

Article

# Observational Study on the Creation and Typology of Behavioral Design Units in International Organizations

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## ABSTRACT

Recently, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, presented a technical note on behavioral science (United Nations, 2021) and its application by different UN organizations, in order to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Other supranational organizations are also setting up their own «behavioral analysis and design units» or leading specific initiatives. So far, the structure of such behavioral analysis units has not been examined. The aim of our work is to find out, through an observational study of their websites, both the structure of the behavior analysis and design units of supranational organizations and their composition, as well as the main types of projects they carry out and the opportunities and implications created for psychology professionals.

## Estudio Observacional Sobre la Creación y Tipología de Unidades de Análisis y Diseño del Comportamiento en Organizaciones Supranacionales

## RESUMEN

En fechas recientes, el Secretario General de Naciones Unidas, António Guterres, presentaba una nota técnica sobre ciencias del comportamiento (United Nations, 2021) y su aplicación por parte de distintas organizaciones de Naciones Unidas, para lograr cubrir los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenibles 2030. Asimismo, otras organizaciones de ámbito supranacional están también creando o bien unidades propias de «análisis y diseño del comportamiento» o bien liderando iniciativas específicas. Hasta la fecha, no se ha analizado la estructura de este tipo de unidades. El objetivo de nuestro trabajo es conocer, a través de un estudio observacional de sus sitios web, tanto la estructura de las unidades de análisis de determinantes del comportamiento de organizaciones supranacionales como su composición, así como los principales tipos de proyectos que llevan a cabo y las implicaciones y oportunidades que representan para los profesionales de la psicología.

### Palabras clave

Diseño del comportamiento

Psicología

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Organizaciones supranacionales

Unidades de análisis y diseño del comportamiento

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## Introduction

Recently, the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, presented a technical note on the behavioral sciences (United Nations, 2021) and their application in different United Nations organizations to achieve the necessary changes, both at the individual and societal level, in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG 2030 hereinafter). Recently, the American Psychological Association (APA) also explains in its report "Emerging trends for 2023: What's ahead for psychologists and the field?" how psychologists are increasingly in demand to help solve some of the biggest challenges we face as a society. The report also mentions the tendency of psychology professionals to broaden their focus and go beyond personalized and individual therapy, reinforcing even further their central role in the promotion of the psychological health of the population (APA, 2023).

These trends indicated by the APA to broaden the focus towards solving societal problems in which human behavior is key, are aligned with the United Nations technical note on the behavioral sciences (op.cit), in which practical measures are proposed to create an enabling environment for the application of the behavioral sciences in various fields: health, climate change, gender, education, prevention of extremism, and in practically all areas of its activity.

The main idea of the technical note is that the fulfillment of many of the 2030 SDGs is based on a simple, but not simplistic, premise: achieving them depends on people and organizations carrying out some specific type of behavior, and in this area psychology professionals have and will have a central role.

Thus, the call of the United Nations is clear. All professionals in the behavioral sciences are called upon to contribute through models and techniques to identify the determinants of whether or not certain behaviors are realized, analyzing the barriers and facilitators of these behaviors, as well as establishing concrete strategies to implement and evaluate the behavioral change. All of this is focused on a practical perspective, based on different models and techniques of psychology, such as those that have been developed throughout its history in areas such as prevention and health promotion.

But in addition to the United Nations, which by its nature is the most representative of the supranational institutions, many others, such as the World Health Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, and large non-governmental organizations, such as UNICEF, are creating working teams around the behavioral sciences. In the OECD study *Behavioural Insights and public policy: Lessons from around the world*, it is mentioned that the "organized disorder" in the application of the behavioral sciences in these organizations is a result of organic growth due to initiatives in this field, which have gradually taken root in the institutions (OECD, 2017).

Thus, the creation of new structures is becoming possible. These organizational structures, hereafter referred to as "behavioral

analysis and design units" (BADUs), are aimed at identifying the determinants of people's behavior. The barriers and facilitators for them to carry out different behaviors appropriate both for the achievement of their health objectives and, at the collective level of the SDGs. They also offer a privileged setting not only for academic research, but also for professional intervention in a real environment and with the possibility of being able to carry out studies with large samples that can have a great impact on the health and well-being of citizens.

It should be noted at this point that the English concept used by many of the units analyzed is that of "behavioral insights", although we have consulted the RAE during the course of this study and do not have a univocal term or a direct translation into Spanish, so, as we have indicated above, we have called them "*unidades de análisis y diseño del comportamiento*" [behavioral analysis and design units], since, as we shall see below, these units are not limited to a reflection on behavioral determinants, but also have a clear vocation for intervention, and in this sense we have used the concept of "*diseño del comportamiento*", which in English is "behavioral design", and is well established in the scientific field.

An approach to the analysis of BADUs, but opening the scope to any type of organization, including companies, was carried out in the *Behavioral Teams Around the World* report (Wendel, 2019). Using a questionnaire, the authors identified a total of 595 BADUs around the world. According to the authors, these BADUs were very heterogeneous in their composition and objectives. A high percentage (55%) were consulting firms and companies that use behavioral design to improve their products and services (45%).

In the same study, the author highlights that the countries with the highest number of teams and BADUs are: United States (242), United Kingdom (82), Netherlands (31), Australia (26), India (22), and Canada (20). The authors identified 10 in the case of Spain, but did not provide further information on their nature.

However, to date, BADUs have not been analyzed in supranational public bodies, understanding the concept of supranational organization as defined by Klabbers (2009): "a form of international organization which, encompassing several states, has its own purposes and means, has autonomy in relation to the member states, especially in the pursuit of its purposes, in the formation of its structures, and in certain cases the right to issue binding rules for the states".

The aim of our study is to determine whether supranational organizations, as organizations that have a strong influence on the policies of the states that comprise them, have their own BADUs, or if not, have at least developed initiatives related to the behavioral sciences and particularly psychology, as tools for analysis and intervention in the achievement of their goals. For this purpose, we will analyze the type of composition of the potential units, their structure, the type of projects on which they work, and we will identify, as a sample of their work, some of the reports produced by these BADUs.

Finally, this study offers a reflection on what repercussions this type of behavioral analysis and intervention unit may have for the professional development of psychology, with respect to the academic training of future psychology professionals, research in the field, and at the professional level.

## Methodology

In order to achieve our objective, we carried out an observational study with purposive sampling, through the evaluation of the online corporate websites of a series of international organizations of which Spain is a member, based on those identified on the website of the Spanish Senate.

### Procedure

The study is structured in three phases. In Phase 1, the sample of websites to be analyzed was selected. In Phase 2, an analysis of each website was carried out with a prior categorization system established by the researchers to identify, within the general website of each organization, the specific spaces or websites where the characteristics of the potential behavioral units, or related initiatives, were shown. Finally, in Phase 3, the information from the different websites was systematized into tables.

#### Phase 1. Sample Selection

A purposive sample was selected of international organizations of a European and global nature, of which Spain was a member at the time of the analysis. Specifically, the organizations included on the website of the Spanish Senate (link: <https://senado.es>), and specifically on the "international organizations" page (link: <https://www.senado.es/web/conocersenado/enlaces/organismosinternacionales/index.html>), were analyzed, as it was considered that this sample is representative, sufficient, and adequate for the objectives of this study. The Spanish Senate's website was chosen as the source for consultation after finding that it was the only site offering a list of all the supranational organizations to which the Kingdom of Spain belongs. It should be emphasized that despite not being included in the initial list, the website of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Europe was incorporated into our study. This decision is justified by the fact that although the WHO is a worldwide organization, it was considered relevant to analyze the website of this organization in Europe, due to the potential usefulness that the data obtained could have for psychologists in Spain.

#### Phase 2. Evaluation and Analysis

- For the evaluation and analysis of each of the websites, the following search protocol was carried out on the English version of each website.

- Reading and searching for references to *behaviour/behavior* on the home page (main menu) of the website. If a reference was found, it was recorded. If a specific online link was found, the link was followed and it was determined whether it referred to the existence of a *behavioral unit, the organization's own initiative, and/or an external collaboration with organizations specialized in behavioral design*.
- Specific search in the corresponding section of each website for "organization chart or structure" in order to identify any service, unit, or reference to *behavior/behavior*.
- Specific search through the website's internal search engine for any reference to *behaviour/behavior*.
- Searching for the organization's name together with "*behavior\**" in the Google search engine and scanning the first 50 hits that were not paid posts on Google. The Google search was conducted after clearing the cookies and previous search history to avoid bias.
- The Google search was carried out by one of the researchers (LA) in December 2022, with a final update in May 2023. The results were recorded in an Excel file with a specific link to each of the organizations. Subsequently, a second researcher (MA) in June 2023 reviewed and validated the results of the categorization. When there was disagreement, the website was reviewed again by the two researchers jointly and the suitability of one or the other type of categorization was discussed.

#### Phase 3. Systematization of the Information Collected

Compiling and systematizing the information gathered in the first phase in four tables created *ad hoc*.

- The first table (Table 1) lists the supranational organizations that were included in our study.
- The second one (Table 2) describes organizations with stable behavioral analysis units.
- The third (Table 3) describes organizations without behavioral analysis and design units, but with stable initiatives or collaborations, which we consider as such when they have developed some type of intervention guide and/or recommendation for integrating the analysis of behavioral determinants in their work and reports.
- The last table (Table 4) includes supranational organizations that, whilst not having a BADU or initiatives that can be considered stable, have been found to identify some type of activity related to the analysis of behavioral determinants.

## Results

Taking as a reference the organizations listed in the "International Organizations" tab of the Spanish Senate's website, the organizations listed in Table 1 were identified in Phase 1 of our study, indicating whether they have a unit or carry out initiatives related to behavioral analysis.

**Table 1**  
*Supranational Organizations*

Supranational organizations analyzed that have a specific Behavioral Analysis and Design Unit (BADU)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WB. World Bank</li> <li>• CE. European Commission</li> <li>• WHO. World Health Organization (Europe)</li> <li>• UNICEF. United Nations Children's Fund</li> <li>• OECD. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</li> </ul>
Supranational organizations analyzed that do not have a specific Behavioral Determinants Analysis Unit (BADU) but do carry out external initiatives and collaborations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</li> <li>• WHO. World Health Organization</li> <li>• UN Women. UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</li> <li>• UN. United Nations</li> <li>• UNDP. United Nations Development Programme</li> <li>• UNEP. United Nations Environment Programme</li> </ul>
Supranational organizations in which no BADUs or stable initiatives in the field of behavioral design were identified
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IMF. International Monetary Fund</li> <li>• ILO. International Labour Organization</li> <li>• UNWTO. World Tourism Organization</li> <li>• OSCE. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</li> <li>• NATO. North Atlantic Treaty Organization</li> <li>• UNESCO. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</li> </ul>

Note. Source. Senate of Spain. [www.senado.es](http://www.senado.es)

It should be noted that from the list of international organizations in the Spanish Senate website, when we reached the organization "European Council", we replaced this term with "European Commission". This decision was taken because the European Council is not of a technical nature but of coordination of EU public policies.

In Table 2, the following fields were compiled for each supranational organization: name of the organization, name, link, and objectives of the BADU, scope of work of application, structure of the BADU, and main published reports and a web link for further consultation.

Table 3 contains the following fields: name of the organization, initiative, objective of the initiative, and main reports published and their web link for further consultation. The initiatives and collaborations in Table 3 are considered to be of a stable nature.

Finally, Table 4 lists the objectives of the supranational organizations that do not have their own BADU and do not appear to have established stable initiatives. In some cases, some of these organizations have created a report or specific initiative, and these are included in the observations section of the table with the link.

Regarding the number of behavioral units among the organizations analyzed, the results indicate that a total of 11 (64.7%) of the 17 supranational organizations analyzed either had a specific behavioral unit (60%), or had carried out their own initiatives in the field of behavioral design or explicit collaborations with specialized external organizations (35.3%). The organizations with a behavioral unit listed in Table 2 are: the World Bank, the European Commission, WHO Europe, UNICEF, and the OECD. The organizations that had either developed specific initiatives or collaborated with organizations specialized in behavioral design are the FAO, WHO,

UN Women, UN, UNDP, and UNEP. And finally, no recurrent behavioral science initiatives or collaborations were identified with the IMF, ILO, UNWTO, OSCE, NATO, or UNESCO.

The areas of work are those pertaining to each of the organizations and range from interventions in specific areas such as the FAO that focuses its efforts on the fight against hunger, the WHO promoting health, UN Women with initiatives to prevent violence against women and girls, or the UNDP that maintains academic-scientific collaborations for the reduction of poverty.

Governmental organizations such as the Competence Centre on Behaviour Insights of the European Commission, or the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) work in broader areas of intervention due to the nature of these types of organizations.

Regarding the structure of these units, it should be noted that the World Bank, the European Commission, WHO Europe, and UNICEF refer to having a specialized team of researchers and external collaborators, and the WHO explains that it has a "technical advisory group". However, in the case of WHO Europe and UNICEF, the total number of professionals that make up the BADU is not available. As for the previous training of the professionals working in the BADU, this information is included on the organizations' website only with the exception of UNICEF. In cases such as the WB, the EC, or WHO Europe, the biography of the workers is included, which shows that the previous training of most of the professions defined as Behavioral Scientists covers psychology, sociology, applied consumer research, economics, and marketing, but due to the structure of the information we were not able to calculate percentages of each professional group.

## Discussion

Behavioral determinants analysis units and initiatives related to the role of behavioral sciences in general seem to be present in a good number of supranational organizations, but at the same time the structure of the analysis units, the theoretical frameworks on which they base their work, and the training of the professionals working in them, seem heterogeneous in the light of our analysis.

Thus, the fact that we had to categorize the information extracted into three groups- organizations with specific behavioral analysis and design units, others with initiatives and collaborations, and yet others in which, although we have found some reference to the importance of people's behavior, we cannot conclude that they have initiated any systematic work or created a specific unit-leads us to believe that there may soon be a great emergence of behavioral analysis and design units.

For example, in June 2023, the World Health Organization urged the world's governments to create behavioral determinants analysis units to help decision-makers better understand the behavioral determinants of individuals, organizations, and society in general in order to develop health campaigns with a greater impact on population health (WHO, 2023). This significant development marks a milestone that is likely to be followed by other supranational organizations and their national chapters.

**Table 2**  
Supranational Organizations With BADU

Organization	Name and Objectives of the BADU	Description and areas of intervention	BADU Structure	Main reports published
World Bank (WB)	<p><b>Integration, Mind, Behavior and Development Unit (eMBeD)</b></p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> To diagnose, design, and evaluate behavioral interventions to fight global poverty and reduce inequality.</p>	<p>The Integration, Mind, Behavior and Development (eMBeD) Unit works closely with project teams, governments, and other partner agencies to diagnose, design, and evaluate behavior-based interventions. By collaborating with a global network of scientists and practitioners, the eMBeD team provides answers to important economic and social questions, and contributes to global efforts to eliminate poverty and increase equity.</p> <p>Working in more than 50 countries and on more than 80 different projects in the fields of education, health, economics, environment, safe societies, labor, organizational governance, and social innovation laboratories.</p>	<p>18-person team and collaborations with international teams worldwide.</p> <p>eMBeD works closely with project teams, governments, and other partners to diagnose, design, and evaluate behaviorally informed interventions. Most of the professionals are behavioral scientists or economists, and have degrees (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral) in psychology, sociology, and economics.</p> <p><b>eMBeD Team</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ghana - Energy Sector Transformation Initiative Project.</li> <li>• Nudging to Safe Evacuation in Haiti.</li> <li>• The use of nudges to save lives.</li> <li>• Motivating public sector workers in Nigeria.</li> <li>• Behavioral insights for tax compliance.</li> <li>• How to encourage people to save money.</li> <li>• How Behavioral Science can Nudge Pregnant Women to Attend Prenatal Care in Haiti.</li> <li>• Change of mentality and life (Peru).</li> <li>• Creating connections and empowering women at the local level (Nicaragua).</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
European Commission (EC)	<p><b>Competence Centre on Behavioural Insights</b></p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> Use behavioral knowledge to help design better policies, bridge the gap between policy makers and behavioral researchers. Increase the use of behavioral insights for policy, where relevant.</p>	<p>The Competence Centre of Behavioural Insights is an agency of the European Commission that works in three basic areas: research, advice, and training in behavioral design applied to issues of interest to the European Commission.</p> <p>Areas of its work include: gender differences in the workplace, mental health public policy, behavioral experiments in the area of household water consumption and food waste, food product labeling (nutrition labeling), skills for environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Team of 11 researchers and external collaborators. Located at the <i>JRC Joint Research</i> Centre of the European Commission. Researchers include behavioral economists, psychologists, sociologists, and consumer research experts.</p> <p><b>CCBI Team</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program to support policy formulation with evidence on human behavior.</li> <li>• Analysis of behavioral insights for communication:</li> <li>• CCBI 2023 Seminar Series: Applying lessons from behavioral science.</li> <li>• Employees' reaction to gender pay transparency.</li> <li>• Separate collection of municipal waste: How to change behavior?</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
World Health Organization (WHO EUROPE)	<p><b>Behavioural and cultural insights (BCI) for health</b></p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> to help address persistent health challenges involving human behavior. Participating in BCI involves exploring the factors that affect health behaviors and then using this information to improve health policy, service, and communication outcomes, thereby achieving better health and reducing inequity. This information can be obtained by using evidence and methods from disciplines as diverse as psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, and cultural studies.</p>	<p>Behavioural and Cultural Insights (BCI) for Health of the WHO Europe was created in 2020 to lead efforts, advance evidence, and provide technical guidance to countries in the field of behavioral science. Its work is guided by the WHO European Programme of Work, which identifies BCI as a flagship priority in WHO European regions. The Unit works on a variety of issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using social and behavioral sciences to inform public policy during COVID-19.</li> <li>• Intervention in the reduction of antibiotic prescriptions.</li> <li>• Supporting behavioral and cultural perspectives (BCI) for health on various topics in member countries.</li> <li>• Sharing evidence on behavioral and cultural perspectives (BCI) through outreach and specialized training initiatives.</li> <li>• Building knowledge and skills on behavioral and cultural perspectives (BCI).</li> <li>• Supporting member country teams with behavioral and cultural perspectives (BCI) in countries.</li> </ul>	<p>The structure and number of professionals are not reported. At the European level, the work teams are composed of psychologists, behavioral economics experts, and digital marketing experts. The total number of BADU professionals is not specified.</p> <p><b>BCI team</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioural insights on health service needs and access: Results of a qualitative study among refugees...</li> <li>• Evaluation report for the training module "Communicating with patients about COVID-19 vaccination": Greece.</li> <li>• A guide to tailoring health programmes: using behavioural and cultural insights to tailor health policies, services and communications to the needs and circumstances of people and communities.</li> <li>• Training of public health professionals in behavioral design.</li> <li>• Behavioral and cultural insights at the WHO Regional Office for Europe: annual progress report 2022.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>

Organization	Name and Objectives of the BADU	Description and areas of intervention	BADU Structure	Main reports published
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	<b>Social and Behaviour Change Team</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> To promote positive changes in support of children's rights through collaboration with communities and authorities. To help families to access decisions that affect their lives.	UNICEF's social and behavioral change team has been working for 35 years to achieve, beyond communication and citizen participation strategies, ethical changes that bring well-being to children. For this reason, they combine behavioral science and design to strengthen, for example, the role of human-centered design. Also, together with UNICEF <i>Inocenti</i> - the Global Office of Research and Foresight, the BIRD Lab has been created, a collaborative, inclusive space for experimentation and innovation to apply <i>Behavioral Insights</i> that contribute to the organization's objectives.	The total number of BADU professionals is not specified, nor is there a specific link to members' biographies. It is only mentioned that different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, communication, and behavioral economics are used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SBC Evidence Impact Mapping</li> <li>• UNICEF The Behavioural Drivers Model.</li> <li>• UNICEF Everyone wants to belong.</li> <li>• UNICEF Exploring the drivers of behaviour: the case of child marriage (remote course).</li> <li>• UNICEF Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) for the response to COVID-19.</li> <li>• UNICEF's accountability to affected populations.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	<b>Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) - OECD Directorate for Public governance</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> To provide support to governments using BI, unite the BI community, change the behavior of organizations, and apply BI in the world (gather case studies and lessons for public institutions).	The OECD has a specific BADU within its <i>Observatory for Public Sector Innovation (OPSI)</i> . This observatory offers an interactive map of behavioral insights units and projects around the world, at the level of government projects, university centers, and research centers. Among the projects carried out by organizations related to behavioral design, the most relevant is to offer a consultation service of both behavioral design units and projects being carried out in the world in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health.</li> <li>• Finance.</li> <li>• Education.</li> <li>• Environment.</li> <li>• Public Policies.</li> </ul>	Although it is not specified how many professionals work specifically in the field of behavioral insights, the OPSI team is composed of 15 people, of whom 5 indicate that they work in the field of behavioral analysis and design. The academic background of its members includes graduates in political science, psychology, economics, and public policy innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral Insights and Organisations.</li> <li>• Behavioral Insights and Public Policy: Lessons from Around the World.</li> <li>• Supporting Governments using Behavioral Insights.</li> <li>• Applying behavioral perspectives to organizations: Global studies.</li> <li>• Beyond the individual: why and how behavioral perspectives can be applied to organizational behavior.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>

In our study, the structure of the World Health Organization was surprising, in that at the global level they have an advisory group made up of professionals in psychology, public health, economics, politics, and marketing but no specific unit, while at the WHO Europe level there is a BADU. No doubt this situation can be explained by the more theoretical and conceptual approach of the WHO at the global level and the fact that at the European level structures are articulated that allow field work in specific projects such as those developed at WHO Europe.

A fact that is also relevant to point out is the case of the OECD, which despite not having a behavioral analysis and design unit, currently offers one of the most complete guides for anyone interested through its Observatory (OPSI), which details both centers and specific initiatives around the world based on "behavioral insights".

This, together with the fact that they have a specific working area on behavior in the OPSI of the OECD, made us finally decide that "de facto" there was a specific unit, understood as a group of people working systematically with a common objective and within the framework of a structure.

Although our study offers a first approach to the incorporation of behavioral sciences and specifically to the analysis of how they

are being integrated into the protocols and work of supranational organizations, which had not been done to date, we believe that our study has a number of limitations that should be taken into account in future studies.

The first is the use of an observational methodology that provides more superficial information than, for example, in-depth interviews or questionnaires with those responsible for each behavioral analysis unit or leaders of the different initiatives would have provided.

Thus, for example, in an analysis such as this it is not possible to establish, beyond an approximate idea, which theoretical model or models underpin the work and reports that are realized in the organizations, both in the field of the BADUs and the various initiatives. In order to solve this problem, more in-depth studies would be needed to analyze both the documents linked to the different websites and the scientific production published by the technicians and academics who collaborate in the different organizations.

Another limitation is that we have not been able to identify specific initiatives in the organizations listed in Table 4. Nevertheless, we have collected them with the intention of continuing the observation, since some of the organizations, such

as ILO, UNWTO and UNESCO, are organizations in the framework of and related to the UN. In this sense, we understand that the call of its Secretary General, António Guterres, to the use of behavioral sciences as a fundamental tool in their analysis and interventions, will favor the establishment of new stable initiatives or even BADUs in these organizations, despite the internal complexity of these organizations.

### Conclusions

We believe that the main contribution of our study is to draw the attention of psychology professionals in Spain to the work in the field of behavioral sciences that is carried out in the supranational organizations to which Spain belongs, according to the website of the Senate of Spain.

**Table 3**  
Supranational Organizations With Initiatives Related to Behavioral Sciences

Organization	Initiative in which it is framed	Type of Initiative	Objectives of the initiatives	Main guides and reports developed
Food and Agriculture Organization of the World (FAO)	<b>FAO Office of Innovation</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> the objective of the innovation office is to consolidate and strengthen the FAO's innovative spirit, emphasizing the development of new cooperation formats and the change of mentalities. For the global agrifood system, all types of technological, social, political, institutional, and financial innovations are considered relevant and applicable.	The Office of Innovation uses behavioral science to gather an evidence base on how to successfully foster behaviors that support innovation and lead to progress on the SDGs.	The FAO gathers databases, tools, and materials and prepares reports on how to improve public awareness, communication, and marketing in order to achieve behaviors that ensure public health (clean kitchens, food handling, food safety, nutrition, and healthy habits, agriculture, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior change communication strategy for the food security, and agricultural productivity project "you are what you eat".</li> <li>• E-agriculture best practices: the social, green and digital behavior change communication model for scaling up.</li> <li>• <i>Clean cooking</i> behavior change communication interventions in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Nigeria.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
World Health Organization (WHO)	<b>Behavioural Sciences for Better Health (Technical Advisory Group on Behavioural Insights and Sciences for Health)</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> Gathering evidence on the determinants of behavior at the individual, community, and population levels can improve the design of policies and programs, communications, and products and services.	The 17-member Technical Advisory Group (TAG), led by a psychologist and composed of psychologists, behavioral economists, anthropologists, and social marketing experts, is a WHO initiative.	<p>They focus on the study of the determinants of health-related behavior, both the barriers and facilitators to the functioning of interventions aimed at improving health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral intervention for family planning use in adolescents.</li> <li>• Improving the effectiveness of HIV programs through behavioral science.</li> <li>• Using social and behavioral sciences to inform public policy during COVID-19.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young People and COVID-19: Behavioural Considerations for Promoting Safe Behaviours.</li> <li>• Behavioral considerations for the acceptance and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.</li> <li>• Technical note from the WHO Technical Advisory Group on behavioural insights and science for health.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
United Nations (UN) Women	UN Women does not have a specific BADU, however, the <b>UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women</b> identified "training for behavior change" as one of the ways to prevent violence against women and girls, and therefore donated part of its budget to civil society projects for this purpose.  <b>Objectives:</b> To showcase the contributions, recommendations, and practical advice of 7 civil society organizations on the intervention of "training for behavioral change" (training for behavioral change).	UN Women's activities are based on partnerships with organizations such as the UK's <i>Behavioural Insight Team</i> (social enterprise) and external experts. They also develop specific training on behavioral insights in collaboration with UNICEF.	<p>By compiling the 7 projects funded by UN Women to prevent gender-based violence against girls and women, the following is intended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To showcase the unique contributions of different types and sizes of organizations, from small local grassroots youth groups to large international human rights organizations.</li> <li>• To show the diversity of possibilities in forms, objectives, durations, intensities, and participants of trainings for the prevention of gender violence in different social contexts.</li> <li>• To provide practical tips and recommendations for leveraging trainings within their prevention interventions, i.e., for practitioners, researchers, and donors.</li> </ul>	<p>Learning from practice: Training for behavior change to prevent violence against women and girls.</p> <p><a href="#">Access to the report</a></p>

Organization	Initiative in which it is framed	Type of Initiative	Objectives of the initiatives	Main guides and reports developed
United Nations (UN)	The UN does not have a specific BADU, however, it has created the <a href="#">UN Behavioural Science Group</a> with more than 800 internal and external UN members.  <b>Objectives:</b> The objective of the UN constituted group is to promote awareness and support the work of behavioral sciences at the UN.	The UN Behavioural Science Group provides learning opportunities on behavioral science approaches and methods; and brings external perspectives and approaches to the UN. It also collaborates with behavioral science academics and specialized organizations in the design and implementation of projects based on the analysis of behavioral determinants.	The objectives of the initiative, related to health, prevention of extremism, and reduction of inequalities, among others, are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote awareness and support the work of behavioral science at the UN.</li> <li>• To provide learning opportunities on BeSci approaches and methods.</li> <li>• To contribute points of view and approaches from outside the UN.</li> <li>• To collaborate with behavioral science academics and specialized organizations in the design and implementation of behavior-based projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNITED NATIONS Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started with Behavioural Science.</li> <li>• Behavioral Sciences to Reduce Administrative Burden.</li> <li>• COVID-19 Vaccination Confidence, Access and Roll-out: Global Lessons from the Field Using Behavioural Science.</li> <li>• Principles and steps for applying a behavioral perspective to public health.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to reports</a></p>
United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)	The UNEP does not have a BADU, however, it collaborates with social consultancies such as the Behavioural Insight Team.  <b>Objective:</b> To reduce the environmental impact of university campuses through behavioral change, specifically, through the concept of the nudge.	Although it does not have a specific unit, it <i>collaborates with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), Grid-Arendal and others</i> to produce publications and events related to "green nudges", advocating the impact of the use of behavioral sciences in sustainable practices. Specifically, UNEP has launched the <a href="#">Green Nudges</a> program for universities.	The objectives of the "Green Nudges" initiative for universities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use the concept of "Green Nudges" with the aim of achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.</li> <li>• To promote sustainable practices related to energy efficiency, waste selection and management, water saving, etc. that can reduce the carbon footprint of the campus.</li> <li>• To avoid the gap between intention and action in relation to students' sustainable practices.</li> <li>• To align campus environmental policies with students' values and awareness of environmental preservation.</li> <li>• To share best practices and success stories of the use of "nudges" among different universities, which can also be extrapolated to other contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Little Book of Green Nudges</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to the report</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consuming Differently, Consuming Sustainability: Behavioral Insights for Policymaking.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Access to the report</a></p>
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. Helping countries develop policies, leadership skills, partnership skills, institutional capabilities, and build resilience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Its work concentrates on three focus areas; sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, and climate and disaster resilience.	UNDP does not have a BADU or any specific initiative, however, it collaborates with behavioral science organizations, the UK Behavioural Insights Team (a social purpose company), and Nudge Lebanon to work on aspects such as the achievement of the SDGs or guidelines to prevent violence from extremism through Behavioral Insights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objectives of the UNDP's behavioral science initiatives are:</li> <li>• Working to reduce extremist violence</li> <li>• Reducing violence against women</li> <li>• Establishing laboratories for public policy</li> <li>• Development of entrepreneurship through the behavioral sciences.</li> </ul>	<p>Among the tools developed by the UNDP related to behavioral insights is the <a href="#">A Behavioural Insights Toolkit for Entrepreneurship Programming</a>, which aims to strengthen entrepreneurship in developing countries through behavioral science.</p> <p><a href="#">Access to the report</a></p>

To date, we have not provided a panoramic picture of the various BADUs and initiatives related to the analysis of the determinants of human behavior for the achievement of organizational objectives at this level, and we consider our study to be a first step that should be followed up with more precise, domain-specific studies.

It is also relevant that beyond being just another area of work, the involvement of the behavioral sciences in these organizations

is having and will have a significant impact on the policies of member states, and for example, the work in behavioral sciences is one of the fundamental pillars for the UN (UN, 2021).

In our opinion, it is plausible to think that the leadership of organizations such as the United Nations-which, as we have indicated, has already publicly positioned itself through a technical note on the necessity of incorporating the study of behavioral sciences into its projects worldwide-is key. This highlights the need



**Table 4**  
Supranational Organizations Without a BADU or Stable Initiatives

Organization	Objectives of the Organization	Observations
<a href="#">IMF. International Monetary Fund</a>	The IMF's objectives are to promote international monetary cooperation among countries, ensure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty.	No references were found either to "behavior/behaviour" in IMF initiatives or collaborations, or to BADUs.
<a href="#">ILO. International Labour Organization</a>	The ILO aims to promote labor rights, foster decent work opportunities, improve social protection, and strengthen dialogue among labor actors.	The ILO, in conjunction with the University of Geneva, collaborated on a project to design a behavioral intervention in the context of the ILO's Integrated Programme on Fair Recruitment.  <a href="#">Access the report</a>
<a href="#">UNWTO. World Tourism Organization</a>	The UNWTO's stated objectives are to stimulate economic growth and job creation, to encourage the protection of the environment and the heritage of destinations, and to promote peace and understanding among all nations of the world through tourism.	No references were found either to "behavior/behaviour" in UNWTO initiatives or collaborations, or to BADUs of the UNWTO.
<a href="#">OSCE. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</a>	The OSCE is guided by the objectives of helping participating States to build democratic institutions; holding genuine and transparent elections; ensuring respect for human rights, freedom of the media, the rights of national minorities and the rule of law; and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.	No references were found either to "behavior/behaviour" in OSCE initiatives or collaborations, or to BADUs.
<a href="#">NATO. North Atlantic Treaty Organization</a>	NATO's main objectives are to guarantee the freedom and maintain the security of member states through political and military means.	No references were found either to "behavior/behaviour" in NATO initiatives or collaborations, or to BADUs.
<a href="#">UNESCO. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</a>	UNESCO aims to contribute to peace-building, poverty eradication, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information.	UNESCO organized a session with experts focused on "Changing behaviours for improved education outcomes" on the current and potential applications of behavioral insights to improve education and youth outcomes.  <a href="#">Access the summary of the session.</a>

to emphasize scientific methodology in decision making and, in particular, in the improvement of judgments and the avoidance of bias to be contemplated both in public institutions and in the business world (Kahneman, Sibony, & Sunstein, 2021).

We believe that the UN's positions will be the norm in its satellite organizations worldwide, and that precisely for this reason they represent a challenge, but also an opportunity for psychology professionals and future graduates in Spain. An example of the above is that the WHO in its position of June 2023 urges the creation of BADUs among its organizations and member states (WHO, 2023).

Some of the questions raised by our study are related to establishing the extent to which these types of initiatives are contemplated in current curricula, both undergraduate and postgraduate, with, for example, the analysis of interventions carried out in these organizations and the study of the models, methodologies, and techniques that organizations such as the UN and the European Commission itself use in their behavioral interventions.

These theoretical models have not been included in this study, precisely because the organizations do not make them explicit in all cases, and because it would have been necessary to carry out an

analysis beyond the scope of this work, which would have involved an in-depth analysis of the different reports and the scientific production of their authors, and despite this, in some cases the theoretical models proposed are adaptations, if not ad-hoc creations on the part of the organizations. Undoubtedly, there is an important field of study to systematize these models, without necessarily proposing their homogenization, but it is essential to analyze their common proposals and their relationship with models that have been established for years in the field of, for example, health promotion.

This would help to establish training curricula in our universities and professional associations to enable students and professionals of psychology to acquire the necessary technical skills, and for the representation of Spanish psychology in these types of organizations to be greater through a greater participation in the job offers of these organizations in the field of behavioral sciences.

Some specific questions that should be resolved in other studies and in the work of psychological associations would be: What specific training should be offered to future psychologists, as experts in human behavior, in order for them to be integrated to a greater extent in this type of units? Would some training be necessary to promote interdisciplinary work with experts from other

disciplines, while maintaining the professional identity of our own field? Could we then contribute models and techniques that mostly come from the field of psychology, adapting ourselves to the real needs of solving problems faced by these organizations and society as a whole? In which commissions and working groups should this type of dedication be included: the existing ones or should we create cross-cutting areas such as "behavioral analysis and design for population intervention" (as the APA seems to suggest in its analysis of trends for 2023)?

In fact, as we have mentioned, the APA (2023) reflects the tendency of psychology professionals to broaden their focus and go beyond personalized therapy, further reinforcing the psychological health of the entire population, which is precisely the main object of the work in the supranational organizations analyzed in our study, and may be a job opportunity for many psychology graduates.

Perhaps the differential element in relation to what has been done in public health, community health, and other areas of psychology, is that now the context and scope of these interventions is changing, and that large supranational organizations, such as the ones analyzed, are beginning to place the deserved value on different types of models and behavioral design techniques developed in our discipline, which, now more than ever, in the recent history of our profession, can contribute to improving the health and quality of life of citizens at a global level, an objective that is inherent to our professional work as psychologists.

### Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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