



**The Association of Schools of Public Health
in the European Region (ASPHER):
Mission and programmes**

**Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozialmedizin und Prävention (DGSMP)
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www.aspher.org



ASPHER: some facts

- Founded in 1966, partly as a WHO initiative
- By now 86 Institutional members – schools and university departments of public health
- Represented in 39 European countries
- Represents the overall majority of European academic public health education, training and research
- More than 5000 academics and experts employed in member institutions



Mission

- Support the professionalisation of public health workforce
- Help increase capacity building in public health, from point of views of education, scientific research and practice
- Strengthening the role of public health by improving the education and training of public health professionals for both practice and research
- Assist schools and university departments to achieve their missions of professional and graduate education, research and service
- Build coalitions with other programmes and public health organisations to increase public awareness, appreciation and support for public health



Key activities (1)

- Development of lists of competences for public health professionals to be achieved in public health educational programmes – latest version November 2011 <http://2011.aspher.org/pg/groups/198/public-health-core-competences/>
- Development of an accreditation agency for public health educational programmes – the agency was started in 2011 - <http://2011.aspher.org/pg/profile/aphea>
- Peer evaluation of educational programmes
- Sustaining schools and departments of public health – at all academic levels
 - bachelor, master, ph.d., continued professional development



Key activities (2)

- Mentoring relatively young educational institutions
- Development of a European Master of Public Health (MPH) programme
- Sustaining the European dimension in public health education and training
- Developing ethical principles in public health education, research and practice
- Taking other measures, e.g. mapping the educated public health workforce in Europe
- Collaboration with organisations active in European public health education, training, research and practice – WHO, EU, WFPHA, other NGOs
- Organising conferences and other meetings, e.g. the annual conference in November and the Deans' and Directors' Retreat in May



Key activities (3)

- Publishing material on education, training, research and practice, e.g.
- Experience on the establishment of schools of public health
- The development of a European MPH programme
- Quality improvement and accreditation
- Ethics in public health
- Lists of competences for public health professionals and competences to be achieved in educational programmes in public health
- Public Health Reviews
- Expressing views on developments – e.g. the position paper of 29th March 2012 on the WHO Health 2020 strategy (*I brought 3 copies of this*)



European lists of lists of public health core competences

Since it was initiated in 2006-2008, the core competences programme of ASPHER has produced four lists of competences, among which the two latest were published in Autumn 2011:

- A list for public health professionals
- A list for MPH education
- Plus:
- A report on philosophy, process and vision.



Basic question 1:

What are competences about?

*Competences indicate the **potential to meet concrete challenges**, enabling a person (or other functional entity) to **perform** rationally to achieve set targets*

Concrete public health challenge



Analysis of challenge – in concrete terms



Relevant interventions



Performance

Knowledge, understanding; skills



Knowledge, understanding; skills





Basic question 2:

What, then, should a public health professional be able to do?

A public health professional should be able to:

- Develop
- Organise
- Implement
- Carry out, manage and
- Evaluate

- Public Health strategies and interventions

relevant to meet present and future public health challenges



Public health challenges ... and the structure of lists of competences

Public health challenges arise in both of the two systems,
which *define public health*:

- Population health and
 - Man-made interventions and systems created to meet the challenges...
- And also in:
- Their mutual interaction.

*Thus: competences must relate to this logical framework,
whether considering public health practice or research*

This is mirrored in the thematic structure of chapters of the lists:



The themes of the chapters of the lists - and the initial programme work groups

General

WG1 Methods in public health

Population health

WG2 Population health and its social and economic determinants

WG3 Population health and its material - physical, radiological, chemical and biological
- environmental determinants

Man-made interventions and systems

WG4 Health policy; economics; organisational theory and management

WG5 Health promotion: health education, health protection and disease prevention

WG6 Ethics



**Further to the relationship to analysis and action:
Competences must be interpretable in terms of strategies -
The basic strategic framework or '*the public health circle*'**

1. Situation analysis – problem analysis
 1. Population health
 2. Health systems and other systems bearing on health

↓
2. Formulation of targets and identification of target groups

↓
3. Choice of intervention – evidence based

↓
4. Implementation, management

↓
5. Evaluation – back to stage (1)

Moreover, lists of competences must relate to interactions, which are crucial for management and development,

Including:

- Practice
 - Strategies
 - Decisions
- Education
- Research





Further lists

Further lists or developments of the lists are needed for:

- Other educational programmes than the MPH programme:
 - Bachelor programmes;
 - Ph.D. programmes;
 - Continued professional development;
 - Public health components in basic education for the health professions, e.g. medical doctors, nurses, dentists;
- Employers for job specification in systems;
- Organisational structures – public health systems and services;
- Specific themes, e.g. health promotion, health economics, methodology...
- Specific geographical, economical and political entities – countries, regions...



Activities of the competences programme so far

1. Development and edition of lists, with input from:
 1. Member schools of public health
 2. Decision makers, including Ministries of Health
 3. Other lists of core competences
1. European conferences – so far 2 (Aarhus and Paris, both 2008)
2. Practitioner-school workshops
3. Master classes, with decision makers



Future development of the competences programme

1. Development of a European structure/agency to continuously develop and adjust lists of core competences; together with European partners, e.g. WHO, EU, NGOs
2. Development of a European structure to take care of testing of competences at the individual level
3. Implementation of lists of core competences in schools of public health, e.g. by establishing partnerships, networks, consortia



Publications from the competences programme

– See www.2011.aspher.org

Latest European lists, as of 2011 (*I brought 3 printed paper-copies*)

Birt, Foldspang. Philosophy, process and vision. ASPHER Publ. No. 7. 2011.

Birt, Foldspang. European Core Competences for MPH Education (ECCMPHE). ASPHER Publ. No. 6. 2011.

Birt, Foldspang. European Core Competences for Public Health Professionals (ECCPHP). ASPHER Publ. No. 5. 2011.

European forerunners

Foldspang (ed.). Provisional lists of core competencies. Programme Phase 2. ASPHER Publ. No. 4. 2008.

Foldspang (ed.). Provisional lists of core competencies. Programme Phase 1. ASPHER Publ. No. 2. 2007.



Related Publications

Birt, Foldspang. The developing Role of Systems of Competences in Public Health Education and Practice. *Public Health Reviews* 2011;33:134-47. *

Whittaker, Pegorie, Read, Birt, Foldspang. Do academic competences relate to 'real public health practice'? A report from two exploratory workshops. *Eur J Public Health* 2010;20:8-9.

*) The theme of the November 2011 issue of *Public Health Reviews* is public health education.



Finally:

The implementation of the lists of core competences in European schools of public health

Implementation of the lists of competences in schools of public health is a central challenge to be scrutinized thoroughly:

- The nature of public health research and practice is outspokenly cross-disciplinary;
- Offering an educational programme covering the comprehensive universe indicated by the lists is demanding;
- There thus seems to be two options:
 - Development of the individual school or programme – or:
 - Establishment of collaborative networks or consortia of schools, which can then offer full programmes.



The implementation of the lists of core competences in schools of public health

In July this year the first of a series of meetings was held to investigate:

- The profile of competences offered in MPH programmes
- The need for collaboration between schools
- The schools' attitude as concerns collaboration in networks/consortia

The meeting was held in Warsaw and included representatives of **four Polish schools**.

Their attitude to collaboration in networks was most positive.

Meetings with other national schools will be planned...



The implementation of the lists of core competences in German schools of public health

- We would like to invite German schools – ASPHER members as well as non-members - to participate in such a meeting/workshop, to be held in Germany or, e.g., in Malta in relation to the Annual European Public Health Conference 2012
- Please show your interest by giving your contact details just after the workshop – see formulas for that



Thank you for your attention!

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