

Annual report 2020

EUPHA Digital Health section (EUPHA-DH)

Overview and goals

As digitalization is permeating all aspects of society, questions arise as to how it can be fruitfully employed to sustain the public health goals of quality, accessibility, efficiency and equity in healthcare and prevention. The EUPHA Digital Health Section was approved by the EUPHA Governing board in November 2019, in the context of the 12th European Public Health Conference in Marseille, France. Acknowledging the importance of the current and future role of digitalization in public health and building on the enriching discussion stimulated by past EPH scientific sessions, the establishment of a EUPHA thematic Section on Digital Health was proposed with the aim of bringing together researchers, policymakers and practitioners across Europe working on digital public health for knowledge sharing and capacity building. The Section aims to work across competences, disciplines



and settings to apply EUPHA's strategic objectives to the field of digital health. The Section aims at building advocacy, and at gathering, producing and disseminating evidence on the need for and on the impact of digital solutions for public health. It brings together a core group of experts in selected digital health aspects, facilitate the exchange of national-level best practices and stimulate the Europe-level debate to place digital public health high in the EU policy, research and education agenda.

Setting the scene: a conceptual framework for Public Health digitalization in Europe

As the EUPHA-DH section was approved, the first action taken was to work on the publication "Public health digitalization in Europe. EUPHA vision, action and role in digital public health".¹ In the paper we first researched to define 'digitalization' in its broader sense, as well as applied to public health. We then built a conceptual framework where key public health domains were associated to available digital technologies in a matrix that help to identify digital features that bolster public health action. We also provided illustrative data and evidence on the application of digital solutions on selected public health areas. In the second part of the report, we identified the strategic pillars for a successful European strategy for public health digitalization and we outlined how the approach being pursued by EUPHA applies to digital health. The paper was published in a European Journal of Public Health Special Issue on Digital Health (https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/issue/29/Supplement_3) and presented in the context of the 12th EPH Conference workshop "EUPHA and Europe-wide action

¹ Odone A, Buttigieg S, Ricciardi W, Azzopardi-Muscat N, Staines A. Public health digitalization in Europe. Eur J Public Health. 2019 Oct 1;29(Supplement_3):28-35. doi: 10.1093/eurpub/ckz161. PMID: 31738441; PMCID: PMC6859512.

on digital public health”. EUPHA DH President and Vice-President co-authored the Supplement editorial “Digitalization: potentials and pitfalls from a public health perspective”.²

10.C. Workshop: EUPHA and Europe-wide action on digital public health

Chairperson(s): Dineke Zeegers Paget – *EUPHA*, Anna Odone – *Italy*

Presentation of the European Journal of Public Health 2019 supplement on Digital Health

Natasha Azzopardi Muscat – *EUPHA*

Assessing the impact of digital transformation of health services: Opinion by the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (EXPH), Walter Ricciardi – *WFPHA*

Objectives, mission, scope and preliminary output of the proposed EUPHA Section on Digital Health

Anna Odone – *Italy*

Selected examples of successful projects on digital public health, Stefan Buttigieg – *Malta*

Activities at the EPH conference (16th WCPH)

■ Pre-Conference:

PRE001 - Privacy by default, security by design. Effects of GDPR on public health research

Joint Pre-conference with EUPHA-PHMR, EUPHA-ETH, EUPHA-HSR, EUPHA-LAW initiative, InfAct: Joint Action on Health Information, Sciensano, Ministry of Health Malta, Gesundheit Österreich, EUPHA

■ Plenary Session 4:

PL4 - The Digital Information Revolution

■ Workshops:

1.C. - Workshop: How are digital solutions contributing to enhance immunization programmes and policies? Joint workshop with EUPHA-IDC

20.C. - Round table: Harnessing the digital transformation of disease prevention: a focus on m-health and genomics Joint workshop with EUPHA-EPI, EUPHA-PHG, EUPHA-HP

22.C. - Workshop: Digital Interventions in public mental health: current impact and future directions Joint workshop with EUPHA-PMH

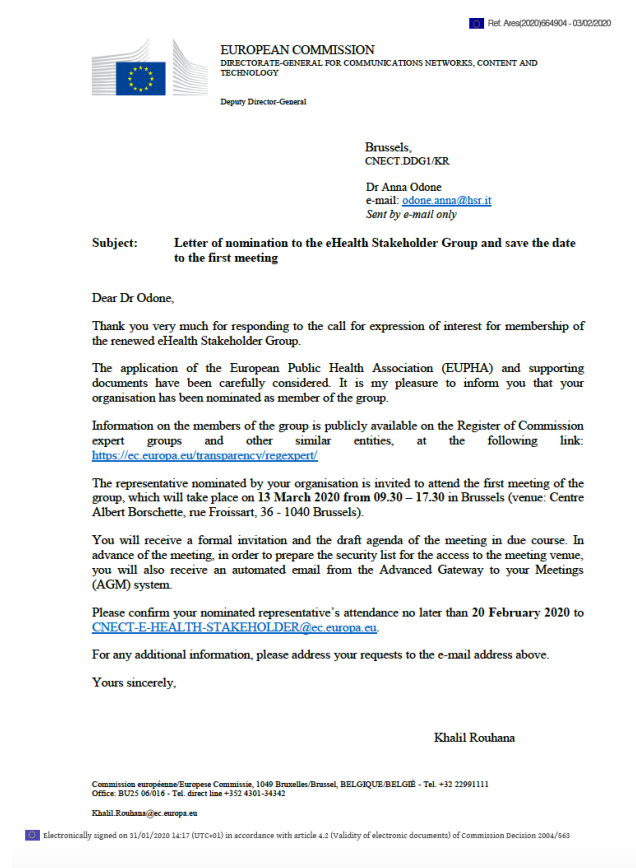
² Azzopardi-Muscat N, Ricciardi W, Odone A, Buttigieg S, Zeegers Paget D. Digitalization: potentials and pitfalls from a public health perspective. Eur J Public Health. 2019 Oct 1;29(Supplement_3):1-2. doi: 10.1093/eurpub/ckz169. PMID: 31738438; PMCID: PMC6859515.

29.C. - Workshop: Assessment, regulation and use of apps for health management: where we are and where we are going? Joint workshop with EUPHA-HTA

eHealth Stakeholder Group

The Section applied, on behalf of EUPHA, to be part of the European Commission eHealth Stakeholder Group and was successfully nominated as member of the group in February 2020 (the Commission received over 100 applications for a maximum of 40 membership places). The eHealth Stakeholder Group provides advice and expertise to the Commission, particularly on topics set out in

the Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market, that was adopted in April 2018. In particular in relation to the following areas: i) Health Data, including taking forward the Commission Recommendation on a European Electronic Health record exchange format and the further elaboration of the baseline set of technical specifications and better interoperability, ii) Digital health services, iii) Health data protection and privacy issues, iv) Cybersecurity for health and care data, v) Digital tools for citizen empowerment and person centred care, v) Artificial intelligence and health, as well as other cross cutting aspects linked to the digital transformation of health and care, such as financing and investment proposals and enabling technologies.



Other activities - EUPHA and EPHA joint statement

In May 2020 EUPHA, together with EPHA issued the joint statement on [“Digitalisation to support an effective public health response to the COVID-19 emergency”](#). Reflecting on how the COVID-19 crisis was demonstrating the potential of digital health technology to manage some of our greatest public health challenges, and fully leveraging digital innovation in public health, EPHA and EUPHA underlined their aim to create a suitable environment for the introduction of emerging digital technologies, including by better informing policymakers about real societal needs and by training public health professionals, patients and other end users so they can effectively engage with digital tools in practice, policy and research. Section President and vice-president collaborated with EPHA

for drafting the structure and content of the joint-statement and are now working on its update and revision.

Other activities - Research project on digital tools for vaccination

In the context of the EUVIS (Europe Vaccines ICT Strategies) research project, the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) Sections on Digital Health (EUPHA-DH) and Infectious Diseases Control (EUPHA-IDC), collected from experts across Europe best practices on the use and impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and digital tools to increase vaccine uptake and ultimately vaccination coverage in Europe.

International participation in events on behalf of EUPHA

- October 2020. European Federation of Allergies and Airways Diseases - EFA Allergy and Respiratory Patients Conference
- September 2020. DISH Project – European reference group first workshop digital skills for the health workforce
- September 2020. HIMSS & Health 2.0 Health Conference & Exhibition. From Data to Action: Population Health Management
- April 2020. European Science-Media Hub. Which way for EU data governance during COVID-19?

Relevant publications on behalf of the Section

- Azzopardi-Muscat N, Ricciardi W, Odone A, Buttigieg S, Zeegers Paget D. Digitalization: potentials and pitfalls from a public health perspective. Eur J Public Health 2019; 29(Supplement_3): 1-2.
- Odone A, Buttigieg S, Ricciardi W, Azzopardi-Muscat N, Staines A. Public health digitalization in Europe. Eur J Public Health 2019; 29(Supplement_3): 28-35.
- Ohannessian R, Duong TA, Odone A. Global Telemedicine Implementation and Integration Within Health Systems to Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Call to Action. JMIR public health and surveillance 2020; 6(2): e18810.
- Scardoni A, Balzarini F, Signorelli C, Cabitza F, Odone A. Artificial intelligence-based tools to control healthcare associated infections: A systematic review of the literature. J Infect Public Health. 2020 Aug;13(8):1061-1077. doi: 10.1016/j.jiph.2020.06.006. Epub 2020 Jun 16. PMID: 32561275.

General communications with section members

- **Newsletter & section webpage:** we communicate with members through newsletters, email and updating the section webpage.
- **Social media:** we are active on Twitter through the [Section official Twitter account](#)