



Statement by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) on a successful European Public Health Week – addressing the need to work together

The third edition of the European Public Health Week (EUPHW) was organised last week (17-21 May 2021). Institutions and individuals across 40 countries organised a total of 212 events in 19 different languages. The European Public Health Week is an initiative from EUPHA co-funded by the European Commission and with the support of the World Health Organization – Regional Office for Europe. The call to ‘join forces for healthier populations’ could not have come at a better time, where it is clear that COVID-19 can only be overcome if we all work together. Each day of the week was dedicated to a specific topic and the number of the events per day ranged from 38 to 47. Around half of the events were organised by at least two partner institutions, and every day was kicked-off by a webinar of one of the official partners or collaborators of the EUPHW.

- **The first day addressed the need for clear communication** from science to policy, health literacy for all and community involvement. To kick off and celebrate this theme, the WHO Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN) hosted a webinar dedicated to infodemic management: social listening for public health action.

The recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oT3w9hURISg&t=147s>

- **The second day addressed new challenges in mental health.** Especially during COVID-19, mental health challenges have increased and it is even more important now to provide psychological support and protecting all our human rights. The mental health of the health workforce was highlighted as a priority in some of Tuesday’s events. GAMIAN-Europe was the official partner of Tuesday, hosting a kick-off webinar with EUPHA on the impact of COVID-19 on people with mental health conditions and beyond. GAMIAN-Europe said it “has witnessed first-hand that vulnerable groups are at greater risk of suffering from the negative mental health consequences of the pandemic. In particular, individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions have suffered an undeniable burden on their mood or mental health status during lockdowns. It is important to recognise that pre-existing patients and their carers must receive adequate care from mental health services. Patient organisations, peer networks and self-help groups have played a very helpful role for supporting patients and carers during the pandemic, and this period has put a spotlight on their ability to understand and meet their needs, provided they have sufficient resources to do so.

The pandemic has also shed light on the high co-morbidity of physical illness with long term mental illness, and how taking this issue into account is vital for limiting the mental health burden of COVID-19 on vulnerable individuals.”

The recording of the webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LSK5okar-Y&t=4s>

- **The third day addressed Your Local Community** and had the highest number of events organised during the EUPHW. The setting of your local community – making small changes that work, creating an environment where you can be healthy – is the basis to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and an equitable and sustainable world. The WHO Europe Healthy Cities Network kicked off the theme of the day with a webinar asking the European community “how healthy is your city?”. Nino Berdzuli from the WHO Regional Office for Europe said: “Across the European Region, mayors and municipalities spearhead efforts to improve the daily conditions of urban life, its people and their health. WHO has long recognized the importance of the public health work undertaken at the local level and the WHO Healthy Cities approach is now well integrated within the WHO structures and programme of work. Investing in the people who make up our cities; designing urban places that improve health and well-being; and promoting greater participation and partnerships for health and well-being are core themes of our current work. “

The recording of the webinar is available at <https://who.zoom.us/rec/share/G1bAa8Dm3KrLkhWZZ5ZOYTvvrpON7XapSOwct-JuoETiPDVA1BL2mQm3BGmsXBJU.wvL5ZelfykqITCaG> (password: 6aB.v3Sg)

- **Thursday was dedicated to All for one health**, an important topic as it recognises that the whole ecosystem cannot be seen separate from health. Health touches upon all aspects of society, including ‘from farm to fork’, climate change, pollution, the workplace and antimicrobial resistance. The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD) was the official partner of the Thursday theme, hosting a webinar with EUPHA on “sustainable and nutritious diets for healthier populations.” Annemieke van Ginkel-Res, Honorary president of EFAD, said: “The European Public Health Week gives European dietitians the opportunity to join forces for One Health, to help and lead European consumers toward healthier and more sustainable diets. Every European citizen should have the right to have access to sustainable nutritional & dietary advice during the life span.”

The recording of the webinar is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xw_eR-0N3s

- **The last day addressed Leaving No One Behind**, especially important due to the delays in access to care for all due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is clear that recovering from COVID-19 is giving us an opportunity to build back not just better, but fairer.

EuroHealthNet was the official partner of the last day of the week, hosting a webinar with EUPHA on “COVID-19 and Health Inequalities: applying the lessons to deliver change”. Ingrid Stegeman, Programme Manager at EuroHealthNet said: “Speakers emphasised how the pandemic has highlighted the weaknesses in our health and social protection systems, and exacerbated health inequalities. With more awareness than ever on this issue, and funds available for reconstruction, the time is ripe for public health actors to demand and pursue evidence-based actions that can generate better Health-outcomes for All. These include the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee, more integrated action across policy areas, a greater focus on mental health and on effective ways to engage and empower people facing vulnerability, through participatory approaches. EuroHealthNet’s Health Inequalities Portal (www.health-inequalities.eu) brings to-together a wide range of information to support public health actors and other stakeholders, in efforts to move beyond the rhetoric and into the reality of ‘leaving no one behind’.”

The recording of the last kick-off webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zFKteRSgp4&t=1s>

Throughout the week, the ‘let’s join forces’ motto was visible as activities included local, regional and international lectures and webinars, photo competitions, launch of publications, social media campaigns, virtual exhibitions, movie screenings, online networking gatherings and safe outdoor physical activities at a time when the pandemic still requires social distancing. Many of the 26 EUPHA Sections working on specific public health themes engaged their own networks to host or attend several events.

EUPHA President Dr Iveta Nagyova, said: “It is clear from three years of enthusiastic support throughout Europe for the European Public Health Week that this week is here to stay. The EUPHW will continue to raise awareness for public health issues and bring together all groups that have an interest in a healthy population and health for all.”

We would like to thank all the organisers, partners, disseminators and participants to make the 2021 European Public Health Week edition a success.

Whether you joined this year’s EUPHW as an Event Host, Participant or Disseminator, please complete this **evaluation survey by 30 May**: <https://tinyurl.com/EUPHWevaluation>

For more information, visit www.eupha.org/EUPHW

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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.

EUPHA - European Public Health Association

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