

## Thuy Ingrid Nguyen-Thi's reflections on an internship at the EUPHA Office

*Blog by Thuy, EUPHA office intern, October – December 2021*



As a master's student in Public Health with a focus on reducing health inequalities within and between European countries, I was delighted when I received the wonderful news to have been selected as an intern at EUPHA Office. Needless to say, I seized the opportunity to learn from a renowned international, multidisciplinary and scientific organisation, as I was seeking to deepen my understanding on how research turns into policy at European level. As my internship drew to a close and I began to reflect on all that I have learned, I felt appreciative of what an excellent and invaluable experience this has been over the last three months.

Right from the start, I felt warmly welcomed as the entire office team was incredibly kind, approachable, and humorous. This, paired with a positive and motivating working environment, made the team truly pleasant and inspiring to work with and learn from. Drafting the annual report as my initial assignment helped me obtain a first overview of EUPHA's impressive network, projects, and the large number of activities, and thus develop a more concrete understanding of how advocating for public health can be done on a large scale. Given my experience with COVID-19 measures and the implications thereof in research as well as in hospitals, EUPHA matched my interests by tasking me with writing a COVID-19 track report, summarising key messages from the sessions at the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health. Aside from improving my writing skills, this consolidated and extended my knowledge on this subject and provided me with much food for thought. Reviewing codes for the analysis of the EUPHA member questionnaire gave me another chance to put into practice what I had learned in university and solidify it through discussions and valuable insights from my supervisor, Maaïke Droogers (EUPHA Deputy Director). I am grateful for the trust EUPHA put in me to work independently throughout my internship, as well as for the opportunity to incorporate my own ideas. This freedom was always coupled with helpful guidance and constructive feedback when needed. Regular meetings, both with the EUPHA office team as well as with Maaïke, were held mostly online due to COVID-19 measures. These meetings were not only beneficial for updates, clarifications, and feedback but also for giving me an even better sense of belonging to the team during the - at times isolating - pandemic.

In addition, I had the privilege to take part in the 14<sup>th</sup> European Public Health Conference, which turned out to be tremendously informative, insightful, and engaging. As part of a great team, I supported the official social media campaign, and in doing this, improved my social media skills. Of the many profound sessions, the ones surrounding public mental health, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic were most intriguing to me. Regarding the latter, I had the honour of co-moderating a round table on the last day of the conference, which was a new and welcomed challenge. During the conference, there were plenty of opportunities to attend the 'Join the Network' meetings, which were not only meaningful for networking but also included inspiring in-depth discussions. A memorable highlight was the chance to engage with three leading figures of European public health as part of the mentoring sessions: Dr. Iveta Nagyova (EUPHA president), Prof. Dr. Peter Allebeck (Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Public Health) and Dr. Natasha Azzopardi Muscat (WHO Regional Office for Europe), who imparted their experiences and career advice to us. The conference provided me, as it did many others, the opportunity to broaden my awareness of public health issues at European

level and knowledge of innovative models, to network and learn from similarly interested speakers and attendees, and to apply my existing knowledge to new contexts and ideas.

All things considered, I got an invaluable first-hand look at the multifaceted public health work in action and left my internship with a toolbox much fuller than when I started. Maaïke was a genuinely caring, considerate, and supportive supervisor, who guided me every step of the way. She played an important role in making my internship an instructive experience. The knowledge, insights, and confidence I gained during my time with EUPHA have been helping me develop professionally and in my personal endeavours. I thoroughly enjoyed my internship, and it has brought me closer to achieving my goal of expanding my studies with the European Master of Public Health as an add-on degree. As I look back on this exceptionally rewarding experience, I am filled with gratitude for this opportunity, and proud to have contributed to such an esteemed European organisation.



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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