

# THE GLOBAL DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY IN EUROPE AND IN THE WORLD

## Charter of the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) at the occasion of the 6th European Public Health Conference in Brussels, Belgium, November 13-16, 2013

Founded in 1966, ASPHER is the key independent organisation dedicated to strengthening the role of public health by improving education and training of public health professionals for both practice and research in the European region. It also has strong links with similar associations in other regions of the world, and with European and international professional and civil society associations in the field of Public Health. Since the early nineties Europe is growing together again and ASPHER contributes to that under its mandate. Europe is also part of a rapidly integrating world and shares responsibility beyond continental borders. With the support of world leaders in public health this Charter is made public:

### The Charter:

**The Global Background:** It is commonly known that the key health problems of today transgress national and even continental borders, including air and water pollution, climate change, lifestyle changes conditioned by the contagious social environment, demographic dynamics, the communication revolution, the heavy toll from natural disasters and military conflicts, and last but not least the ongoing financial crisis and the inequity between and within countries. There were global answers in the past: the primary health care strategy inaugurated by WHO in Alma Ata 1978 or the Millennium Goals (MDG) adopted by the United Nations in 2000; however, the implementation of effective and sustainable interventions for health is a long-term endeavour<sup>i</sup> where much depends on reliable global partnership, as noted in MDG 8. We, the Schools of Public Health in Europe, accept our global responsibility, which is guided by the two key principles of Solidarity<sup>ii</sup> and Subsidiarity<sup>iii,iv,v</sup>. We act as part of the international community, focusing on education for practice and research to contribute to the global public goods essential for health, the building block for our future<sup>vi</sup>.

**Education and Training:** The health sciences as well as the target groups of public health education and training are extremely heterogeneous as is also the array of potential employers of graduates<sup>vii,viii,ix</sup>. In order to match the training of well prepared professionals with the current public health needs in a context of heterogeneity and fragmentation, cooperation between academic institutions, health system authorities, funders and civil society becomes increasingly important, particularly in addressing the global health agenda<sup>x</sup>, facilitated by the widespread adoption of new educational technologies based on digital media<sup>xi</sup>. Both education and research are core composite parts in the development of globalization, with international students numbering 2.5 million globally<sup>xii</sup> and constituting 20.5% of the total enrolment of the European Schools of Public Health<sup>vii</sup>. Global health is an emerging topic of highest relevance in the public health academic curricula<sup>xiii</sup> but there are serious misbalances, with academic programmes being frequently organised by institutions in high income countries<sup>xiv</sup> without adequate involvement of recipient countries in setting priority topics.

Since the nineties, in Europe, academic programmes and lifelong learning are increasingly structured around exit competences in seven key areas: methods in public health; population health and its social determinants; environmental health; health policy; management of health services; health promotion; and ethics<sup>xv</sup>. Efforts are underway to globally harmonise the

underlying essential public health operations<sup>xvi</sup>. Furthermore ASPHER has taken the initiative, together with partners - the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), the European Health Management Association (EHMA), and EuroHealthNet (EHN) - and in consultation with WHO Europe and the EU Commission, to establish the European Agency for Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA)<sup>xvii</sup> with a global outreach. ASPHER is the lead organisation in advancing public health capacity in the European Region leading the workforce development defined in the 7<sup>th</sup> Essential Public Health Operation of WHO-Euro.

The European Schools of Public Health are to improve their task profile in terms of training for research and services; monitoring population health; enhancing community oriented intervention; liaising with Public Health Associations; and increasing bi-directional engagement with decision makers<sup>xviii</sup> at the national, European, and global level. Consultation and consensus brought a considerable degree of harmonisation between the member states of regional groupings like the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the European Union in different areas. Public Health is priority as a next field of partnership and cooperation.

### ***The road map for 2020:***

The main roads for ASPHER's leadership into the future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>xix</sup> are identified as:

- 1) Recognition of the global dimension of education and training for public health.
- 2) Leadership based on an agreed long-term strategy.
- 3) Strengthening of the public health capacity in the European Region leading the workforce development towards shaping an education- and training-defined, authorised public health profession in all European countries as well as in other regions of the world.
- 4) Development of the European Schools of Public Health towards multilateral coordination and cooperation in multidisciplinary professional networks ensuring the continued development of the highest possible quality.
- 5) Supporting development of national comprehensive and coherent systems for the delivery of services for the public, building on well-defined decision hierarchies, competences and job roles, so that population health challenges can be met in due time by necessary essential public health operations, being performed based on relevant public health competences.
- 6) Engagement with the population, including patients, and with policymakers, health professionals and persons outside the health sector but with important public health roles, in order to adapt public health training and education to the evolving needs of the society in general and the health system in particular.

The key supporting instruments for implementation are: (a) Education and training programmes to be delivered in the national language and progressively in English as a key tool for global communication; (b) International mobility organized efficiently for students and teachers; (c) Innovative and affordable technologies provided for online learning and network communication; (d) Alumni contacts especially with international students supported and formalised; (e) Programmes of continuing training offered regularly and increasingly online; (f) Further development of lists of public health core competences, so that they correspond to all public health educational and training levels and to geographical and economic variations

across European countries; (g) Stimulation and participation of the development of lists of public health competences in other parts of the World; (h) Shaping a public health profession by leading academic discussion and by learning from experience in other countries; (i) Initiating discussions in national associations of public health to develop the spirit and rules of a coherent, authorised public health profession, and accordingly, the development of authorisation systems by national governments; (j) Supporting development of comprehensive systems for the delivery of public health services; (k) Collaborating with WHO Europe and with other international, European and national public health associations in assuring and developing a sufficient and competent public health workforce (WHO Europe's Essential Public Health Operation (EPHO) No. 7) in- and outside Europe.

ASPHER is dedicated to improving public health education and training in Europe and elsewhere, but also conscious of the fact that professional training is above all a means to an end; our ultimate objective is better population health through increased capacity and quality in public health services. In order for this goal to be achieved, public health schools must quickly adapt to changing realities, taking into account policy needs and limitations, the burgeoning empowerment of citizens worldwide in health matters, and the perceptions of practicing public health professionals, who are uniquely placed to understand the emerging needs in the field. ASPHER is ready to lead in all of these areas, but also to expand its role through network leadership approaches that strengthen its partners and bring mutual objectives that much closer to realization.

Brussels, November 15, 2013

Prof. Vesna Bjegovic-Mikanovic, president ASPHER

Prof. Helmut Brand, immediate past president ASPHER

Prof. Julio Frenk, Andrija Stampar medallist 2012

Prof. Jose Martin-Moreno, Andrija Stampar medallist 2013

Prof. Anders Foldspang, co-chair of ASPHER Honours' Committee

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- iii Oswald von Nell-Breuning: *Solidarität und Subsidiarität im Raume von Sozialpolitik und Sozialreform*, in: Erik Boettcher (Hrsg.), *Sozialpolitik und Sozialreform. Ein einführendes Lehr- und Handbuch der Sozialpolitik*, Tübingen 1957, 213-226
- iv [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/institutional\\_affairs/treaties/lisbon\\_treaty/ai0017\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/ai0017_en.htm) (accessed 18.10.2013)
- v *Solidarity* encompasses development financing, technical cooperation, and humanitarian assistance. The global community is responsible for the dispossessed. *Subsidiarity* is the organising principle of decentralisation, stating that the central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level, presently best known as a general principle of European Union law.
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- xviii Ulrich Laaser. *The institutionalization of public health training and the health sciences*. *Public Health Reviews* 2002; 30(1-4): 71-95.
- xix See also the recommendations to the European Schools and Departments of Public Health based on the ASPHER Survey 2011-2012: <http://aspher.org/pg/blog/read/317399/recommendation-for-aspher-members-from-the-surveys-20112012> (accessed 16.10.2013).
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