

# EAWOP Small Group Meeting (SGM): Strengthening European Military and Organisational Psychology

## 1. Executive summary

### *Meeting overview*

The SGM on “Strengthening European Military and Organisational Psychology” took place from February 21-22, 2024, at the university of KU Leuven in Belgium. It was co-organised by Ingrid Covington, Martin Euwema and Vita Glorieux. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how we can strengthen European military and organisational psychology. This SGM was in response to the call at the EAWOP Katowice 2023 congress to start a new network ‘EMOP’ (European and Military Organisational Psychology) to bridge the gap between Work & Organizational Psychology (WOP) and military psychology, and support our Ukraine colleagues through this.

A total of 25 participants from various European (including Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom) and non-European countries (United States, UAE, Japan) registered for the meeting, representing both academia and practice. This diverse representation was intentional, as the aim was to bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners in both military psychology and WOP domains.

### *Key highlights*

The objectives of this SGM were threefold. Firstly, to establish a network to unite W&O psychologists and military psychologists, focusing on collaboration, shared agenda’s and priority setting. Second, to identify and define specific projects in collaboration with key stakeholders. Lastly, to provide support to our colleagues in Ukraine by addressing their urgent needs.

The two days were structured with keynotes followed by plenary thematic discussion sessions. This format was chosen to encourage broad participation among attendees. Additionally, some of the keynote presentations were made available online to accommodate those who were unable to travel to the event but expressed interest in participating remotely. The keynotes covered a range of topics, blending personal experiences with research insights. Discussion topics included the pressing needs and challenges faced by defence forces, the specific needs of Ukraine, strategies for promoting wellbeing and managing enduring stress, as well as approaches to recruitment, retention, and transition during times of crisis and change.

### *Meeting outcomes*

Overall, this small group meeting has identified a network of researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners interested in collaborating on relevant research endeavours to form the bridge between WOP and military psychology. At this moment, the organizers are actively seeking funding opportunities and collaborating with the EMOP community to organize a special issue and Position Paper for the EJWOP and a practitioner piece with the support of former editor Angie Carter, for EAWOP In Practice. It is our intention that the projects to emerge from the SGM and EJWOP Special Issue paper, will culminate in a comprehensive symposium at the upcoming EAWOP Prague 2025 Congress.

Concrete scientific outcomes from the meeting include the presentations, which offered fresh insights and clarity on various topics, and subsequent discussions that generated new perspectives for study, as well as practical and policy implications. Additionally, the discussions contributed to fostering new understandings of each other's needs and priorities, especially for our Ukrainian colleagues. So to conclude: Emerging themes for future research were identified, while practical recommendations were also discussed.

In general, feedback on the meeting was overwhelmingly positive, with participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to establish new connections and collaborate in this important area.

## 2. Activity report

### *Event general information*

The SGM on “Strengthening European Military and Organisational Psychology” took place from February 21-22, 2024, at the University of KU Leuven in Belgium. It was co-organised by Ingrid Covington (Shape HQ & KU Leuven), Martin Euwema (KU Leuven), and Vita Glorieux (Royal Military Academy Brussels & KU Leuven). The topic of the meeting was to discuss how we can strengthen and form the bridge between European military and work and organizational psychology (WOP). This SGM was initiated in response to the call at the EAWOP Katowice 2023 Congress to start a new network ‘EMOP’ to bridge the gap between WOP and military psychology, and answer the call from Ukraine W&O psychology for closer cooperation.

A total of 25 participants from various European (including Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom) and non-European countries (United States, UAE, Japan) registered for the meeting, representing both academia and practice. See Annex 1 for a complete list of participants, their countries of origin, and their EAWOP affiliation. We had 24 participants attending in person, three participating online. Participants represented a range of European Academic and Government Institutions, private enterprises and independent practitioners. In addition to Military and WOP academics and psychologists, present at the meeting was an international lawyer with experience of working in conflict zones, and a chaplain-psychotherapist with experience of supporting international military families in and outside of combat zones.

This diverse representation was intentional, as the aim was to bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners in both military psychology and Work & Organizational Psychology (WOP) domains. The meeting sought to facilitate collaboration among researchers and practitioners by exploring shared interests and potential future projects. Additionally, it aimed to enhance understanding of current organizational dynamics. Importantly, organizers made a concerted effort to involve practitioners to gain insights into the challenges they face and collaboratively develop a new research agenda, as well as to provide evidence-based recommendations.

## *Program overview and course of the meeting*

*General topic and specific topics overview, Meeting format/organisation, Keynote speakers, Number of papers*

The central theme of this SGM was focused on strengthening European and military psychology. The objectives of this SGM were threefold. Firstly, to establish a network to unite W&O psychologists (WOP) and military psychologists, focusing on collaboration, shared agenda's and priority setting. Second, we wanted to define specific projects in collaboration with key stakeholders. Lastly the meeting aimed to provide support to our colleagues in Ukraine by addressing their urgent needs.

The two days were structured with keynotes followed by plenary thematic discussion sessions. This format was chosen to encourage broad participation among attendees. Additionally, some of the keynote presentations were made available online to accommodate those who were unable to travel to the event but expressed interest in participating remotely.

For each half-day session of the meeting, we strategically selected a main topic based on insights gathered from our pre-meeting questionnaire. This questionnaire highlighted specific areas where researchers and practitioners encountered challenges or showed keen interest. By tailoring our agenda to address these identified topics, our aim was to ensure that the meeting directly tackled the pressing concerns and interests of participants. Hereby, we fostered a more targeted and productive exchange of ideas and insights among attendees, maximizing the value and relevance of the meeting discussions. While all sessions were conducted in a plenary format, we organized discussions into smaller groups to promote focused and participatory dialogue. This structure facilitated both the dissemination of key information through keynote presentations and deeper exploration and collaboration within smaller discussion groups. At the end of each discussion, ideas were shared collectively to shape a new research agenda, integrating suggestions, insights, and challenges identified by practitioners and researchers.

The keynotes covered a range of topics, blending personal experiences with research insights. Discussion topics included the pressing needs and challenges faced by defence forces, the specific needs of our Ukraine colleagues in W&O Psychology, strategies for promoting wellbeing and managing enduring stress, as well as approaches to recruitment, retention, and transition during times of crisis and change. Hereby also an overview of our different keynote presenters and the theme they elaborated on (see attached a copy of the full agenda):

### Wednesday Feb 21 (am):

- Welcome by Vice Dean of Faculty of Psychology & Educational Sciences – Prof. Ise Noens, expressing the importance of this SGM, in line with Faculty and KU Leuven values and strategy.
- Plenary – participation introductions and aspirations for the SGM
- **Opening Keynote** - NATO General: *“What are the current needs and questions in Defense forces for Work & Organizational psychologists (online)”* – key themes were mental health impact and support related to experiences of being at combat zones and responding to ongoing crises and increases in threat perception over decades of conflict situations – active and frank discussions took place between the general and

the participants – this is a rare opportunity to be up close and personal with a senior military leader.

Wednesday Feb 21 (pm):

- Reflections on emerging themes from the morning discussions – the key insight to emerge from the discussions were the mental health impact of war and combat and the requirement to be clear about the boundaries of WOP and MP and the need to work closely with Counselling and Clinical Psychologists. Defining the role and strengths of our profession emerged as an important action.
- Board members of Ukraine: *“What are the current needs? Current problems of psychological support for military personnel and their families in the conditions of the Russian federation’s was against Ukraine”* led by Prof. Liudmyla Karamushka (Paper 1) – Deputy Director, Institute of Psychology, President Ukrainian Association of Organizational and Work Psychologists – a very comprehensive overview was provided of the work that has been accomplished to date. A main focus was to outline the current situation and priorities for the near and future activities. The two areas where the greatest needs existed were first in providing selection and assessment support to help with the urgent recruitment and deployment of the wider Ukrainian population onto the front line. Prof. Karamushka stated very soberly and clearly that it is widely believed that there will come a time when each and every member of the Ukrainian population, including herself, would be drafted into the military. Second, was the mental health and wellbeing requirements of the soldiers and their families. A discussion ensued amongst the group about the immediate ways in which our community could provide research and practical support to the plight.
- We were then introduced to the Ukraine’s 4 groups of objectives and invited to form workshop groups based on the objective most closely linked to our areas of interest and expertise. The groups of objectives were:
  1. Military personnel selection and training
  2. Psychological support for the military directly in combat zones
  3. Psychological rehabilitation of the veterans
  4. Psychological interaction of the organizations with future military and combatants

Each group did a brainstorm on ways to put these topics forward, so as to help our Ukraine W&O psy colleagues in these respects.

Thursday Feb 22 (am):

- Prof Dr Wilmar Schaufeli (Paper 2): *“Mental Energy in the military”* – we were privileged to receive a keynote from Prof. Schaufeli on his 35 years of burnout research and practice, including an overview of his widely cited and used Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT), and the relations with trauma. The group immediately saw direct relevance and utility in using the BAT to support with the 4 groups of objectives laid out by the Ukrainian Board.
- CPT Dr Gerald Igboanusi (Chaplain G): *“Service Members’ Well Being: effective Strategies for Military Communities”*. Chaplain G is an American qualified psychotherapist and military chaplain based at NATO. He shared his insights and experiences of supporting military communities during and after deployment. The impact of conflict on the mental health and wellbeing of the soldier, their spouse and

their children is wide reaching. This point was echoed by the NATO General who emphasized that the impact of war was generational.

Thursday Feb 22 (pm):

- Dr Alan Bourne: *“Recruitment, retention and careers: ensuring sustainability of forces”*. Dr Bourne is a Chartered Psychologist and Entrepreneur specialising in the digitalization of selection and assessment. He is currently supporting an initiative launched by the UK Treasury to integrate the recruitment services of all UK military institutions. He illustrated the ways that global businesses were approaching recruitment and talent management and made suggestions for how NATO nations could collaborate by developing a NATO-wide skills inventory.
- The participants spent the remainder of the meeting building upon the discussions that took place earlier in the meeting, particularly focussing on applications for the support of Ukraine W&O colleagues.

### *Short description of the SGM topic discussion*

In this SGM, we aimed to address the gap between WOP and military psychology but also identify the current needs during these crises.

Many lessons were learned. The biggest lesson that we learnt collectively was that there are limits on our ability to address the current and future challenges that we as a profession and as a society are facing. It was by responding to challenges being faced in response to WWI that our profession flourished. Since then, however, we have arguably focused more on industrialisation, organisations and individuals, and less on societies and governments and globalisation. Reflecting during our SGM allowed us to see clearly both the ways that our profession has evolved, grown and developed, and the current gaps that exist in our understanding if we are to be responsive and relevant to today’s and tomorrow’s challenges. For EAWOP particularly these challenges include our response to the ongoing full-scale war in Ukraine, and severe risks for further escalation. War evokes many emotions and strong responses, that if left unaddressed can lead to disarray and destruction. This meeting evoked a strong desire for our profession to act in a socially responsible manner and an urgent need to send out to others a ‘call to action’ signal. The special issue feature in EJWOP will serve an important purpose of critically engaging with the ways in which our profession can support the wellbeing of society whilst navigating times of unprecedented disruption.

The research agenda will be developed in response to the following questions:

- I. What are the current needs and questions in Defence forces for Work & Organizational psychologists?**
- II. What are the key relationships that we will need to forge to address these needs?**
- III. What are the moral, ethical and practical concerns and issues that emerge in our profession from working with the defence industries and services?**
- IV. What are the current needs in Ukraine?**

- V. **Well-being in the military – how can we build resilience in individuals, families, groups, organization’s, communities and across societies during times of conflict**
- VI. **Recruitment, retention and careers – what role can digitization play in supporting this agenda?**
- VII. **Resources – what are the main sources of funding to support this research agenda? Who are the key stakeholders?**

### **General conclusion**

We concluded that EMOP and EAWOP have an important role to play in consolidating the knowledge base that exists within our profession in supporting individuals, groups, organisation’s, communities and societies during locally and globally turbulent and uncertain times. A strong appetite exists within our profession to collectively and thoughtfully respond to a world in crises through the development of a research agenda that will be outlined during the EJWOP special issue, culminating in a symposium at EAWOP Prague 2025.

### *Meeting implications/ outcomes*

While the main focus of the SGM was on fostering engagement and discussion rather than solely setting up new research, or publishing together, various potential scientific and applied results were identified or became apparent. These included potential contributions to an issue for the EJWOP, the upcoming European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP) Conference, the EAWOP In Practice journal, and new collaborations to answer the needs of our Ukrainian colleagues. Nonetheless, particular emphasis was placed on advancing networking efforts to strengthen and institutionalize the EMOP initiative. These contributions are discussed more in detail below.

This SGM was the ideal opportunity to network within the EAWOP and newly formed EMOP community. Participants had the opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals and forge valuable relationships that can serve as the foundation for future collaborations. By discussing key priorities, identifying areas for further research, and outlining potential collaborative projects, participants laid the groundwork for hopefully impactful initiatives that will shape the direction of research and practice in the field.

In terms of scientific output, the organizers are considering the possibility to curate a special issue for the EJWOP, aiming to showcase the insights and findings discussed during the meeting. Several participants have already expressed keen interest in contributing their work to this special issue, highlighting the enthusiasm and commitment within the group to disseminate their research outcomes.

Furthermore, recognizing the pressing needs of our Ukrainian colleagues, the organizers are committed to fostering new collaborations among participants to initiate fresh research and practice endeavours that can directly contribute to supporting and addressing the challenges they face. This collaborative effort not only underscores the solidarity within the research



community but also demonstrates a tangible commitment to translating research into meaningful action to aid those in need. Here we really focus on knowledge transference into applied setting with specific outcomes.

### *SGM evaluation*

To assess the success of the meeting and pinpoint areas for improvement in future events, we used several techniques. Initially, impressions and feedback from participants were collected both verbally during the meeting and subsequently through email. Additionally, the organizing committee held several post-SGM meetings to collectively evaluate our own observations and impressions alongside the feedback obtained from participants. This comprehensive approach allowed for a thorough assessment of the meeting's effectiveness and facilitated constructive discussions on potential improvements for future gatherings.

### *Self-assessment*

The SGM was a success, also due to the excellent facilities provided at KU Leuven. The venue's central location, well-equipped spaces, and ability to accommodate both plenary sessions and smaller group discussions made it ideal for our purposes. Coffee and lunch breaks provided opportunities for networking, and the conference dinner was highly praised by attendees. The well-structured program allowed for meaningful discussions with each a specific focus, with sufficient time allocated for each session.

One of our main objectives was to focus on collaboration, agenda and priority setting. Reflecting on our experience, we recognized the significance of offering clearer and more comprehensive details regarding available funding opportunities for our participants. We understood that having specific information about potential sources of funding would have empowered attendees to pursue their research goals more effectively. However, we are still taking these proactive steps after the SGM to support our participants in accessing resources.

Additionally, we recognized the importance of allocating more time for discussions on particularly engaging topics. Even with sufficient time set aside for group discussions, participants were eager to delve deeper into certain subjects after the sessions had concluded. However, we found that the coffee breaks and dinner provided valuable opportunities for continued discussions in a more relaxed setting.

While the SGM was primarily an in-person event, we made accommodations for a small number of participants who couldn't attend physically allowing them to join virtually (these are not on the participants' list). At the beginning, there were concerns about whether incorporating virtual participation would disrupt the engagement and atmosphere we had cultivated within the group. To address these concerns, we established ground rules for virtual participants, such as allowing them to follow along but not interrupt with questions or actively participate in discussions. This ensured that while they could observe the proceedings, their presence did not interfere with the dynamics of the in-person interactions. Looking back, we recognize the potential to promote this option more widely to increase inclusivity and reach interested researchers unable to attend in person.

## Participant assessment

Impressions and feedback from participants were collected both verbally during the meeting and subsequently through email. In general, participants provided positive feedback on the conference, highlighting the effectiveness of short presentations in facilitating more discussions. The conference was praised for incorporating different perspectives and disciplines, fostering an empowering and open atmosphere. Below is a compilation of representative opinions and feedback provided by the SGM participants:

- There were 2 great days, full of knowledge, thank you ALL! If I can be of assistance let me know!
- What a wonderful experience to meet such an esteemed group of people as a PhD student! I realised just how much I missed this and needed it! Thank you and well done for an excellent event.
- Hi. Thank you very much for letting me participate this online. I found it very interesting topics and discussions! I have to leave the session now. Would be very happy to contribute in the future. With warm regards.
- Thanks for such a great event. I really enjoyed meeting everyone in the group. We built momentum, Let's consolidate on next stage of practical actions to help.
- THANK YOU again for the invitation. I look forward to further collaboration and work!
- I really enjoyed our time together – thank you for making me feel so welcome. Well done to the organising team!
- It has been a wonderful small group meeting in Leuven/Belgium and it was great to meet all of you. Huge thanks to Ingrid, Martin and Vita for organizing this meeting and for being such wonderful hosts!



### 3. References

#### *List of participants*

Name	Country of origin	EAWOP
Rebecca Bogaers	Netherlands	YES
Alan Bourne	UK	
Ingrid Covington	UK	YES
Janine Bosak	Ireland	YES
Phelim Cavlan	Malta & United Kingdom	
Sten Delvaux	Belgium	
Eva De Winter	Belgium	YES
Jacco Duel	Netherlands	YES
Martin Euwema	Netherlands	YES
Vita Glorieux	Belgium	YES
Christopher Gresse	German (on-line)	YES
Ann-Louise Holten	Danish ( <u>on-line</u> )	YES
Gerald Igboanusi	United States	
Ivana Igic	Switzerland	YES
Susan Kalkhuis	Netherlands	YES
Liudmyla Karamushka	Ukraine	YES
Oksana Kredentser	Ukraine	YES
Mariko Matsuzaki	Japan	
Salvatore Lo Bue	Belgium	YES
Laura Spear	United Kingdom	YES
Joao Teixeira	Portugal	
Kira Tereshchenko	Ukraine	YES
Natalie S. Robson	UK & UAE	
Wilmar Schaufeli	Netherlands	YES
Torkil Schrøder-Hansen	Denmark	
Mark Veensma	Netherlands	
Diane van Winden	Netherlands (on-line)	
Daryna Yashan	Ukraine	YES

## *Final program*

We want to ensure sufficient time to meet each other and work together to develop concrete plans.

### General schedule

- The small group meeting is scheduled to officially commence at 10:00 on Wednesday, 21/02. Following the day's discussions and activities, we will conclude with a group dinner at Mykene.
- The Small Group Meeting (SGM) is planned to conclude by 16:00 on Thursday (22/02), allowing participants the flexibility to travel home on the same day.
- We meet in Zaal Couvreur - Leercentrum AGORA; Edward Van Evenstraat 4 , 3000 Leuven

## Wednesday 21/02

- 09am welcoming coffee
- 10am Opening by the vice-dean of Faculty of Psychology & Educational Sciences, prof Ilse Noens
- 10h15 Introduction to the program and ways of operating by EMOP board members (Ingrid Covington, Martin Euwema, & Vita Glorieux)
- 10h25 Who-is-who – speed dating and mapping topics
- 11h15 NATO General: what are current needs and questions in defense forces for Work & Organizational Psychologists (for safety reasons name is not revealed).  
Q&A and explore in topical groups.
- 12h30 Lunch
- 13h30 Ukraine- what are the current needs? Presentation by board members of the Ukrainian association for work & organizational psychology.  
Plenary Q&A, followed by topical small group brainstorm
- 16h15 Plenary discussion and preliminary conclusions
- 17h30 End of day 1
- 18h30 Dinner at restaurant Mykene

## Thursday 22/02

- 09h00 Wellbeing and enduring stress- how to prevent- support and cure.  
Introduction by Chaplain G; life coach at Shape (NATO headquarters, Mons)  
Exploration of Mental Energy in the military by prof Wilmar Schaufeli, world leading expert on burnout, stress and well-being.  
Q&A and Small group explorations
- 12h00 Lunch

13h00 Recruitment, retention, transition, and career breach in times of crisis and change

Exploration of the topic by Alan Bourne, founder at Sova Assessment

Q&A and Small group explorations

15h00 Conclusions- Action Planning- Funding- How to move into further actions...

16h00 Closure and goodbye

Possibility to have drinks and dinner for those staying in Leuven

## Financial Report EAWOP SGM

Originally proposed budget

### Overall budget for 2-days EAWOP Small Group Meeting – Location Leuven, Belgium

Venue rental – KU Leuven business meeting room at proper location	€ 600
Administrative and Organisational support by KU Leuven staff (pre-conference/ registration & help with travel& accommodation/ organising room/ facilities/ access to internet/ catering/ hosting during 3 days (including arrival and departure)	€ 3000
Travel costs for 25 participants (flights to Brussels Airport/ train to Leuven at av €250 pp)	€ 6250
Accommodations for 20 participants x2 nights at € 100 (assuming 5 live in the region)	€ 4000
Catering for 2 days (coffee/tea 2 days in meeting room/ reception-dinner/ 2x lunch	€ 3000
€2.200	
<b>total</b>	<b>€ 16.850</b>
Unforeseen: 10%	1.685
<b>Overall</b>	<b>€ 18.535</b>

**Sponsors: KU Leuven/ Research group O2L/ Royal Military School Brussels/ individual participants**

### Expenses-

- On request of the Ukraine delegation we decided to sponsor travel and accommodations for three members. On their request, given the very demanding and long travel (more than 24 hours one-way), we provided accommodation for three nights for each.
- Catering for all participants, including coffee/tea, two lunches and 1 dinner for all participants
- No registration and participation costs for participants (as these were covered by sponsoring through KU Leuven and Royal Military School).
- Venue -Couvreur including large monitors – price was higher than foreseen. Sponsored by KU Leuven.

Catering two days on the venue <i>This included</i>	€ 770,-
Dinner (restaurant Mykene)	€ 1.419,60
Hotel expenses for three Ukraine participants	€ 832,50
Flight and Travel expenses for three Ukraine participants	€ 920,-
Fotographer	€ 60,-
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 4002,10</b>

Other expenses as budgeted.

Detailed expense form and invoices available on request.