

Press Release | Friday 20 May 2022

Special Meeting on War in Ukraine and Public Health: Schools of Public Health come together to address the war

Hosted by the Medical University of Gdansk, Poland, members of the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) met on Friday 20 May for a special meeting on the public health response to the War in Ukraine.

Discussions explored the War impact on public health; public health needs in Ukraine, in other European countries and world-wide; how schools and programmes of public health can respond; and adaptations to public health curricula to ensure the public health workforce is ably trained to meet the challenges resulting from the War.

Public health experts from Ukraine and the ASPHER Task Force on War addressed the meeting and a workshop explored curriculum adjustments. The meeting was held in the context of Gdansk Health Days and the European Public Health Week daily theme of 'Building Resilient Health Systems'.

The ASPHER Task Force on War is divided into three groups concentrated on three key areas which were given attention during the meeting. Group 1 focuses on scientific advisement and presented their Roadmap to guidance on Ukraine. Group 2, occupied with the neighboring country and refugee context, discussed the ongoing collaborative efforts by schools with multilateral agreements. Group 3, which concerns the training and academic context, directed discussions on curriculum adaptations and shared good practices already in place.

"ASPHER's statement, 'The Role of Europe's Schools of Public Health in Times of War: ASPHER Statement on the War Against Ukraine' calls for prevention of war. However, when wars happen, it is within the competencies of the public health community to monitor the health and social impacts of conflict, to organise responses in delivery of humanitarian aid and support for civilians and refugees. As in all disasters, there is a necessary role for public health in response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconciliation." – John Middleton, ASPHER President

"Schools of Public Health prepare and shape those who will be the Public Health professionals that will deal with the reality that results from the war and find the solutions needed for the present moment. Only through well-prepared health professionals, who know the people and the context, can we respond to an increasingly complex world, and that, in itself, makes ASPHER's role crucial. The ASPHER roadmap on Ukraine is one tool in the box and the Task Force on War is working to provide more" – Henrique Lopes, Professor of Public Health, Catholic University of Lisbon

The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) is the key independent European organisation dedicated to improving and protecting the public health by strengthening education and training of public health professionals for both practice and research. The ASPHER Task Force on War was convened in February

2022 in response to the invasion of Ukraine, it will feed into a broader ASPHER agenda on geopolitical health to better understand the political forces which can lead us to better or worsened health. www.aspher.org

Reference documents:

The Role of Europe's Schools of Public Health in Times of War: ASPHER Statement on the War Against Ukraine
<https://www.ssph-journal.org/articles/10.3389/phrs.2022.1604880/full>

Joint Statement on the Special session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe
<https://epha.org/joint-statement-on-the-special-session-of-the-who-regional-committee-for-europe/>

A Roadmap to Developing ASPHER Technical Guidance Notes on War and Health
https://www.aspher.org/download/1103/aspher_ukraine_roadmap_2022-tfw.pdf

Meeting Agenda:

War in Ukraine and Public Health – Gdansk, Poland – Friday 20 May 2022
https://www.aspher.org/download/1105/aspher-tfw_gdansk-20-5_online-final.pdf