European Public Health News

Introduction

In this first European public health news of 2012, the need for European concerted action remains a top priority. Both for ongoing diseases such as HIV where immediate action in Europe is called for (Jakab) and for rare diseases, where European action will benefit the knowledge and treatment of these diseases (Montserrat Moliner). The role for EUPHA here is clear: support for our members and via our members; we are going in the right direction (Ricciardi) and we are planning the future (Zeegers Paget).

Dineke Zeegers Paget
EUPHA executive director

President’s column

The year 2011 has been a successful, packed year of further developing activities for our three strategic objectives: capacity building, knowledge building and policy building. It is not possible to list all our achievements over the year, so I would like to highlight some of them.

The first achievement was our active involvement in the European ministerial meeting on health during the Polish presidency of the EU. The ministerial meeting was organized in Poznan, Poland, on 7–8 November and EUPHA organized a workshop on Health in all Policies. The workshop was organized together with the Polish presidency, the Polish Association of Public Health and the European Observatory on health systems and health policies. Background information included a draft policy brief on Health impact assessment from the European Observatory and EUPHA as well as an EUPHActs on Health impact assessment. Stan Tarkowski, past president of EUPHA, took the lead in organizing this workshop. It was the first time that EUPHA was this proactive at policy building level and the positive experience in Poznan will be continued in the coming years.

The second achievement was the production of two new instruments for dissemination, capacity and knowledge building and support for our members. Two EUPHAacts were produced (Environment and health; Health impact assessment) to provide a short (two pages) overview of important public health topics. Both were well received by the public health community. First requests to translate the EUPHAacts in other languages have already been received. We also produced two EUPHA snapshots (Suicide and suicidal behaviour; Healthy ageing): again a two-page summary, but this time based on abstracts submitted on specific health themes at our annual scientific conferences.

The third achievement was the development and successful launch of EUPHApedia, a search engine for public health in Europe, that includes grey literature and practice examples. Following a successful pilot year, EUPHApedia will be open for all interested.

2012 will also be an exciting year. Not only because we are celebrating our 20th anniversary, but also because the positive, proactive building of capacity, knowledge and policy will continue at EUPHA.

Professor Walter Ricciardi
EUPHA President

EUPHA office column—EUPHA 1992–2012—Time to expand the family!

In 2012, we celebrate our 20th anniversary. EUPHA is now at the age where we have to start thinking about the next generation. We are very happy to present you with an update on exactly that.

EUPHAnxt

EUPHAnxt is our project launched in June 2011 to reach out to young public health professionals and students interested in public health. In the first half year, we set up contacts with: the International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations, the European Federation of Psychology Students’ Association and the International Sociological Association. At the moment, EUPHAnxt has 191 subscribers.

At the European Public Health Conference in Copenhagen in November 2011, EUPHAnxt was very visible with two activities:

- Water the public health tree: all conference participants could leave small messages (leaves) on the public health tree. The messages were collected and summarized by our EUPHAnxt team. The two top ones were as follows: ‘Health is an investment, not an economic cost!’ and ‘It is not the time for more scientific papers, it’s time for action!’
- EUPHAnxt coffee corners: organized to create a chance for the younger generation to meet informally with the highest public health experts at the European level. Participating experts were: Dr Zsuzsana Jakab, Regional Director of WHO Europe, Dr Marine Buissonniere, Director of Public Health Programs of the Open Society Institute, Prof. Martin McKee from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Prof. Jutta Lindert, President of the EUPHA section on Public Mental Health; Prof. Walter Ricciardi, EUPHA President and Prof. Helmut Brand, ASPHER President.

EUPHAnxt activities will be expanded in 2012 to include: representation in the newly created EUPHA Think Tank; representation of EUPHA in European meetings specifically looking at public health and youth (e.g. ‘One Kiss, One Voice’ project, established and hosted by the European Cancer Patient Coalition).

We have been very lucky with the coordinators of EUPHAnxt in our first year: Agnese Lazzari, Arjan van der Star and Fabrizio Bert, who all have agreed to remain actively involved in EUPHAnxt.

Dineke Zeegers Paget
EUPHA Executive director
The HIV epidemic in Europe is still not under control, with over 118,000 new HIV cases diagnosed in 2010 and over three-quarters of them from the eastern part of the Region. The cumulative number of people diagnosed with HIV in the Region is 1.4 million. Still, this represents only a part of the overall picture: because of low access to and uptake of HIV testing and counselling, especially among the populations most at risk of infection and transmission, all HIV cases are not diagnosed. It is estimated that 2.3 million people live with HIV in Europe.

The eastern part of the Region faces the biggest problem: since 2001, there has been a 250% increase in the estimated number of people living with HIV in these countries. Between 2001 and 2010, estimated AIDS-related deaths increased more than 11-fold (from about 7800 to 90,000).

Although the main transmission routes for HIV vary by geographical area, in all European countries the virus often disproportionally affects groups that are socially marginalized (such as migrants) and people whose behaviour is socially stigmatized (such as men who have sex with men) or illegal (such as people who inject drugs). The new data confirm that the HIV epidemic in Europe remains concentrated in these key populations.

In September 2011, 53 Member States of the Region endorsed the new European Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2012–15. The Plan is an urgent call to action to respond to the public health challenge of HIV in Europe. It recognizes successes in the Regional response, such as the increased access to treatment in the western part and the wide coverage of measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission across countries and outlines actions that are the most important in the European context.

I am delighted that countries committed to a plan that set three ambitious goals for Europe: to immediately halt and reverse the spread of HIV; to achieve universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support; and to contribute to the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 6 and other health-related Millennium Development Goals (3, 4, 5 and 8). Now is the time for action by all stakeholders, including governments and civil society, both inside the health sector and beyond. We have the roadmap and the tools to take up the challenge. We need immediate action now.

Reference


Zsuzsanna Jakab
Regional Director,
WHO Regional Office for Europe
and reduce any educational, professional and social opportunities.

For joining efforts from all the parties concerned, the Commission decided to put in place, in October 2010, a European Union Committee of Experts on Rare Diseases where Member States, Patient’s organizations, industry, research and public health projects on rare diseases and other interested parties works together.

Antoni Montserrat Moliner
Policy Officer for Rare and Neurodevelopmental Diseases, Health and Consumers

General-Directorate (SANCO),
Directorate ‘Public Health’,
European Commission

---

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA), the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) and the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine (MAPHM) are pleased to invite you to the 5th joint conference combining the 20th annual EUPHA meeting and 34th annual ASPHER meeting.

The European Public Health Conference aims to contribute to the improvement of public health in Europe by offering a means for exchanging information and a platform for debate to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners in the field of public health and health services research as well as public health training and education in Europe.

The conference website is regularly updated and can be found here: http://eupha.org/site/upcoming_conference.php

Abstract submission opens 1 February 2012 and closes on 1 May 2012 (midnight, CET). Do not forget to submit your abstract on time.

Julian Mamo, conference chair Malta 2012.