
Editorials

European-added value for public health

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European Public Health needs strong drivers to keep pushing forward an agenda of health politics that is rooted in evidence. This is necessary both to safeguard the advances achieved in the health of our populations over the past decades as well as to challenge ourselves to break new frontiers in attempting to address well-established problems at local, national, European and global levels.

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) is well positioned to fulfil this role. From its humble beginnings over 20 years ago, this small organization has established itself as a leader in bringing scientific evidence based on research to the attention of the public health community.

EUPHA has recently adopted a strategy for the period 2015–20, in which continues to build on the development of the four pillars of activity; namely, research, policy, practice and training. The strategy aims to strengthen the scientific and independent voice of public health in Europe. This objective will be complemented by the objectives of building capacity and knowledge across Europe and preparing young public health professionals to take up strong leadership roles thus ensuring the sustainability of public health research and practice in the years to come. Within the above mentioned strategic framework, I have identified the following areas as priorities I would particularly like to focus on in the coming years.

EUPHA has a role to play in shaping the public health research agenda at European level and can be a key driver for innovative collaboration pan European research projects.

EUPHA is a small organization. It is for this reason that we must identify like-minded partners who are intent on pursuing similar public health objectives. By working together with organizations that share our public health values, we can have a positive impact on health policy at European level to counteract the effect of disease promoting organizations.

Europe is made up of countries and regions with varying levels of expertise and resources because of stark differences in size and levels of economic development. Strengthening public health in Europe needs action at European level but equally requires strengthening the activity of organizations working at the grassroots. EUPHA through its broad membership base of national public health associations is well placed to play a pivotal role in developing public health capacity by supporting member associations in reaching out to public health practitioners working at regional and local levels. An example of a useful activity is the promotion of exchange experiences for young public health leaders.

Coming from Malta, a very small country in Europe, I instinctively recognize the need to network, to reach out, to foster cross fertilization of ideas and to engage actively at European level to pursue evidence-based public health policy and practice at a national level. Without European networks and support, the development of public health in my country would have been far more difficult. Similarly, I can see how EUPHA as a small organization is demonstrating that through the forging of effective partnerships at European and global level it can punch above its weight and be an effective voice for the promotion of evidence-informed public health policy.

European Public Health policy needs to be crafted through the shared vision of public health leaders from across Europe who recognize the added value of working together, sharing their expertise, pooling limited resources and creating knowledge and practice networks, all of which taken together will undoubtedly create the impact we yearn for not only within Europe but reaching out to the global community.

I look forward to being actively engaged in this important endeavour and call upon all those who feel they can contribute to the implementation of our strategy for the improvement of public health in Europe to become involved.