, even at this introductory level, should be on how to train others.

The Standing Committee will invite delegates from such countries, who we think could be interested in this training in a meeting during the European Congress in Prague to discuss the idea and to get more information of what is needed.

The Council of Europe has commented our plans with a wish that they would love to see a training course to start already this year.

5) Developing an agreement of assessment and screening methods

This topic was discussed in the joint meeting in Strasbourg. The aim of the project is to equip all EU/CE countries with reliable and valid tools to be able to assess effects of crisis and disasters in survivors and bereaved. The aim is also to have measures suitable for children and adults and to look at broad functions, not just PTSD as defined by ICD or APA but Post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression, anxiety, grief, impact on functioning etc.. The aim is also to find process measures such as measures of cognitive distortion, other predictive/moderator measures, screening instruments, diagnostic interviews etc.

The idea is to organise a workshop in this topic to find and agree on the measures useful for this purpose. Part of the workshop would be to consider best practice in adapting measures for different countries/languages/cultures, and issues related to translation, back translation, pilot, standardise, reliability and validity.

The Standing committee plans to make a detailed proposal to the Council of Europe for organising such kind of workshop, but this will be a task of the future Standing Committee.

6) Tsunami disaster- European report

In the joint meeting in Strasbourg in connection with the document “Lessons learned” an idea of a report of the crisis work done in European countries with the victims of the tsunami disaster came up. The Standing Committee plans to send a questionnaire to those nine most affected countries in Europe. The first version of the questionnaire is ready and it has been discussed in the meeting of the Standing Committee.

Collecting the data and making a report of it will also be the task of the future Standing Committee.

Contribution of the Standing Committee in Congresses

During the working period the Standing committee has contributed in three congresses. The Standing Committee carried out a symposium in IAAP world Congress in Athens 2006. A member of the Standing Committee was also one of the keynote speakers of the Congress.

The members of the Standing Committee had a meaningful contribution also in the conference “Citizens and resilience – the balance between awareness and fear” in den Haag in November 2006. This conference was organised by Impact, the Dutch knowledge & advice centre for post-disaster psychosocial care. The conference was financed by European Union. Ten members of the Standing Committee took part in this conference in the delegations of their own countries.

At the European Congress in Prague July 2007 the Standing Committee has organised two invited symposiums: One of the “Psychological Core in Crisis Interventions” and one on “Long-Term Intervention after Disasters”.

Web-page of the Standing Committee on disaster, crisis and trauma psychology

During the working period the Standing Committee has produced its own web-page as a part of the web-page of EFPA. This has meant a lot of work and Atle Dyregrov, who took the responsibility of the web-page has overcome great technical difficulties in producing the page. Important information on disaster, crisis and trauma can now be accessed at the site. Gradually material relevant for each EFPA member states has appeared on the page.

Collaboration with other organisations

The Standing Committee has discussed of collaboration with various organisations in the crisis field, such as International Red Cross, WHO etc.

Managing Director of Psychologists, Psychiatrists and Social Workers Without Borders, Pam Ryan asked for a possibility to present their organisation to the EFPA Standing Committee and to discuss collaboration. Members of the Standing Committee put forward some critical comments about the activities of the organisation. We saw as a main problem that the organisation was active in too many areas. Our opinion was that such organisations should concentrate on a few important tasks. Although the organisation had a lot of contacts to different organisations, professionals and politicians, they had only a few contacts to Europe.

The result of the discussion was that we keep doors open to collaboration, but we did not decide on a detailed content for collaboration.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Standing Committee

Implications for EFPA Member Associations

- 1) The Standing Committee emphasizes the importance of actions of Member Associations in the field of disaster and crisis psychology. The proposal of the Standing Committee still is that every Member Association takes the initiative to set up some special organisation for those psychologists working in the field of disaster and crisis psychology. This organisation can be a division or a subgroup in the association. The Standing Committee wish to establish contact to all these organisations to ensure that over time there will be access to a number of contacts in each state that may be easily mobilised in the event of disaster. This would be the end product in producing a network of psychologists in Europe to be used in cross-border crisis and disaster situations.
- 2) The Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology strongly advises that as many as possible, but at least the largest Member Associations, nominate a delegate (and also a substitute for him/her) to the future committee. This is important for effective work of the Standing Committee.
- 3) The Standing Committee recommends that each Member Association ensures that every psychologist has basic knowledge in disaster, crisis and trauma psychology.

Implications for EFPA

- 1) To set up a Standing Committee on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology

- 2) To ensure the continuity of the work of the Standing Committee
- 3) To support the Standing Committee in the collaboration with the Council of Europe.
- 4) To allocate appropriate resources for the work and activities of the Standing Committee

Appendix 1

The members of the Standing Committee

Tuomo Tikkanen, EC Liaison

Salli Saari, Finland, Convenor

Eva Muenker-Kramer, Austria

Olivier Serniclaes, Belgium

Jana Malikova, Czeck Republic

Stelios Georgiades, Cyprus

Anders Korsgaard Christensen, Denmark

Dominique Szepielak, France

Georg Pieper, Germany

Vassiliki Boukouvala, Greece

Isabel Fernandez, Italy

Marc Stein, Luxemburg

Magda Rooze, Netherlands

Atle Dyregrov, Norway

Nubbia Reggini, San Marino

Marko Polic, Slovenia

Catherine Perello Scherdel, Spain

Eva Håkanson, Sweden

Nuray Karanci, Turkey

William Yule, United Kingdom

Ben Teeuwen, EFPSA

Appendix 2

Basic Training/Course in Trauma and Crisis Psychology for Psychology Undergraduate Programs

Aims:

The aim of the course is to ensure that all psychologists have a basic knowledge of trauma, crisis and disaster psychology, if they are called upon to assist. The training will provide students of psychology departments with an understanding of disasters and traumatic events, psychosocial consequences and processes in disasters and crisis situations and an overview of basic methods of assessing and responding to psychosocial needs of both children and adults. An awareness of ethical principles and human rights will also be developed.

Objectives:

After taking the course the students will:

- 1. have an understanding of disaster and crisis situations and traumatic events**
- 2. have developed an understanding of the normal psychological adaptation process and its stages following the disasters and of psychosocial consequences, such as loss of resources; psychosocial needs; psychological, behavioral, cognitive, physical and emotional symptoms, including acute and post-traumatic stress disorder and syndromes that are related to these situations**
- 3. have an understanding of the disaster and crisis management institutions and procedures in their countries, and transnational agencies**
- 4. have developed a basic knowledge in the assessment of psychosocial needs**
- 5. have learned some basic psychosocial intervention methods**
- 6. have developed an understanding of self-care for workers in disasters and /or traumatic events**
- 7. have an understanding of ethical issues involved in work with disaster and traumatic event survivors**

Content:

- 1. Disasters and traumatic events:
Definitions , characteristics and negative events/stressors associated with disasters , potentially traumatic events and crisis
Populations affected by these events (both children, adolescents and adults)**
- 2. Organisations and procedures involved in disaster management and crisis work in the specific country. Disaster plans and national mental health services.**
- 3. Psychological reactions to trauma and disasters, the normal psychological adaptation process and its stages following the disasters and related disorders (dissociation; ASD; PTSD; depression) in the emergency/acute; intermediate and long-term phases**
- 4. Aims and processes of early, intermediate and long-term psycho-social intervention**

5. Aims methods and processes of various methods of disaster and /or crisis interventions: Aims, timing, main principles and procedures for Psychological First Aid and early mental health follow-up

6. Principles and methods of help for more specific psychological problems: Introduction and overview of evidence based trauma treatments. (e.g; CBT, Prolonged exposure & EMDR)

7. Long-term psycho-social support: Fostering skills for preparedness, and community organisation for self-help.

8. Values and ethics: Human rights, confidentiality and trust

9. Stress management skills and self care

Appendix 3

Psychosocial support and services for victims of disaster Council of Europe Recommendations

Adequate psychosocial intervention following disasters can reduce ill health and foster resilience if handled appropriately. The council of Europe wants the citizens of Europe to have access to comparable services regardless of where they live. By a more systematic focus on psychosocial support within each member state's emergency planning, by proper training of volunteers and professionals, and by describing a minimum level of care for those who experience disasters, this aim can be reached. The following recommendations to member states will ensure that a similar level of care will be accessible for those who become victims of a disaster throughout Europe:

Following disasters, survivors, bereaved and rescue personnel have the right to access appropriate help and services free of charge. To guarantee this, psychosocial support has to be integrated in national laws and regulations, and be part of all emergency plans. Action plans should be available on national, regional and local level and include the following elements: a) coordination of psychosocial resources and activation plans from the federal to the local level, b) mapping the trauma risks within a country with its possible psychosocial consequences, c) mapping resources available for psychosocial support, d) designate parties responsible for organising and delivering psychosocial support, e) include psychosocial resources in emergency drills and exercises, f) description of the services that survivors and bereaved have the right to access including community support, and the duration of services.

To ensure that professionals and volunteers who work with the victims of disaster have adequate and sufficient training for the work, trainings have to be instigated at all levels, following recommendations to be developed by the Council of Europe.

Psychosocial support and services should include the following important elements:

- a. Psychological first aid should be available for all survivors and bereaved immediately after disaster. Adequate information systems that secure early identification of those involved, embedded in a caring environment, reduce the mental strain of individuals and families, and should be prioritized in the early help efforts
- b. Out-reach early interventions should be actively offered to bereaved families and survivors
- c. Screening should be undertaken (1-3 months after the disaster) to ensure that effective treatment is available for people at risk
- d. Culturally sensitive long term follow-up for individuals, families and communities that experience significant mental distress over time as a result of the disaster
- e. Special efforts should be taken to ensure that children get appropriate services and assistance
- f. Specific concern and approach for vulnerable or highly exposed group.

Modern disasters often cross borders, and the Council of Europe will coordinate country plans to ensure that responses that require across border cooperation can be undertaken in a smooth manner.