

ASPHER on the Horizon of 2015

by Robert Otok, Ilana Levin

The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) is the key independent European organisation dedicated to strengthening the role of public health by improving education and training of public health professionals for both practice and research. Founded in 1966, ASPHER now has over 80 institutional members located throughout 39 countries within the WHO European Region. Since its move from Paris to Brussels in 2008, the association has been growing steadily.

ROAD MAP TO 2015: DEVISING A COLLECTIVE STRATEGY

Following ASPHER's most recent presidential election in November 2009, when Prof. Antoine Flahault – Director of the EHESP School of Public Health (Rennes and Paris, France) – was elected, the association undertook a strategic planning process using the Delphi method to devise a collective strategy and reach consensus on the association's common goals and priorities through to the year 2015. Almost all of ASPHER's members participated in the three-round Delphi process based on the final outcome of which seven task forces were established. A set of stakeholders, as suggested by members, including ASPHER's key partners such as the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), was consulted over the course of the strategic planning process.

ASPHER'S TASK FORCES

ASPHER's seven task forces address key areas pertaining to the training and education of public health professionals. They are all co-chaired by members of ASPHER's Executive Board, but allow cooperation and partnerships with other organisations too.

Striving to raise standards and improve quality of education and training in Public Health on a European level, ASPHER's Task Force on Accreditation for Public Health Education aims to establish the European Accreditation Agency for Education in Public Health by January of 2011 and to proceed with the accreditation of the first institutions willing to undergo the process shortly thereafter.

The Task Force on Public Health Core Competencies is currently engaged in the second phase of devising a list of core competencies for Masters level education in public health, during which schools of Public Health are engaging in dialogue involving local public health workforces, health ministries and senior decision-makers. Several workshops, in which schools discussed with workforce members competencies which can be applied to real-life Public Health-related issues and challenges, have already been conducted in various parts of the European region. The results of this process will result in the production of a catalogue of core competencies for public health.

ASPHER's Task Force on Doctoral Programmes and Research Capacities plans to submit the Guidelines for Doctoral Programmes in Public Health for approval to the ASPHER General Assembly during the Annual Conference in Amsterdam in November of 2010.

The Task Force on Innovation and Good Practice in Public Health Education will run an assessment of public health services in Europe (public health institutes, occupational health services, environmental health services, NGOs etc.) in order to propose public



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Abstract

ASPHER BIS ZUM HORIZONT 2015

Der Verband der Ausbildungsstätten für das öffentliche Gesundheitswesen im europäischen Raum ASPHER hat über 80 institutionelle Mitglieder, die stetig mehr werden, und ist die zentrale unabhängige europäische Organisation, die eine starke Rolle von Public Health durch die Verbesserung der Aus- und Weiterbildung von Public-Health-Fachleuten in Praxis und Forschung fördert. Die sieben aktiven Taskforces von ASPHER wurden alle auf der Grundlage eines auf der Delphi-Methode beruhenden strategischen Planungsprozesses (2009) eingerichtet, an dem sich beinahe alle Mitglieder von ASPHER beteiligten. Durch die Arbeit in den Taskforces, die sich alle mit Schlüsselbereichen der Aus- und Weiterbildung von Public-Health-Fachleuten befassen (d.h. Akkreditierung von Public-Health-Lehrgängen in Europa, Kernkompetenzen und Leistungsstandards für Public Health, usw.), sowie durch gemeinsame Projekte/Aktivitäten, wie zum Beispiel die jährliche EUPHA-ASPHER-Konferenz, kooperiert ASPHER aktiv mit den Hauptakteuren im Bereich der öffentlichen Gesundheit in Europa. Des Weiteren ist ASPHER bestrebt, laufend an neuen Initiativen mitzuwirken – beispielsweise vor Kurzem an der Wiederaufnahme des Public Health Reviews Journal und der Begründung eines jährlichen Forums für Nachwuchsforscher. Partnerschaften und Kooperationen mit anderen Organisationen auf Ebene des Sekretariats und der Taskforces werden für das künftige Wachstum und die Weiterentwicklung von ASPHER von entscheidender Bedeutung sein.

health performance standards (with reference to the European public health core competencies) and to translate them into teaching/training modules at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels in public health.

The Task Force on Ethics and Values in Public Health, collaborating closely with EUPHA's section on ethics, will seek to prepare a statement on teaching Public Health Ethics recommended for use by members of both associations, in addition to a core curriculum on Public Health Ethics at bachelor's and master's levels.

The fundamental aim of the Task Force on Advocacy and Communication, a partnership between ASPHER and the ECDC, is to motivate the European schools of public health to promote academic and advanced training programmes based on evidence and research related to advocacy and communication challenges as well as to foster students' engagement in the greater public health debate. The task force will encourage awareness of key health advocacy themes as defined by ASPHER members. This activity is to be promoted in balance with the process of developing curricula for educational programmes to improve communication skills necessary for health advocacy amongst public health professionals in Europe.

The Task Force on Global Health was started after numerous respondents suggested during the Delphi process that there is a need in Europe for a single forum for interested academic institutions with involvement in Global Health to exchange views and ideas, so as to develop a European voice on Global Health issues and influence relevant policies. The task force will advocate for evidence-based policies and increased resources for global health in the European Union and other relevant bodies, develop guidelines for partnerships between European institutions and their counterparts in low and middle-income countries, foster exchange of ideas and, where appropriate, collaboration between European global health institutions on research, teaching and capacity building.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

ASPHER seeks to build capacity in strengthening the European Public Health workforce by forming strategic alliances and actively collaborating with key stakeholders. EUPHA is its partner in the organisation of the Annual European Public Health Conference, which brings together top-level academics and professionals in public health from all over Europe (and beyond).

Another example of ASPHER's collaboration with major players in European public health is the consortium with **EuroHealthNet**, **EUPHA**, **IUHPE**, and **EHMA**, under the leadership of the **Department of International Health of Maastricht University** (Member of ASPHER) and with the support of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, to review the capacity of EU Member States to develop and implement public health policies and interventions. The European Commission (DG Sanco) contracted this consortium representing the major professional organisations in European public health to make recommendations for EU action and support based on a review of the current public health capacity in Europe.

ASPHER'S LATEST INITIATIVES

The first Young Researcher's Forum was held at the Second European Public Health Conference in Lodz in 2009. Following its great success, a second forum has been scheduled to take place in Amsterdam, in November of 2010. This event is a unique opportunity for MPH, PhD and postdoc researchers to present their work to a select audience of peers and key representatives of the European public health community. An award, funded by ASPHER members, is presented to the researchers with the best oral and poster presentations.

ASPHER has also recently helped to re-launch the Public Health Reviews Journal (PHR). This journal, which had been published for many years in Israel, was dormant for some time after the owner/publisher retired. In 2008, the journal was revived when the PHR rights were purchased by the EHESP School of Public Health (France) and an editorial board was established with ASPHER's involvement. PHR seeks to provide systematic reviews of important topics in public health in order to assist in translation of science into practice, in Europe and globally. The journal will place emphasis on the integration of current state-of-the-art knowledge, translational issues, and interdisciplinary approaches, describing evidence-based policy and best practices, for the benefit of a wide audience, including SPH faculty and students, public health professionals, scientists, policy makers, and practitioners. PHR will strive to be agenda setting, offering recommendations for the advancement of the field of public health in Europe and around the world.

The first issue, *The New Public Health*, released in July 2010, will be followed by an issue on Ageing due to come out at the end of 2010, an issue on Cardiovascular Issues in early 2011, an issue on Education in Public Health in late 2011, and one entitled *Healthy Europe 2020* at the beginning of 2012. A special issue on ethics in public health is being planned by ASPHER's Task Force on Ethics. In order to reach a wider audience, Public Health Reviews is available freely online – www.publichealthreviews.eu – with printed copies provided for a fee.

FUTURE DIRECTION

ASPHER hopes that in the coming years its member network will continue to grow and become more enriched. The secretariat structure will be strengthened in order to best support the various task forces, helping them to reach their goals as well as to ensure sustainable growth of the organisation. To this end, partnerships and collaboration with other organisations at the secretariat as well as at the task force level will be essential. ■