

Founded in 1993 in Utrecht, Netherlands

**EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR ALL PSYCHIATRIC TRAINEES**

## **A guide to establishing and maintaining new national psychiatric trainee associations**

Dear colleagues,

One of the priorities detailed in the EFPT action plan 2008-2009 was to attract new candidate members to the EFPT and highlight the benefits our organisation offers to the trainees in all fields of psychiatry across Europe. We have been successful in inviting many new members as observers this year, who will have the opportunity to become full members of EFPT at the next annual Forum in Croatia.

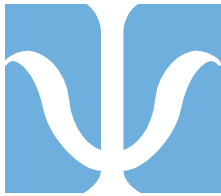
Although the EFPT policy has always been to welcome all trainees, only national trainee organisations can become full members. We are aware that the efforts of new countries to form a national association often fail and only a few countries have been able to successfully establish formal trainee representation. The reasons for this are often complex but identifying the most common hurdles in the process of setting up a national organisation and suggesting practical ways to overcome them may assist in the smooth transition from observer to full member status.

Thus, the Board has decided to develop *A Guide to Establishing and Maintaining New National Psychiatric Trainee Associations* and set up the National Associations Working Group with the aim of helping all new observers invited to the Cambridge Forum to organise their national associations effectively in the forthcoming year.

We hope you will find the guide user-friendly, and full of practical advice to help you form a successful trainee association in your country!

Amit Malik  
EFPT President

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EFPT President Elect



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## A Guide to Establishing and Maintaining New National Psychiatric Trainee Associations

- ***STEP 1. Getting the idea: utilising existing international young psychiatrists' networks to recruit younger participants***

Although global trainee and young psychiatrists' organisations are scarce, and the EFPT is the only Europe-wide trainee organisation, participating in the activities of other organisations is a good opportunity to interact with other networks and take advantage of the benefits they offer to their members (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Getting the idea!

- ***STEP 2. Decision: Forming a national organisation? Why?***

Before you decide to initiate the process of setting up a national trainee organisation in your country, you must think carefully about the aims you would like to achieve and potential benefits of such an organisation. Here are some points to consider:

1. Although problems trainees face differ from country to country, e.g. poor performance of their residency training in practice, outmoded regulatory legislation, failure to prepare residents for the challenges of everyday psychiatric practice, mentorship problems, etc., they affect most trainees in that country. These trainees will, most often, welcome practical solutions to these problems and can do so by networking with other trainees in a similar situation, thus finding effective ways to improve their training systems.

A national organisation becomes more than just a small group of individuals trying to improve certain problems in residency training - it has the power to speak for all trainees in the country. You are no longer perceived as "a few complaining trainees" but are regarded as "representatives of trainees". This gives you a new identity and a new position within the national psychiatric community – you become active participants in the matters concerning you directly, i.e. your residency training. It is also worth remembering that an organisation of young psychiatrists can attract positive attention of your senior colleagues who may become invaluable allies in improving problems in your residency training.

2. Most residents engage in various social networks during their residency training and although the primary motivation to join them is not necessarily to use them for any specific purpose they nonetheless provide an excellent opportunity for our professional development and help us shape the direction our profession should follow.

You can utilise these networks to form your national organisation which, in turn, will allow you to:

- form a community united around the same goals
  - recognise specific strengths of your members which you can use to achieve your goals
  - reach all members of your community
  - engage in scientific, research, educational and other activities using the established networks
  - empower trainees to take an active role in shaping training in your country
3. Effective trainees' participation in the development of national mental healthcare and educational policies can only be achieved through adequate representation in the relevant national bodies. Forming an active trainee organisation will certainly help you achieve this goal.
  4. The longstanding relationship between national and international young psychiatrist and trainee organisations is of great benefit to both and cannot be overstated. In fact, the EFPT was first established by the leaders of several European trainee and young psychiatrist organisations and today it provides inspiration, guidance and support networks to those who wish to establish trainee organisations in their own countries. The growing network of national organisations is a measure of success of EFPT and its global counterparts in shaping specialist training at national level. National trainee organisations help to build a coherent trainee community and can have a formal representation in relevant national bodies. This often provides an international platform for promoting the trainee agenda. It is therefore essential that your national trainee organisation is well structured, has clear aims, and follows the motto: think globally, act locally!

- ***STEP 3. Let's get started - preparation!***

Good planning and preparation is of utmost importance for the future of your new organisation. Below you will find some useful pointers to consider before initiating the process:

1. Do not start alone – it is good to have a few people sharing your ideas and enthusiasm! Two or three trainees you can rely on can help you form a nucleus of your organisation and share the workload.

2. Define clear and achievable goals and objectives of the association and keep them always in mind!
3. Define the criteria for membership: e.g. trainees only or, trainees and young psychiatrists? Regular members only or honorary older members that can help you?
4. Decide whether your new trainee association should be a part of a national psychiatric association or an independent trainee organisation (Table 1). If you think it would be easier to achieve your objectives as part of a national psychiatric association you should consider the following:
  - a. Decide which national association to approach if there are more than one
  - b. If your objective is to represent all psychiatric residents, an association representing all psychiatric specialties is probably the best option (i.e. a national psychiatric association is probably more suitable than a forensic psychiatry association)
  - c. Identify the strengths of the national psychiatric association you are planning to approach – will they be able and willing to help you when you need them most – at the start?
  - d. Try to gauge the attitudes of the leaders of the potential mother organisations towards the formation of a trainee section and what their expectations would be!
  - e. Be flexible and cooperative with your mother organisation!
  - f. Discuss funding options available (this is better done after the initial development steps have been taken)

Table 1. Issues to consider when establishing an independent national trainee organisation vs. a trainee section within a mother national psychiatric organisation

<i>Independent national trainee organisation</i>	<i>National trainee organisation as a part of a mother national psychiatric association</i>
Greater feeling of independence and autonomy	Potential independence on trainee issues, but within the confines of the rules of mother organisation
May be attractive to residents	Possibly more attractive to some residents but not to others
Starting without the support from senior colleagues, leaders in your country	Starting with the support of senior colleagues, leaders in your country
Starting without the mentor	Starting with a mentor
Looking for financial support can take a lot of your time and energy	The opportunity to have financial support from the mother organisation, and learn from their fundraising experience
No "mentors"	The stigma of being a youth structure within your mother organisation
Potentially difficult to motivate all residents join and start a network	Access to established networks of your mother organisation and potential to reach all residents through senior colleagues

5. Seek legal advice on how new organisations are constituted in your country.
6. Organise a Founding Assembly – make every effort to invite all trainees to attend the Founding Assembly. You can contact them directly if you have a register of trainees in your country, or by using personal contacts. You can also send invitations to all hospital managers and other leaders of psychiatric training facilities. A signature of the president of your mother organisation, if you have one, may be a good incentive. Take minutes of the Founding Assembly and any other legally required documents.
7. Prepare well for the Founding Assembly. Decide how you want to present the idea, what you want to achieve and prepare a formal agenda for the meeting. Your agenda should include items such as funding for your organisation, election of officers to form a board, setting up a working group or temporary board to develop a legal framework

and to initiate the operation of the organisation. Your board or working group should include representatives of different psychiatric centres and specialties, if relevant, to ensure that most residents have their representatives on this board. However, try to keep the number of representatives to 15. Any more than that and it will be very difficult to gather at the regular meetings.

**Table 2. Seven easy steps to get you started!**

<i>Step</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
1	Do not start alone – form a nucleus of the organisation
2	Define goals
3	Define membership
4	Independent national organisation or daughter organisation
5	Prepare for the Founding Assembly
6	Consult a legal expert
7	Organise a Founding Assembly

- **STEP 4. What now? Form a successful national organisation!**

1. **Goals and activities**

The aims and objectives you defined at the outset should always be at the forefront of your activities motivating your next steps. However, now that you have laid the firm foundations of your association and are planning your first activities, you should define your objectives in greater detail, breaking them down into specific actions. Be as detailed as you can, and focus on smaller and realistically achievable goals to begin with. Here are a few examples:

- a. If your general goal is to improve the educational system in your country, some specific actions that would help you achieve this would be to:
  - i. Identify the shortcomings – do not rely on subjective individual opinions – carry out a survey of residents to elicit their feedback on your training system. If you have representatives of all residents on your Board it should be easy to approach all the trainees in your country for their views. Your results would then be representative and consistent and could then be presented to policy makers in your country at a congress or in a journal, or both! Nothing attracts the attention of professors like residents' criticisms!
  - ii. Organise a symposium for residents to address a specific problem with training and invite educational policy makers. It would be a smart move to also invite representatives of other national organisations whose systems you would like to emulate.
  - iii. Arrange master classes/workshops run by experts to address any parts of your residency training that are particularly deficient or underperforming. Focus on something of importance to residents, e.g. legal responsibilities, how to make a poster presentation, etc.
  - iv. Evaluate your activities

2. **Active members**

The essential driving force in any organisation is its members. Try to appoint active, motivated and hard working members to your Board as this will help you to achieve your objectives – you will be able to delegate work to others. At the same time, it is important to stay on top of things and make sure all the

allocated tasks are carried out. Don't be disheartened if some of the members lose interest. It's best to be flexible and accommodating in the early stages of your organisation's life when changes are inevitable.

### 3. **Networking**

- a. Having a vibrant national trainee network throughout your country is an invaluable asset. It allows you to access all or most of trainees in your country to enlist their help, carry out surveys, invite them to conferences and training events, etc.
- b. International trainee networks are equally important and you have already taken the first steps in this direction by utilising the EFPT network. International networks can be a great source of information on how training systems operate in other countries, what aspects of training work well, what is feasible and how to go about implementing changes to your residency training. Through international trainee collaboration we can learn from each other and implement good ideas in our educational systems. International networks can be useful in many ways:
  - i. Learn from other people's examples - look at the best solutions to problems and ask how they approached them – e.g. how to form your national association – is the EFPT model feasible in your country or does it need to be adapted to your circumstances
  - ii. Gain access to information and international expertise (e.g. potential speakers for your events)
  - iii. Collaborate with organisations experiencing similar problems and those offering solutions
  - iv. Gain access to other networks and possibilities for trainees and young psychiatrists
- c. Developing non-trainee links is also very important. It is always advisable to maintain links with policy makers in your field of interest. These would include ofcourse officers of your mother organisation (if you have one), the UEMS representatives of your national organisations, medical faculty representatives, or other decision makers depending on the system in your county.

### 4. **Communication**

This is closely related to networking – you can't hope to communicate well with your members without a functional network. Ensure robust means of communication from the start. If you do not have a national registry of residents in psychiatry, a good idea is to collect residents' contacts through your representatives on the Board. Offer residents regular updates on your organisation's activities. It is also worth investing in a website but you should ensure you have resources to update it regularly. You can also communicate with residents by emailing directors of their institutions, using the network of your mother organisation, if you have one.

### 5. **Legal framework of your organisation**

- a. **Constitution/Bylaws.** This is a cornerstone of your organisation so take time to prepare a constitution and bylaws for your organisation. Take legal advice, especially if you are setting out your organisation as part of the already existing one and fulfil all the requirements to be legally accepted by your mother organisation. When drafting a new constitution and bylaws, consult examples from other countries and organisations. Try to build into your constitution and bylaws solutions to any potential difficulties in your

organisation. Make sure your constitution and bylaws have mechanisms for introducing amendments.

- b. First elections.** If you have been operating as a working group rather than a Board a properly drafted constitution will allow you to form your organisation and organise elections in accordance with its principles. If you have already formed a Board prior to adopting a constitution, continue your work until the mandates of Board members expire under the provisions of your constitution and then organise your first elections. Either way, this is a very crucial stage.
- c. Trainee representation in relevant national bodies.** To have any effective impact on training and education, trainees must actively participate in the development of national mental healthcare and educational policies. Therefore, acquiring full and equal representation within relevant national bodies is a crucial step in that process. You can start with acquiring representation in various relevant structures of your mother organisation. All the experience and contacts you have accumulated thus far will prove useful in these initiatives.

## 6. Financing

Financing can often be challenging. To organise any event – workshop, symposium, etc. – the organisation needs funding. Raising funds usually takes a lot of effort but you will quickly learn to be creative, imaginative and resourceful! Here are some examples:

- a. ask your mother organisation – discuss different options of funding such as establishing an annual budget, obtaining financial support for a specific event, organising an event as part of a larger one, organised by your mother organisation
- b. learn from your mother organisation’ expertise and emulate their experience
- c. ask for donations in the same way your mother organisation does
- d. apply for funding – explore different options, including national and international funds for professional organisations
- e. explore the internet for funding options

## 7. Ensure continuity

Be persistent but patient – your organisation will need at least several years to get properly established and function efficiently! Do not get discouraged by poor attendance at your events to begin with! The average duration of residency training is too short to achieve all your goals! Therefore, your greatest achievement is the formation of an organisation with solid foundations thus allowing other generations of trainees to build on your work towards an organisation with a distinct identity and influence on educational policies. Consider this as your contribution to the creation of competent mental health professionals fit for tomorrow’s world. You have established the foundations for a successful national organisation! Congratulations!

Table 3. *Form a successful national organisation in 7 steps!*

<i>Step</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Define realistic goals and activities
2	Motivate working members
3	Form networks and utilise professional contacts
4	Establish means of communication
5	Provide your organisation with the legal frame
6	Develop financing strategies
7	Ensure continuity

