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HOSTED BY



Instituto Nacional de Saúde
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Session 6. What now for NPHIs? The choices made for us and by us

Following three years of COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the European context has changed and so have the European National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs). Moderated by Dr. Trygve Ottersen, Chair of the IANPHI Europe Network, this interactive session raised key questions to determine *what are the most pressing strategic questions for IANPHI Europe Network's members and what changes NPHIs would like to witness in the coming year to better support each other.*

To start the session, participants were invited to identify the challenges for which European NPHIs are least prepared for. Budget cuts, NPHI reorganization, environmental challenges, data sharing and data management were among the most cited challenges.

Tumultuous times and pressing strategic choices for NPHIs. *Preliminary results from survey*

By Dr. Bjorn G. Iversen, Senior Medical Officer, Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI)

As the health and political context has changed in Europe, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI) launched a survey within the Europe Network to assess their strategic priorities. Launched in March 2023, the survey received responses from 12 member institutes by the time of the meeting. Members were invited to continue participating in the survey, the results of which will be analyzed and published in a webinar and report at a later date.

Dr. B. Iversen focused on some of the survey's questions. First, he detailed what triggered the revision of the institutes' strategies and what were the most important drivers of change. Experiences from the pandemic, political initiated reorganization and budget cuts, revision of laws and mandates, workforce challenges, and technical issues were among the responses put forward by the participants. Moreover, two questions relating to the responsibility for setting strategy and the autonomy to make strategic choices such as budget allocation raised the issue of NPHI independence. Many responding institutes formulate their own strategy, whereas in other countries there is a close interactive process between the NPHI and the Ministry of Health.

Groups brainstorming and panel discussion

By Prof. Theoklis Zaoutis, Greek National Public Health Organisation (EODY), Greece

Dr. Jennifer Harries, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), United Kingdom

Dr. Cristina Abreu Santos, National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge (INSA), Portugal

Dr. Bjorn G. Iversen, Senior Medical Officer, Institute of Public Health (FHI), Norway

After small group exchange around tables to discuss current issues at their institutes, four participants were invited on stage to share their table's reflections.

Several directors and representatives confirmed that they were in a situation of major change and organizational review of their institutes. Their roles and responsibilities are being redefined in relation to other public health stakeholders such as boards of health, research institutes, etc. The creation of an ideal European NPHI model was discussed, however, no one model fits all countries. There are many similarities between organizations, and mutual

collaboration can strengthen both. WHO's Essential Public Health Functions (EPHFs) can be a source of inspiration for the NPHI's modernization.

The participants also exchanged views on communication and trust. The latter seems to be linked to the level of independence of NPHIs. Total independence is neither possible nor desirable as institutes need to work with politicians, but scientific independence and clearly defined roles help create a climate of trust with the political world but also with the public.

Finally, participants were asked to share their hopes of NPHI achievements in the upcoming year. Results could be used and compared to the current state of affairs at the next IANPHI Europe Network Meeting 2024, hosted by the National Public Health Institute of Montenegro.

Written by Philippine Colle, IANPHI Secretariat