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## President's message EABA Newsletter

**By Zuilma Gabriela Sigurðardóttir**

It is a pleasure to present the second issue of the EABA newsletter in the year 2016.

The conference in Enna in Sicily was a success, it had over 300 attendees from 36 countries. The invited talks were outstanding, thank you Lanny Fields, Ricardo Pellón, Angelika Anderson, Wayne Fuqua, and Alan Poling, for your valuable contributions. The science program was exemplary thanks to the great participation of so many behavior analysts in Europe. The setting was adventurous and beautiful, the social program was fun, the food and hospitality was unforgettable. Thank you Nanni Presti, Kore University, and the student volunteers for such great work!! Thank you all for having us. Thanks go too to BART and IESCUM for helping out with the organization of

the conference.

It was a pleasure for the president to award two European students for their behaviour analytic research a grant from the B. F. Skinner Foundation. Congratulations!! This event was a first in the history of EABA but will take place yearly.

The EABA board changed when Martti Tuomisto's second term ended. Torunn Lian took his place as Basic Science representative and in her place Christos Nikopoulos was voted Applied Science representative. Welcome Christos!

In 2017 we will have elections for the position of treasurer as Karola Dillenburger finishes her second term. Our current secretary will end his first term and can go for a second one, there may be a vote. We will have to elect a

new president. All members are encouraged to nominate potential new board members when the time comes, including themselves.

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Year 6, issue 2, Winter

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for Behaviour Analysis

# EABA Conference 2016 Enna, Sicily, Italy



Opening ceremony led by Professor Nanni Presti

Volunteers

Beautiful Enna

B. F. Skinner Foundation grant awardees

Sicilian dancers at the ancient castle

Presenters

Gala dinner

THANK YOU TO ALL THAT  
PARTICIPATED AND  
HELPED US MAKE  
THE CONFERENCE GREAT!!!





# 9th Conference of the European Association for Behaviour Analysis (EABA)

Sept 19-22, 2018, in Würzburg, Germany



**FHWS** University of Applied Sciences  
Würzburg-Schweinfurt

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND JOIN US FOR THESE FANTASTIC EVENTS!!!**



## II EABA Summer Seminar

July 5-8 2017 . Cadiz Spain . [europeanaba.org](http://europeanaba.org)



See [www.europeanaba.org](http://www.europeanaba.org)

# Interview with Dr. Hanns Rüdiger Röttgers about Behaviour Analysis in Germany

By Zuilma Gabriela Sigurðardóttir



Thank you so much Dr. Röttgers for accepting to be interviewed. I appreciate your time.

You have held positions in local and university hospitals and public health institutions from 1987 to 2008. Since 2008 you have been a professor in social medicine and health care science at the School of social work, Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) Münster. You have also been a German partner of „Simple Steps“ and are founder of „Münsteraner Intensivprogramm für Kinder mit Autismus-Spektrum-Störungen“ MIA, the EIBI program for children with ASD.

1) I am curious about the status of behaviour analysis in Germany. Can you summarize what the status is?

In academic science, most topics covered by BA in the US and other countries are covered by psychologists; the therapeutic applications being done by clinical psychologists or physicians with a psychiatric and behavioral psychotherapeutic qualification (that is the case for my work in the field), those related to work, environmental and other non-health related issues are typically done by occupational and organizational psychologists.

BA is widely unknown even in academic science. Even where the term as such is known, BA is misunderstood as a traditionalist variant of clinical psychology that didn't develop further after the “cognitive turn” in behavioral therapy.

As a consequence, there is no formal status of BACB credentials whatsoever. Being a BCBA or BCaBA is “nice to have” but, from a formal point of view, it is nothing more than an expensive certificate issued by a foreign private company. This is especially important for health care applications: In Germany, only

physicians and psychologists with a state-approved therapeutic license are entitled to deliver health care services. No other degree is accepted; that is why the few BCBA's working in German health care have medical or psychotherapeutic degrees as a legal base for their work.

2) Can you tell us a little about the history of behaviour analysis in Germany

I can't claim to have a comprehensive overview there. BA as a science has neither formal academic base nor tradition in Germany, as I pointed out before. So, BA knowledge of course does exist, there are even very well established departments of psychology with a renowned behavioral therapeutic tradition, this mostly in the sub departments of clinical psychology. But none of these departments call themselves "behavioral analytic"; I told you already about the misconception of BA as a sort of old-school psychology having overslept the so-called "cognitive turn". So, BA is a sort of "imported science"; the German professional organization has just been founded, largely depends on experts educated abroad and does not yet have a measurable influence.

3) Has any one field of behaviour analysis (ideology/philosophy, the basic science, the applied science, service delivery) developed more than the others? If so, why do you think this happened that way?

In fact, it's only service delivery where BA as such has any foothold in Germany. There are some companies and individuals with BA degrees from abroad delivering ABA services for persons with Autism spectrum disorders. As academic institutions are not (or not yet) existent, there is no homegrown scientific debate; BA as a science in Germany is drip-fed from abroad.

4) Are there any undergraduate courses on behaviour analysis being taught in Germany? And if so, where and what departments, i.e., psychology, education, others?

As far as I know, there are no undergraduate courses on BA in Germany in a formal sense. That does not exclude BA contents being taught in other formal contexts, of course: I may refer to our Münster autism early intervention program for children with autism that has been developed in the school of Social work. Here, students from Bachelor courses in psychology, educational science and social work pass a curriculum that is more comprehensive than the requirements for a registered behavior technician (RBT) exam; we use teaching materials developed in cooperation with BCBA's, however, we may not call this "RBT" because teaching, examination, and supervision are delivered by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, not by BCBA.

5) Are there any graduate programs in universities in Germany that emphasize behaviour analysis? If so, where and in what departments?

The same is true for graduate programs. Wherever behavioral analytic knowledge is taught, chances are it will be called clinical or occupational psychology or terms like "behavior related" will be used. Look at the newly established Masters' program "behavior related counseling" of the UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt: I am sure there are lots of BA-derived contents, but BA lacking an academic base, teaching is done by psychologists.

6) What has been the biggest threshold to the development of behaviour analysis in Germany?

As BA is not eligible for public funding in the health care system in Germany (whereas the medical and psychotherapeutic sciences underline the importance of behavioral interventions, e.g., in the field of autism spectrum disorders in all official guidelines and professional standards, quoting mostly BA-derived research), most of the BA-related services that are publicly funded are delivered in the special needs educational and disability care system. This is also the administrative competency area where autism-related interventions are funded. Here, they are competing with a vast spectrum of non-specific methods, some of which are even counterproductive or harmful. The problem is that decision making in this administrative area is done by administrative or pedagogic staff or social workers. Here a problem arises: Generally spoken, education and pedagogic science in Germany have no strong empirical research tradition, and learning psychology as the underlying basic science is vastly ignored. Many persons leading discussions in pedagogics in Germany are profoundly anti-scientific. They claim that unconditional "acceptance of

disability" must be the prevailing priority, insinuating that effective help is equivalent to non-acceptance. This discussion already prevented funding of our Münster early intensive behavioral intervention (EIBI) programme by "Aktion Mensch", the main German welfare funding organization for persons with disabilities, and endangers a comparable EIBI programme in Bremen. The leading left-wing daily newspaper, the "tageszeitung", wrote on Dec. 2nd: "The aim of ABA is to extinguish any individual personality traits". So, trying to establish BA science and services in Germany first means to overcome strong ideological resistance.

7) What do you think has to happen so that behaviour analysis can flourish in Germany?

In my opinion, the key question is whether BA will succeed in establishing an academic base in German universities. If not, its ideological opponents will successfully continue negating its merits and creating misunderstanding and prejudices. Setting up university curricula is also crucial in order to "liberate" BA from its reductionist and misleading perception as being nothing but an autism intervention technique or, as its opponents try to convince the public, as a quasi-sectarian subchapter of psychology denying scientific progress. The BACB, on the other hand, might consider to temporarily recognize course sequences delivered by university teachers from other sciences. Also, the exclusion of medical science as acceptable field of study for a BCBA certification is not helpful for countries like Germany. If and when BA will hopefully have established a stable academic base over here someday, then there would be the moment to return to the strict Anglo-American standards. As the situation is today, the development of BA in Germany is choked off by a too restrictive policy of the Board.

8) The next EABA conference will be held in Würzburg, Germany in 2018. Do you think that may influence the status of behaviour analysis in Germany and if so in what way? What consequences do you think this may have?

The conference in Würzburg is a great opportunity to raise awareness; Würzburg is also an ideal location because the Department of Social Work has a long tradition of behavioral orientation. This said, I have to add that that is a rare exception in Germany. I think the critical issue for BA, a sort of "condition sine qua non", will be the establishment of an academic coursework leading to a BA degree. If Würzburg were the first university to do so, that would be a fantastic starting point. I could also imagine some common project, including BA in our clinical Masters' programme as a starting point. I wish the conference in Würzburg all the best; however, I remain skeptical as BA has many powerful opponents in Germany.

## Dr. Hanns Rüdiger Röttgers' bio

Dr. Hanns Rüdiger Röttgers received his medical licence in 1987 from Münster University medical school. He is a certified medical specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy, public health and environmental medicine. He also has a master's degrees in political science (Hagen University) and applied ethics (Münster University). He has held positions in local and university hospitals and public health institutions from 1987 to 2008. Since 2008 he has been a professor in social medicine and health care science, school of social work, Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) Münster. He has been a German partner of „Simple Steps“ and is founder of „Münsteraner Intensivprogramm für Kinder mit Autismus-Spektrum-Störungen“ MIA, an EIBI program for children with ASD. He is also a member of the Council of Europe Drafting Group for the elaboration of an Additional Protocol on the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary placement and treatment. Dr. Röttgers is married and has two daughters.

## Behaviour Analysis in the Czech Republic – A success story

## The Arrival of ABA in the Czech Republic

By Jana Gandalovicova, MD

Behind this story is a small beautiful boy and his parents. At the age of 3 he was positively screened for autism and one year later diagnosed with a severe form of ASD. Both his parents are cardiologists, used to reading lots of scientific literature, logging on Pub Med and Science Direct on a regular basis. I remember that day precisely. It was January 2013. I went to a child psychiatrist's office to get the final diagnosis, which I had already anticipated. I got it, replied "OK!" and immediately asked what could we do to help him. The psychiatrist's reply surprised me, because there was only silence, a shrug of shoulders and her explanation that nature could somehow help itself... I was stunned. My evidence-based medical training made me start reading other than cardiology literature. I was on the look-out for what science had to offer for my son. And it was quite easy. Very quickly I bumped into the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendation on management of children with ASD and, therefore, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). A well established and proved scientific approach for children with autism.

I was overwhelmed by joy, relief, and hope for my son, that lasted just for a short while. For the next few months, we happily and willingly let ourselves and our limited resources be misused by so-called ABA therapists. We believed that they had been properly educated. We watched helplessly as our son's condition deteriorated. Pain is a most effective eye-opener! Not just physical pain, due to numerous bites and scratches we received from our son, but psychical pain, that there was nothing we as parents could do to help our son.

So I started to read again, diving again into the science of ABA, but this time concentrating on finding out about professional credentials for ABA providers. This is how I discovered the Behavior Analyst Certification Board ([www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com)). And then it was easy. I simply checked their registry of certificants, and found that there are no BCBAs in the Czech Republic, not a single one of them; and there was nowhere offering of proper approved education and training in ABA in my home country either. I asked myself: "What to do now?" We were left with only one choice. We had to bring proper ABA to our society. But HOW? I logged on to the website of the European Association for Behaviour Analysis (EABA), went through the pictures of members of committee and it was Prof. Karola Dillenburger, BCBA-D who caught my eye. I felt that she would be the right person to help our hopeless situation. On the 20 of April 2015 at 19:36, we wrote her a 'SOS' email. That was how it all started. This was the most important email message we had ever written, because Karola replied immediately. We were delighted. Not only that, she brought in more help by 'dragging' her husband Prof. Mickey Keenan, BCBA-D in as well. Help was on the way in form of buckets-full of invaluable advice and suggestions.

On our side, I introduced this idea of early intensive behavioral intervention during a parliamentary seminar. There I met another mom – Milena Nemcova – a tireless advocate for autistic children. I explained to her the importance of this step and she immediately agreed and offered her support. So, now there were two families.

We quickly realized the importance of approved local training in ABA and were searching for a progressive academic from the psychology or education field to establish university level post-graduate course. And we found him in Ass. Prof. Karel Pancocha, the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University in Brno. Now there were three of us on the Czech side and the collaboration between Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, and Masaryk University Brno started immediately, supported by Erasmus+ funding from the EU. Karel visited Northern Ireland in Oct. 2015 to discuss the way forward in relation to ABA training at Masaryk University, even before Karola and Mickey had set foot into the Czech Republic.

We decided to organize a conference in Brno to raise awareness of ABA. But where would we get the funds? We knew that professors in ABA charge lots of money to share their science with others. What

Karola and Mickey told us astonished us. “Just get us air tickets and a hotel room and we’ll come over for the sake of the science, with no extra costs”, was what we were told. Then we were convinced without a speck of doubt that our first impression was right. Still having no funds, we paid the travel and accommodation out of our own pockets. Apart from Karola and Mickey, the invitation to speak during this conference also was accepted by Zuzana Mastenova, BCBA from Slovakia. She has been a huge help to us ever since then. (Czech and Slovak languages are very similar; we can understand each other very well). So, we had the first ABA conference. It was held in Brno and the venue was a full-scale cinema, with over 400 parents and professionals attending and Karola and Mickey were even on Czech TV. Overall, a stunning success.

The foundation of the Czech Society for Applied Behaviour Analysis (CSABA, [www.csaba.cz](http://www.csaba.cz)) became our next achievement. It was particularly important that we distinguished our activities from the invasion of non-board certified people coming in from abroad, saying that they were delivering ABA. CSABA allows us to voice our concerns and objections and to guarantee that our children get access to high quality ABA-based interventions supervised by Board Certified Behaviour Analysts. We were fortunate to bring David Kasal, MD, on board as Chair for CSABA. David is a pediatrician and member of Parliament.

In the absence of certified behaviour analysts in our country, we again looked abroad for support to give our newly formed society the necessary weight and respectability. Mickey and Karola agreed to become honorary members with Dr Neil Martin, BCBA-D, Director of International Development for the Behaviour Analyst Certification Board becoming our honorary advisor. We went still further by securing our society’s affiliation to the Czech Medical Association of J. E. Purkyně, a highly respected institution with over 20,000 members, a remarkable achievement indeed. The goal of CSABA is to bring proper ABA to Czech Republic, to establish certified education and training, to create a new non-medical allied health profession – Certified Behaviour Analyst and the goal of getting ABA-based evidenced-based treatment reimbursed by the public health system (NB: the Czech Republic has a health insurance system).

The first big event run by CSABA was a hearing/seminar at the Czech Parliament in Prague called *Out of the trap of autism with ABA*, that was held in February 2016, again with participation of Profs. Dillenburger and Keenan and Zuzana Mastenova, BCBA. Other dedicated people also gave of their time, again free of charge, including Dr Neil Martin, Director of International Development of the BACB, who explained the importance of professionally approved training and Prof. Lorri Unumb, Director of State Government Affairs for Autism Speaks, who was the architect of Ryan’s law that spearheaded changes American legislation to enable insurance coverage of ABA in 44 US States. The hearing/seminar was attended by over 120 politicians, professionals and parents and constituted yet another success in your battle to bring ABA to the Czech Republic.

Another major achievement followed. Together with Assoc.Prof. Pancocha we were able to secure significant funds from the Ministry of Education to send up to 15 Czech students to study at Queen’s University Belfast (or other international BACB approved course sequences) and to establishing our own Czech BACB approved course sequence at Masaryk University in Brno. In the middle of 2016, the Masaryk course sequence was approved by BACB and will be offered from next academic year (starting in Sept. 2017) under the leadership of Prof. Michael Keenan, BCBA-D, Visiting Professor at Masaryk. In the meantime, we just finished our first RBT course, developed and taught by Zuzana Mastenova, BCBA. Where do we stand now?

- Our course sequence at Brno got approval from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board
- A 3-year, fixed-term Senior Lecturer post in ABA (BCBA/BCBA-D) has been advertised at Masaryk University, Brno.
- Our first batch of behaviour analysis trainees have started their course work at QUB
- Our first batch of approx 40 students has just concluded their 40-hour RBT training
- Our systematic early screening programme will start shortly
- We are finalising the translation into Czech language of Simple Steps ([www.simplestepsautism.com](http://www.simplestepsautism.com)), a multimedia online training resource developed in N. Ireland for



parents and professionals who want to learn about ABA. This was possible with financial support from the biggest health insurance company in the Czech Republic.

- We have secured a contract to translate into Czech language the text book *Applied Behaviour Analysis* by Cooper, Heron, & Heward.
- Negotiations are underway to start a class with an ABA-based curriculum for children with autism
- Co-operation with National Institute of Education to raise awareness on ASD and ABA among teachers that will also serve as a pool for future ABA trainees.
- Efforts are ongoing to establish a new non-medical allied health profession
- Negotiations are ongoing with the Ministry of Health and the insurance company regarding coverage of ABA interventions

All this was possible thanks to a close collaboration between determined parents and selfless professionals and academics who are determined to spread their science for the sake of children, and NOT for personal gain or profit.

It all started with one email... to be continued...

If you are a BCBA and interested in becoming involved in teaching/supervising on the approved course sequence at Masaryk, please get in touch with the course director, Prof Mickey Keenan [mickeykeen@me.com](mailto:mickeykeen@me.com)





## EABA Membership

We are a growing community of professionals interested in the dissemination of Behaviour Analysis in Europe.

### **BENEFITS of membership:**

1. Subscription to the *European Journal of Behaviour Analysis (EJOBA)*
2. Reduced EABA conference registration fees
3. Affiliate/student members enjoy all benefits of membership except for the right to vote on matters of interest to the organization and the right to hold office.

## EABA Membership

Welcome to our most recent affiliated chapter!

## The Hellenic Community for Behavior Analysis (Hellenic ABA)

Affiliated Chapters Membership gives your members access to the benefits of EABA membership, including the European Journal of Behaviour Analysis, email notifications, information sharing, and reduced conference rates.

**We encourage associations to apply for Affiliated Chapter Membership.**

### **Current affiliated chapters of EABA:**

The Hellenic Community for Behaviour Analysis

Associazione Italiana di Analisi e Modificazione del Comportamento AIAMC, Italy

Norwegian Association for Behaviour Analysis

ABA Deutschland

FinnABA (Association for Behaviour Analysis / Finland)

Association for Advancement of Radical Behaviour Analysis – A.A.R.B.A, Italy

European Institute for the Study of Human Behaviour IESCUM, Italy

## News from the EABA Community

### From our members

- EABA currently has 230 members from over 30 countries: 111 full members, 72 student members and 47 affiliate members
- Join us on Facebook and Twitter (@AbaEuropean).

## Upcoming ABA Events in Europe

### In April

**The Experimental Analysis of Behaviour Group (EABG) conference at University College, London, UK on April 10-12. Call for papers is open till February.**

### In June

**International congress of ABA in Rome, Italy on June 9-11. For more information see [www.dallaluna.it/convegno-aba-2017/](http://www.dallaluna.it/convegno-aba-2017/)**

### In July

**EABA summer program in Cádiz, Spain July 5-8. For more information look regularly at the EABA website, [www.europeanaba.org](http://www.europeanaba.org), info will be updated as it becomes available**

## Kudos for EABA members accomplishments

Two graduate students, one PhD student in Greece, Anastasia Salma and one master's student in Norway, Ruth Kopperud, received the B. F. Skinner foundation research award for their behaviour analytic research.

Well done!

