**Preface to the Special Issue: 50 years of FEPSAC**

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The 50th anniversary of FEPSAC is a milestone in a vivid history of sport and exercise psychology in Europe. FEPSAC is the acronym for *Fédération Européenne de Psychologie des Sports et des Activités Corporelles* whichtranslated from French means European Federation of Sport Psychology and Physical Activity. FEPSAC’s main aim is to support the development of sport and exercise psychology in Europe by 1) promoting scientific, educational and professional work 2) disseminating information and promoting co-operation and by 3) maintaining social and scientific relations between persons and groups working in sport and exercise psychology, mainly in Europe. In order to achieve these aims FEPSAC organizes a congress every four (as of 2022 every two) years, publishes the journal [*Psychology of Sport and Exercise*](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/620792/description#description), position statements and takes the initiative for the publication of books. FEPSAC has its own website ([www.fepsac.eu](http://www.fepsac.eu)) as well as social media presences on facebook, twitter and Linkedin. The organisation is altruistic and strives to achieve non-profit goals of international value. FEPSAC consists of group members (associations of sport psychology) and individual members. FEPSAC is run by a Managing Council which is elected every four years.

**FEPSAC history**

FEPSAC was founded on June 4, 1969 in Vittel, France during the 2nd European Congress of Sport Psychology, Ema Geron became its first president. The idea for a European Federation of Sport Psychology had been born the previous year during the 1st European Congress of Sport Psychology, which took place in Varna, Bulgaria in December 1968. Among the reasons mentioned for the establishment of FEPSAC, Seiler and Wylleman (2015) state that language played an important role. This was both because at the 2nd World Congress of Sport Psychology in Washington, DC in 1968 only English was allowed (Kunath, 2003) and because there was a wish to allow for the exchange between sport psychologists from the Western and Soviet political systems. This was something deemed impossible in the “capitalist” ISSP (Morris, Hackfort, & Lidor, 2003), which also called for an openness towards languages in addition to English. It is not by chance that FEPSAC is the acronym for the French name of the organization.

The establishment of FEPSAC allowed for the exchange of sport psychologists between the two political systems with FEPSAC presidents stemming from both the Soviet/Eastern (Ema Geron, Paul Kunath) and Western (Guido Schilling) systems in the first two decades of its existence. In its early years, FEPSAC successfully recruited MC members from across Europe, and hosted congresses in 1972 (Cologne, Federal Republic of Germany), 1975 (Edinburgh, United Kingdom), 1979 (Varna, Bulgaria), 1983 (Magglingen, Switzerland), and 1987 (Bad Blankenburg, German Democratic Republic). Almost all subsequent congresses were held in western regions of Europe (1991 Cologne, 1995 Brussels, 1999 Prague, 2003 Copenhagen, 2007 Halkidiki, 2011 Madeira and 2015 Bern). Nevertheless, Europe’s political divide and language diversity made it difficult for European sport psychologists to read each other’s work and travel freely to attend conferences during FEPSAC’s first 20 years of existence.

These problems were also not resolved by the fall of the wall in 1989 when at least travel restrictions were no longer in place. At the 1st FEPSAC congress after Germany’s reunification in Cologne 1991 there were subsidies for Eastern Europeans to travel to attend the congress; however, since then there has been a rapid decline in the number of MC members from Eastern Europe (Seiler & Wylleman, 2015) and as mentioned above, FEPSAC congresses have been held mainly in countries without a Soviet past. This may be due to a dramatic reduction in funding for the sport system when superiority in sport was no longer considered a political statement. Poor funding especially impacted Eastern European colleagues’ ability to conduct research (e.g. lack money for accessing scientific journals and for participating in scientific events such as conferences).

Even if the language diversity and the economical imbalance within Europe remain challenging for the promotion of sport and exercise psychology today, the unification of Europe has contributed to many positive aspects, which have enhanced the development of our field. The establishment of the European Master Program in Sport and Exercise Psychology in 1996/1997 (Vanden Auweele, 2003), and later the prestigious *Erasmus Mundus* Program in Sport and Exercise Psychology (Lintunen, Apitzsch, Papaioannou, & Vanden Auweele, in press) as well as the open labor market and the unification of the study system within Europe – Bologna in 1999 – have contributed to larger European-wide collaborations for specialists in sport psychology (Araújo, de Oliveira, Jannes, Carlsson, Snauwaert, & Sanchez, 2006). As unification of Europe and the fall of the iron curtain have also led to the spread of the English language, one can now notice more pronounced English language skills in many students and scholars compared to earlier years.

**Knowledge dissemination**

One of FEPSAC’s key accomplishments has been to disseminate knowledge, predominantly in the English language, and via various types of publications. This includes the publication of books including *Anxiety in Sport* (Apitzsch, 1983), *European Perspectives on Exercise and Sport Psychology* (Biddle, 1995), *Psychology for Physical Educators* (Vanden Auweele, Bakker, Biddle, Durand, & Seiler, 1999; Liukkonen, Vanden Auweele, Vereijken, Alfermann, & Theodorakis, 2007), and *Sport and Exercise Psychology: From Theory to Practice* (Raab, Wylleman, Seiler, Elbe, & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2016), as well as the founding of the prestigious FEPSAC journal *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* by Stuart Biddle in 2000, which succeeded the *Yearbook of Sport Psychology*. The publication of 11 position statements on FEPSAC’s website and regular dissemination of FEPSAC Bulletins (twice a year between 1989 to 2001), of PSE newsletters (as of 2001) and monthly email newsflashes (as of 2016) via email also contribute(d) to knowledge dissemination.

**Promotion of research**

FEPSAC also has multiple initiatives to promote research. FEPSAC has been promoting young researchers via the young researcher’s award since 1991 (Hatzigeorgiadis, in press). FEPSAC’s research project on “Sport as an integrative tool in multi-cultural societies” has been producing publications and organizing symposia since 2007 (Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2013). In 2011 the Ema Geron award was established which honors an exceptional national contribution to the development of sport and exercise psychology. FEPSAC received legal status as an International Non-Profit Association registered in Belgium in 2015, meaning that FEPSAC can now be included as an official partner in grant applications (e.g. EU grants) and thereby support research partnerships and collaborations.

**Supporting professional development**

FEPSAC has furthermore contributed to the education of applied practitioners via the Forum of Applied Sport Psychologists in Topsport (FAST) and the Psychological Excellence for Elite Performance (PE4EP) program (Wylleman, Moesch, & Debois, in press). The FAST group is a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiative which joins professional practitioners from around Europe who provide applied sport psychology services at the elite/Olympic level from private practices, academia, and elite sport organisations. PE4EP is a European-level continued professional development program focusing on specific aspects directly relevant for coaches, sport psychology support providers and other service providers working with elite and Olympic athletes and teams.

Since the 2003-2007 term, FEPSAC also invested more in its member communication via the internet and established the FEPSAC website. The FEPSAC website was completely remodeled and went online together with a new FEPSAC logo during FEPSAC’s 40th anniversary in 2009. Since 2015 the website is complemented by information dissemination via social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; Fritsch, Sanchez, & Bertollo, in press).

**Future goals and challenges**

Nevertheless, FEPSAC still needs to achieve more in order to ensure a balanced access to resources, skills in authoring intellectual work and knowledge exchange. This imbalance is, on the one hand, due to the economic imbalance across countries that impacts access to journals, books, and attendance at conferences and similar events. On the other hand, such imbalance is also caused by the diversity in Europe when it comes to languages spoken. Furthermore, there is an imbalance in educational opportunities for students, researchers and practitioners in the field. While in some parts of Europe very sophisticated and longstanding educational programs exist, in many other regions of Europe there is a lack of sport psychology educational and training opportunities for practitioners at graduate and post-graduate levels. Although there has been an increased focus in ensuring the quality of sport psychology services (e.g., in the German speaking countries, Kellmann, Gröpel, & Beckmann, 2011; in Italy, Lucidi, Giardina, & Bortoli, 2017), and formalized supervision has become an integral part of the education of applied practitioners in many European regions (e.g. Stambulova, Johnson, & Linner, 2014), there are no European-wide guidelines for the education and further education of applied practitioners.

One of FEPSAC’s main goals for the future is, therefore, to establish European-wide criteria for specialists in applied sport psychology. This endeavor was supported by EASY (Educators in Applied Sport PsychologY; Hutter, van der Zande, Rosier, & Wylleman, 2018), that provided information on the educational systems in sport psychology across Europe as well as extensive feedback on FEPSAC’s first drafts of these criteria. In the meantime, the FEPSAC MC elected in 2015, outlined minimum European-wide criteria that specialists in applied sport psychology should meet in order to be certified by FEPSAC (Wylleman, Moesch, & Debois, in press; Schinke, Si, Zhang, Elbe, Watson, Harwood, & Terry, in press). These criteria were especially aimed at giving guidance to colleagues from those countries wherein high-quality educational opportunities and / or a national certification system are lacking.

In the past, FEPSAC initiatives have also focused more on sport psychology (e.g. PE4EP, FAST, FEPSAC certification for applied practitioners). In the future FEPSAC needs to also increase its focus on exercise psychology as health-related research has grown rapidly in the past decade(s) and also offers much more opportunities for e.g. grant generation than sport psychology. First steps in this direction would be to ensure that members which have a background in exercise psychology are elected to the Managing Council and that FEPSAC congresses and other educational activities offer more exercise psychology sessions. A future perspective might also be to focus on specifically supporting the professional development of exercise psychologists.

Another goal is to strengthen the ties with partner organizations within our discipline (e.g., International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP), Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), Asian South Pacific Association of Sport Psychology (ASPASP), European Network of Young Specialists in Sport Psychology (ENYSSP) as well as neighboring disciplines like the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA)and the European College of Sport Science (ECSS). This has been accomplished, for example, through participation in each other’s conferences, joint symposia and joint publications (Schinke et al., in press). Furthermore, we aim to strengthen our ties with sport-related and political stakeholders (e.g., sporting organizations such as the IOC, FIFA and health organisations like the WHO). For such collaborations to be strengthened, FEPSAC and its members need to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of their work as well as show how they can contribute to other fields in an interdisciplinary perspective. FEPSAC supports current trends for evidence-based decisions, the publication of reproducible studies, the pre-registration of studies, and multi-center interdisciplinary research projects as funded by the EU.

We are observing that FEPSAC and sport and exercise psychology within Europe are developing strongly which is indicated by increasing numbers of members as well as congress delegates. Research in sport and exercise psychology can contribute to tackling global societal challenges such as physical inactivity, obesity and the aging society. It is our aim that further research and high-quality work continue to be conducted that, amongst other, showcase the effectiveness of interventions and help overcome the confidence crisis the field of psychology is momentarily experiencing (Schweizer & Furley, 2016). Further, it is our strong emphasis to provide goals for the next decades ahead for sport psychology (Raab, 2017). This special issue gives a comprehensive overview of the quality that has been produced in our field in the past 50 years for which we would like to express our sincere thanks to the editors Bernd Strauss and Nikos Ntoumanis as well as all contributing authors. We very much look forward to the 50-year anniversary celebrations to take place at the FEPSAC Congress in Münster in July 2019.

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