

Annual report 2021

EUPHA Law and public health section (EUPHA-LAW)

There is a growing recognition that law as a discipline has a major role to play in framing effective public health strategies and implementation at global, transnational, regional and national levels. To respond to this evolution, EUPHA established a Law and public health section (EUPHA-LAW) in 2020.

Goals for 2021

The core aims for EUPHA-LAW this year were to:

- define the Section identity more clearly. EUPHA-LAW focuses on public health law and policy rather than healthcare law, with a particular emphasis on Europe (Europe being understood as the WHO EURO region);
- communicate the Section identity on website. EUPHA-LAW has reviewed the content of its web pages and improved the communication of its identity with a view to developing meaningful interactions with website visitors;
- increase Section membership. EUPHA-LAW is seeking to increase its membership through general and targeted messages. To this effect, it will launch a members' survey at the end of September to help shape activities over the next two years;
- increase collaborations. To develop effective regulatory responses to complex public health challenges, EUPHA-LAW works with a variety of sub-disciplines in law and public health to help build greater legal capacity. We also acknowledge the imperative for both multi-disciplinary and multi-level responses, and we have started to develop collaborations with other EUPHA sections and external partners to promote effective responses; and
- focus on two key themes of wide appeal. To start establishing itself, EUPHA-LAW has decided to group its activities into two key themes: (1) strategic litigation, human rights and public health; and (2) trade and public health. These themes are priority areas for lawyers interested in public health, whilst they also have a sufficiently broad remit to give coherence to our portfolios of activities without however preventing individual initiatives.

Collaboration with other sections

- Following the Sections Council, potential collaborations have been identified, initiated and/or strengthened with the Ethics, the Health Impact Assessment, and the Environment sections (see below).

Activities at the EPH2021 conference

- The section is co-organising the session on health impact assessments.
- The section is co-organising the “Strategic litigation, air pollution and climate change” session (including supporting speakers on the panel with a ticket waiver).

Other activities

- The name of the Section has been changed from “Public Health and Law” to “Law and Public Health” to better reflect the central focus on law and legal determinants of public health.
- EUPHA-LAW held its launch event in May 2021: “EUPHA Law and Public Health Section Launch Webinar: Unleashing the Power of Law to Promote Better Health for All”. This was held on 20th May 2021. It featured an external speaker (Lawrence Gostin) and members of the Steering Committee (Amandine Garde, Markus Frischhut, Anniek de Ruijter, Farhang Tahzib). It ended with a roundtable with questions from the audience.

- EUPHA-LAW also supported or co-organised the following events:
 - Webinar: ‘COVID-19, the TRIPS Waiver and the Pandemic Treaty’ (at the 9th International Festival of Public Health (Manchester, 19 July 2021).
 - Conference: “Regulating front-of-pack nutrition labelling conference” (online, 9-10 September 2021) co-organised by the University of Liverpool, the University of Essex and the University of Georgetown.
 - Webinar: “Public health, climate change and strategic litigation” (online, 7 October 2021) co-sponsored with EUPHA-ENV, Global Health Law Groningen Research Centre and the UK Faculty of Public Health.
- EUPHA-LAW participated in a EUPHA podcast on law and ethics which followed the EUPHA “Law, ethics and politics in 2020” report from the 16th World Congress on Public Health 2020.
- EUPHA-LAW responded to the European Commission’s proposal for labelling rules on alcoholic beverages.
- Our partners include the UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) (that has been an early supporter of EUPHA-LAW); the European Association of Health Law (EAHL) and UACES; the UK-based PETRA Network on trade and health; the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA); the European Health Forum Gastein.
- EUPHA-LAW is planning a major conference on health and strategic litigation to be held in early 2023. To build towards this event, EUPHA-LAW will continue its series of smaller events on Climate Change, Public Health and Strategic Litigation. A roundtable discussion will be organised in March on climate change litigation before the European Court of Human Rights.
- EUPHA-LAW is working with the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) to help build capacity for training in law in public health schools.
- EUPHA-LAW is planning an in-person Steering Committee away day to develop partnerships and develop and take forward new ideas, which will be scheduled for spring/summer 2022 around an event members will already be attending.
- EUPHA-LAW is considering an event on “Rhetoric to Practice” to highlight various public health topics which the EU has claimed to have worked on without any tangible progress.
- EUPHA-LAW and EUPHA more broadly support the Thematic Network on “Health as a fundamental value. Towards an inclusive and equitable pharmaceutical strategy for the EU”, financed by the European Commission.
- EUPHA-LAW and EUPHA more broadly support an initiative calling on the EU to adopt a directive on restricting the marketing of unhealthy food to protect children from harm.

Join the Network (JTN) annual meeting

- The first JTN meeting of EUPHA-LAW was held on 12th November 2021.
- The session began with a round of introductions with participants introducing their names, affiliations, current role and their interest in law and public health. An overview of the activities of EUPHA-LAW over the past year was given, and participants commented on the events which have been received positively. The results of the members’ survey were discussed. Participants were invited to share further thoughts. A number of topics were discussed as potential areas of future work, including asylum, access to medicine, corruption and biotechnology. Members were asked to suggest how they would like to be involved in new and existing initiatives. Discussions also took place on the ways members would prefer to be communicated with, and there was a general preference for current methods of email, but it was also suggested that a Twitter account may be of use. It was agreed that a number of further communications would follow between members and the Steering Committee to take forward the ideas which had been raised.

General communications with section members

- EUPHA-LAW has used the EUPHA monthly Newsletters to communicate with its members and other EUPHA members as needed.
- The results of the forthcoming Members' Survey will inform how we engage with our members (see below).

International participation in events on behalf of EUPHA

- Many of our events are international. For instance, the events organised by the UK FPH or the front-of-pack nutrition labelling conference (over 250 registered participants from 39 countries from Antigua to Vietnam).
- Members have also represented the section at international events (e.g., at the 14th EHFCN International Conference).

Survey

- EUPHA-LAW Members Survey was circulated to members in October 2021 results were discussed at the Join the Network meeting. Following this, the Section has increased insight into the preferences of members, and a number of topics for potential new collaborations have been identified. EUPHA-LAW has also been prompted to reflect on its communication strategy.