



# WHO

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

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SCHERFIGSVEJ 8  
DK-2100 COPENHAGEN Ø  
DENMARK

TEL.: (45) 39 17 17 17  
TELEFAX: (45) 39 17 18 18  
TELEX: 15348

51140  
EUR/ICP/HRH 014  
04484  
ENGLISH ONLY  
UNEDITED

## *CONSULTATION ON WHO/EURO'S PROGRAMME ON TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN PUBLIC HEALTH*

Copenhagen, Denmark  
30 September–1 October 1993

## TARGET 32

### HEALTH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

*By the year 2000, health research should strengthen the acquisition and application of knowledge in support of health for all development in all Member States.*

## TARGET 36

### DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH

*By the year 2000, education and training of health and other personnel in all Member States should actively contribute to the achievement of health for all.*

## ABSTRACT

The draft training and research in public health programme policy document was reviewed at a consultation in Copenhagen in 1993. Participants attempted to define public health and looked at ways to improve training as well as the operation of the links between research and policy development. The document will now serve as the strategic framework for the development of the programme.

## Keywords

PUBLIC HEALTH – education  
HEALTH POLICY  
RESEARCH  
EUROPE

## INTRODUCTION

Nineteen participants representing policy-makers in the scientific and academic communities, and WHO headquarters and the Regional Office for Europe reviewed and commented on the draft programme policy document concerning training and research in public health. They defined the strategic intentions, elements and mechanisms of the programme more precisely, paying particular attention to forthcoming consultations in the dialogue series, the planned series of documents arising from these consultations and the needs of the countries of central and eastern Europe and the newly independent states for training and research in public health. They identified the major issues to be addressed at the three forthcoming consultations on training and research, research and policy, and training and policy. The improved and endorsed policy document will now serve as the principal strategic framework for the development of the programme.

## DISCUSSION

The participants devoted considerable time to attempting to define public health, recognizing its function of integrating a number of well defined special disciplines. They were particularly interested to see the PAHO/AMRO publication *The crisis of public health*, which has since been distributed to everyone present.

Public health could be conceived as a pyramid with technicians at its base, integration and management specialists at its apex and technical specialists in fields such as maternal and child health, environmental health and parasitology in between. The function of public health specialists is to coordinate the critical interactions between the consumers and providers of health services, policy-makers, trainers and researchers.

Current training in public health did not give sufficient attention to policy development. Participants were concerned over how to develop the scientific basis of policy, considering that there needed to be greater stress on monitoring, evaluating, analysing and critical skills.

Participants analysed the tenuous links between research and policy. A study in the United Kingdom had found that politicians do not draw on the large volume of research available, and ideology plays too large a part in the development of policy. At the same time, researchers often do not disseminate their findings, and the language of research often makes it inaccessible to potential users. Politicians work under time constraints and are susceptible to lobbying, although in the health sector this is weak. The only recognized contribution from research is when a problem has been identified and the question arises as to how best to solve it.

Public health research is dominated by epidemiology, which is a quantitative approach, while qualitative studies and methods are urgently needed. Universities are independent and their motives for embarking on research projects are driven by considerations such as funding or publication. Governments are therefore in a better position to carry out research that is actually needed.

In view of these considerations, the Regional Office would expand beyond the narrow promotion of modules and look into the overall question of public health education related to specific country contexts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The programme policy document would be revised in line with the discussions at the consultation and a section would be added to it outlining the history of public health in Europe.

The Regional Office should work towards a debate around the definition of the new public health.