



Reflections on my internship at the EUPHA office

Blog by **Julian Hein**, EUPHA office intern, 30th January – 9th June 2023

Hi, I am Julian, and I performed an internship at the EUPHA office during spring 2023.

My two video calls with Marieke and Maaïke before the start of the internship were very pleasant, hence I was excited to start my internship. To accommodate for my living situation in Germany, I was allowed to work three weeks per month from home and one week from the office in Utrecht. At my first day in the office, the whole team was very welcoming and happy to have me there. For me, as a M.Sc. student in “Communication, Health and Life Sciences”, this was a great chance. I was eager to join EUPHA and learn more about Public Health and the impact of evidence-based health policymaking.

I had two exciting and connected projects planned for my four months at EUPHA. The first one focused on the situation of public health professionals in the Eastern part of the WHO European region. Together, we defined research questions and collaborated with the WHO/Europe including recruitment of several interviewees from the WHO country offices. One key task for me was to better understand potential barriers or enablers of public health professionals to participate in health policy processes within these countries. The mix of document analysis, literature review and interviews of local public health professionals got me excited and allowed me to gain valuable and novel insights into the situation on the ground. Secondly, I supported EUPHA by identifying potential funding opportunities for future projects through which I learned more about organisation and financing of EUPHA itself. I participated in weekly coffee chats and team meetings through which I learned about the great variety of topics EUPHA deals with, e.g., the European Public Health Conference, the European Public Health Week or EUPHANxt, the networking initiative for young professionals.

Overall, three themes spanned my entire internship:

Autonomy: The general outline of my projects was provided, but the design, development of new ideas and the completion of the tasks were pretty much up to me. Marieke trusted me to deal with this relevant project that involved a direct collaboration with WHO Europe. I am grateful to have learned from a good example of how trust in team members can empower them.

Responsibility: This directly leads to the second point. The responsibility that I was allowed to take in the projects really helped me to *learn* from this internship – e.g., how to deal with setbacks, how to manage the project in time or how to align outcome expectations from different stakeholders. Marieke always encouraged me to take the necessary steps and gave me constructive and useful feedback on the way.

Broadening of horizons: I was able to broaden my horizon throughout the entire internship. I participated in EUPHA’s Section Council, where I could network and experience collaboration among high-level public health professionals from all over Europe. I was able to interview public health experts



from Central Asia, Caucasus and Moldova. At last, I was able to present the project findings at the WHO/Europe office in Copenhagen. To get to know the WHO staff in person and discuss with them future project steps was valuable for me and allowed me to grow personally. It confirmed my positive impression regarding their attitude towards young professionals.

The team of the EUPHA office has always been kind and supportive. Moreover, Marieke and Maaïke ensured that the internship was a true professional experience broadening my horizon on public health. I can only recommend this experience and would certainly do it again.

- Julian

July 2023



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.



Co-funded by the European Union

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