

February 2022

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Editorial

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic

Looking back at the last two years, it is remarkable that it has taken a pandemic to understand the true importance of (public) health. Equally striking is the notion that it has taken two years to realise that there is no going “back to normal”, that a whole new European and global normal is in order.

In building the new normalcy, we have no choice but to be wise and learn from the ongoing crisis. Whilst lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic are many, some learnings seem to stand out:

- Public health is the key to a functioning society and civil society plays a vital role in ensuring it;
- Health cannot be seen in opposition with economy and the intrinsic value of health and the high return of health investments cannot be overstated;
- Any global health threat must be dealt with in a true global and cooperative spirit, one that marries people, evidence and policy.

Underlying these learnings, it is health inequalities that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into stark relief. Both in the EU and globally, the pandemic has painfully exposed and worsened the pre-existing social and health disparities, impacting the lives of under-served communities.

In 2021, the EU took important steps to address the unequal distribution of vaccines within the Union, taking the opportunity to tackle long-standing social disparities in Europe. However, the devastating fight with the pandemic has pushed many other health services to the side, resulting in poor quality of healthcare, or in no care at all.

So, what could be done to strengthen and future-proof health systems, while making them equitable? In Europe, a lot has started happening by the creation of the European Health Union, which focuses on health emergency preparedness and response, and cross-border health threats. It is encouraging to see that the political

attention is also being paid to the underlying factors, such as chronic conditions and ageing population, for instance through the recent launch of the “EU Roadmap on NCDs”.

But future-proof, equitable public health systems will take more than medicines, vaccines, and emergency preparedness. As you will read in this month’s top stories, it is becoming clear that [the current system of innovation, manufacturing and allocation does not result in health for all](#), and that [market mechanisms cannot be the solution to global health threats](#). Only a European Health Union that connects the EU, its member states, and regions, that addresses health inequalities, that is based on [inclusion and participation](#), and that [establishes global leadership](#), will deliver on a bold vision of a people’s health union.

Speaking of people, it takes civil society to truly understand the most affected among us, to give them voice, and to ensure their resilience and recovery. Especially in times of crises. As national leaders have recently acknowledged: “*Now more than ever, [civil society groups should define what the recovery from the coronavirus should look like and who it should serve](#)”.*

Two years into this pandemic, there is clearly no *building back better*, only *building forward smarter*, and it requires an all discipline, all society approach.



Milka Sokolović
Director-General, EPHA

This Month's Top Stories



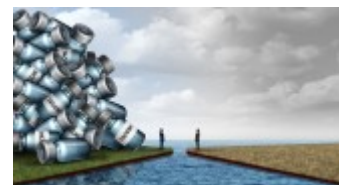
EPHA President, Alice Chapman-Hatchett: Personal Reflection on COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic: choosing between public health and civil rights

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Market mechanisms cannot be the solution to global health threats

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COVID-19: The current system of innovation, manufacturing and allocation does not result in health for all

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Upcoming EPHA Events



Better meals for Europe's children:
Pathways to serving healthier,
tastier, more sustainable food in
schools

March 24 | 10:00 - 13:00 CET | Online

[REGISTER HERE](#)

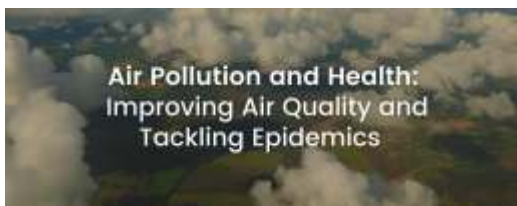


The Health Argument for Clean
Heating and Cooking:
Ways to reduce air pollution

March 31 | 10:00 - 13:00 CEST | Online

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Previous Discussions



Air Pollution and Health:
Improving Air Quality and
Tackling Epidemics

10 February 2022

[WATCH THE DISCUSSION](#)



Transparency of (real)
pharmaceutical costs

18 January 2022

[WATCH THE DISCUSSION](#)

EPHA Updates



Policy Recommendations:
using procurement for a
systemic food
transformation

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Improving air quality can
decrease the health costs
of epidemics, say
researchers

[READ MORE](#)



Report | Ending routine
farm antibiotic use in
Europe through improving
animal health and welfare

[READ MORE](#)



“Not even close”: healthy transport in European cities is still a dream, not reality

[READ MORE](#)



The growing field of digital epidemiology: importance and limitations

[READ MORE](#)



Joint letter | Alcohol consumption is a major preventable risk factor for cancer

[READ MORE](#)

News From Members

European Oncology Nursing Society

[EONS Safety Survey](#) and [Cancer Nursing Index](#) provided important information on current workplace exposures to hazardous drugs with potential acute health effects and/or chronic effects.

EONS is extremely proud to announce that the [Protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work Directive](#) (CMD4) reached a political agreement by introducing binding occupational limit values for 11 substances in the annex to the directive and broadened its scope into CMRD with the inclusion of reprotoxic substances.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Smoke Free Partnership

SFP position on the evaluation and review of the Tobacco Product Directive : tracking and tracing system

[READ MORE](#)

IDF - Europe

On the International Day of Education 2022, IDF Europe highlights the importance of access to education as a key social determinant of health

[READ MORE](#)

Eurocare

9th European Alcohol Policy Conference. Registrations are now open.

Oslo, 16 - 17 June 2022

[READ MORE](#)



Royal College of Nursing

Nursing staff must be protected as COVID-19 restrictions in England set to end

[READ MORE](#)



FEANTSA

FEANTSA strongly denounces the criminalisation of homeless people in Denmark

[READ MORE](#)



Safe Food Advocacy Europe

Joint Letter to MEPs calling for a cross-party consensus on the #BECA report in the plenary vote

[READ MORE](#)

Eurochild

[Eurochild stands in solidarity with the children of Ukraine](#)

[Eurochild continues its work to influence better data systems for children in alternative care](#)

[Ensuring the European Child Guarantee helps end child poverty.](#)

[Children deserve a safer digital environment](#)

[Child Rights Coalition Flanders releases Position Paper on EU Child Guarantee](#)

[Eurochild endorses joint briefing on discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in the EU](#)

Other News



Science and Technology in
childhood Obesity Policy

STOP - Fourth Stakeholder Dialogue

Online, 22 March 2022, **12.45-15.45 (CET)**

Join the discussion and learn from individuals from different backgrounds and sectors who are actively involved in addressing childhood obesity and to recommend to national authorities and the European Commission a sustainability plan for future stakeholder engagement on childhood obesity.

Registration deadline: Tuesday, March 15

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



WHO - Europe

Launch of the *Equity & Health Newsletter - working together to leave no one behind.*

[READ MORE](#)

The WHO European Office for Prevention and Control of NCDs and the WHO Representative Office to the European Union is hosting a public webinar for the [launch of the WHO European Obesity report.](#)

Thursday March 3, 10:00-12:00 CET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

EPHA (AISBL) is the European Platform bringing together public health organisations representing health professionals, patients groups, health promotion and disease specific NGOs, academic groupings and other health associations. The European Public Health Alliance has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020). The content of this email represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains. Transparency Register Number: [18941013532-08](#)

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