

Article

Forensic Psychology in Spain: Reasons for its Recognition as an Official Specialty

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ABSTRACT

The consulting provided by forensic psychology professionals to judges and courts on matters related to fundamental rights and freedoms or public safety requires enormous professional specialization. Paradoxically, in Spain despite the fact that as a scientific discipline it has developed exponentially in recent decades. This article presents up to ten arguments to support the urgent creation of the specialty of Forensic Psychology. The specific Spanish legal framework that regulates the skills necessary to carry out assessments in the field of mental health, along with the important legal repercussions associated with mental disorders, means that this specialty must include clinical skills for forensic psychology professionals.

La Psicología Forense en España: Razones Para su Reconocimiento Como Especialidad Oficial

RESUMEN

El asesoramiento que realizan los profesionales de la Psicología Forense a jueces y tribunales en materias relacionadas con derechos y libertades fundamentales o de seguridad pública requiere de una enorme especialización profesional. Paradójicamente, en España no existe un reconocimiento oficial de la Psicología Forense a pesar de que como disciplina científica se ha desarrollado exponencialmente en las últimas décadas. En este artículo se exponen hasta diez argumentos que apoyarían la urgente creación de la especialidad de la Psicología Forense. El específico marco legal español que regula las competencias necesarias para realizar valoraciones en el campo de la salud mental y las importantes repercusiones legales asociadas a los trastornos mentales obliga a que dicha especialidad incluya competencias sanitarias para los profesionales de la Psicología Forense.

Palabras clave

Psicología forense
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Introduction

An analysis of the professional organizations of psychology at the international level shows that many different specialties exist, and that there is wide diversity with respect to the requirements for obtaining them depending on the country. This is because these specialties are established by consensus and reflect different professional realities (Neto et al., 2020).

In Spain, the General Council of the Spanish Psychological Association (CGP in Spanish) recognizes eleven professional divisions: Academic Psychology; Psychology of Physical Activity and Sport; Psychology of Work, Organizations, and Human Resources; Educational Psychology; Legal Psychology; Psychology of Social Intervention; Clinical and Health Psychology; Psychotherapy; Traffic and Safety Psychology; Health Psychology; Clinical Neuropsychology. In addition, within the areas of professional intervention, there are others that do not have a specific division, such as the area of new technologies applied to psychology, the area of psychological intervention in emergencies and catastrophes, and the area of gender equality. The professional divisions have the status of internal advisory bodies of the CGP and are configured as groupings in which the organization of the sectoral activity of the different areas of specialization and areas of psychological intervention is structured (CGP, 2022).

Regarding the recognition of a specialty within psychology, in Spain there are two pathways: the official pathway, which involves recognition by the different public administrations and, therefore, has legal consequences, i.e., possession of the specialty is a requirement for the performance of professional functions; or professional accreditation pathway by the CGP, which does not involve recognition by the public administrations nor does it have legal repercussions, i.e., it only involves recognition by the psychological association (Jarne et al., 2012).

At the official level, the practice of psychology in the healthcare field is the only one regulated with two expert roles: the psychologist specializing in clinical psychology, via the Resident Psychologist Intern program (PIR), and the general health psychologist, via the Official Master's Degree in General Health Psychology (MPGS in Spanish) (Jarne & Pérez-González, 2020). Both formulas had a transitional qualification route for professionals with sufficient experience and training in the field. Obviously, the restriction in the number specialties that are officially regulated is a major drawback for a science such as Psychology, with multiple fields of intervention (Fernández-Hermida, 2017).

Through the Comisión Nacional de Acreditación Profesional (CNAP) [National Commission of Professional Accreditation], the CGP has created nine professional accreditations under the formula of "expert psychologist", including that of Expert Psychologist in Legal Psychology and/or Forensic Psychology.

The main objective of a professional accreditation is to attain quality professional performance, based on the requirement of sufficient training and experience in the field, and to ensure, with the renewal of the accreditation, continuous education and training (Lin et al., 2017).

In our assessment, the accreditation proposal formulated by the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA, 2001) is quite rational and accurate (see Figure 1). This proposal distinguishes between basic training and more advanced levels of

professional competence, within a sequential and cumulative format (Sadoff & Dattilio, 2012).

The aim of this article is to advocate for the need to create in Spain the specialty in Forensic Psychology with official recognition, within a curricular itinerary that includes healthcare and clinical competencies. It should be clarified that the Spanish regulation regarding healthcare competencies in psychology does not exist in other countries in our region (Fernández-Hermida, 2017). In this sense, the allusion to "clinical psychology" internationally is not comparable to the conception of clinical psychology in Spain (PIR). In the first case, mental health training (assessment, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment) is not carried out by a residency system, but through postgraduate training (Master's or PhD).

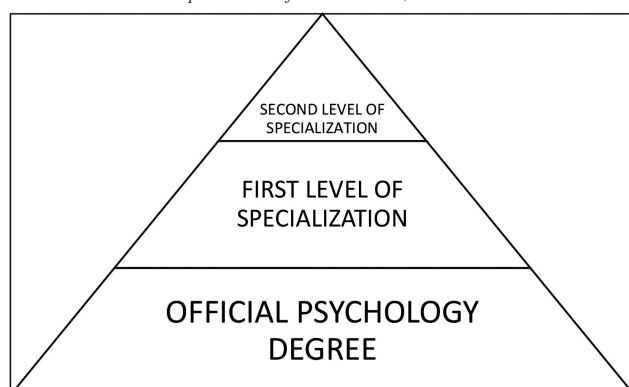
The Situation of Forensic Psychology in Spain

Forensic Psychology is the branch of Legal Psychology in charge of using research from basic and applied psychology, as well as professional scientific practice, to assist judges and courts in their decision making, through the issuance of expert reports (Neal, 2018). Although clinical and experimental psychologists have participated as experts in judicial proceedings since the beginning of the 20th century, forensic psychology as a specialty did not begin until the end of World War II, in parallel with the recognition of clinical psychology as an independent profession within mental healthcare (Golding, 2016). Currently, although its presence has grown exponentially, there are still aspects to improve and new challenges to confront (Liell et al., 2022; Neal et al., 2022; Shapiro, 2023).

In Spain, Forensic Psychology entered the Administration of Justice in the 1980s through the Divorce Law, and its demand has also increased in the courtrooms, both in the public and private spheres. This expansion has resulted from the increased recognition within the courts, the growing judicialization of Spanish society, and legislative development (Chacón, 2008).

However, Forensic Psychology in Spain is only recognized by the psychological associations. In June 2020, the CGP developed the accreditation in Legal and/or Forensic Psychology, enabling two accreditation routes: a) ordinary; and b) extraordinary, of a transitional nature, for professionals who have extensive experience and specific postgraduate training. Table 1 shows the requirements for the ordinary accreditation route:

Figure 1
EFPA Accreditation Proposal. Taken from Neto et al., 2020



The renewal of accreditation is carried out every 7 years and requires having completed 200 hours of continuing education and 15 expert reports during that time. Maintaining these requirements is necessary so that the accreditation process does not lose value (Sadoff & Dattilio, 2012).

Forensic Psychology and Healthcare and Clinical Competencies

There are two main reasons why the itinerary of the future specialty of Forensic Psychology should be within the healthcare and clinical competencies in Spain (Infocop, 2020):

The importance of psychopathological evaluation in judicial proceedings (forensic implications of mental disorders). The clinical status of the individuals evaluated is an area of mandatory exploration in all areas of intervention of Forensic Psychology, both in criminal law (psychological harm, capacity to testify, criminal liability, risk of recidivism, and procedural capacity) and in civil law (procedures for the provision of support to individuals with disabilities, procedures related to the capacity to testify, judicial proceedings for civil liability or family proceedings). As the APA (2022) points out in its latest guidelines for child custody evaluations in family law proceedings, both clinical and forensic training are necessary to provide these expert opinions. Even for interventions such as conducting the pre-constituted test, the latest protocols advise that forensic psychology professionals also have health training to carry out the tasks of support, assistance, and assessment of the results. (Soletto, Jullien & Escudero, 2022)

The specific Spanish legal framework that regulates health competencies in psychology which can today only be accessed by two officially recognized degrees: the title of Specialist in Clinical Psychology and the Master's Degree in General Health Psychology (Jarne & Pérez-González, 2020). Assessment of psychopathology and psychodiagnosis, fundamental in Forensic Psychology, are activities that fall within the scope of healthcare training, so professionals in this area need these competencies. Other clinical skills are also of importance for certain psychological expert opinions: for example, knowledge of evidence-based interventions is important to assess the evolution of psychological harm or the management of risk factors in developmental psychopathology in

cases of child-juvenile victimization. Furthermore, knowing the symptomatology, course, and prognosis of a psychopathological condition is essential to detect indicators of simulation or dissimulation of symptoms, which are common phenomena in the forensic context. Surprisingly, some legal reforms, for example Law 8/2021, which reformed civil and procedural legislation to support people with disabilities in the exercise of their legal capacity, prioritize the participation of social and health professionals for the preparation of these expert opinions, which leaves out the participation of Forensic Psychology, as judges and courts understand that the medical professional represents the healthcare professional and the social work professional represents the social professional, when, in fact, psychology is one of the sciences that has contributed the most to knowledge and methodology in the field of disability (Muñoz et al., 2023).

This clinical-forensic perspective is also present in other countries such as, for example, the United States, where only clinical psychologists can carry out expert reports (DeMatteo & Scherr, 2023), Canada (Hill & Demetriooff, 2019), and Australia (Day & Tyler, 2012).

Following the hierarchical model proposed by the EFPA, the following training pathway is proposed for forensic psychology professionals (see Table 2).

This proposal is quite similar to the regulation of Forensic Psychology in countries where there is a longer tradition of regulation (see Table 3).

Arguments Supporting the Need to Create the Specialty of Forensic Psychology

The Enormous Impact That Psychologists' Opinions can Have in the Forensic Context and, Therefore, the Need to Guarantee the Quality of the Expert's Work

Although expert evidence is not the only evidentiary element for courts, the influence of expert testimony on judicial decisions has been demonstrated (Melton et al., 2018). In the case of the psychological expert report, this acquires a high prominence in cases such as child sexual abuse or child custody, especially if reports are by public experts. For example, in Spain, Ruiz-Tejedor's

Table 1
Ordinary Accreditation Pathway. Own Elaboration Based on CGP (2020)

General requirements (3 mandatory requirements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a degree in Psychology (or a degree approved or recognized by the Ministry of Education). To be a member of an official professional association. Not to be disqualified or suspended from professional practice.
Training requirements (2 alternative requirements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have completed a postgraduate course of at least 500 hours of theoretical and practical training in the field of Forensic Psychology at universities or official psychological associations. This training must include the evaluation, writing, and defense of expert/forensic reports and at least 150 hours of supervised practice. To be in possession of the qualification of Doctor of Psychology or Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Psychology in a line of doctoral research carried out in the field of Forensic Psychology.
Experience requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proof of professional experience with a contract of at least 4 years in the field of Forensic Psychology. Proof of the preparation and defense of at least 12 reports in real legal proceedings.

Table 2
Training Proposal in Forensic Psychology

Curricular itinerary in the public sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 1 (basic training): Bachelor's or honor's degree in Psychology. Level 2 (First advanced level of competence): MPGS or healthcare qualification / PIR. Level 3 (Second advanced level of competence): open competition exam with specific syllabus + selective course at the Centro de Estudios Jurídicos [Center for Legal Studies], including a period of supervised practice with rotations through different jurisdictions. A transitional pathway should be contemplated for professionals who, having already developed their professional career in the field of Forensic Psychology within the Administration of Justice, can validate their experience and specialized training with the proposed itinerary.
Curricular itinerary in the private sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 1 (basic training): Bachelor's or honor's degree in Psychology. Level 2 (First advanced level of competence): MPGS (Master's in General Health) or healthcare qualification / PIR. Level 3 (Second advanced level of competence): Master's degree in Forensic Psychology including supervised internship + CGP accreditation.

Table 3

Training Course Required for the Preparation of Forensic Psychological Reports in Countries With a Longer Tradition in This Area. Own Creation Based on Websites Consulted

United States*	Great Britain	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in Psychology (4 years). • Advanced degree: via doctorate (4-8 years). • Supervised internships (the APA recommends 4,000 hours of accredited supervised practice). • Licensing exam in Clinical Psychology. • Accreditation in Forensic Psychology (American Board of Forensic Psychology). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree in Psychology (3 years) • Master's degree (2 years) accredited by the BPS. • Complementary training: via accredited supervised practice (minimum 3 years), via a doctoral program accredited by the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC). • Registration with the HCPC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in Psychology (3 years). • Advanced degree: via Master's degree (2 years) or PhD (4-5 years). • 1 year of supervised practice. • Registration with the Psychology Board (similar to the Spanish official psychological associations COPs).

Note: *The training pathway varies by state. This information reflects the most common requirements.

(2018) research on child sexual abuse found an 88.2% concordance rate between the conclusions of the psychological expert report, issued by public experts, and the judicial sentences in relation to the credibility of the child's testimony. Furthermore, Rodríguez-Domínguez and Jane (2015) found a concordance rate of 84% between the official expert report and the judicial sentence when what was requested was the best custody option, and 81.5% in reports about the visitation regime.

Expert work, therefore, carries great responsibility that must go hand in hand with a performance to the highest standards of technical and deontological quality (Areh et al., 2022). Achieving this excellence in intervention requires specific and specialized training. Empirical research has shown that the higher the level of specialized training, the more reliable the opinions that forensic psychologists reach (Guarnera et al., 2017).

The Clearly Defined Professional Profile of Forensic Psychology in Relation to Other Areas of Applied Psychology

From the beginning of Forensic Psychology, researchers and professionals understood that it was a field of application of psychology with its own particular characteristics that differentiated it from other areas of Psychology (Grisso, 1987; Catalán & Domingo, 1987).

Although there are different ways in which psychology professionals can intervene as experts in the courtroom (i.e., a clinical psychologist who has treated a victim of sexual assault or an expert in experimental psychology who explains, in a generic way, how a memory trace is created and recovered), only the forensic psychologist with health training will be able to make psycholegal assessments on the specific case, that is, to relate psycho(patho)logical variables to the legal issue that is being settled. Issues such as the relationship with the person being evaluated and the reliability of the assessments made mark differences between the different professional roles (Esbec & Echeburúa, 2016; Subijana & Echeburúa, 2022).

The Diversity, Breadth, and Specificity of the Knowledge Required for the Practice of Forensic Psychology, Which Must be Included in Specific Training Programs

In Spain, as in other countries, Forensic Psychology advises the courts in the different jurisdictions, but especially in the civil and criminal fields (Zwartz, 2018). This implies that the forensic psychology professional has to form professional opinions in very varied psycho-legal matters, which require specific evaluation methodologies

(criminal responsibility, dangerousness, custody suitability, etc.). Therefore, in addition to knowledge of the legal framework in which they will perform their function, they will need broad knowledge of the application of psychology to legal issues, which might include the Psychology of Testimony, Criminal and Forensic Psychopathology, Forensic Psychology of the Family, Forensic Victimology, Psychology of Delinquency, and Forensic Neuropsychology.

On the other hand, the specificity and evolution of this field of Psychology has led to the development of specific guidelines and protocols to address specific types of evaluations, such as forensic evaluation in disputed custody (Ramírez, 2022), the assessment of testimony (González & Manzanero, 2018), the assessment of the risk of serious gender violence in couples (Muñoz et al., 2022), the assessment of suspected *mobbing* (Dujo et al., 2022), the assessment in intimate partner violence (Muñoz & Echeburúa, 2016), the assessment of psychological harm (Muñoz, 2013), or other interventions of the forensic psychologist, such as the evaluation of pre-constituted test (Ministerio de Justicia [Ministry of Justice], 2022).

This broad and specific set of knowledge should be included in formal training programs, as well as in the official recognition of the specialty of Forensic Psychology (Day & Tyler, 2012). The current situation of lack of regulation of this professional profile poses the significant risks of leaving users of the Administration of Justice in a situation of legal vulnerability and discrediting the profession (Guarnera et al. 2017).

The Complexity of the Context of the Forensic Examination and the Methodology of Psychological Expert Evaluation

The characteristics of the judicial context make it necessary for forensic psychology professionals to have specific knowledge and skills in order to perform their work (Melton et al., 2018). The tendency of the individuals evaluated to distort information that is unfavorable to them makes it necessary for professionals to have training in detecting phenomena such as dissimulation, simulation, or oversimulation (Walczyk et al., 2018), to have knowledge to select appropriate tools (DeMatteo et al., 2020), or to systematize the gathering of information with third parties in their work methodology (Heilbrun et al., 2015).

The soundness of the assessments required by the forensic context also forces professionals to make explicit the scientific basis for their considerations (Cutler & Kovera, 2011). In this sense, the use of psychological assessment techniques together with structured professional judgment avoids introducing elements of subjectivity, and, therefore, provides the considerations of expert psychologists of greater robustness (Guarnera et al., 2017). Selecting psychological

tests in the expert context requires consideration of response validity scales and appropriate psychometric properties (Heilbrun, 1992).

Areh et al. (2022) focus on incremental validity. Legal considerations and the forensic context requires the expert to obtain as much information as possible with minimum intervention. Furthermore, and in light of the scientific rigor demanded by the legal context, the use of projective tests is considered inadequate (Areh et al., 2022).

Although scarce, some tools have been developed to meet the specific demands of the forensic examination context (protocols to obtain and assess child testimony in cases of sexual victimization, to assess procedural capacity, to assess the risk of recidivism, etc.), and forensic norms have been incorporated into classic psychometric tests (Edens & Boccaccini, 2017).

The interview, as the backbone instrument of any psychological assessment, also requires adaptations to the characteristics of the forensic examination context (Davis, 2019).

Finally, proper use of data from scientific research is also required: distinguishing the different levels of evidence and scientific quality and identifying the consensus and disagreement of the scientific community on the psycholegal issue being evaluated (AFCC, 2018).

The Complexity and Demands of the Psychologist's Intervention in the Forensic Context Require Specialty Guidelines in the Application of Professional Ethics and Deontology

The characteristics of the forensic examination context accentuate the ethical and deontological dilemmas in the practice of psychology and create specific and distinct challenges from other contexts in which psychologists work (Areh et al., 2022). In addition, the scrutiny to which the performance of the forensic psychology professional is subjected increases the risk of deontological complaints (Arch et al., 2013). In this regard, prestigious professional organizations in psychology have developed specific guidelines for the application of the psychologist's code of ethics to this professional field (APA, 2013; APS, 2019; EFPA, 2001; BPS, 2021). In general, these deontological specificities of the forensic context revolve around five basic issues: objectivity, conflict of interest, collection and use of information, consent, professional competence, and the quality of the intervention performed.

The principle of contradiction that governs all expert evidence in the legal context introduces another practice typical of forensic psychology professionals: the preparation of counter-reports, as an instrument for controlling the quality of the scientific activity provided to a judicial process (Horeajo & Dujo, 2020). The risk of an inappropriate use of this forensic practice as a strategy for the baseless discrediting of the expert, requires an ethical and deontological approach (COP-M, 2009).

The Importance of Communicating the Results of the Forensic Evaluation to the Different Legal Players: The Writing and Defense Though Testimony of the Forensic Psychological Report

The psychological expert report is the visible element of the intervention of the forensic psychology professional and the product through which their work will be evaluated. Therefore, the

preparation and writing of the expert report is one of the core competencies of the forensic psychologist (Zwartz, 2018). These competencies include: robustly substantiating their opinions, answering clearly and completely the psycholegal issue raised, coherently organizing the information collected, separating facts from inferences, providing explanations regarding the reasoning followed in order to reach the conclusions and/or to discard contradictory information, as well as presenting the limitations of their investigation (DeMier, 2013).

Regarding the defense of the report in the oral trial, the forensic psychologist must have skills that allow them to handle hostile cross examinations that include: asking multiple, repetitive, yes or no questions, raising the tone of voice when asking, quoting authors or asking about facts or psychological theories that the expert should know (Urta, 2002).

Ultimately, forensic psychologists present the professional and academic aspects of the discipline in public and legal settings, being exposed to legal scrutiny, debate, and cross-examination. And although psychological theories and data are subject to scientific review in academic and research settings, a different set of rules and problems arise when psychological knowledge and methodology are admitted as evidence in the judicial context. This is because the legal dispute is significantly different from the scientific dispute, and it is essential that the psychological expert knows how to clearly argue and explain the scientific criteria in the legal context (Subijana & Echeburúa, 2022).

Recommendations Made by Different Sectors

Institutions such as the Ombudsman, and their counterpart in Andalusia, highlight the important work of public forensic psychologists in the service of the Administration of Justice (within what are known as the Psychosocial Teams). However, they denounce the current situation of their intervention, especially in family proceedings. Specifically, they demand the need for specialization and continuous training by these professionals, its legal regulation, that they be subject to deontological control, and that they follow common protocols for action (Defensor del Pueblo [Ombudsman], 2017; Defensor del Pueblo Andaluz [Andalusian Ombudsman], 2018). The Spanish Association of Family Lawyers (AEAFA, 2020), based on a survey conducted among its members, and the NGO Save The Children (2012), concerned about the evaluations of minors in the forensic context, have also expressed their opinion along the same lines.

The Disparity of the Procedures Followed to Select Forensic Psychology Professionals who Perform Their Function in the Public Sphere

Since the transfer of competencies in the area of Justice to the different Autonomous Communities, there has been an enormous disparity in the selective processes that allow access to forensic psychology positions. In the Autonomous Communities that have not transferred the competencies (Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Ceuta, Extremadura, Balearic Islands, Melilla, and the Region of Murcia) the syllabi of the open competitive exam are specific for the practice of forensic psychology. However, in most of the Autonomous Communities with transferred competencies,

the tendency is to announce these jobs within general public employment offers, with a non-specific syllabus that does not guarantee basic training in forensic psychology. The risk of these professionals providing inadequate judicial advice is high, with the serious repercussions that this may entail (Garret & Neufeld, 2009).

Compliance With the Requirements of Different Legal Norms

In recent years there have been important legal reforms that, among other aspects, aim to offer citizens, including the most vulnerable, better procedural guarantees and greater efficiency in the Administration of Justice. Repeated reference is made to the importance of having professionals specialized in such sensitive matters as the expert assessment of sexual crimes, gender and domestic violence, disability and support needs, etc. This is reflected in regulations such as Organic Law 5/2000 Regulating the Criminal Responsibility of Minors, Organic Law 1/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence, Organic Law 4/2015 on the Statute of the Victim of Crime, Organic Law 8/2021 on the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence, Law 8/2021 Reforming Civil and Procedural Legislation for the Support of Persons with Disabilities in the Exercise of their Legal Capacity and the recent Organic Law 10/2022 on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom. However, to this date, there is no compliance with these legal precepts.

The Need to Continue Developing Lines of Research of Interest to Forensic Psychology and for This Professional Specialty to Continue to be Linked to the Research That Supports its Rigor and Scientific Guarantee

Although Forensic Psychology has increasingly integrated data from scientific research into professional practice, there are still many challenges to work through in order to improve expert practice. Grisso (2010) outlined the new agenda of the discipline, which continues to be relevant today (see Table 4)

The rapid evolution of scientific knowledge in Forensic Psychology-estimated to remain relevant for about 7 years (Neimeyer et al., 2014)-also justifies the creation of such a

specialization that would guarantee the continuous training of professionals.

Having the specialty would allow continuity to be given to lines of research specific to Forensic Psychology (i.e., development of psycholegal conceptual models or construction and validation of specific tests for this context), as well as expansion of new areas of intervention (Shapiro, 2023). In addition, it would contribute to fostering evidence-based practice and strengthening the professional role of the forensic psychologist in relation to other professionals. In short, the credibility and utility of Forensic Psychology in Spanish courts depends on the recognition of the specialty (Andreu & Graña, 2005).

Conclusions

The professional situation of Forensic Psychology in Spain is concerning. The lack of specialization, regulation, and definition of the competencies of professionals in Forensic Psychology facilitates professional intrusion, and subordinates Forensic Psychology to Legal Medicine in the Institutes of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, making invisible the contribution, authority, and autonomy of psychological science and, therefore, limiting the advancement of the profession (Catalán, 2016).

In this article different arguments have been presented to support the need to create a specialty in Forensic Psychology. Inadequate advice to the courts that can lead to erroneous sentences with serious consequences for people's lives could be avoided with the creation of this specialty.

A training itinerary has also been proposed to articulate this specialty, following the hierarchical, sequential, and cumulative model of the EFPA for the development of the professional career. Although ideally, for the authors, the training of forensic psychology professionals should be carried out through a specific postgraduate program in Legal Psychology (Muñoz et al., 2011), the prominence of psychopathological assessment in the forensic context and the specific Spanish legal framework regarding the professionals competent to make considerations on the mental health status of the persons being assessed make it necessary for the training of forensic psychology professionals to provide them with healthcare competencies. The detractors of this proposal are supported by different arguments. The first argument involves a concern that Health Psychology may phagocytize Forensic Psychology, even though the context and the object of the intervention mark clear differences between the two specialties (Thompson & Frumkin, 2023), and that practices typical of the health context may be inappropriately extrapolated to the forensic field (see, for example, Scott et al., 2014 for the issue of child and adolescent sexual victimization). However, in the context of our proposal we believe that this concern is not justified as it is the second level of training that will guarantee training and competence in Forensic Psychology, eliminating the risk of losing the identity of the specialty. The second argument is that the requirement of having to take the MPGS to practice Forensic Psychology would unnecessarily lengthen the training of professionals who want to engage in this field of applied psychology. In this sense, our proposal is in line with the EFPA model, falling short of the requirements in countries such as the USA, where Forensic Psychology enjoys enormous professional prestige. Nevertheless, it is logical that the training of forensic

Table 4
Future Agenda of Forensic Psychology. Own Creation Based on Grisso (2010)

In relation to research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase collaboration between researchers and practitioners. • To promote the participation of legal professionals in forensic psychology research in order to better focus their demands. • To design studies that provide insight into the performance of forensic assessment tests beyond the laboratory. • To design studies to assess the quality of forensic evaluation methods followed by practitioners.
In relation to expert practice standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To clarify the differences between the role of the forensic psychologist and that of other psychologists who may intervene in judicial proceedings. • To develop best practice protocols for the different types of expert evaluations. • To improve the professional accreditation processes.
In relation to training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To homogenize the training of forensic psychology professionals. • To facilitate a case supervision system for practicing professionals. • To strike a balance between depth and breadth in forensic training.

psychology professionals should be proportional to the responsibility derived from their work. In addition, we find other arguments to support this proposal: 1) at present, the acquisition of health training for professionals in Forensic Psychology through a specific postgraduate program in Legal Psychology and, therefore, outside the healthcare specialties, seems very unlikely; 2) with this itinerary, in addition to acquiring a legal requirement to make considerations in the field of mental health, we ensure that future forensic psychology professionals undertake the specific training in the areas of Psychopathology, Psychological Assessment, and Psychodiagnosis, which have been substantially diminished after the reconversion of the Bachelor's Degree into a Degree, and which are an essential requirement to undertake the second degree of training; and 3) the figure of the forensic psychology professional is strengthened, reducing the risk that their professional opinions in the area of mental health will be questioned or not considered at all in the courtroom because they lack health competencies, resulting in a transfer of this competency, at least in the public sphere, exclusively to forensic medicine professionals (losing areas of practice previously conquered and developed by Forensic Psychology).

We hope that this article will serve to address the debate on the training pathway of forensic psychology and that the scientific and professional associations in the field (Sociedad Española de Psicología Jurídica y Forense [Spanish Society of Legal and Forensic Psychology] -SEPJF-, Asociación de Psicología Forense de la Administración de Justicia [Association of Forensic Psychology of the Administration of Justice] -APF- and Asociación Iberoamericana de Psicología Jurídica [Ibero-American Association of Legal Psychology] -AIPJ-), together with the División de Psicología Jurídica [Division of Legal Psychology] (PsiJur) of the CGP, will work to reach a consensus that will facilitate the urgent official recognition of the specialty of Forensic Psychology. Regardless of the different perspectives with which we know this debate is approached, we are convinced that we all want the best development of Forensic Psychology. Let us therefore make an effort of cohesive and collaborative work to achieve this, and to prevent the lack of an official regulation from continuing to undermine what has been achieved through research and professional practice in our country and has taken so much effort to accomplish.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no potential conflict of interest.

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