

## **A Shared Commitment of Europe to Strengthen Academic Public Health**

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At a critical juncture in global health, Europe finds itself at a pivotal moment. The retreat of the current US administration from key global commitments—on issues such as climate change, science, and public health—has created a significant leadership void. Europe must now step forward and reaffirm its role as a leader in shaping global health policies. By prioritizing the fundamental human right to health, addressing the health impacts of migration, responding to the consequences of war, and emphasizing the need for shared preparedness, Europe can set a powerful example of solidarity and action.

In this effort, the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) must play a central role, setting the foundation for lifelong education and training of a workforce that is attentive to the needs of the communities it serves—scientifically well-prepared and imbued with a morally and ethically rigorous human dimension. ASPHER's academic mission and values will guide the health response and ensure the well-being of all, particularly the most vulnerable, thereby fulfilling the core objectives of public health.

Recent years have exposed and deepened global inequalities, driven by political decisions, conflict, forced migration, and environmental degradation. Public health services, already stretched by the aftermath of epidemics, wars, and austerity measures, now face unprecedented challenges. Millions of displaced individuals require healthcare access, integration, and innovative solutions. These challenges are compounded by the erosion of trust in science and evidence-based public health measures, as well as the persistent shortage of a well-trained competent public health workforce with adequate career opportunities to effect positive change.

In this context, ASPHER plays an indispensable role in shaping Europe's academic response to these evolving challenges. The association is uniquely positioned to ensure that the European and global public health workforce is equipped to tackle a broad spectrum of critical issues—from human rights and environmental health to antimicrobial resistance and misinformation. Through its extensive network of academic institutions, ASPHER supports the development of a public health workforce prepared to respond to both immediate crises and long-term threats, while building resilient, healthy communities.

Europe has the opportunity to lead by promoting, within a comprehensive One Health framework, a human-centered approach that guarantees universal access to all levels of care and services needed for people to enjoy healthy lives, while recognizing the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. This commitment must urgently prioritize equitable and inclusive health systems, particularly in times of crisis, ensuring that no one is left behind but instead integrated into the broader health system.

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ASPHER can play a central role in making this possible. By strengthening academic public health, ASPHER offers the opportunity for cross-border education, training, and research collaborations, enabling European institutions to pool resources and expertise in tackling health inequalities, driving health policy innovation, and developing sustainable health systems. The importance of this shared commitment extends beyond individual regions or countries—it is a collective responsibility that can profoundly impact the well-being of all citizens across Europe. The engagement of multiple stakeholders—from academic institutions and governments to private sector partners—can create a powerful, sustainable framework that will lead to concrete improvements in global public health.

The time is now for Europe to demonstrate its leadership in building a healthier, more equitable, and resilient world. Europe must rise to the occasion by reinforcing public health education and ensure sufficient funding for public health services, thus giving public health the central relevance it deserves. As a powerful network of academic public health institutions, ASPHER is committed to fostering a shared vision to strengthen academic public health, ensuring that the next generation of public health leaders is not only prepared for current challenges but also poised to prevent and mitigate future crises. This vision will help build a better, healthier world for all.