



EUPHA statement: standing up for the vulnerable 18 December 2019

Sophie Beau, co-founder of the European Civil Rescue Association SOS Méditerranée, France, issued a powerful call to action during the opening ceremony of the 12th European Public Health Conference in Marseille, France, held 21 November 2019. Speaking to over 2,300 public health professionals from across Europe, she gave voice to those who lived and died as they migrated across the Mediterranean Sea.

Sophie's message was unequivocal: people are dying in the Mediterranean Sea and our governments are allowing this to happen. The graphic and shocking scenes she presented, using photographs taken during the operations of SOS Méditerranée, showed the desperate faces of migrants, some pulled from the sea and others suffering from thirst and hunger as they drifted in leaking, overcrowded vessels.

Sophie's compelling speech is a testimony to the capacity of European citizens to mobilise in a crisis. She reminded us of their commitment to solidarity, but also the importance of mobilising it at a time when people face so many challenges in their lives. Her speech exemplified the conference theme 'building bridges for solidarity and public health', underlining how bridges *can* be built to overcome differences.

Facts on the rescues conducted by SOS Méditerranée¹:

- Since September 2019, SOS Méditerranée has assisted 29,963 refugees in distress;
- 85% were men;
- One-third of the rescued were minors, most of them unaccompanied.
- The new rescue ship the Ocean Viking has saved 1,211 people from drowning (since August 2019).

The Mediterranean cannot continue to be the site of almost 40% of migrant deaths worldwide.²

EUPHA's actions on solidarity, migration and health in 2020:

- In 2020, a workshop will be held at the World Congress of Public Health on solidarity in public health; offering an opportunity for those public health professionals that felt addressed by this call to action.
- The [Marseille statement](#) on solidarity with 48 co-signatories (and counting) – if you wish to co-sign, please send a message to office@eupha.org.
- Supporting the launch of the Global Society on Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Health at the World Congress of Public Health in Rome, October 2020.
- Co-organising a satellite meeting on Human rights, ethics and law, jointly with EUPHA Ethics in public health section, EUPHA Public mental health section, and the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) (in the UK, Q3), that will include migration and the Mediterranean on the agenda.
- Conference track reports on the 'migrant and health' and 'solidarity in health' tracks.

¹ <https://sosmediterranee.com/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>

² <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

Do you want to join the action now? Join the EUPHA Migrant and ethnic minority section and sign the Marseille statement. Don't ignore the deaths in the Mediterranean, but address your politician to take action now. And contact us if we can support your activities.

For more information contact Bernadette Kumar, President of EUPHA migrant and ethnic minority section (BernadetteNirmal.Kumar@fhi.no) or Maaïke Droogers, EUPHA Scientific officer (m.droogers@euphaoffice.org).



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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