

Society for Social Medicine
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 15 SEPTEMBER 2004

Agenda item 5: Report on EUPHA

1.0 The Association

EUPHA was formed in 1992 as an umbrella organisation for public health in Europe. It brings together about 10,000 public health experts for professional exchange and collaboration and aims to:

- promote and strengthen public health research and practice
- improve communication between policymakers, researchers and practitioners
- provide a platform for the exchange of information, experience and research
- promote effective European joint research and other activities in the fields of health research and health services research.

2.0 Annual Meetings

Annual conferences have been held in different European cities every winter since 1993. At last year's conference in Rome - one of the largest to date - 800 participants heard papers on a wide range of topics (selected from 499 abstracts), and took part in thirty-one workshops.

This year's meeting is in Oslo from 7-9 October. The conference topic will be urbanisation and health (details on EUPHA's website: <http://www.eupha.org>).

3.0 The Journal

EUPHA's primary link with individual members of national associations is through the *European Journal of Public Health (EJPH)*.

A recent review of the journal's performance has been prompted by financial considerations (see below), the opportunity to review EUPHA's contract with the publishers (OUP), and the appointment of a new editor-in-chief (Johan Mackenbach). A draft strategy for improving the *EJPH* will be considered by EUPHA's executive council in October 2004, includes proposals for changes to the layout and editorial content, aimed at producing a livelier magazine.

Central to the proposed changes is a new format which would mean 6 issues a year instead of 4, distributed primarily by electronic means. A small number of hard copies would be sent to member organisations themselves, and to individual members who opted to pay an increased subscription of €23 (roughly £16) a year.

4.0 Sections and projects

EUPHA's sections provide a means of developing multi-disciplinary European networks of those interested in:

- health promotion
- food and nutrition
- epidemiology
- social security and health
- youth
- public health practice and policy
- health services research
- migrant health

- communicable diseases
- utilisation of medicines

Recent research projects have included the public health consequences of man-made disasters, and the future of public health in Europe.

5.0 Organisation

EUPHA's decision-making body is the Governing Council, on which each country has two seats (and on which SSM is represented). Decisions are implemented by a smaller Executive Council, consisting of current, previous and future presidents (hosts of annual conferences), the editor-in-chief, treasurer, and secretary. Day-to-day running of the organisation is delegated to a part-time manager based in Utrecht. A Scientific Committee selects the papers for annual meetings; SSM is represented on this group by Ellen Nolte.

6.0 Finances

The annual cost of running EUPHA is currently just under €90,000 (c. £65,000), nearly half of which has until now been donated by the Dutch Ministry of Health.

EUPHA's President wrote to member organisations in April 2004 informing them that the Ministry's subsidy would cease at the end of the year, forcing the association to review its operations and prepare a strategy for sustaining its finances. The financial strategy is based on changes to the journal (described above) and increased income from conferences, a share of profits from the *EJPH*, membership fees, project grants and institutional sponsors.

The Committee's response to the President's letter was that SSM could not increase the number of members for whom it pays a subscription (all SSM members are automatically EUPHA members). Its financial support could therefore only be increased by means of an additional grant. This could only be made by a decision of the AGM, and a favourable vote was unlikely without a more convincing case being made than that contained in the existing business plan.

We understand that the Faculty of Public Health is prepared to offer a one-off research grant which will help maintain the *status quo* for a further year, enabling EUPHA to review its role and infrastructure and prepare an improved business plan.

7.0 The Future

The SSM Committee welcomes the Faculty's decision and endorses its view that now is an opportune time for EUPHA's role to be reviewed. The organisation has existed for just over ten years, during which time there have been important political and environmental developments in Europe. What began as an umbrella organisation could, if its members so wished, be developed as a forum for the European public health community, enabling issues of common concern to be explored, research partnerships to be forged, and policy to be influenced.

The Committee hopes that the Faculty's generosity will result in the options being fully explored. SSM members are invited to contribute to the debate.

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