

# KOŠICE, SLOVAKIA



# REPORT ON EASP SUMMER SCHOOL 2024

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CENTRE OF SOCIAL  
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
SCIENCES



**EASP** EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

## HOW DID WE COME TO ORGANISE THE SUMMER SCHOOL?

Following the ongoing commitment of the EASP to diversity and inclusion and the ambassadorship project aimed at supporting underrepresented regions, the EASP Summer School was organised in Košice, Slovakia. This event marks the first time such a prestigious gathering has been hosted in the region, reflecting the dedication to fostering academic collaboration and cultural exchange.

It was organised by the Institute of Social Sciences of the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, in cooperation with the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, brought together 60 doctoral students from these countries worldwide.

This endeavour began as an initial effort led by **Jana Papcunová** as the local organiser and **Yasin Koc** as the academic content coordinator. Recognizing the scale of the task, we later welcomed **Bibiána Kováčová Holevová** to our organising team, making this a true collaboration of efforts. The project, which fostered not only professional growth but also enduring friendships, was set in motion in September 2024 following the EASP General Meeting in Krakow, facilitated by the Meetings Officer, Claudia Manzi. Her support helped transform this ambitious idea into a meaningful and successful event, reinforcing the community spirit that lies at the heart of EASP.



**Jana Papcunová**



**Yasin Koc**



**Bibiána Kováčová Holevová**

## SELECTION PROCESS AND THE DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPATION

Our summer school attracted a remarkable level of interest, with 123 applications submitted by prospective participants from 23 different countries. Ultimately, 52 students were selected, representing a diverse array of these countries. As usual, we included an additional 8 participants from our partner associations such as SPSP and SASP, extending our reach to Australia, the United States, and Canada. In the end, students from 21 countries joined us, reflecting not only their countries of study but also their varied countries of origin.

In selecting participants, we were committed to maintaining both equity and relevance. The number of offered places was proportionate to the number of applications received from each country. Priority was given to students who might not have another opportunity to attend a future summer school, as well as those whose research interests aligned most closely with the themes of our program. By emphasising these criteria, we ensured that our cohort was not only geographically diverse but also composed of individuals whose academic pursuits were well-suited to the collaborative and intensive environment we aimed to create.

The final composition of our participants reflects the range and reach of our selection process. The UK was represented by 10 participants, followed closely by Germany with 9, and Italy with 6. The Netherlands brought 5 participants, while Spain, Austria and USA each had 4. We also welcomed 3 students from Australia while France, Poland, and Switzerland were represented by 2 participants apiece. Additionally, we had individual representatives from Ireland, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Israel, India, Croatia, Finland, and Turkey, underscoring the truly international character of our summer school.

Despite some last-minute cancellations, we were able to maintain the diversity and balance of our cohort by promptly replacing those spots with participants from our waitlist and others who were quick to confirm their interest. This adaptive approach allowed us to uphold our commitment to inclusivity and ensured that the cohort remained as globally representative as initially planned. Together, these students contributed to an enriching learning experience.



# THE MAIN WORKSHOPS

The success of the summer school was due to the diversity of topics covered at the workshops. They each tackled crucial areas within social psychology and led by experts committed to advancing research and fostering dialogue:

1. **Social Cognition:** Led by Hans Alves and Moritz Ingendahl from Ruhr University, this workshop examined the cognitive processes involved in forming attitudes toward individuals and groups. Participants explored mechanisms such as information sampling, attention, memory, and integration, gaining insights into how these processes influence social perceptions.



2. **The Social Psychology of Violent Ethno-National Conflicts:** Ruthie Pliskin from Leiden University and Islam Borinca from the University of Groningen facilitated a deep dive into the psychological underpinnings of violent conflicts. They discussed the role of attitudes, emotions, and behaviours in conflict and post-conflict societies, as well as strategies for conflict resolution.



- 3. Solidarity and Social Change:** This workstream, guided by Maja Kutlaca from Durham University and Soledad de Lemus Martín from the University of Granada, focused on the dynamics of allyship, solidarity, and collective action. The workshop addressed when and how allies can either support or potentially undermine social change, using case studies to highlight key concepts.



- 4. Cognitions and Environmental Impact:** Cameron Brick from the University of Amsterdam and Karlijn van den Broek from Utrecht University led a workshop on applying social psychological theories to environmental issues. This session encouraged participants to design studies around mental models and behaviour, with a focus on valid behavioural measures and the broader determinants of environmental action.



5. **Reacting to Inequality: Sexual and Gender Identities:** Facilitated by Yasin Koc from the University of Groningen and Jenny Veldman from Utrecht University, this workshop examined how sexual and gender identities intersect with inequality and stigma. The discussions incorporated diverse theoretical perspectives to explore ways in which individuals respond to inequality, both to advance the status and well-being of disadvantaged groups.



Each workshop was organised a bit differently, based on the preferences of the teachers. Some groups asked students to present papers from the reading list, encouraging shared understanding. Others had students present their own research to find common themes. Some focused on teaching methods and theories for students to use in their own studies, while others quickly started working on research questions and proposals each day. Many groups combined these approaches. By the second week, most groups formed smaller teams to develop research proposals for presentations on the final day.

Overall, these workstreams facilitated a rich exchange of ideas, allowing participants to engage deeply with topics that are central to contemporary social psychology. By focusing on themes such as conflict, solidarity, environmental sustainability, and identity, the workshops underscored the discipline's relevance to global social issues.

# KEYNOTES AND METHODOLOGY WORKSHOPS

We organised a series of specialised methodology workshops and invited keynote lectures to extend learning opportunities beyond the immediate summer school participants. To ensure that the workshops resonated with the broader academic community, we solicited input from EASP members through a survey. We also made these sessions accessible online, allowing members beyond the summer school to participate.

We offered a workshop on **multilevel data analysis**, led by Marcello Gallucci from the University of Milano-Bicocca, which provided crucial skills for handling complex data. Denisa Fedáková and Michal Kentoš joined us to present insights on **the European Social Survey**, showcasing its value as a cross-national research tool. Additionally, we hosted a seminar led by Marcel Martončík and Matúš Adamkovič on **responsible research practices and open science principles**, aligning with our commitment to ethical and transparent research.

Our invited lectures featured both local and international scholars. We welcomed Jozef Bavoľár from the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who discussed the social factors affecting risk perception. Pavol Kačmár delivered an engaging keynote on his journey as a young researcher. We invited Barbara Láštiová from the Slovak Academy of Sciences to critically address diversity challenges in social psychology, fostering reflection within our field. Anna Kende from ELTE Eötvös Loránd University shared strategies for combating anti-Gypsyism, demonstrating the practical impact of social psychology on reducing prejudice. Ivan Ropovik from the University of Presov provided insights on structural equation modelling, while Sharon Coen from the University of Salford delivered an online keynote on research ethics, emphasising the importance of integrity in our work.

Through these keynotes and workshops, we aimed to equip participants with both methodological expertise and diverse perspectives on pressing social issues, enhancing the academic rigour and breadth of the summer school experience.



## ROUNDTABLES BY TEACHERS

We organised two roundtable discussions with summer school teachers, designed to facilitate open conversations on key issues in academia. As teachers, we prepared some initial discussion points, but we encouraged students to lead these sessions with their own questions and insights.

The first roundtable focused on **the publication process**. With most of us holding editorial positions at prestigious journals, we were able to share valuable perspectives on navigating this often challenging aspect of academic life. We covered topics such as manuscript submission, peer review, and strategies for responding to feedback.

The second, and perhaps more significant, roundtable was dedicated to **mental health in academia**. We discussed a wide range of issues, from the pressures of defining success and the impact of research topics on our well-being, to handling difficult power dynamics and the personal costs of relocating for academic careers. We aimed to provide examples of how to maintain a healthy balance in academia, emphasising the importance of building networks of social support—such as those forged through summer school. Notably, some of the teachers had maintained friendships that began during previous summer schools, such as those in 2014 and 2016, underscoring the lasting value of these connections.

Through these discussions, we hoped to create a space where students could openly explore the challenges they may face in their careers and consider strategies for sustaining well-being and resilience in academic life. Students appreciated the changing discourse in academia regarding the care for mental health and showed their interest in taking this debate further.





## THE CORE OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL: SOCIAL EVENTS

Our social events played a crucial role in creating connections and friendships among participants. The program began with a **Welcome Ceremony** at Hotel Yasmin, where we gathered for an evening of introductions, dinner, and a welcome drink. This provided a relaxed environment for students and teachers to start getting acquainted.

On Day 3, we hosted a **multicultural meet-up** where participants shared elements of their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of global community. On the following day, students enjoyed a **sunset walk** to a viewpoint overlooking Košice, allowing them to connect informally while taking in the beautiful scenery.

As the week continued, we organised a **historical tour of Košice's Old Town** with local historian Dr. Ondrej Ficeri, who brought the city's rich heritage to life. On Day 7, we took a journey along the **Tokaj Wine Route**, where participants explored the local wine culture and history, bonding over shared tastings and stories.

The final week included a **visit to the botanical garden**, a serene environment for reflection and conversation, followed by a farewell dinner back at Hotel Yasmin. This heartfelt evening allowed everyone to reminisce about the experiences and friendships they had formed.

In addition to these structured events, students organised their own social activities, such as a **talent night** hosted by Mitakshara Medhi, where participants shared poetry, music, and comedy. Informal gatherings, from bar hopping to karaoke and to watching the EuroCup, became regular nightly events. These moments of casual interaction helped to deepen friendships and build a strong sense of community that extended well beyond the academic sessions.



## A BIT OF COVID DISTRACTION

On Day 4, our program was disrupted by the first positive COVID-19 case, presenting us with the immediate challenge of protecting health while maintaining participation. As additional cases emerged, Karlijn and Yasin promptly developed “Dynamic Guidelines for COVID-19 at the EASP Summer School.” These guidelines were designed to safeguard those concerned about infection while allowing asymptomatic individuals to continue attending activities.

We quickly adapted, reallocating hotel rooms and implementing safety protocols to manage exposure risks. Teachers took turns bringing meals to those isolating, exemplifying a strong sense of community and teamwork. Thanks to our collective efforts and flexibility, we managed to contain the situation effectively, enabling workshops and social interactions to continue in a safe, adjusted format.

# FINAL DAY OF PRESENTATIONS

On the final afternoon of the summer school, we dedicated time for students to present the research proposals they had developed over the two weeks. Each workshop group showcased their projects, covering a diverse array of topics that reflected both the workshops' themes and the participants' creativity.

The presentations showcased a wide range of topics, such as academic-life balance, predictors of collective action, perceptions of male allyship, and pro-environmental behaviours. Other projects explored the complexities of gender roles, the influence of social networks on cognition, and the psychological drivers behind support for social movements.

The afternoon was a true celebration of our students' hard work, filled with engaging discussions and a sense of shared accomplishment. Many of these projects have the potential to evolve into future grant applications and publications, highlighting the program's lasting impact on participants' academic careers.



## STUDENT REFLECTIONS

The feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting both the quality of the program and the sense of community it fostered. Many participants highlighted the value of the comprehensive approach, as one student told what they liked the most: “The combination of theoretical workshops with methodological and other types of workshops; the great diversity of people's backgrounds; the relevance of the social agenda as well.” The sense of belonging and inspiration that emerged from these interactions was also a common thread. Another one shared, “I loved the sense of community it built. I feel very inspired.” The opportunity to form meaningful connections left a strong impression on many students, who saw it as integral to their experience.

Beyond the academic insights, students appreciated the supportive environment fostered by facilitators across workshops. “The specific workshops, developing ideas and projects, support from all facilitators across workshops (and knowing that we have people to turn to for guidance in the future), the social events that helped us gel with other participants,” remarked one student.

Finally, the structure of the program, combining engaging classes and well-timed social events, was also praised. One participant summed it up, saying, “The classes were very stimulating and well organised, with excellent tutors; social events were well spaced out and very enjoyable; excellent sense of community throughout.” This feedback captures how the summer school successfully balanced rigorous academics with ample opportunities for social bonding, leaving students with both knowledge and lasting friendships.

## REACTIONS FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Local academic community also echoed the experiences of the participating students.

*“We are very excited that for the first time in the history of the European Association of Social Psychology, the summer school was hosted in Košice, making an impact in the region, inspiring local students to integrate within the international research community,”* added **Jana Papcunová**, co-organizer of the event and researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences, CSPA, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

*“I am very grateful to the European Association of Social Psychology for the trust shown and the opportunity to organise this exceptional summer school in Košice. It was a huge opportunity and an unforgettable experience for our Institute and the entire Centre. Meetings with students, as well as with the lecturers themselves, were very inspiring and opened up new possibilities for further cooperation.”* stated **Anna Kalistová**, head of the Social Sciences Institute CSPA SAS.

*“I believe that the EASP Summer School in Košice enriched the people who participated in it, not only with knowledge, but also with experiences and memories of this unique event. I want to express the hope that these intense and fulfilling 2 weeks will be an inspiration and a source for further growth (of all of us). Thanks for the opportunity to be a part of it!”*, added **Bibiána Kováčová Holevová** from the Department of Psychology, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University

The event not only supported researchers at the outset of their careers but also showcased the region and highlighted local topics, fostering both academic and cultural exchange.

## SOME LESSONS LEARNT

Starting from September 2023, our journey of organising the summer school included so many different steps including finding teachers, crafting workshop themes, drafting emails, selecting students, communicating decisions, handling all local arrangements, and running the event itself for 2 weeks in Košice - meaning dealing with lots of excitements as well as frustations. Reflecting on these experiences, we identified key lessons that will guide us in organizing future events.

*Flexibility is Key:* While careful planning is essential, unexpected changes are inevitable. This experience underscored the importance of remaining adaptable and fostering an environment of openness to help us navigate any unforeseen circumstances smoothly.

*Connection over Networking:* Many students expressed their discontent with the word “networking”. We aim to build long-lasting relationships. Today’s students are tomorrow’s organisers, teachers, and editors. Using the term “connection” helps emphasise authentic relationship-building, reducing the pressure students may feel to constantly self-promote.

*Gratitude Matters:* The effort involved in organising an event of this scale became truly apparent once we arrived in Košice. Recognizing and appreciating the hard work of local organisers is crucial, as it fosters a sense of shared gratitude and reinforces the community spirit.

## WE HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE TO THANK FOR

This is such a big scale event that would not have been possible without the goodwill of a number of amazing people.

First, we extend our gratitude to Anna Kalistová, our ombudsperson, for her support with administrative and financial matters.

We would also like to thank our student volunteers: Katarina Durčianski, Alexandra Jakubčová, Jácinta Bodnárová, Daria Porozina, Adam Pekarčík, Kateryna Svyrydenko, Miriam Končeková, and Anna Urbancová, for their time and assistance.

Our thanks go to Tibor Nalevanko for providing technical support, as well as to Dagmar Hvozdovičová, the Bursar of the Faculty of Arts, and Iveta Adamčíková, the canteen manager, along with the team who ensured meals were served throughout the two weeks.

A big thank you to photographer Marek Lukacko for beautifully capturing the event’s key moments.

Finally, we appreciate the efforts of our colleagues from the Institute of Social Sciences, CSPA SAS—Monika Nickelová, Lucia Lengeňová, Samar Issmailová and Miroslava Bozogáňová—for helping to ensure the smooth running of the event.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all the workshop teachers who dedicated two weeks of their summer holidays to teaching and engaging with brilliant students. This shows their commitment to science and to building the next generation of scholars. We also thank all the keynote speakers and workshops teachers for their commitment.

## FINAL WORDS

This was an excellent experience for everyone involved. As mentioned several times during the summer school, it was a dream of Yasin to organise the summer school when he was a student in Exeter in 2016. Now that this dream has come true, we pass this dream and the associated responsibility onto the next generation. A few students have already been inspired for it! We are looking forward to working alongside with these brilliant PhD students as colleagues in the near future. Because we owe each other a better world.

With love, Yasin and Jana

