

12th European Public Health conference

Building bridges for solidarity and public health

Marseille, France, 21-23 Nov. 2019

I attended the 12th European Public Health (EPH) conference in Marseille, France, from 21-23 November 2019 thanks to the support of the NRSNGH International Training Grant. Organized annually by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) and its members, this conference brings together all the European actors in health policy and practice to share their research, discuss challenges and identify a way forward. This year's theme was particularly relevant to global health as it focused on 'building bridges' between Europe and neighboring regions but also between health and other sectors. The conference brings together different formats in order to help participants learn (e.g. plenary sessions; presentations), discuss (e.g. pitch and workshops), network (e.g. exhibition and network lunch sessions) and develop their skills and competences (e.g. skill building seminars). Of the 17 topics covered by the different tracks this year, I attended sessions on: Solidarity in health; Maternal, child and adolescent health; Infectious diseases control; Global health and environmental change; Data, evidence and practice; Health workforce / Health at work; as well as a series of skill-building workshops on advocating research to policy makers and soft skills building.

Aside from the conference itself, the EPH has a lively network of groups for young professionals and researchers in health. EUPHANxt, the EUPHA network for young professionals, hosted a series of sessions featuring young professionals as speakers or moderators. Its social media channels also allowed great exchanges between ourselves on health topics, conferences, practical advice and possibilities to meet young professionals from across the globe working on the same topics. One of the outcomes from this group was an open letter to the EPH organizers highlighting our generation's call for more diverse and environmentally-friendly conferences in the future. Several other young professional organizations, including the Young Forum Gastein which I'm a member of, also organized side events and informal meets to network with young and more experienced professionals.

The EPH was beneficial to me in several ways. First of all, the diversity of topics covered in the plenaries and sessions provided a great opportunity for me to catch-up with the latest development in health research and policy currently happening across Europe. Vulnerable groups and health inequalities – issues at the heart of my PhD research - were prominently featured in the program this year, thus allowing me to hear about various perspectives and methodologies applied to their study. While I didn't get much feedback on my abstract and poster, the networking opportunities *did* give me a chance to make my work and the work of my research center more visible, as well as meeting researchers working on similar topics. As the European conference on public health, the EPH also offers opportunities for work meetings, which allowed me to discuss and clarify with European colleagues and advisers, methodological questions I faced with some of my current papers. Finally, thanks to the EUPHA chair mentoring program and the Young Forum Gastein, I had the opportunity to co-chair two sessions (an oral presentation session and a skills

seminar), thus developing my skills as a session co-organizer, an interviewer, a moderator and a chair. The oral presentation session titled 'Healthy start in life' focused on health disparities in childhood and adolescence and included four presentations from European researchers as well as Q&As. The skill seminar organized by EUPHANxt, Young Forum Gastein and EuroNet featured an interview with an experienced public and global health advocate (James Chauvin) and a series of round tables with practitioners and researchers to discuss how best to develop the various skills necessary to address the health needs of selected vulnerable groups (sexual minorities, homeless populations and migrants and refugees).

The EPH does not necessarily offer the time or opportunities to get very specific feedbacks on a particular piece of research. However, in my opinion, it is a great opportunity to get new perspectives on your research, build your network and develop your skills as a young researcher. As such, I highly recommend for other PhD students in European and global health to attend and take advantage of all the opportunities available to young professionals during and after these three days. Next year's edition is likely to be even more relevant to members of the NRSGH as this will be a joint conference between the EPH and the World Congress on Public Health.



1. Picture from the 'Skillscamp: from soft skills to health for all' seminar by EUPHANxt, Young Forum Gastein and EuroNet.