

25 Years of Psygroup

Working together in diversity.

On 16 October 2026, Psygroup celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Résidence Palace in Brussels. The event marked not only twenty-five years since the founding of the practice in Etterbeek, but also an opportunity to reflect on the values that have shaped Psygroup from the very beginning.

Coincidentally, the celebration took place on the same day as a European summit in Brussels. While leaders from twenty-seven countries gathered to cooperate across different cultures, histories and perspectives, Psygroup reflected on a similar ambition as the EU at its origin: creating a professional community in which diversity is not an obstacle, but a source of strength.

The Programme

The afternoon was organised around three presentations, each exploring diversity from a different perspective.

Patrick Engelhardt, founder of Psygroup looked back on twenty-five years of Psygroup and reflected on the development of a professional community built on diversity, autonomy and shared values.

Geert Schelkens explored intercultural relationships, illustrating how cultural differences can both enrich and challenge couples.

Lotta De Coster concluded on reflections on how to move beyond diagnostic labels and to appreciate the uniqueness of every individual.

From a Small Practice to an International Community

Psygroup was founded in 2001 with a simple but ambitious idea: to create a place where independent clinical psychologists could build their own private practice while remaining connected to a supportive professional community.

At the time, clinical psychology in Belgium was still developing. Although the title "psychologist" had recently become legally protected, clinical psychologists were not formally recognised as healthcare professionals until 2016. Building a sustainable private practice was therefore often challenging, with limited recognition, few support structures and relatively little public awareness of mental health.

Psygroup emerged as a response to these circumstances by combining professional autonomy with mutual support and collaboration.

Over the past twenty-five years, more than forty psychologists have been part of Psygroup. Some stayed only briefly, while others have remained for many years. Every colleague contributed something unique, enriching both the practice and its professional culture.

Diversity as a Core Principle

Diversity has never been a slogan at Psygroup. It has always been part of everyday practice.

Throughout the years, psychologists from many countries and professional backgrounds joined the group. They brought different languages, cultures, personalities, therapeutic approaches and experiences.

This diversity allowed Psygroup to welcome an equally diverse international client population in Brussels. For many clients, receiving therapy in their own language or with someone who understands their cultural background made a significant difference.

At the same time, diversity also became a source of continuous learning among colleagues. Different perspectives encouraged professional growth and broadened everyone's understanding of psychological practice.

From Diversity to Shared Identity

However, diversity alone does not automatically create a community.

One of the central questions throughout Psygroup's history has therefore been:

How can individuality and diversity be preserved while building a shared culture of connection, solidarity and belonging?

Psygroup's answer has never been to strive for uniformity.

Every psychologist remains professionally independent, develops a personal clinical style and makes autonomous therapeutic decisions.

What connects the psychologists is not working in exactly the same way, but sharing a common set of values: respect, responsibility, solidarity, professional quality and commitment to clients.

These shared values create a collective identity without limiting individual freedom.

A Shared Project

Psygroup supports psychologists in achieving three shared ambitions:

- building a sustainable private practice;
- experiencing professional autonomy, fulfilment and fairness;
- working in an environment that offers comfort, appropriate facilities and mutual support.

Realising these goals is a shared responsibility towards colleagues, clients and the organisation itself.

The Psychotope

To describe this environment, the concept of the **psychotope** was introduced.

Just as living organisms require the right habitat to flourish, psychologists also need the right physical, professional and human environment to develop. The psychotope consists of more than offices and consultation rooms. It includes peer consultation, professional exchange, informal encounters, social activities and the willingness to invest in one another.

Over the years these activities evolved from practical meetings into a more open and flexible way of connecting, including peer meetings, cultural outings, theatre visits, and activities such as karaoke evenings and even axe throwing.

These shared experiences helped strengthen relationships while respecting individual differences.

Balancing Freedom and Solidarity

A psychotope can only function when diversity is actively supported. This requires tolerance, empathy and authenticity. It also requires solidarity.

Solidarity does not mean everyone becomes the same. It means recognising that personal freedom exists alongside responsibility for the wellbeing of the wider community.

Finding this balance between autonomy and collective responsibility remains one of the defining characteristics of Psygroup.

An Important Lesson

Looking back after twenty-five years, Patrick Engelhardt reflected on one of the most important lessons he learned as founder.

In the early years, he believed that creating a strong shared identity and professional community also required a certain degree of alignment. He had a clear vision of the principles guiding Psygroup, both in its values and in the way people would work together, and believed that people needed to relate to these principles in a similar way.

This perspective was understandable when building a new organisation. Creating clarity, coherence and a common direction helps establish a strong foundation.

Over time, however, he learned that people can connect to shared values in different ways. One of the biggest lessons was learning to let go of the idea that everyone needed to approach things in the same way, and to trust the group process.

A shared identity is created by allowing people to contribute from their own personality, expertise and perspective while remaining connected by common principles.

Today, Psygroup remains a practice with clear foundations. The group shares a commitment to quality psychotherapy and to working with clients who are motivated to invest in this process. Within this shared framework, there is room for different perspectives, clinical interests, patient populations and ways of contributing.

Looking Forward

Twenty-five years after its foundation, Psygroup remains committed to the principles that inspired its creation.

The practice continues to offer psychologists professional independence within a supportive community while providing high-quality psychotherapy to a diverse population.

Ultimately, the anniversary was above all a celebration of people:

the psychologists who have worked at Psygroup, the clients who entrusted them with their care, colleagues and referring professionals, and everyone who contributed to building this shared project.

The central message of the celebration can be summarised in one sentence:

A true community is not built by being the same, but by trusting one another in our differences.

Patrick Engelhardt

Founder of Psygroup and clinical psychologist.

His clinical work integrates humanistic, systemic and dialogical approaches. He holds postgraduate training in client-centred psychotherapy and systemic therapy. Since 2001, he has served as Managing Director of Psygroup, developing it into an international group practice which has become a trusted and well-established reference in Brussels for people seeking support in their personal development, psychological wellbeing, or mental health.

Patrick served as Chairman of the Flemish Association of Clinical Psychologists (VVKP) from 2020 to 2023 and is currently vice president of the Belgian Commission of Psychologists.