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Subject: Candidacy for the EUPHA Section on Sexual & Gender Minority Health Presidency

Dear Members of the EUPHA Section on Sexual & Gender Minority Health,

Hereby, I would like to apply for the position of Section President of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) Section on Sexual & Gender Minority Health, or EUPHA-SGMH. Since 2011, I have been actively involved in EUPHA in various capacities, first as an intern and later as coordinator of EUPHANxt. I then co-founded the EUPHA-SGMH section back in 2016 and I served as the Section Vice President since. As a research assistant professor in sexual and gender minority health, with over a decade of experience in research leadership and with a vast network within the European public health arena, I am convinced that I am the right candidate for the position of Section President. In this letter, I would like to provide you with a brief overview of my area of expertise, highlight possible future strategic avenues for the section, and outline my motivation for the position.

Over the past ten years, my personal research as a social epidemiologist has focused on the study of sexual orientation and gender identity-based mental health disparities and how systems of oppression may drive such disparities. During my research-focused multidisciplinary doctoral program in public health and recent postdoctoral fellowship in psychology, I developed a research program to further the current understanding of stigma-based mechanisms underlying these inequalities. Through an interdisciplinary lens that borrows from the fields of sociology, psychology, and public health, it focuses on demonstrating how sexual and gender minority stigma may be perpetuated through complex systems within societies and cultures and how multilevel factors related to such stigma may interact to shape the mental and physical health of sexual and gender minorities. Stigma-based frameworks have so far been unable to fully explain mental health disparities based on sexual orientation and gender identity and, even in countries particularly low in sexual and gender minority stigma, sizable disparities persist. To further the understanding on why these disparities may persist, my work concentrates around extending the literature in two important and novel ways by, on the one hand, further pioneering and exploring how sexual and gender minority stigma may function as socioecological system shaping mental health and, on the other hand, by employing epidemiological methodology to further address gaps in the literature on causal inferencing and counterfactuals.

Since its inception, EUPHA-SGMH has been the perfect network to learn, initiate collaboration, discuss, and disseminate results to further a wider sexual and gender minority health research agenda.<sup>1</sup> Europe, with its widely varying social attitudes and degrees of stigma towards sexual and gender minorities, provides a unique opportunity for pan-continental multidisciplinary collaboration to advance health equity.<sup>2</sup> Under the leadership of Dr. Richard Bränström and myself, section membership has grown to over 11,000 individuals in just six years' time and the section has engaged in continuous advocacy.<sup>3</sup> Current challenges lie within further diversifying the ranges of health topics discussed and subpopulations represented in the section, and within facilitating collaborations across the network. If appointed, I will focus my efforts on intensifying collaborations

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<sup>1</sup> Bränström, R. & Van der Star, A. (2013). All-inclusive Public Health—what about LGBT populations? *European Journal of Public Health*, 23(3), 353-354.

<sup>2</sup> Bränström, R. & Van der Star, A. (2015). More knowledge and research concerning the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals is needed. *European Journal of Public Health*, 26(2), 208.

<sup>3</sup> Bränström, R., Van der Star, A., & Pachankis, J. (2019). European-wide monitoring of sexual and gender minority health: a necessary and feasible task for advancing health equity. *European Journal of Public Health*, 29(2), 199-200.



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with several of our partners, such as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – Europe, Transgender Europe, the European Professional Association for Transgender Health, and the Organisation Intersex International Europe, to help diversifying work across all sexual and gender minority subgroups. I will further advance existing plans to establish country representatives to spark and facilitate easier collaborations within and across country borders. European research funding will be identified to possibly establish a cross-European research consortium. Further priorities will be determined based on input from the membership and steering committee; all in a collaborative and dynamic effort.

With 11 consecutive EPH conferences attended, I am committed to EUPHA's mission and the people that make up the fabric of the organization. Even when moving between Amsterdam, Stockholm, New York City, and San Diego to further advance my research career, I have remained loyal to EUPHA and have uninterruptedly contributed to the growth of the organization and, in particular, EUPHA-SGMH. Over the years, I have initiated and co-organized over 25 high-quality and well-received workshops and seminars in sexual and gender minority health at EPH conferences. I am grateful for the inspiring leadership of Dr. Richard Bränström, outgoing Section President, whose vision led to the creation of the section and who steered it through its massive expansion. I am highly motivated to lead EUPHA-SGMH into a new chapter that honors this legacy and will be even more valuable to the section members. Based on my expertise, research leadership, EUPHA engagements, and commitments to EUPHA-SGMH as co-founder and Vice President, I hope this letter brings across my qualifications and motivation for the EUPHA-SGMH Section Presidency.

I am looking forward to continuing collaborations and meeting in Berlin later this fall,

Sincerely,

Arjan van der Star, Ph.D., M.Sc.

Outgoing Vice President, EUPHA Section on Sexual & Gender Minority Health