

Climate Action through Public Health Education and Training

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“We recognise that not every public health professional needs to become an expert in climatology and ecology, but we argue that all graduates need to understand the basics, be able to communicate knowledgeably, and form partnerships and alliances in multidisciplinary settings with experts in these areas” – Middleton, 2016

Background

Climate change continues to be the biggest challenge of the 21st century, with profound and growing negative consequences on public health. **Public health and healthcare professionals** must take **ownership** of their role to increase their accountability regarding their contribution to the climate crisis. The **new extremes** require the public health & health service community to **adapt & respond, to mitigate & prevent**.

Public health and healthcare professionals **require core training and continuous professional development** to improve their understanding of the linkages between climate and health and to make it a priority in their work. Successful integration of the climate conversation in the education and practice of the public health and wider healthcare workforce training must be **comprehensive**.

Education that improves **climate-health literacy** helps build consensus and becomes the foundation for the acquisition of the expertise required to contribute to the solution of climate problems, build understanding of the gravity of the **twin crises of climate and health**, the urgency of the threat, awareness about what can be done and the skills to work with others to take the first steps.

Process

ASPHER conducted an online survey in to look at the implementation of climate education and climate action taken by public health institutions to provide a baseline assessment. **The survey results found a lack of a systematic approach and ad hoc actions by public health academic institutions**. This supported the development of a Climate-Health implementation strategy for action within ASPHER's strategic priorities and members.

Outcome/Implications

ASPHER was successful in raising the issue at the EU Health Policy Platform; an interactive tool to boost discussions about public health concerns, share knowledge and best practices with the European Commission. **Together with the thematic network, ASPHER developed a climate-health education statement, and hereby receiving institutional support at various levels from over 80 stakeholders.**

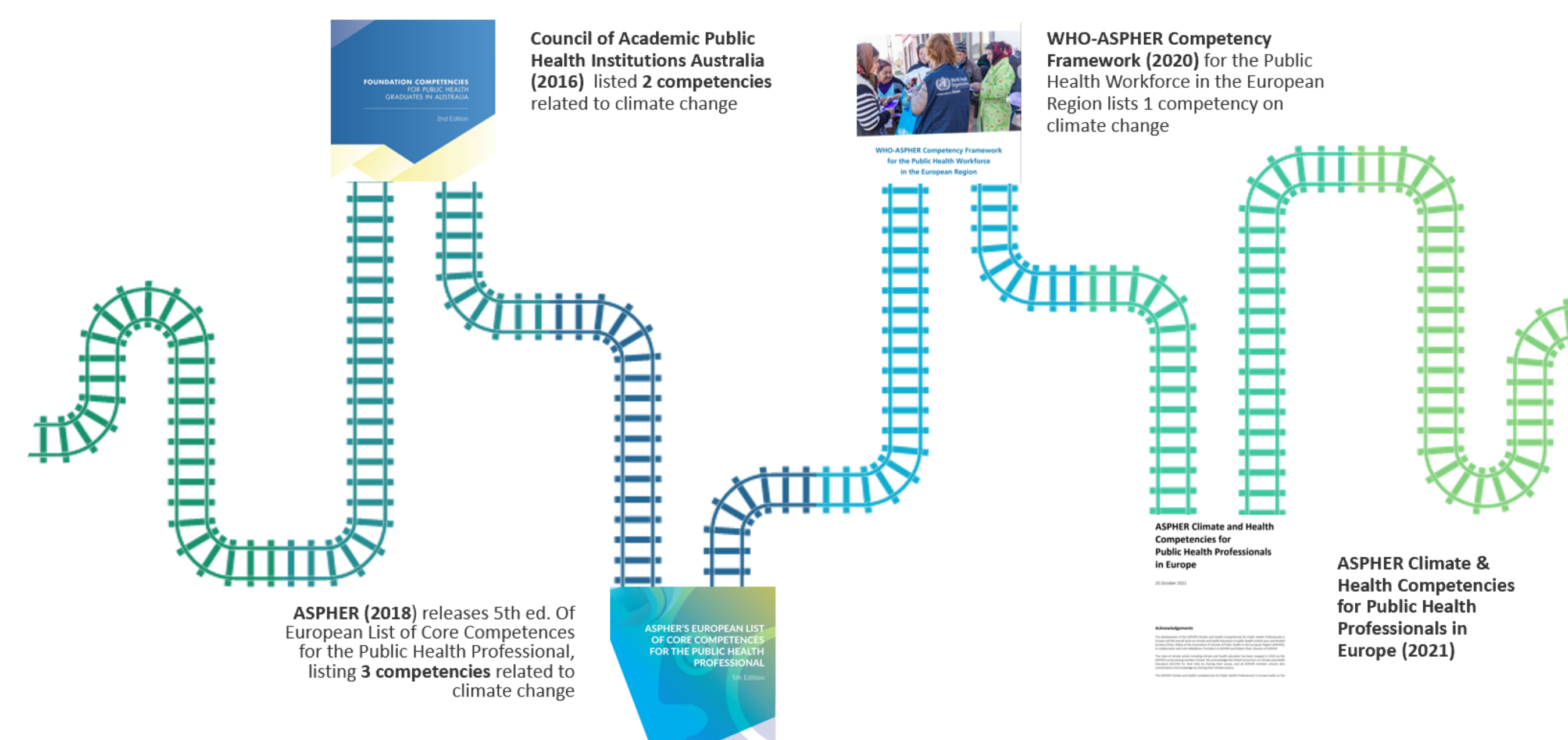


Moving towards the right to 'health for all' by training the public health and wider health workforce on climate change and health

Joint statement by the EU Health Policy Platform's thematic network "Climate action through public health education and training"

Climate change continues to be the biggest challenge of the 21st century, with profound and growing negative consequences on public health. The cost of inaction to act in a timely and systemic manner will have catastrophic implications for the planet, the ecosystem, our livelihoods, notably the health and social systems of today and in the future.

Concurrently, ASPHER has been working on revising competencies for public health professionals related to climate-health. Focused on utilizing existing resources, the strategy goal is to **avoid re-inventing** the wheel and support implementation within ASPHER institutions. Working with global partners and existing frameworks/roadmaps, a set of climate & health competencies were briefly introduced in 2021 for the European Context through four domains: **knowledge & analytical skills, communications & advocacy, collaboration & partnerships, and policy.**



Results

Re-structuring the role and responsibility of the public health and health workforce requires strong building blocks. **The ASPHER climate-health education statement has gained traction at the leadership level to raise awareness and understanding that public health has a responsibility to be prepared for the climate crisis.** Leveraging existing policy spaces such as the EU Health Policy Platform has provided visible recognition to build conversations alongside the European Commission, DG SANTE, DG CLIMA, and the European Environment Agency.

Next Steps

The challenge to move forward is **support the implementation** of the recommendations of the statement into practical solutions to support the embodiment of climate-health competencies in public health curriculum. In the online survey, challenges of funding, lack of time, lack of expertise were raised. ASPHER is currently supporting a rigorous review of the existing competencies; while identifying case examples of good, practical examples of climate-health curriculum. **It is important to note that these conversations emphasize on including all levels throughout the process; including students, professors, education, and health partner to prepare the future workforce for the unexpected, and expected climate crises.**



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