



# Public Health Research Network for Southeast Europe (PHR-Net)



# Public Health problems in SEE region

- Compared with the EU countries, SEE region is characterized by ***higher death rates*** including not only infant mortality and maternal death, but also cardiovascular mortality and injuries.
- Therefore, there is an urgent need to ***reconstruct public health research and training*** in SEE countries in order to improve living conditions in this region and to build bridges with the EU and thus to further integration.

# Public Health research challenges in SEE region

A general characteristic in almost all SEE countries relates to the comparable problems they face for engaging in research work which include:

- **lack of funds**
- **lack of expertise**
- **lack of "good data"**

# Milestones of PH-SEE Network

- ***2000-2007***: Public Health for South East Europe (PH-SEE, a project of the Stability Pact);
- ***2007-onwards***: Forum for Public Health in South East Europe (FPH-SEE, <http://www.snz.hr/ph-see>);
- ***April 2009***: Public Health Research Network for Southeast Europe (PHR-Net).

# Coordinating Center of PHR-Net

- Department of International Health,  
Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life  
Sciences,  
Maastricht University,  
The Netherlands.

# Participating Centers

- Andrija Stampar School of Public Health, Zagreb, ***Croatia***
- Faculty of Medicine, Ljubljana, ***Slovenia***
- School of Public Health, Belgrade, ***Serbia***
- School of Public Health, Sofia, ***Bulgaria***
- School of Public Health, Skopje, ***Macedonia***
- School of Public Health, Tirana, ***Albania***
- Institute of Public Health, Bucharest, ***Romania***
- Faculty of Medicine, Sarajevo, ***Bosnia & Herzegovina***
- Institute of Public Health, Podgorica, ***Montenegro***
- School of Public Health, Chisinau, ***Moldova***
- School of Public Health, Pristina, ***Kosovo***

# PHR-Net: *kick-off meeting*

- **Date:** April 16-17, 2009
- **Venue:** Maastricht
- **Participating centers:** 7 countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia)
- Under the auspices of the **School for Public Health and Primary Care (CAPHRI), Maastricht University.**

# Arguments in favour of establishment of PHR-Net (1)

- Expertise and cooperation is needed in all SEE countries for a scientific analysis of the broad range of public health issues in order to:
  - *inform policy*, and;
  - *intervene at the population level.*

# Arguments in favour of establishment of PHR-Net (2)

- For most SEE countries, the cooperation with other institutions in the region and especially collaboration with the EU organizations will be mandatory in view of the ***accession process***.

# Arguments in favour of establishment of PHR-Net (3)

- Very few SEE countries have enough resources to ***fund, organize and conduct*** on its own high-quality research work, compatible with international standards and best EU practices.

# Aim of PHR-Net

- The ultimate goal of PHR-Net is to promote, provide guidance and support different research activities and research projects in SEE countries.

# Vision of PHR-Net

- The research vision of the network is to investigate and explore the potential for improvement of the population's health in countries of Southeastern and Eastern Europe by research into the public health evidence of interventions.

# Mission of PHR-Net

- Bring together the human resources and capacities for public health research in Southeastern Europe, from other transitional countries in Europe and from Western EU member states.
- For SEE countries, public health research capacities should be sought within the academic institutions, institutes of public health and departments of health, as well as national public health associations.

# "Targets" of PHR-Net

- Establishment of a comprehensive list of ***priorities*** for public health research in SEE countries based on a detailed analysis of the situation;
- Identification of present and future ***capacities*** to execute and conduct public health research work in SEE countries;
- Identification of suitable institutions, agencies and ***funding*** opportunities to conduct research work in SEE region.

# Specific Objectives of PHR-Net

- To design and implement up-to-date and relevant public health research projects in order to inform policy and improve the populations' health in the SEE region.
- To determine and analyse in a comparative way health indicators within SEE countries and between SEE region and the EU countries.

## Specific Objectives of PHR-Net *(cont.)*

- To establish effective and sustainable partnerships between the EU and the SEE region, involving the EU research and academic institutions in the SEE countries.
- To support the institutional capacity building for public health research and training, targeting especially the existing and the newly established Schools of Public Health and other training institutions, Institutes of Public Health and Public Health Associations in SEE countries.

## Specific Objectives of PHR-Net *(cont.)*

- To organise professional and scientific meetings, workshops and conferences in the SEE region.
- To publish a common section in the most renowned SEE scientific journals such as e.g. the Croatian Medical Journal.
- To execute research and publish the research findings in other renowned international peer-reviewed journals.

## Specific Objectives of PHR-Net *(cont.)*

- To review existing health policy options comprising all relevant issues of the New Public Health and develop corresponding strategies and recommendations for policy making.
- To share experiences in public health training and public health practice.

# Composition of PHR-Net

- **Core group:** consists of one participant from each of the seven SEE countries present at the meeting and three other members from EU academic and research institutions (Germany and the Netherlands, respectively).
- SEE members of the core group, referred to as ***ad nominem focal points***, represent leading/outstanding researchers in their own respective countries and are nominated as members of the PHR-Net based on this very capacity/competence.
- The focal points should be accountable and transparent in their respective countries which implies they should report and inform the research and academic public health community and health professionals at large.

# Suggested short-term activities of PHR-Net

- Mapping capacities for interventional research;
- Survey on student careers and employers' interests and understanding;
- Health literacy survey;
- Youth survey in SEE region;
- Meta-analysis of the socioeconomic determinants of health in the SEE region.

# Suggested mid-term activities of PHR-Net

- Improvement of social equity in health service utilization – integration of vulnerable population groups;
- Improvement of cost-effectiveness of health care delivery – the impact of clinical guidelines;
- Improvement of universality of health insurance schemes: identification of a functional mix of Bismarck and Beverige systems;
- Improvement of public health advocacy in the political arena;
- Reduction of the potential for violence in the transitional societies;

# Suggested mid-term activities of PHR-Net *(cont.)*

- Security and preparedness;
- Health in mental institutions (including depression and suicide);
- Lifestyle research;
- Reintegration capacity for returning migrant workers;
- Directives on cross-border health care;
- Overproduction and rewarding of sender countries.

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