

Interview between Arja Huttunen (board member of the adult section 2019–) and Ritva Pölönen (board member of the group section 1997–2003) for the EFPP Archives

”Memorising the time of the beginning of the EFPP”

I welcome Ritva Pölönen to this interview. The meaning of this interview is to get material for the EFPP Archives from the persons who have been board members (delegates) at the beginning of the EFPP federation. I express my honour to have this kind of possibility to share the memories with her about the time when EFPP as an psychoanalytic psychotherapy organization was established.

Ritva doesn't remember the exact year when she was taking part to the seminar dealing with the psychoanalytic psychotherapy which was organised in London. The topic of the presentation was "What do we mean by psychoanalytic psychotherapy and how does it differ from the psychoanalysis?" The presentation was held by the couple Sandels. After that special meeting, Brian Martindale had raised up the idea of establishing the European federation of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

I ask Ritva to describe her memories of the primary (initial) state of the EFPP.

Ritva validated Brian Martindale as the founder of the EFPP, he was the right person for this kind of work. She didn't however know exactly what kind of different processes there existed, but from that very meeting the idea and the process of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy federation was stoned. Also, the criteria of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy theory and supervising were required (named/listed).

The countries that were at the beginning qualified to join to the federation were those which already had the structured psychoanalytic psychotherapy training standards. She mentions that in Finland, the Therapeia Society was one of the most experienced (the society has had some training programs) psychoanalytic psychotherapy society with well structured training and supervision standards were created(?).

I want to discuss how the members were elected for the federation/ the board, how did the information exchanges happen?

She explains: "All information happened by faxes and phone calls, in fact from the very beginning EFPP federation had a secretary who took care of the administrative work." And what comes to election process, the federation's main idea was that the representatives are equally elected from different parts of the European continent: one representative from the west, one from the north and one from the eastern part.

Ritva describes shortly also the election process by which/ how she became elected into the group section of the board; she was encouraged and supported by her Finnish fellow colleague Mikko Roine who has been active participant in international psychoanalytic psychotherapy field especially with colleagues in London. She had struggled with her ambivalence to run the representative as the board member in group section because of her English language skills. In fact she had felt difficulties at the beginning of the board period, but quickly noticed that also the others had same difficulties.

The election situation had been exciting; Ritva had won a voting by only one vote to the Danish colleague!

I want to go back to the previous question and hear more about the election processes of the member countries. korjaa tämä kysymys, koska vastaus ei vastaa kysymykseeni...

Ritva evaluates that the EFPP's very basic priority was to influence psychoanalytic training programs to fulfill EFPP's criteria in each member country. The EFPP struggled a lot with its goal for to realize and for to win a resistance. Also supervisory criteria raised a lot of discussions, meaning that it was difficult to give up their own way of thinking. One large question was also what kind of basic education were accepted before starting a psychoanalytic psychotherapy training. In early years of EFPP federation, many member countries participants preferred psychiatrists as the basic education. And it was a true astonishment when she described that in Finland psychologists were allowed both to study and teach in the psychoanalytic training programs and addingly they could graduate to the psychoanalysts as well. In Finland, the criteria for the basic education has been all the time broad meaning that also social workers, nurses, theologians, social psychologists can be validated.. Ritva remembers to have justified many times that also psychologists had competence/readiness to teach psychoanalytic theory and run the studying groups. And the question also was if the psychoanalysts were the right persons to teach at the psychotherapist training groups...or have they have to be psychotherapists? These kind of questions were in the air.

Ritva continues to memorise her work for instance with Spanish colleagues when she worked as a consultant and taught and helped them to create the group psychotherapy's ground which consists of a psychoanalytic theory of group processes, the group psychotherapy treatment and supervision. In fact there were a need to understand how different psychotherapy treatments separate from each

other and what were the main criteria to be fulfilled if they wanted to join the EFPP federation.

We also discuss how important was the observer status in the EFPP. Before some European country wanted to become a full member of the EFPP it had the possibility to take part in the delegates meeting and learn what kind of preparing processes they need to make in their training programmes and so on in their own country. Ritva also mentions the co-operation with Finland's neighbour countries Lithuania and Russia (St.Petersburgh) from where Finnish colleagues have colleagues taking part in the working groups organized in Finland... Ritva mentions that there were a lack of the professional books in Russia and she wanted to borrow them to these colleagues.. this kind of co-operation they have had at that time... I reflect to Ritva's opinion that the theme of basic education ground has been discussed also nowadays at least in adult section's zoom meeting.

I want to ask Ritva what kind of experiences she got to Finland from those years she was the board member.

She remembers discussions with Brian Martindale who had described Finnish as strict super-ego persons, with clear boundaries. By that Ritva meant that the Finns coherent group psychotherapy training systems where the candidates could train strictly to the group psychotherapist compared with the other different groups section's member countries people who thought that you have to be at first an individual psychotherapist and after that you are allowed to continue as the group psychotherapist training...

At those days Finnish colleagues tried to co-operate with Norwegian colleagues and discuss with those questions, but it didn't take a further steps.

I wanted to clarify that idea of strict super-ego feature people, what does it mean?

Ritva told that there were a push to modify the frequency of one's own treatment and get facilitations of those criterions needed. In discussions people thought that the treatment requirements in Finland were too high . We reflected the requirements which are needed nowadays... it is in group psychotherapy one and half hour a week and in individual psychotherapy it is 2 to 3 times a week..also the discussion were alive when it decided has the treatments realise during the training program, before the training or at the same when you are at the training program.

I was interested in the national network - phenomenon, has it discussed in the board 1997?

Ritva told me that the EFPP federation's foundation and the national network phenomenon was created at the same time.

I asked was the amount same at those days as it is nowadays meaning 2 person in each section..

Ritva clarified that at those days one representative and her/his deputy member was enough per member country. She told that the members and deputy members were chosen in Finland by turns between the main psychoanalytic associations. Ritva had noticed that the very same representatives were chosen to the board members, she continued " perhaps the question was also an economical, representatives were forced to cancel the patients sessions and they lost his /her earnings.."You have to take part to the board meeting before three days of the main congress and travel fees were free , they were the rewards for your job for the board work. There were also an aftermath after the delegates meeting were we processed what was the offering of the congress and the delegates meeting",she described...

....battery of Ritva's computer was quite finish...

We reflected the changes in the amounts of the delegates between the beginning and nowadays of the federation and also the changes between the costs which are nowadays paid to the board members.

I continued with my questions and wanted to ask what kind of social phenomenon there were 1997- 2003 in the air except those psychoanalytic psychotherapy's criterions which were built in the board?

Ritva said that one special factor was the co-operation with Karnac books and the publishing the books of psychoanalytic psychotherapy's theories, psychoanalytic thinking and psychotherapy. Professor Tsiankis from Greece was one who organised that work and also Brian Martindale was an important person who put his input for this kind of the board's function. In those days we put a lot of energy for the creation of psychoanalytic theory. Of my mind the first books were excellent and they were used broadly in the psychoanalytic training programs as the basic material for learning psychoanalytic theory. Ritva wanted to add that EFPP had also its own journal...

We agreed that it must have been a very important work. We came to the conclusion that that EFPP as an psychoanalytic organisation has had a clear, continuous mission to develop and defend psychoanalytic psychotherapy in each part of the European. A change which has happened during its development is that nowadays EFPP doesn't separate east, west, north and middle Europe, but we all

are the same area, meaning the integrity of the EFPP federation is one of the main ethical principal.

Ritva emphasized the importance of the variety of the board members; she appreciated a lot of the co-operation in her time at the board and mentioned for instance an Italian Alessandro Bruni whose influence had been impressive in the discussion not at least for the well organized group psychotherapy training system in their country. " He taught a lot of us and Ritva thinks that all the members in the group section were open to listen his experiences and wanted to modify them to each own country psychotherapy systems. She had called Prof. Bruni to teach Finnish group students... The other person whom Ritva remembered was professor Bande from Switzerland, he has been very systematic and he was a good theoretical thinker. Those authors were well appreciated in the EFPP and the co-operation was very important, meaningful, lively and rich so that everyone felt to get a lot from them.

I validated Ritva's thoughts and thought that also nowadays also these values are existing strongly.

We took a moment for the personal discussion of the localisation of ...Tohmajärvi and Lohjajärvi

I asked Ritva about the ethics, did this issue exist in the discussions?

Ritva said that the question of ethics was many times discussed in the board, but she thought that perhaps there were something which scared to open that issue so that the board members didn't ever manage to start working them through, " there were always other important issues, even though the ethics was important. Perhaps people thought that each country has its own ethical principals...

I mentioned that the board had organized a working group which has now wrote the ethical code which consists both an organizational ethical principals and the principals for the clinical work between the patient and the psychotherapist.

Ritva appreciated that work and she noticed that kind of ethical code can influence a lot to each country's way of handling those themes. It is a good way to learn from the others and she believed that the ethical code can help to develop the professionals to do better their work and also to develop the psychoanalytical organisations.

I reflected our discussion and asked if she wanted to pick up something important, which could be good to say..

Ritva stressed the importance of the ability to co-operate with other countries', different psychoanalytic colleagues. She sees that ability will make possible rich and fruitful thinking and gives way to the possibility to develop both the personal psychotherapeutic instrument and also the training programs to become better to the students. Also the congresses made by the EFPP were a great way to learn and the interactions were wonderful about the topics been held after the lectures. She understood that this kind of discussions made possible to further develop psychoanalytic thinking and theory." Theories must develop itself also... She sees the personal interactions were very important... I mentioned that nowadays the interactions with delegates are active thanks to electronic media, it means that the delegates meet every second month... One single factor which Ritva remembered well was the EFPP Board's support and experience to her when here in Finland the government handled the law. Also so the law of psychology was at time under processing in Finland and Ritva had used all the knowledge which she had gathered in Europe and which could be useful for preparing that new law. She remembered to get copies(main important parts of the law) from German's psychotherapy law consisting 400 pages, which were a huge help for her.

So EFPP influenced a lot of the psychotherapy field here in Finland which she had felt grateful.

I mentioned Ritva a similar experience from my own board member period when COVID-19 time began and the restrictions was put in Finland so that Kela denied not to do group psychotherapies by zoom. We got the latest information of the group psychotherapy research (Uli Schultz-Verain) to justify to the decision makers in Kela that the zoom is available during the Covid -19 times- especially just then!

We talked about the changes in the psychotherapy field from the juridical point of view comparing with the time 1997-2003 and nowadays and Ritva was giving an example of her doctor's studying psychology where she is able to practice at the clinic with patient under supervision during her studies, so that the student get a realistic experience of the work.

At the end of the interview I wanted to go back during the foundation of EFPP times. I wonder does Ritva remember if the co-working to EU was intended to do? She remembers that Brian Martindale has talked about that and the discussions were gone through. Also here in Finland Ritva remembered to keep in touch with

some EU-delegate for to get the idea discussed in EU comission, that person had promised to do it, but never managed to get it into the end.

Ritva thought that for to get psychotherapy on the EU comission level it would need to be transpired on that high level – it would need the own experince of some high officier and courage to confess that menthal health is important as other somatic illnesses.

Of course the economic issues are one important element in this context. Every country doesn't have insurance system which would be needed for that.

At last I wanted to thank Ritva for this time for us and I honoured a lot of this memories which will be used to all dlegates in Europe. We feel grateful for all this important experince and memories which will live in our minds.