



Sharing European Educational Experience in Public Health for Israel (SEE EPHI)

No-cost extension request

The objective of this document is to request a no-cost extension to the ERASMUS+ CBHE project # 618578-EPP-1-2020-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP.

The Sharing European Educational Experience in Public Health for Israel (SEE EPHI) project, which aims to enhance the public health workforce (PHW) in Israel through sharing European educational experience, and focusing on: HARMONIZATION, EMPLOYABILITY, LEADERSHIP and OUTREACH. SEE EPHI is a complex intercultural project, the success of which is dependent upon multiple factors both internal and external.

The project was officially launched on 15 January 2021 in the midst of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic related travel and work restrictions. As described in SEE EPHI's recently submitted interim report, by shining a spotlight on the importance of the work of the public health community, the pandemic has made the SEE EPHI project far more relevant than the consortium could have imagined at the time the proposal was written. The public health workforce, in Israel, Europe and the world-over has needed to respond to unfamiliar challenges, and seek solutions in a landscape where knowledge of the virus, its transmission and its effects were changing on a daily basis and continue to develop to this day. This was reflected in the responsibilities of key partners involved in the SEE EPHI project, several of whom were active members of the advisory board to the Ministry of Health for COVID-19 policies and strategies in Israel.

Implementing a multinational capacity building project during the pandemic time period, however, introduced significant challenges to carrying out the project activities. Partners did their best to progress under the circumstances and mitigate the restrictions, but there were inherent limitations that could not be entirely overcome.

Lockdowns, travel and meeting restrictions. All of the project activities have been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic due to travel, work and meeting restrictions. Throughout most of the first two project years, travel and face-to-face meetings could not be carried out as planned. Online meetings were held to progress on the work, but integration and synergy between partners and Work Packages would have

been considerably enhanced had in-person meetings been possible throughout the project period. The pandemic forced partners to work largely in isolated silos; as a result, key connections and required synergies between interdependent Work Packages were difficult to synchronise due to indirect contact.

Opportunities for European added value in country were severely diminished as distant partners were unable to travel to Israel to make contributions and Israel partners were unable to come to Europe to experience on the ground how the European HEIs implement best practices. Even as countries reopened in mid-2022, travel had to be cancelled for some intended meeting participants due to COVID infections.

Moreover, local pandemic conditions precluded activities meant to be held in person. This impacted on a wide variety of project activities, from interviewing and outreach to employers, dissemination events, collection and filming of I am Public Health (IamPH) campaign stories from across the cross-sectoral Israel workforce, development of student work placements and career fair, and training of faculty trainers at Israel HEIs in leadership and problem-based learning. Given that the sector concerned in the project relates to health, COVID-19 restrictions impacting on access to employers and stakeholders were particularly strict and extended for a longer period than for other sectors and the general public. This was even the case for the HEIs themselves, some of which are housed within hospital settings. These impediments were especially harmful for the SEEPEHI project given that multiple on-site visits had been planned, to promote cross-sectoral learning, which could not be replaced by digital means.

Key SEEPEHI partners involved in Covid response. Given the area of work of SEEPEHI partners in the field of public health, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were compounded for the project as many key project personnel were called upon to respond to the public health crisis and involved in national response to manage the outbreak in the Ministry of Health, hospitals and other organizations who fought COVID-19, diverting their attention and limiting their available time.

Although on a different level, this was also true for those working in education who were required to rethink and restructure course work, spending extra time to learn new technologies in order to teach remotely.

Reopening challenges. The reopening of society created its own unique set of challenges as most workplaces, including HEIs, resumed more or less simultaneously which compounded the partners' time and capacity burdens.

As a result of the described challenges and in order to attain maximum value of the impact of the project, SEEPEHI is requesting a 6-month no-cost extension for the project period of work. This would allow for the full implementation and proper evaluation and dissemination of the remaining project activities. As many of the SEEPEHI innovations

are new to the partner country of Israel, additional time will serve to ensure that the project activities are not only fully implemented, but also well adapted to the cultural and cross-sectoral needs of target groups. Properly assessing the performance, impacts, successes and limitations of piloted activities will be critical to provide evidence and argumentation for their sustainability.

Moreover, the Israeli academic year closes at the end of June. Postponing the end date from 14 January 2024 to 14 July 2024 will allow project activities to be implemented over the course of the entire 2023-2024 Israeli academic year and provide a more natural end time to the project that coincides with the end of the academic year. It would also provide the opportunity for participation of the project in an additional Israeli Public Health Conference, exposing the public health community in Israel to the final project products.

Specific key project activities that will benefit from added value in the extension period include:

WP4 Public Health Israel online platform. The proof of concept of the PHI online platform will be launched at the annual Israel Public Health Conference in June 2023. However, it will be new to Public Health professionals, students and employers and will require time to disseminate as well as to evaluate if it is meeting needs, in particular to serve the WP6 Public Health Registry and to make adjustments accordingly.

WP5 Piloting of 5+1 peer train the trainer sessions. Training of trainers/faculty in leadership and problem-based learning will be able to be fully implemented in Israel HEIs over the course of the 2023-24 academic year with the benefit of European partner experience able to add value now that travel and meeting restrictions have been lifted.

WP6 IamPH Campaign. Following the period of restrictions especially in health sector work places, the IamPH has only recently been able to access the diverse, cross-sectoral public health community to gather IamPH stories and videos. The extended time period will allow more representative participation in and a wider dissemination of the campaign to assure a fuller recognition of who makes up the public health workforce, the employment opportunities available and present a broader, multi-sectoral perspective of who recognises themselves as part of the workforce to become part of the PH Israel registry. The pandemic has not only made the public health workforce less accessible, but it has also caused a significant shift in the field and more time is needed for it to be fully and truly presented and disseminated in its evolved form.

WP7 second SEEPHI in-country dissemination workshop. A second full SEEPHI dissemination workshop covering all implemented activities will be able to be held at the annual Israel Public Health conference which will be held in May/June 2024. Finally, the extension would provide a tremendous added value by providing an opportunity to disseminate the full project results to the key stakeholders in Israel.

To conclude, we would also like to assure that we create the groundwork for the implementation of the results after pilots and provide recommendations to other countries, academic or training organisations that would like to implement similar innovations.

We thank EACEA for consideration of the request for a no-cost 6 months extension of the SEEPhi project. We trust we have made a compelling argument that allowing the additional time to the project will bring added-value to the project outcomes with face-to-face partner interactions, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the final activities under conditions unconstrained by the COVID-19 pandemic and related partner responsibilities and restrictions.

Submitted on 14 April 2023 on behalf of SEEPhi Consortium partners by the Project Coordinator, the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER)



The Association of Schools of Public Health
in the European Region