

Athens, Greece: A truly interprofessional meeting on the current status of Psychotherapy in Europe.

By Mina Polemi-Todoulou, HELASYTH

On the evening of February the 8th, 2008, the Hellenic Association for Systemic Therapy (HELASYTH) brought together leaders of all different psychotherapeutic approaches in a discussion on "Psychotherapy in Europe Today", with a stimulus presentation by Mony Elkaim. The event had the support of the National Organisation for Psychotherapy of Greece, the Hellenic Federation of Societies for Systemic and Family Therapy and the Research Center for Greek Society of the Academy of Athens. Participants were welcomed in the beautiful neoclassical Athens University Cultural Center that is named after the Greek poet Kostis Palamas and had some informal get together time with piano music, wine and food before entering the discussion on controversial topic.



Almost all important Greek organisations related to psychotherapy were invited: Psychotherapy associations of all approaches, training centers, university clinical departments of Psychology, Psychiatry and Social Work, Pan-Hellenic Associations of Psychologists, Psychiatrists and Social Workers, research centers, mental health policy makers and social service directors representing the ministry and the municipality, parliamentary deputies and political party representatives, as well as media people.

The meeting had a great participation, representing a wide range of different viewpoints. The discussion focused mainly on the need for: a) autonomy for the profession of psychotherapy and b) criteria that safeguard its importance, such as c) a well grounded combination of academic education as provided by universities with the psychotherapy training as provided by the training centers, along with d) the emotional integration, maturity and ethical stance that is required by the therapist. The difficulty of filtering candidates for the psychotherapy profession through academic criteria was quite stressed. There were also some doubts expressed regarding the necessity to have a common European platform, yet the need for mobility of therapists and trainees across countries was acknowledged.

Participants underlined the importance of such an event and a very collaborative context was created, promising further action and cooperation on important issues.