

Letter to the Editor

31st EFPT Forum 2023 in Zurich "Making YOUR mental health a priority"

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From July 4th to July 8th, 2023, the 31st Forum of the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) took place at the University Hospital Zurich, marking the world's largest gathering for trainees in psychiatry. This significant event served as a meeting point for 200 highly motivated trainees and budding experts specializing in child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry, representing 42 national societies. The execution and organisation of this forum were skilfully handled by the Local Organising Committee (LOC), a team composed of members hailing from the Swiss Association of Psychiatric Trainees (SAPT). Switzerland, an influential founding member of the EFPT, had the honour of hosting this annual event for the second time since its inception in 2013. The forum's primary objective remained the advancement and support of young psychiatrists across Europe, reinforcing Switzerland's commitment to the cause.

The motto for the 31st EFPT Forum in 2023 was "Making YOUR mental health a priority." This choice underscored the organisers' commitment to a pressing issue. In an era characterized by limited human resources, the mental well-being of healthcare practitioners plays a crucial role. Fatigue and exhaustion not only negatively impact the quality of care and patient satisfaction but also increase the risk of mental health disorders and substance abuse among physicians.¹ Among all medical specialties and across all age groups, psychiatrists have one of the highest rates of suicide.² While systemic changes such as improved working conditions and supportive management cultures are crucial in preventing mental health risks in the workplace, the destigmatisation of mental disorders among physicians, encouragement to seek mental health treatment, and prioritisation of a healthy work-life balance over a career-focused lifestyle are equally vital at the individual level.³

The EFPT Forum 2023 in Zurich was led by Dr Michael Wallies, the then EFPT President, and it was hosted in Switzerland for the second time, coinciding with the 31st anniversary of this significant event. The Local Organising Committee (LOC), headed by Drs Fabian Kraxner, Filippo Toni, and Selim Kotti, spearheaded the planning and execution of the forum. This dedicated team, comprising 20 individuals, had commenced their preparations following the handover from the LOC of the EFPT Forum Malta after the conclusion of the previous EFPT Forum in 2022. The pre-planning phase involved an array of tasks, including the

development of a comprehensive scientific and social program, the invitation of esteemed speakers and guests of honor, securing sponsors and financial planning, facilitating participant logistics (accommodation, transportation, catering, and service), and conducting public relations activities (website development, logo creation, promotional videos, and social media engagement).

Efforts to garner financial and material support for the forum from Swiss professional societies, clinics, and foundations were met with enthusiastic responses. The generous contributions from these sponsors were essential for the successful execution of the forum. Notably, for the first time, all forum participants received a free standard package on-site, encompassing accommodation, main meals, and a public transport ticket. This initiative aligned with the LOC's goal to facilitate the participation of member states in the forum, irrespective of their financial resources—a significant achievement they took pride in.

The EFPT Forum was founded on four key pillars that fostered interaction and active engagement among emerging psychiatrists in Europe. Firstly, the Forum featured esteemed keynote speakers from various sectors, including influential figures such as Maria Walsh and Katrin Langensiepen from the European Parliament's Coalition for Mental Health & Wellbeing. Swiss psychiatrists like Dr Fabian Kraxner, along with EFPT past and current presidents Dr Florian Riese and Dr Michael Wallies, and EPA Early Career Psychiatrists' Committee chair Dr Tomasz M. Gondek, shared their insights. Professor Norman Sartorius, a former WHO Director of the Division Mental Health also delivered a keynote speech and was honored with an award in recognition of his exceptional contributions to the field of psychiatry. Secondly, the working group sessions offered a collaborative environment for both long-standing and new members to delve into a broad range of psychiatric topics, from research and psychotherapy to leadership and exchange. The third pillar was the General Assembly, held on the Forum's final day, where executive members deliberated on various new developments and elected the new EFPT President – Dr Mette Konings from the Netherlands, where the next Forum would take place in 2024. Finally, the social aspect of the Forum was not neglected, with ample networking opportunities set against the backdrop of Switzerland's picturesque landscapes, including excursions to Reichenbachfall, known for Sherlock Holmes' fictional

confrontation with his archenemy Dr Moriarty, the Grimselfpass, and the Aare Gorge. A historic gathering spot, the Polyterasse of the ETH, also hosted a get-together. The cultural highlight was the International Night, where each country showcased its heritage and dance. The detailed program of the Forum could be found on the Forum's official website.⁴

In summary, the 31st anniversary EFPT Forum in Zurich, marked a significant gathering for trainee and early career psychiatrists, with around 200 attendees from 42 countries participating in a five-day event focused on advancing psychiatric education. With the theme "Making YOUR mental health a priority," the LOC had called upon psychiatric trainees and national psychiatric societies throughout Europe to prioritise the protection, preservation, and promotion of physicians' mental health and firmly integrate these principles into the working and training culture of their respective institutions.

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