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## **Declaration concerning: The development of the public health workforce in Europe**

The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) considers the Health 2020 Strategy for public health in Europe a major step forward in protecting and promoting health and preventing disease in European populations. ASPHER sincerely acknowledges WHO Europe's invitation to lead the Health 2020 Strategy Working Group for Public Health Workforce Development in Europe – the Essential Public Health Operation (EPHO) No. 7 Working Group.

The working group is being established to ensure the best and widest and most professional support of public health workforce development. Besides the core steering group with its operational unit, the working group is planned to be constituted with five panels of experts, representing all levels of public health professional education and training as well as key European and international public health stakeholders, specific high-level expertise, and representatives of countries with longer experience and representatives of other EPHO-defined working groups.

The development of the public health workforce shall be in balance with, on one side, the need related to the proper functioning of the essential public health operations, the EPHOs, and, on the other side, high-quality traditions for academic and practical public health education, training and research.

The proper comprehensive education of sufficient numbers of public health professionals – defined by their competency profiles in terms of Bologna process levels – bachelor, master, Ph.D., continuing professional development - is vital for the relevant and effective up-scaling and future functioning of public health services and systems. The shaping and authorization of a public health profession is a crucial objective in this process, in order to ensure a sufficient number of professionals holding responsibility for the comprehensive planning, management, and cost-effective and ethical functioning and evaluation of systems of public health services.

Also health professionals – medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, physiotherapists – have important roles to play, related to selected parts of public health services, and relevant public health components thus should be ensured in the educational curricula of these professions, as also indicated in the European Action Plan, which was endorsed by WHO Europe's member states in

2012. Many other occupations in other sectors play significant roles in public health, and components of public health should be included in their educations and training.

As leadership plays a crucial role in public health and in all types of public health workforce and for decision makers at various levels, leadership flagship courses should be arranged in balance with the overall comprehensive and coherent strategy for the public health workforce development.

This specific part of the Health 2020 process – the development of public health workforce - will start with the proposed estimation of uncovered needs as concerns public health workforce in relation to the proper functioning of the Essential Public Health Operations, so that they effectively, cost-effectively and in ethically acceptable ways can meet challenges in their population's health. Member states will be encouraged to set up goals as concerns the public health workforce and will also be advised about how to reach their goals. A toolkit text is under preparation by the EPHO 7 Working Group.

Member states will acknowledge their need to build schools of public health or to further develop the capacity, the organisation and types of programme, they already have, to be able to deliver the comprehensive set of competences needed for public health professionals and the selected competency components needed in the educations of health professionals and other workforce.

Based on nearly 50 years' experience and with 100 institutional members distributed over all WHO member states – schools of public health and university programmes for public health education - ASPHER thinks that member states will earn much from considering schools of public health as national and local knowledge centres, which strive to communicate the newest evidence about how best to prevent diseases and protect and promote their population's health and wellbeing.

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