

Dear Madam President Irena Bezić!

1. Most recently, in March 2023 - in such a challenging time for the world - you became the President of the largest professional organisation of psychotherapists in Europe. Firstly, we sincerely congratulate you on your election and wish you to be a "worthy captain" in turbulent times, times of transformation, change and new challenges. Secondly, please tell us how to become President? What should you do, what qualities should you have and where should you be better than others?

**Thank you for congratulations! To become a president of EAP is for me an honour and challenge in today's Europe. My way to become president was through long years of fighting for the Law of psychotherapy in Croatia – after 13 years of persistent work on uniting different psychotherapy modalities, and discussions with politicians, we succeeded – Croatia has now a modern Law on psychotherapy, in line with the EAP standards. On the other hand, I proved to be a good chair of our Ethical guidelines committee and National umbrella organisations committee, so EAP members decided to vote for me probably because ethics and mutual understanding is now the key to stay together fighting for the values and standards of EAP.**

2. You have extensive experience of psychotherapeutic work during the war in Yugoslavia. Your presentation at the Second Joint UUP and EAP Online Symposium was devoted to the role of the psychotherapist during the war, and it was based on your personal experience. Doesn't it seem like a strange coincidence or a perfect system that at a time when our world is being destroyed by war, the head of the EAP is a person who knows what war is?

**It is an interesting coincidence, and it wasn't foreseen – in the same way as no war in Europe, after the world II, was really foreseen. Unfortunately, we are witnessing how quickly the neighbours can become enemies and this phenomenon is not because of the special wickedness of the certain nation, but because of the politics and politicians. If you lived once through the war, than you know a lot about surviving strategies, destruction and suffering of people, and about importance to keep your mind clear of different war manipulations.**

3. One of the tools of war that Russia is using is the appropriation of our history, our cultural heritage. Ukraine has a thousand-year history of statehood. For the world, it is a country of unbreakable, freedom-loving people. It feeds hundreds of millions around the world with its grain. The steel produced at our plants is the frame for many iconic buildings, from skyscrapers to the gates of the Panama Canal. Ukraine is home to famous artists, singers, dancers and inventors. The Ukrainian "Shchedryk" is the most recognisable Carol of the Bells carol. Having had many professional and personal encounters with Ukrainians, what qualities of Ukrainians do you think will help us win?

**What I like about the Ukrainians I know, is the realistic view on what is around them, and willingness to do something about it. This is a spirit of the modern times. Nobody will really gain the power fighting for old greatness, or old myths, the power is coming from the faith in freedom and a better future.**

4. Today, people are in particular need of support. The demand for psychotherapy is growing rapidly. That is, psychotherapy is a developing profession that requires control

in terms of compliance with standards, quality of care, etc. In Croatia, you fought for the adoption of the relevant law. Could you please tell us about this experience and what were the consequences of the adoption of this law? How will you implement this experience in your current activities?

**Psychotherapy is indeed the profession of the future, developing very quickly, and if development is rush, it means it needs clear standards and regulations, otherwise it might end in a mixture of traditional and new-age healing methods or in technological pragmatism of artificial intelligence. Psychotherapy is based on the relationship between therapist and the client, and the regulations the quare there to reinsure the professionalism of the relationship and scientific proof of the used methods. Since we have a Low of Psychotherapy in Croatia, there is more interest in psychotherapy from all parts in the society. There is more security that if you invest long years of training to become a psychotherapist, that at the end this will pay off because you will be a registered psychotherapist, not just one of the healers, life couches etc. And for the clients it means that the psychotherapy practice is under the professional and ethical control of the Chamber of psychotherapists, so they have a sort of the state guarantee that this profession has clear standards, and that the quality of the psychotherapy work is an interest of the state.**

**I am convinced that clear regulations, with somebody back-up-ing these regulations, help against power misuse. To work as psychotherapist you have to we establish thrust between therapist and the client, if this thrust is misused, the whole psychotherapy is losing its sense, and could do harm. So, establishing standards of psychotherapy we contribute to more thrust in the process of psychotherapy. Since there are very big differences between countries in Europe, there are also different views concerning psychotherapy. My idea is that we have to continue talking to each other, not imposing ideas on each other, and find together concepts we can agree upon. One of these concepts is European certificate of psychotherapy (ECP) for individual psychotherapist, and European accreditation of psychotherapy institutes (EAPTI). Both certificates show European wide similar standard of quality in psychotherapy work and education – so the „west“ and „east“ , as well as north and south European psychotherapist are here equal. There are discussions in Europe concerning differentiation of professions: psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, and psychotherapist. If the legal regulation of this professions is clear, there is no further space for power struggle around who is doing the most important help in the field of mental health.**

5. In your address on the EAP website, you emphasised that your aim will be to strengthen cooperation between psychotherapists in European countries. What role does the series of EAP and UUP Joint Symposiums play in fulfilling, as we understand it, one of your programme objectives?

**I am very happy that we started this project of Joint Symposiums of EAP and UUP – it proved to be the right platform for getting to know each other and to talk to each other about the important topics connected to psychotherapy and life in Europe nowadays. It started as just EAP and Ukraine, but now more national psychotherapy organisations are joining, like a Check national organization in this Symposium, probably some more in the Symposiums to come.**

**Inspired by this Symposium several other national psychotherapy organisations (like Denmark, France and Kosovo) and are starting a project called „European room for listening“, so the idea is developing on several levels. This all makes me happy because I believe the contact and establishing relationship through exchange of ideas and knowledge will bring us in the better future.**

