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# **Counselling in Europe**

Training, Standards, Research,  
'Culture' & Information about 39 Countries

2021

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# Introduction

First of all I would like to point out that I am not a native speaker thus my English is by no means perfect. Nonetheless, I hope you will gain much information from this book and with it increase your knowledge and understanding about counselling.

I thank David Dutch (EAC) and Renate Luther for helping with the translation and Sofiiia Molot for the editing process.

I am writing this book from various roles that I currently hold, and I would like to link the enumeration directly with heartfelt thanks to the many colleagues from the various institutions:

My team in the "Counselling Research Unit" at the University of Cologne, Germany include Annette Hummelsheim, Marc Höcker, Robert Baum, Clara Stein, and Bianca Rusch. I would especially like to thank Sofiiia Molot, who played the most prominent part in bringing the book together, formatting it, etc.

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I head the "Centre for Advanced Teaching and Learning (ZHD)" at the University of Cologne, too. Together with Hendrik den Ouden and Miriam Gertzen I have developed expertise in Adult Education and Higher Education Didactics.

In addition to working at the university I am also director of the koelner-institut.de which offers non-university teaching of counselling. My special thanks there go to Christine Jablonski, Martina Masurek, Franziska Gnest, Jonas Lichtenberg, Robert Baum and last but not least the co-director, my wife, Kathrin Meiners.

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The ninth chapter is a guest contribution from John McLeod. Thank you very much, John.

Chapter 10 deals with some essential ethical topics – e. g. transcultural. It is a short form of a book I am writing together with Ilja Gold and Eva Weinberg (Gold, Weinberg and Rohr 2021), including Interviews with Souzan AlSabah, Sandra Karangwa, Berivan Moğultay-Tokuş, Amma Yeboah and a preface from Eia Asen. I thank all of them.

Chapter 1, 7, 8 and 10 are partly already published in German. I think some of the thoughts are very interesting for an international audience. I thank the publisher and my co-authors for allowing this.

### **Book structure**

The first chapter defines and explains counselling. Then, in chapter 2, the European Association for Counselling (EAC) and its training standards are presented. Chapter three describes the International Association for Counselling (IAC). Chapter four gives an overview about the brief history and background of counselling, the current

regulatory status, the challenges and trends as well as additional information of 39 European countries. These are the European results of the World Mapping Project (IAC). Chapter 5 gives an overview of the selected European-wide associations. The American and the European Standards are compared in chapter 6, while Chapter 7 deals with teaching counselling.

I cover the importance of research in chapter 8. The following Chapter 9 features a guest contribution from Prof. John McLeod, "Integrating research knowledge and awareness into counselling and psychotherapy training: an apprenticeship model". Finally, Chapter 10 deals with power, discrimination and racism in counselling.

# 1 About Counselling

All countries differ significantly in economic opportunities, social policies, religious practices, political organisation, wealth, and much more. The world population reached the 1 billion mark in 1820, and less than two hundred years later (2011) the number of people had already increased to 7 billion. This excessive growth exacerbates problems related to employment, pollution, poverty, and depletion of natural resources.

The 20th century experienced two major world wars, advances in science and technology, the Cold War, and increasing concern for the environment. Steady growth in science and communications technology and changes in family structures in the 21st century raise both hopes and fears among the population (cf. Hohenshil, Amundson & Niles 2015, p. 3). The current time is characterised by the fast pace and constant change. Also, there is the problem of the Coronavirus, which spread worldwide, putting the entire population in a state of emergency. The stressors mentioned above lead to psychological strain on individuals and groups. Essential counselling functions are available in every culture globally. Yet in some countries they are more likely to be performed by families, friends, acquaintances, indigenous healers, shamans or non-specifically trained medical personnel. Against this background, there is a growing need to initiate, develop, and professionalise counselling services worldwide to promote society's mental health (cf. Hohenshil, Amundson & Niles 2015, p. 4).

Counselling is a discipline in its own right; it is a sub-discipline of various psychological, educational, social, labour, and organisational science or other disciplines. It is a cross-disciplinary, scientifically based concept of thought and action that different disciplines draw on and use according to their specific objectives and needs. From this starting point, I would like to use this book to help you understand that counselling is coming out of the shadow of a formerly predominantly therapeutic basic understanding. And not least due to international developments – is developing its own, scientifically based profile. Through specific counselling courses of study at universities and colleges and continuing education institutions. In no way should the previous diversity of counselling concepts and counselling formats



be abandoned favouring a uniform counselling system. For it is precisely this diversity that represents a great resource in the fields of application and for the target groups of counselling.

With the social developments in recent decades, one can observe a rapidly increasing need for counselling in the most diverse everyday and professional life areas. It must guarantee that experienced-based, effective and efficient counselling based on theoretically and methodologically sound knowledge from an experienced perspective. A prerequisite for this is a scientifically elaborated, interdisciplinary counselling concept.

Counselling is in the field between individual therapeutic measures, social welfare activities and educational activities. It draws on knowledge from the following areas: medicine, psychology, psychagogy, psychotherapy, social work and sociology, and in exceptional cases, theology and legal sciences.

By synthesising and integrating psychodynamic, behavioural therapy, humanistic and systemic approaches, she develops ways of working for her specific work field.

Counselling in the psychosocial field deals with people who seek guidance, advice, support and help with various problems and questions of coping with their existence.

The counsellors are informed by the people seeking help with factual information about their personal life situation and the behavior of the people interacting with them and thus are allowed to work together with the person seeking help and clarify the concrete situation and resolve the conflict.

Counselling is a special get-together for a period of time. Its standards incorporate the individual's full intentionality. Then again, the counsellor gives complete privacy to the client. Counselling's objective is not to offer solid guidance, the advisor endeavors along with the individual looking for appeal, and help explain their troubles, issues, or clashes and attempts to give them both assistance in comprehension and direction as help in deciding. Opportunities for tackling problems are looked for together. Counselling is one form of empowerment.

One of the counselling objectives is to look for guidance and help more dependable and suitable and give that person more individual

flexibility. Accomplishing this objective requires a fortifying of oneself. Accordingly Advising at the same time adds to the democratization of society" (BfgA, 1975, 4).

Counselling, as we can see, has a long history. First as a concept for action in social work, then as part of therapeutic action, counselling is on its way to becoming a discipline in its own right. It is here that it gains its ability to connect with international developments in counselling. Although the professionalization of counselling in Europe still seems to be borrowed from and linked to therapeutic schools and based on an internationally established academic profile.

Most recently there has been a great deal of progress in counselling's theorization in Europe (cf. Nestmann & Engel, 1997).

The Bologna Process at European universities, which favours an interdisciplinary approach without one discipline or another being able to claim dominance alone, is helpful in this regard.

Counselling has a long professional tradition but its independent academic formatting has only just gained momentum in Europe. To establish and maintain the international connection to the development of counselling, there is an urgent need for an expanded scientific positioning and establishing of direction (see chapter 8). This also applies to the professional discourses in the informal continuing education sector of the professional associations currently being sought, such as developments in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). A wide variety of cooperative ventures between universities, higher education institutions and continuing education and training institutes, between theory and practice are currently exemplary and could point to sustainable new developments.

The following visualisation attempts to delimit and narrow down the field of counselling (see Figure 1).

Its four axes express rather qualitative aspects (cf. Brandel-Nebehay & Russinger, 2005; Gregusch, 2013). Thus, they do not capture typically quantitative factors of counselling, such as the duration or frequency of sessions (one-time, several or up to fifty sessions; time from five minutes to one hundred and twenty minutes or more), the setting with the number of counselees (i. e. individual, couple, group or team counselling) or the specificity of the diagnostic process. Instead, the graph can be used to characterize concrete counselling via the range between the poles (1) specificity "Consulting" to "psychosocial counselling", (2) voluntariness in the use of counselling, "high

voluntariness" to "low voluntariness", (3) formalisation of the setting, "formal" to "informal" setting (4) interests of the Counsellor, "own strong interests" to "no own interests" (if applicable, the term "convictions" would also fit here). I want to illustrate the four axes using the example of a freelance, practising Counsellor:

(1) On the axis of specificity from "Consulting" (or information-giving counselling, such as financial counselling or educational counselling) to the other pole: "psychosocial counselling" (or process counselling, Therapeutic Counselling, etc.), one would most likely make a point in the right quarter (since, for example, communication or conflict models or even psychoeducation are introduced and explained, it can also have parts of information-giving counselling).

(2) Voluntariness in the use of counselling: A very "high voluntariness" can be assumed here. At first glance, this axis may seem very clear-cut. Still, even in the coercive context of a correctional institution, there are voluntary counselling offers or, in the case of couples counselling, definitely 'involuntary' participants.

(3) Formalisation of the setting: In our example, we can speak of a 'formal' setting: Not as formal and bureaucratic as, e. g. psychotherapy, but also not as informal as the 'Counselling talk' between boss and employee.

(4) Interests of the Counsellor: Here, we would probably speak of 'not so strong own interests'. Maybe there is an institution with its expectations, mission statements, funding ideas, etc. – and yet no self-employed counsellor can have an interest in losing clients 'too quickly'.

Moreover, there are 'own convictions' of the Counsellor with regard to counselling per se: e. g. that a robust solution orientation is helpful or rather deep processing, that an intense confrontation e. g. in the sense of the provocative style is helpful or rather an empathic-appreciative listening is essential, that 'it is better not to separate' or 'that one does not stick to difficult couple relationships'. As in school, there are 'hidden curricula' in counselling.

If this visualisation invites professional (self-)reflection, it has already fulfilled its purpose, knowing that it is an inadmissible reduction of complexity (Rohr, 2017b).

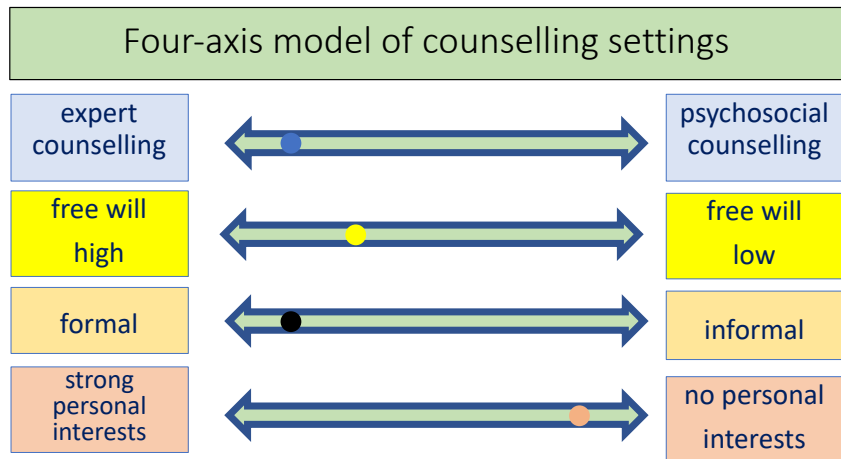


Figure 1: Four-axis model of counselling settings (Rohr 2017)

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