

Pre-conference Workshop

## Public Health: the Next Step



Thursday 14 November 2013

08.30 – 11.30

SQUARE Brussels Meeting Centre, Room 204

### Organizers

EUPHA section on Child and Adolescent Public Health

EUPHA section on Chronic Diseases

EUPHA section on Ethics in Public Health

and the EUPHAnxt

## Rationale

It looks like time stands still in certain areas of public health research. Time stands still because too much research in public health consists of repeating what others have done. In certain areas of public health, revolutionary breakthroughs are hard to find in the last decades and directions for future research are missing. A clear example of such an area is the public health lifestyle research. Consequently, the question can be asked: what value does public health research have?

A healthy lifestyle is valuable in reducing the incidence and impact of major health problems and for improving quality of life. In order to engage people in becoming and staying healthy we have to understand and deal with the determinants of lifestyle. In the past decades, an outrageous number of studies have been performed into determinants of several health related behaviors such as smoking, unhealthy dietary habits, lack of physical activity and unsafe sexual practices. With some certainty we can now say that – for example – people with a low socioeconomic status, high social stress and low self-efficacy have a higher chance of an unhealthy lifestyle. Insight in determinants may indicate by whom and at what level strategies may be implemented so that a positive change in health related behavior can be reached. However, producing sound knowledge about an issue does not automatically lead to desirable change. The translation of research results into practical implications is always a tough one, but now the time is (over)ripe to take the next step.

The objective of this pre-conference is to discuss the thresholds that cause the stagnation of implementation of knowledge into practice and to discuss the value public health research wants to add to society today and the next decades?

## PROGRAMME

- 08.30 -08.35**      Opening of the preconference
- Chairs**  
Danielle Jansen, EUPHA Section on Child and Adolescent Public Health  
Auke Wieggersma, EUPHA Section on Child and Adolescent Public Health  
Iveta Nagyova, EUPHA Section on Chronic Diseases
- 08.35 – 08.55**      **The need for 'arm chair thinking' in public health research**  
**Els Maeckelberghe**  
*Associate Professor, University Medical Centre Groningen, University of Groningen, the Netherlands*
- In the opening plenary in Malta, Louis Gunning provoked everybody in saying: “when you do research, ask the question: what value does it add to society?” We need to ask: what is the value PH-research wants to add to society today and the next decades? In order to answer that question, we need to lean back in our arm chair and reflect on the nature of the relation between theoretical and practical thinking. There is no self-evident nor a direct relation between the results of research and their implementation in practice. The philosopher Joseph Raz argued that reasons for action are ultimately provided by the values that can be realized through action. Consequently, public health research needs to clarify more precisely the values it wants uphold and add to society. Dr. Els Maeckelberghe will offer a practical tool for thinking about the aim of public health research and for mapping the landscape of value it operates in.
- 08.55 – 09.05**      Q&A
- 09.05 – 09.25**      **Agenda-setting in public health research in the coming post-crisis era: done in small back rooms or moving towards crowd-sourcing?**  
**Arjan van der Star**  
*Coordinator of EUPHANxt, European Public Health Association - EUPHA*
- Due to austerity in times of financial crisis, research budgets are currently trimmed and agendas are rethought, also within the field of public health. However, rather than only leaving this to politics, we as community should come up with our own new models for agenda setting in research and reconsider how we add societal value by what we do, how we do it and for what reason we create new evidence. What different models can we think off and what are their advantages and disadvantages? How can we justify our expenses and our research choices in the coming post-crisis era? How can we, more than ever before, create and add value, not for academic purposes only but for the society as a whole?
- 09.25 – 09.35**      Q&A
- 09.35 – 09.55**      Coffee Break

09.55 – 10.15

### **The Body Economic: Why Austerity Kills**

**David Stuckler**

*Senior Research Leader in Sociology, Oxford University, United Kingdom*

Politicians have talked endlessly about the seismic economic and social impacts of the recent financial crisis, but many continue to ignore its disastrous effects on human health—and have even exacerbated them, by adopting harsh austerity measures and cutting key social programs at a time when constituents need them most. The result is that many countries have turned their recessions into veritable epidemics, ruining or extinguishing thousands of lives in a misguided attempt to balance budgets and shore up financial markets. Yet sound alternative policies could instead help improve economies and protect public health at the same time. Dr David Stuckler and Dr Sanjay Basu's pioneering research mines data from around the globe and throughout history to show how government policy becomes a matter of life and death during financial crises. This lecture will be full of shocking and counterintuitive revelations and bold policy recommendations, and will present an alternative to austerity—one that will prevent widespread suffering, both now and in the future.

10.15 – 10.25

Q&A

10.25 – 11.10

Working on assignment

11.10 – 11.30

Discussion & Closing

## SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Dr Els Maeckelberghe**

Dr Els Maeckelberghe is an Associate Professor in Ethics at the University Medical Centre Groningen, University of Groningen, the Netherlands. She is the President of the Section on Ethics in Public Health at EUPHA (European Public Health Association); Co-chair of ASPHER Working Group on Ethics and Values in Schools of Public Health; and Chair of the EUPHA working group on private sector collaboration. She is also an owner of the Bureau Maeckelberghe, linking art and science in training, coaching, mediation, and advice.

**Arjan van der Star, MSc**

Arjan van der Star is a multidisciplinary health care expert with a special interest in Public Health and social health inequalities. Since several years, he is working on European level and is actively involved in EUPHA by coordinating the EUPHAnxt initiative for young professionals and junior researchers. During his studies he gained knowledge and experience through positions across different segments of health care (systems). Throughout these positions he developed remarkable analytic and writing skills in scientific research, and has been working closely with physicians and researchers. Furthermore, he is a successful semi-professional singer and currently performs on many stages in the Netherlands and China.

**Dr David Stuckler**

David Stuckler, MPH, PhD, MPH PhD Hon MFPH is a Senior Research Leader in Sociology, Oxford University and research fellow of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Chatham House. He has written over 90 peer-reviewed scientific articles on the economics of global health, public health, in *The Lancet*, *British Medical Journal* and *Nature* in addition to other major journals. Dr. David Stuckler has consulted on the political economy of healthcare for WHO and UNICEF, and received grants from the European Centre for Disease Control on the impact of economic crises on public health. He has taught at Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford on the subjects of global politics, economics and health as well as quantitative methods. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *BBC World Service*, *CNBC*, and *New Scientist*, among other venue.