



Statement by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) on International collaboration indispensable in the fight against COVID-19

For several months now, the world has been gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is obvious that international collaboration is key to combatting a global outbreak of this magnitude. Coordination and concerted action are needed, as well as the [exchange of surveillance data and research outcomes](#). As the specialized United Nations agency for health, the World Health Organization (WHO) has a pivotal role in this, facilitating interaction and collaboration between all the member states, continuously monitoring the evolution of the pandemic, and developing guidance for member states to put in place appropriate measures. As Professor Laetitia Rispel, President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), said in a [statement](#) in response to the decision by the Trump administration to suspend USA funding to the WHO: “We’re dealing with an unprecedented global public health emergency that requires cooperation and collaboration by all UN Member States and observer jurisdictions to ensure effective viral transmission prevention and control, the treatment of people who are infected, and to deal with the serious economic and social ramifications of this pandemic.”

Also, for us, the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), WHO is an important partner, in particular WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO-EURO). Together with WHO, we are working to support public health professionals and improve the health of citizens throughout the entire European region and beyond. For example, EUPHA is active in WHO-EURO’s Coalition of Partners, which takes collective action to strengthen essential public health services and capacities across the WHO European Region, and WHO-EURO is a strong supporter of the [European Public Health Week](#), which is coordinated by EUPHA. Enhancing collaboration, coordination and communication in the fight against COVID-19 was the overarching theme of this year’s European Public Health Week, which took place from 11-15 May.

An evaluation of the international collaboration in this public health emergency response and management, including the functioning of various stakeholders, is important and will provide valuable lessons for future emergencies. Indeed, during the World Health Assembly on May 18, many member states called for an independent investigation, once the virus is under control, of the way the organisation handled the pandemic. However, while the pandemic is still ongoing it is vital to ensure a continued international collaboration and not to jeopardize this.

Although infection rates in many countries in the European region are falling, some countries still see increasing numbers of infections. This holds true as well for other parts of the world. In addition, new spikes in infection rates may well occur until a vaccine is widely available. This means that we need to remain vigilant, and that international collaboration continues to be indispensable.

Therefore, as international public health community, let’s keep on working together and helping and supporting each other. Only by joining forces can this devastating global public health emergency be tackled.

20 May 2020



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The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations in Europe. Our network of national associations of public health represents around 20'000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.

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This activity received co-funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020).