



EuroHealthNet Communications Network meeting report

26th March 2020

On **Thursday 26 March** EuroHealthNet's communications network in 2020 held its first virtual meeting of the year. Given the extraordinary circumstances, it was decided to dedicate the meeting to focus on how partners are communicating about COVID-19, particularly to those audiences that experience vulnerability and health inequalities. The aim was to exchange experiences, ideas, and successful practices to support mutual learning and understand how the EuroHealthNet office can best support partners in the coming months.

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Main outcomes

- A private online space for partners to exchange resources and ask for advice has been created. Joining instructions will be circulated to the group. The platform can be accessed here: <https://groups.io/g/EuroHealthNet-Comms-Network>. It will only be open to members of the communication network.
- Participants are key to exchange resources and ideas, particularly translations. Resources, including a large number of translations are available in the online space
- It was decided to host another meeting of the group sooner than planned, to follow up on this exchange
- Issues and actions could be grouped into six topics:
 1. **Translation of resources and how to get them into communities**
 2. **Reaching and supporting specific audiences**
 - Roma Communities
 - Children*
 - People with visual and hearing impairments
 - Migrant/diaspora communities and refugees
 - Professionals- health and other
 - Ramadan and religious gatherings
 - People experiencing homelessness*.
 - Other communities
 3. **Handling the overload of information and fake news**
 4. **How to cooperate with social services and other sectors to take a holistic approach**
 5. **Mental health and health promotion and wellbeing during confinement phases.**
 6. **Other remarks**
- Remarks are organised here by topic for easy navigation. Specific points for further discussion have been highlighted with *
- Resources and ideas discussed in the meeting are listed here. However, the EuroHealthNet will aim to keep the online discussion tool up to date with new resources. We ask partners to support each other by sharing good practices, and questions there.



Minutes

1 Welcome by EuroHealthNet

5.1.2e, Director of EuroHealthNet welcomed all participants. She acknowledged that these are difficult times, and the hard work of the partners.

The group's purpose was recalled by the chair of the meeting, **5.1.2e** (Senior coordinator – Communications, EuroHealthNet): to give professionals a place to learn from and exchange with one another, and to support good communication between national partners and the European level, and vice versa.

2 Introduction to the communication network's online platform

5.1.2e (Communications Officer, EuroHealthNet) presented a new online resource for the group.

During our last physical meeting in November 2019, participants requested a shared space to have open discussions and to exchange resources and ideas. This platform has now been built. The platform includes:

- Practical tools, such as links to free photobanks, software etc
- Resources for planning communication strategies and evaluating actions
- Material that support communication about COVID-19, especially to reach vulnerable audiences. This section will continuously be updated.

The platform can be accessed via the following link: <https://groups.io/g/EuroHealthNet-Comms-Network>. It will only be open to members of the communication network



It is hoped that the group will use this space to share resources, ideas, questions and opportunities in the online platform. Members will receive an email digest of updates in the group once 12 posts have been made. It is possible to adjust these settings.

3 Discussion

Participants took turns in explaining their work and activities. There were several recurring themes, so responses here are organised by topic rather than by speaker.

General Comments

- Participants shared the desire to use each others' best practices, and not 'reinvent the wheel'.
- Participants hoped to be able to share each other's resources, especially translations
- There is an interest in translating EuroHealthNet's [statement on COVID-19](#) into Italian and Greek.
- Many organisations have setup websites with information diagnosis, prevention, communication, management of protection measures, etc. However, given the fast-changing nature of the situation, it has been hard to focus on specific communities.
- Prolepsis (EL) has made several proposals through our [interviews](#) and [articles](#) to protect the most vulnerable.
- It was stressed that that health promotion can help to make it easier for people to implement current measures to contain the COVID epidemic or to support them in doing so.
- It is important to present information suitable for mobile devices, as this is how most people search for information.

Translation of resources and how to get them into communities

- Pharos has found that most information on COVID-19 is not understandable for 30% of the population. It has produced easy-to-understand materials which use plain language and illustrations and are translating into 8 languages: Dutch, English, Tigrinya, Turkish, Arab, Farsi, Chinese and Polish are now complete. **Other participants are invited to use these materials** which can be found at <https://www.pharos.nl/coronavirus/>. Animations are also planned.
- Further translations of key information by doctors without borders can be found in the online form.
- Pharos works with 'key figures' from migrant communities to translate and disseminate. A list of 'key persons and how PHAROS has worked with them can be found at <https://www.pharos.nl/sleutelpersonen/>



- The Spanish Ministry of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare is also working with social influencers to reach young people and adults.
- The Ministry communicates the same information in different ways such as webpages, videos, and social media, to reach a wide audience. It received a lot of support from the internet and media, such as from YouTube, Twitter, Spotify, and TV channels to help spread COVID-19 information. It is also translating key materials in five languages.
- Prolepsis (the Institute of Preventive Medicine Environmental and Occupational Health from Greece) has published [infographics](#) and [guidelines for households that have COVID-19 infections](#).
- DoRS has noticed an important issue: most information is in English and therefore not understandable by many Italians, but translation takes time.
- The use of mediators and 'influencers' was discussed* Pharos has, for example, started working with an Arabic-speaking influencer, 5.1.2e

Reaching and supporting specific audiences

Roma Communities

- In Bulgaria In Roma neighbourhoods that are under lockdown, health mediators have gone into the neighbourhoods to provide information about preventive measures and to place mobile sinks and disinfectant stations. Leaving flyers and other information materials with local shops in vulnerable neighbourhoods has been effective. Shop owners were happy to assist in the spread of public health information. NCPHA is looking into the possibility of spreading free disinfectant along with the flyer.
- Drones are used to distribute public health messages. Thermo drones are even being used to measure people's temperature and to identify people who have a fever and might be infected with the virus.
- In Spain, the ministry is working with Roma people to translate and get feedback on materials
- Prolepsis is also working on this issue and is also proposing the use of intercultural mediators.
- NIJZ (Slovenia) made information available in [audio form](#) and in braille.

Children*

There was general concern about how to reach (vulnerable) children who are no longer in school.

- Sante Publique France is also looking for info on how to prevent children from experiencing domestic violence in these times.
- The World Health Organization recently published [tips on how to help children deal with stress](#) during this challenging time.
- [UNICEF has tips for parenting during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).



- The Portuguese National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge created a [special space on its website for children](#). The space includes a game about preventing the spread of the virus, a story called 'my grandmother has COVID-19', a national reading plan to enable and stimulate children to read books during confinement, and links to an free e-books and to a website for kids with games, activities and more info about COVID-19.
- [Advice for families with members diagnosed with ADHD](#).
- NIJZ wrote [recommendations for parents](#) on how to talk to children about the situation
- Public Health Wales is keen to find out more and collaborate with other organisations

People with visual and hearing impairments

- The Slovenian National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ) and the Spanish Ministry are working on this
- NIJZ have made special materials for people with vision disabilities in braille. It also made special easy-to-read leaflets, where the both the content and graphic design is simple to take in. NIJZ collaborates closely with organisations for people with disabilities to ensure proper content and framing of information. There is also a special telephone line for people with visual impairment.
- In the UK the [National Association of Deafened People](#) published guidelines and support for deafened and head of hearing people during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On the online platform for the network there is a collection of information material in sign language.

Migrant/ diaspora communities and refugees

- Prolepsis is advocating to go inside refugee camps and seek support from people who are or were health professionals in their home country. They continue to be in contact with refugee camps to record needs and examine how they can support.
- In cooperation with a partner organization in Germany Prolepsis translated a large information document for the Greek people now living in Germany. The website with information in several languages is available [here](#).

Professionals- health and other

- Austrian Health Promotion Fund (FGÖ) is targeting multipliers in the field of health promotion. These are experts and practitioners who are in direct contact with citizens across all settings.
- The Italian National Institute of Health (ISS) created an [online course](#) on COVID-19* which is followed by 150,000 health care professionals. Course is in Italian but might be translated to French and/or English in the future.
- The [WHO](#) and the [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine](#) also published several online courses about COVID-19.
- Piedmont Regional Health Promotion Documentation Centre (DoRS, Italy) created a special [section on their website to reach health professionals](#). This section has scientific articles



about COVID-19, and articles written by DoRS about children and mental health. A lot of the documentation provided is in English and some information is translated into Italian.

Ramadan and religious gatherings

- Some partners expressed the need for guidance relating to Ramadan* (23rd April-23rd May), particularly the need to build trust with Muslim communities, and develop culturally sensitive approaches
- EuroHealthNet has organised a call with with Dr [5.1.2e](#) who is a psychiatrist and an international expert in Muslim Mental Health at the University of Michigan (USA) on 3rd April at TIME. Participants that would like to join the call should contact [5.1.2e](#) by then end of the day, Thursday, 2nd April.
- WHO has published [guidelines for faith based organisations and faith leaders](#) during the pandemic.
- The Muslim Council of Britain has published [guidelines for mosques and madrasas](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect that they will also publish guidelines on the Ramadan during the pandemic in the near future.

People experiencing homelessness*.

- Another issue is that people who experience homelessness are particularly vulnerable now. In [5.1.2a](#) there is no access anymore to public toilets, drinking water and other public services.
- The American [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention](#) set up a page with resources to support people experiencing homelessness.
- There was also an article in [the Lancet](#) about the effects of COVID-19 on the homeless population.
- The [European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless](#) recently had a webinar on homelessness and COVID-19.
- It was decided that more work and discussion on this was needed.

Other communities

- Prolepsis prepared a plan to protect the elderly (65+ years old) from COVID-19 and to tackle social isolation through a home delivery system. This proposal has just been approved by a private company for funding. The target-group of the program is people over 65 years who live on their own without a supportive network and have serious chronic diseases. Prolepsis Institute will design and operate a delivery coordination center. In this initial stage, the program will cover the needs of 20 individuals.
- In Riga, seniors who are in self-isolation and have no one who can help with food delivery can receive help from the Red Cross or Samaritan Association of Latvia by calling them. A volunteer food supply network has also been established to help reach groups and



people in self-isolation or quarantine. Volunteers can help provide groceries and household goods, but also take pets for a walk and provide emotional support. The website to reach them is www.paliec-majas.lv.

Handling the overload of information and fake news

- The possibility of people getting 'information fatigue' was noted, where people become tired of being constantly told what to do and are overloaded with information. Participants ask what can be done to avoid this, and look to countries which experienced outbreak sooner for guidance as they have been dealing with the situation for longer.
- In Spain, adolescents and young people are our key population because they will be fed up sooner. We need to target them specifically to motivate them to keep up with the guidelines
- DoRS created social media accounts to speak to the public, as they mostly work with health professionals. These channels are mainly used to call out fake news. They do this by debunking fake news and pointing to reliable information. ([Facebook](#), [youtube](#))
- [Apolitical](#) has recently shared some expertise on how to tackle fake news. WHO published 'mythbuster' graphics that can be used to call out fake news as well.
- The Spanish Ministry notes that a lot of miss- and disinformation is being spread via WhatsApp. This is a major challenge as they can't reach this network.
- Prolepsis is producing an [overview of myths and facts about COVID-19](#).

How to cooperate with social services and other sectors to take a holistic approach

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5.1.2a

Mental health and health promotion and wellbeing during confinement.

- Prolepsis has launched a [new website](#) called '14 days' with advice on making quarantine 'as creative and enjoyable as possible'
- The Spanish Ministry is working on recommendations on healthy lifestyles while staying in confinement and for emotional wellbeing.
- The Irish Institute for Public Health highlighted that it has mainly focused on hygiene measures and distancing. However, it is now interested in focusing on promoting health in confinement.



- In Riga, a collection of NGOs and resources was compiled that can help prevent loneliness. A call centre for lonely seniors has been established. The city's welfare department also offers consultations for parents and children (remotely) about addiction prevention and interpersonal relationships and also support for school staff.
- Prolepsis is working on guidelines for psychological support and mental health during quarantine/social isolation.
- The NHS published guidelines on [how to take care of your mental wellbeing while staying at home](#).
- FGÖ made a [website that enables people to send an electronic card](#) to their community. People can send a message to people in their neighbourhoods to show them they appreciate them being good neighbours. These messages can be send via e-mail, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.
- FGÖ has created a Facebook page called '50 Days of Movement' which helps people stay active during confinement. It offers exercise tips for in the home, relaxation exercises and health recipes.
- Healthy recipes for adults and children. FGÖ is also promoting its healthy recipes websites <https://www.gesundheit.gv.at/leben/ernaehrung/gesunde-rezepte/inhalt> (for adults) and [kinderessengesund.at](#) which includes recipes, information, videos and games on the topic of healthy nutrition for children aged 4-10 years. Moreover, [kinderessengesund.at](#) offers recipes, information, videos and games on the topic of healthy nutrition for children aged 4-10 years.
- FGÖ has published a guidance for health-promoting teleworking:
 - "Guide for health-promoting teleworking" (FH Joanneum)"
 - "New technologies and digitalisation in the world of work. Findings for prevention and workplace health promotion" (iga.Report 41)

Other remarks

- A [cute video](#) to make people aware of the need to wash their hands often.
- Concerns were raised about what to do in care homes when someone is infected, but cannot be isolated because of mental illness. [The Spanish Ministry has protocols for such situations. EuroHealthNet is able to help with translating these documents from Spanish to English.*](#)
- NIJZ created leaflets in [Slovenian](#), [Italian](#) and [Hungarian](#) that were sent to every Slovenian household with general information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Slovenia also set specific times each day in which only vulnerable groups



(the elderly, pregnant women, and people who have chronic diseases) can go to the supermarket.

- The Irish Institute for Public Health highlighted the issue of different regulations across borders, where neighbours and colleagues might be living under different conditions.
- 5.1.2a
- ISS from Italy shared that the virus is teaching us a lot and it is clear that we need to change the paradigm, the current socioeconomic systems that should be based on human rights, determinants of health, and the containment of threats from globalisation. Unless we change this paradigm to be more sustainable, we will be suffering. She hopes that, once the situation stabilises, we will think about this paradigm to prevent a pandemic like this in the future. The determinants and equality approach is being taken forward by EuroHealthNet.
- Participants favour the term 'physical distancing' over 'social distancing' as it is important that we stay connected in difficult times. Pharos has prepared a list of new terms such as 'social distancing' into easy Dutch. Their approach can be shared with those that are interested.



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List of participants

5.1.2e	5.1.2e	National Centre of Public Health and Analyses - Bulgaria
5.1.2e	5.1.2e	EuroHealthNet
5.1.2e		National Public Health Centre - Hungary
5.1.2e	5.1.2e	Public Health Wales
5.1.2e		Pharos (Netherlands)
5.1.2e		Italian National Institute of Health (ISS)
5.1.2e		National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ) - Slovenia
5.1.2e		Ministry of Health Spain
5.1.2e		Institute of Public Health Ireland
5.1.2e		Riga City, Latvia
5.1.2e		Institute of Preventative Medicine, Environmental and Occupational Health (PROLEPSIS) (Greece)
5.1.2e		Austrian Health Promotion Fund
5.1.2e	5.1.2e	EuroHealthNet
5.1.2e		Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research
5.1.2e		EuroHealthNet
5.1.2e	5.1.2e	IANPHI
5.1.2e		Riga City, Latvia
5.1.2e		National Centre of Public Health and Analyses - Bulgaria
5.1.2e		Riga City, Latvia
5.1.2e		Centro Regionale di Documentazione per la Promozione della Salute (DoRS)- Italy
5.1.2e		Riga City, Latvia
5.1.2e	5.1.2e	EuroHealthNet