

**ACTIVITY  
REPORT  
2021**



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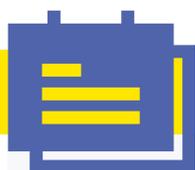
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# 2021 in a Nutshell



## ADVOCACY

- Answer to the public consultation on **Evaluation of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive**
- Answer to the public consultation on the **European Health Data Space**
- **Booklet of best practices in cancer care** from EUREGHA members
- **Launch of 2 internal WGs** on Cancer and Cross border healthcare
- Endorsement of ECL **Statement on eliminating cervical cancer**
- COCIR and EUREGHA Joint Recommendations on **Recovery from COVID-19 – Driving Healthcare Resilience in the EU**
- **Input** to the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (**EXPH**) **opinion on public procurement in healthcare systems.**
- **Participation in three partnerships:** European Alliance for Value in Health; Patient Access Partnership (PACT); OPEN-EU.
- **Participation as expert** in the field in high-level events organised in Brussels.



## EVENTS

- 1 Conference during the European Week of Regions and Cities: **“Healthy ageing in the EU: The potential of digital innovation for elderly health and social care”** in partnership with CoR and DG CONNECT
- 4 meetings of the **Interregional Group on Health and Wellbeing**
- **Visibility partner** for the POLITICO Health Care Summit 2021



## MEMBERS

- **1 high-level annual conference**
- **1 General Assembly** to elect the new Chair and Executive Board
- **8 Executive Board meetings**



## EU PROJECTS

EUREGHA started implementing two new projects:

- COVID-19 (**PERISCOPE**)
- Active and Healthy Ageing (**IN-4-AHA**)



## NEW MEMBERS

Joined Euregha:

- **Liguria region (IT)**
- **The Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives - CESC (HU)**



## COMMUNICATION

- + 294 followers
- + 92 followers
- + 621 followers

For members:

- 23 info flashes**
- 76 event reports**
- 3 newsletters**

# Foreword

2021 was the year of determining a compass for restart, or rather, for resilience in practice. I have already stated before that the biggest risk is the return of the “old normal”, which did not protect us adequately and will not be able to do so in the future, demonstrating the natural end of a life cycle.

Looking at the activities that have characterized our 2021 and - above all - reading and listening to the views we expressed, EUREGHA has shown distinct awareness of the need to equip itself with new lenses to read the future but also with willingness to be positively surprised by it.

We continued to value and support differences between regions by fostering opportunities for our members to share pilot experiences, as shown by the **Cancer Best Practices Booklet**. We have been able to preserve the core of our association. Fulfilling a bridging role between health policies and practices for regional entities; between the rooms of top decisions and the rooms of healthcare venues, even if in the patient’s home. In doing so, we began to talk about community as an elementary area for dealing with well-being - not just health - with all those who live there. We proposed new ways of making this a reality by drawing from the increasingly practical developments of **Value-based Health Care**, such as **Value-based Procurement** or outcome measurement, and the topic of smart specialization strategy, which is a European programmatic framework designed for enhancement and completion of regional innovation specialties. This last topic influenced a large part of the November mission, with which EUREGHA reopened in-person networking with our stakeholders in Brussels.

The ability to engage the future while not knowing what form it will take is called resilience, but even more valuable is the “transformative” resilience that can create a new normal. EUREGHA showed resilience by expanding our membership with the precious joining of **Liguria Region**



**GIOVANNI GORGONI**  
EUREGHA'S CHAIR

(Italy) and **CESCI** - The Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives - (Hungary) despite the temporary absence of physical networking.

We do not know what shape the future will take but EUREGHA has shown with its activities and projects in 2021 that it knows its priorities. They are the old and new pandemics: cancer, mental health, obesity and - partially cross-cutting theme - ageing, and we demonstrated our ability to connect with the right “travel companions” on this journey. Old and new emergencies were shared with partner organizations and with the European Committee of the Regions, to which we continued to provide secretarial support for their online meetings.

It is precisely with the journey that I conclude, fully convinced that the association will be amazed by the path itself and not by waiting for the destination.

Giovanni Gorgoni

## Looking beyond Covid-19

2021 was another challenging year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which remained a top priority in the European Union’s and Member

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States' policy agenda, as well as the public debate. Nevertheless, fortunately, the widespread uptake of vaccines in Europe and the consequent weakening of the virus have allowed policymakers and citizens to more and more consciously abandon the "state of emergency" mindset and start looking at other relevant health challenges on the horizon. The pandemic has made clear the need to build resilient and sustainable health systems across the continent in order to improve citizens' health and wellbeing. To achieve this, EUREGHA considers it crucial to move towards an approach that sees innovation of health and social care systems as a cornerstone. Local and regional health authorities are key elements since they exert a pivotal role in improving the efficiency and quality of health care systems and promoting public health, representing at the same time a bridge between citizens and national and European institutions.

Following the path traced by the EU towards a European Health Union, throughout the year, EUREGHA has invested its energies and resources in bringing the views of the regions on crucial issues, such as value-based healthcare, cancer, active and healthy ageing, collection and use of data, digital transition, cross-border cooperation, and mental health. The network was able to improve its visibility and better position itself in the EU arena by supporting new partnerships and enhancing existing collaborations. This Activity Report will list all EUREGHA's achievements as a basis for following actions in the upcoming years.

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# Prioritised Policy Areas

During the Executive Board meeting in December 2020, the policy domains of cancer and ageing were defined as strategic priorities for EUREGHA in 2021 because significant developments are taking place on these topics, such as the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and the Green Paper on Ageing. Ageing became a priority through the IN-4-AHA project, which started in January 2021.

## Cancer

On 3 February, the European Commission published the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, which outlines a new approach to address the fight against cancer in the EU throughout the entire disease pathway. Together with other major initiatives, it represents a key pillar in the construction of a strong European Health Union. Given the crucial role of regional and local health authorities in the delivery of care and cure for cancer patients, in February, EUREGHA established an internal **Working Group on Cancer** to enhance its vision and position on this crucial challenge. EUREGHA organised three WG meetings (February, April, and November), where members had the opportunity to exchange knowledge and practices and debate with experts from the European institutions and associations active in the field. The work of the Working Group culminated in the publication of a [Booklet of Best Practice in Cancer](#), containing nine regional examples from eight different countries. The collection was launched during the EUREGHA High-level Annual Conference on 9 December and was accompanied by an internal Dossier on Cancer, where members can find information and the latest developments of European policymaking in this respect.

Moreover, as the Secretariat of the CoR's Interregional Group on Health and Well-being, on 16 June, EUREGHA organised a meeting entitled "The Fight Against Cancer: A Challenge for the European Health Union", where CoR members' could deep dive into the subject in view of the CoR Opinion on the "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan" (CDR 2072/2021).

In June, EUREGHA was one of the 50 organisations that have officially endorsed the [Statement](#) of the Association of the European Cancer Leagues (ECL) "**Priorities for Eliminating Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem in Europe**". Following the WHO global strategy for the elimination of cervical cancer launched in September 2020, the signatories urge policymakers across Europe to embrace the opportunity to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem, measured by reducing incidence below 4/100,000 per year and by prioritising some specific actions using a comprehensive approach that leaves no-one behind.

Lastly, EUREGHA submitted its candidacies with three experts to participate in the Beating Cancer Stakeholder Contact Group established by DG SANTE. In case of selection, this participation would allow the network to be updated about the implementation of the Plan and help shape the European cancer strategy in the months to come.

## CANCER

A SHOWCASE OF BEST PRACTICES FROM EUREGHA'S MEMBERS



**Booklet Cover**

## Ageing

On 9 February, the IN-4-AHA project (**Innovation Networks for Active and Healthy Ageing**) kicked off with EUREGHA as one of its consortium partners and leader of Work Package 7 on communication and dissemination. IN-4-AHA is an EU-funded CSA (Coordination and Support Action) aiming to build further upon the legacy of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA). During the kick-off meeting, consortium partners, European Commission representatives, and external stakeholders discussed the achievements of the EIP on AHA and what would be needed to achieve long-term sustainability of the European AHA community. Irina Kalderon Libal from DG CNECT presented the existing EU policy framework on ageing by means of the European Commission's [Green Paper on Ageing](#), which was published in January 2021.

The IN-4-AHA project organised numerous stimulating workshops and webinars focused on boosting uptake and scaling of innovation through cross-border knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement. EUREGHA represented IN-4-AHA in external events, such as the SHAPES Dialogue event on 26 October and the [Regions4PerMed workshop](#) on 16 November.

Another highlight in EUREGHA's work on ageing in 2021 was the [high-level workshop](#) organised within the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities on the morning of 12 October. As a joint effort

with the Committee of the Regions' NAT Commission and Interregional Group on Health and Well-being, European Commission's DG CONNECT, and the Spanish Province of Lugo, EUREGHA put together a workshop to examine the potential of digital innovation for elderly health and social care. The workshop was attended by over 100 people, and included prominent speakers such as European Commission Vice President Dubravka Šuica, MEP Jarosław Duda, and Chair of the Interregional Group on Health and Wellbeing, Birgitta Sacrédeus.



**Valentina Polylas, EUREGHA's Director, contributing to the Regions4Med workshop (16 November)**

### IN-4-AHA Kick-off meeting cover event

# Collaboration with the CoR

On 9 February, the CoR's Interregional Group on Health and Well-being held its constitutive meeting, where CoR's members explored the topics to be discussed throughout the year. The issues at the top of the agenda were two proposals by the European Commission as crucial steps in building the European Health Union: the strengthening of the European Centre for Disease and Control (ECDC) mandates, and the Pharmaceutical Strategy. Among the other issues raised, the members focused on the principle of subsidiarity and the fight against cancer. Furthermore, the members paid attention to elderly health and social care, health inequalities, and mental health.

On 2 March, the Interregional Group held a meeting to discuss two upcoming opinions of the CoR on strengthening the **ECDC's and EMA's mandate, and the Pharmaceutical Strategy**. The main discussion points related to the role of regions, COVID-19, the possibilities and limits of the ECDC and EMA, the role of digitalisation, and access to medicines.

On 16 June, the IRGHW's members met to deep dive into **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan implementation roadmap** and exchange opinions with experts from European institutions and stakeholders on the fight against cancer in the EU. Particular attention was paid to the value of prevention strategies, data and efficiency in cancer care, research, and the patient perspective.

On 12 October, EUREGHA, in collaboration with the Committee of the Regions' NAT Commission and Interregional Group on Health and Well-being, European Commission's DG CONNECT, and the Province of Lugo organised an insightful conference within the framework of #EURegionsWeek Health Day, discussing **active and healthy ageing and the potential of digitalisation** for enhancing elderly health and social wellbeing. Thanks to the contribution of high-level representatives from EU institutions and experts, the conference provided participants and speakers with

a multifaceted view on the use of digital methods for active and healthy ageing, and a fruitful exchange of perspectives.

On 25 November, the CoR Interregional Group on Health and Well-being held its last meeting of the year. The meeting was dedicated to **supporting mental health** during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with contributions by experts from various European regions and organisations, and was an occasion to exchange opinions on the vision and strategy to address this "silent pandemic" and build mental health resilience among European citizens.



**Above: Giovanni Gorgoni, EUREGHA's Chair, at the IRGHW meeting (16 June)**



**Workshop "Healthy ageing in the EU: The potential of digital innovation for elderly health and social care" (12 October)**



**IRGHW event reports**

# Participation in EU projects & tenders



2021 was a relaunch year for the BOOST project, whose aim is to build social and emotional skills and mental health resilience in young children throughout Europe.

As the leader of the Work Package on Communication and Dissemination, EUREGHA continued to constantly spread news, information and latest developments through the BOOST website and social media accounts. A tight focus was dedicated to how BOOST worked and restructured its approach in the face of the pandemic.

In November, EUREGHA invited Åse Marit Hovden, Senior Adviser Public Health at Viken County (NO), to present BOOST’s policy recommendations during the meeting of the CoR Interregional group on Health and Well-being on “Supporting mental health in the EU in pandemic and post-pandemic”.

Due to the serious obstacles posed by COVID-19 to the operational execution in schools, the BOOST consortium has obtained an 18-months extension from the European Commission that will allow completing its implementation efficiently until June 2023.



**BOOST**  
website



The IN-4-AHA project (**Innovation Networks for Active and Healthy Ageing**) is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) building on the legacy of the **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** (EIP on AHA). Aiming to connect supply and demand actors, IN-4-AHA works to identify, support, and enhance the most important innovation ecosystem elements in the field of active and healthy ageing. The main project deliverable will be an innovation scale-up model, complemented by a roadmap and playbook to boost the (cross-border) uptake of innovative digital technologies for elderly health and social care. The project started in January 2021 and will end with a final conference in December 2022.

After the kick-off meeting in early February, the first big activity from IN-4-AHA was the [Open Call](#) for the project’s Living Lab Testing Scheme to facilitate testing and business coaching for innovative, scalable solutions for active and healthy ageing. Five innovative solutions were selected to be tested in e-environments as well as physical spaces in Finland and Spain.

Furthermore, IN-4-AHA organised numerous stakeholder workshops and webinars throughout the year in order to co-create its tools with people active in the AHA community and inform the community about development tools and opportunities via IN-4-AHA or other projects/networks. EUREGHA continuously coordinated the dissemination of these events and initiatives through the project’s media channels and those of the consortium partners.



**IN-4-AHA**  
website

In December 2021, EUREGHA attended the first face-to-face project meeting since the start of the project: The mid-term meeting in Oporto, Portugal. During this meeting, EUREGHA facilitated a co-creation group exercise to help refine the project's stakeholder engagement messages and encourage the individual partners to discover the potential of their own networks.



**IN-4-AHA consortium mid-term meeting, Porto (December)**



Started in late 2020, the PERISCOPE project (**Pan-European Response to the Impacts of COVID-19 and future Pandemics and Epidemics**) intends to promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the outbreak and spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic through multidisciplinary research based on different levels of analysis (theoretical and practical) and different viewpoints: clinic, psychological, socio-economical, political and technological.

EUREGHA is involved in three different Work Packages: “Impact on Health Systems”, “Training and education”, and “Outreach and Dissemination”. Throughout the project's first year, EUREGHA engaged with local health authorities and policymakers to gather evidence on the (un)successful policy measures in the face of COVID-19 by disseminating surveys and organising

exchange meetings. Among the most relevant initiatives, EUREGHA supported partners in the organisation of two workshops on “Holistic Policy Guidance for Pandemic Response”, a great occasion to identify the challenges and needs of policymakers and health authorities to feed into PERISCOPE's policy guidance and trainings. Moreover, thanks to the expertise of its members, EUREGHA started working on the production of an online course with the scope of strengthening the territorial response in case of pandemics.

Finally, EUREGHA contributed to the dissemination of news and information about PERISCOPE's research outcomes, activities, and initiatives through social media channels, newsletters, and internal channels. On 25 November, PERISCOPE was among the special guests at the meeting of the CoR Interregional Group on Health and Well-being, where Walter Osika from the Karolinska Institutet presented the findings on the effects of the pandemic on mental health.



**Periscope  
website**

# Collaboration with other networks



European Alliance for Value in Health

As a member of the EAVH network, EUREGHA focuses on outcomes that matter to people and patients by getting them more involved in the overall health system decision-making process. Comparing the outcomes and evaluating the different health systems' costs allow us to assess health system models and develop a coherent approach to financing, re-allocating resources to high-value care that prioritises patients.



[EAVH website](#)

In addition, the Alliance strives to address intervention and services for prevention, ensuring that provided care is as rightest as possible to patients and to give them support in their needs. EUREGHA commits to making a health system more sustainable and efficient and improving its quality based on patients' needs.

To do so, contributions coming from IT and digital health infrastructures are necessary, whose primary goal is a more accurate data collection process.

These targets compassed two networking events organised in 2021, the [first one](#) in early March and the [second one](#) in August. The former presented the European Alliance and launched a discussion on the aforementioned EAVH aims. The latter, referring to the above purposes, pointed out which changes should have been adopted to make the health system more resilient to future pandemic crises.

## WHO Regions for Health Network (RHN) Annual meeting

From 25 until 28 October, the World Health Organization's Regions for Health Network organised its [26th annual meeting](#) in Moscow. Participants discussed priorities for RHN member countries regarding COVID-19 recovery and the linkage between climate action and people's health and wellbeing, as well as how to strengthen the vision and commitment of the Network in the face of future health and environmental challenges. Great attention was paid to the long-term consequences of COVID-19 on health systems, the importance of strengthening primary health and social care, mental health, the need for a One Health Approach, food safety, technology and innovation, and prioritising climate-related action at the territorial level. EUREGHA had the pleasure of contributing on the last day by sharing perspectives on the future of the RHN. At the end of the meeting, regions agreed on steering the Network towards a more operational and formalised structure, investing in strengthening leadership and governance competencies in and across regions, and strengthening its evidence-based approach.



On 9 december, the MEP Interest Group on Equitable Access to Healthcare jointly with the Patient Access Partnership (PACT) organised a [webinar](#) to discuss the monitoring strategy for the implementation of the reforms under the national recovery and resilience plans with a focus on their expected contribution in



[PACT website](#)

improving access to healthcare. The meeting tackled a range of issues related to the implementation and expected impact of the RRF, positioning it against the framework of other existing instruments that contribute to improving access to healthcare across the Member States. All participants agreed on the concept that healthcare improvement can be achieved through the RRF with a consistent and coherent application of health-related CSRs and that this is inherently linked to recovery, resilience, and equity of access moving forward.

## OPEN-EU

Obesity Policy Engagement Network

EUREGHA continued its collaboration with OPEN-EU, a coalition of key EU experts and policy-makers covering a wide range of areas aiming to implement a cross-cutting policy approach at an EU level to ensure that European strategies and policies integrate measures that effectively help support people living with obesity. On 4 March, Valentina Polylas, EUREGHA's Director, contributed to a panel discussion during the online conference "Addressing obesity: Unlocking the key to resilient health systems", organised by the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) in conjunction with World Obesity Day Europe.



**OPEN-EU**  
**website**

## Cross-border healthcare

To EUREGHA, access to healthcare systems in cross-border regions is among the EU citizens' most important rights. There are several reasons why EU citizens seek healthcare assistance in another Member State: from home closeness to lack of widespread provision of specific treatments, from longer waiting times to linguistic reasons. At the same time, many different hurdles exist that do not allow patients to enjoy the benefits of such a system: these are current rules on reimbursement and the general information provision.



**EUREGHA response  
to the public  
consultation on  
the Directive**

In this sense, EUREGHA contributed to a **public consultation** launched by the Commission in early March 2021. The public consultation issue concerned the implementation of the **Directive 2011/24/EU**, which has been relevant in enhancing European health policies. In March, to strengthen its vision, EUREGHA relaunched its internal **Working Group on Cross-border Healthcare**, an informal place where members could exchange ideas and prepare the response to the public consultation.

According to EUREGHA, the Directive has not been as efficient as expected. Nevertheless, it has a high potential. To tackle the problems resulting from the incomplete implementation of the Directive and to make it more efficient, EUREGHA proposed to confer a stronger role to local and regional levels to NCPs, reducing the distance created between national NCPs and border regions; to give a more prominent role to healthcare providers, so that they are capable of providing clear and precise information on treatments and safety, availability and quality of the health system offered by another Member State; to introduce a new reimbursement system that no longer provides for advance payments, which often pre-

vent patients from using services.

In addition, EUREGHA featured in the European Commission's [report "EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration"](#), published in July 2021, as one of the recognised European networks actively pursuing improvements in cross-border cooperation in healthcare.

## Healthcare promotion and prevention

In conjunction with World Obesity Day Europe (4 March), the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) and The European Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ECPO) organised the annual [European Obesity Policy Conference](#). Valentina Polylys, EUREGHA's Director, participated in a session dedicated to the implementation of strategies for building resilient health systems for obesity. During her speech, she stressed the need to take into account the regional and territorial differences when planning and implementing the strategies. In her opinion, to deliver a successful approach, a EU-wide definition should be adaptable and flexible, and we need to reverse the narrative and work towards a value-based and outcomes-based approach.

Another crucial topic for EUREGHA was mental health. The pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis caused a growing burden on the mental wellbeing of EU citizens. The promotion of mental health and the prevention and treatment of mental disorders are fundamental to safeguarding and enhancing the quality of life, wellbeing, and productivity of individuals, families, workers and communities, thus increasing the strength and resilience of society as a whole. Aware of the centrality of the theme and following the indications of the CoR's Interregional group members, the last meeting of the IRGHW was dedicated to this challenge.

It was an occasion to foster deep reflections on the paths to follow to fully integrate mental health into the national and regional health systems.



**Valentina Polyilas, EUREGHA's Director, at the European Obesity Policy Conference 2021**

## Value-based healthcare and outcomes management

The salience of this issue has been the focus of fruitful and intensive work. As a partner of the European Alliance for Value in Health and the EURIPHI Health & Social Care Regions Network, in February, EUREGHA has contributed with [two inputs](#) to the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (**EXPH**) **Opinion on public procurement in healthcare systems**. Both groups fully support the role of public procurement as a strategic instrument to achieve more innovative, efficient, and sustainable health systems. In two documents, the networks call upon the Expert Panel to work on a Value-Based approach with strong involvement of the EU and its Regions. Strengthening the role of public procurement by advancing towards innovation procurement, enabling the innovation of care delivery, and supporting the transformation of health systems will make the same more value-based, sustainable, and people-centred.

These aims geared EUREGHA and EAVH partners towards challenges, such as making the European healthcare system more resilient and prepared for future crises. To this end, Valentina Polyilas, EUREGHA Director, and Thomas Allvin, EFPIA, co-chaired the [webinar](#) on 17 June **“Lessons learned from the crisis: how a value-based approach can make health systems more resilient”**. Giovanni Gorgoni, EUREGHA's Chair, emphasised the role of the Alliance, claiming that “the EAVH is fundamental for scouting, evaluating and implementing best practices in this field”. The webinar was the occasion to launch a [discussion paper](#) on this subject. These reflections were further explored and culminated in a [policy paper](#) produced by EAVH, proposing manifold recommendations to be implemented in a context of cooperation and coalitions at national and/or regional level.

But what direction to go? In a [blog](#) published in September, Giovanni Gorgoni stated that the comeback of the status quo is more dangerous than the comeback of another pandemic and identified the way forward in reshaping the system, expressing the need for building alliances, coalitions, and new ecosystems and not forgetting the novel dynamism in health innovation, insisting on digital health.



**Giovanni Gorgoni, EUREGHA's Chair, speaking at the EAVH Webinar (17 June)**

## eHealth

Innovation and the benefits that digital technology brings to everyday life hugely affect the health sector. In this respect, data is a key enabler. This is the reason why EUREGHA did not miss the chance to contribute to the public consultation on the **European Health Data Space** initiative, launched by the European Commission in the second quarter of 2021.

EUREGHA believes that the realisation of a European-wide infrastructure can be a key step in collecting and using data, enhancing patient outcomes and the overall healthcare system. EUREGHA's vision supports the exploitation of advantages and opportunities provided by the digital revolution and technological innovations by adopting a patient-centric, value-based, and risk-evaluation approach and promoting cross-border cooperation between States and border regions.

According to EUREGHA, this new architecture should consist of three pillars: data governance and rules for data exchange; data quality and interoperability; infrastructure and technology.



## Healthy ageing in the EU: The potential of digital innovation for elderly health and social care.

On 12 October, the Committee of the Regions' NAT Commission and Interregional Group on Health and Well-being, and DG CONNECT, in collaboration with EUREGHA and the Province of Lugo (ES), facilitated an insightful conference moderated by Giovanni Gorgoni, Chair of EUREGHA, within the framework of #EURegionsWeek Health Day, discussing **active and healthy ageing and the potential of digitalisation for enhancing elderly health and social wellbeing**.

The event was opened by a video message by Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President and European Commissioner for Democracy and Demography, underlying the implications on people's everyday lives and wellbeing, economic growth, fiscal sustainability, health and long-term

care, and social cohesion. She pointed out the EU's commitment to balancing more investment in long-term care and social services by prioritising technology and community-based care.

Jarosław Duda, Member of the European Parliament, expressed the need to design policies that guarantee that no one is left behind since the digital transition could exacerbate social inequalities and marginalisation of elderly people. In this sense, Birgitta Sacerdeus, Chair of the COR's IRGHW, intervened emphasising the role of regions and local realities in effectively implementing the digitalisation process and boosting the silver economy.

The second panel saw the participation of Marco Marsella, Head of Unit at DG CONNECT, and Raluca Painter, Head of Unit at DG REFORM, who focused on the importance of exchanging knowledge between regions and presented the Technical Support Instrument as a tool for facilitating national

and regional reforms for improving accessibility and quality of primary and long-term care. Besides them, the panel was enriched by a video testimonial from the Province of Lugo and the experience of the IN-4-AHA project, represented on that occasion by Piret Hirv, the project manager.

Giovanni Gorgoni concluded the conference by highlighting the need to bring digital transition and healthcare process digitally-enabled out of hospitals and traditional community healthcare centres to the current life of the elderly and to invest in new skills, new professions, and new ways of procurement.

On the same day, the European Health Ministers informally met at the Brdo Congress Centre to reaffirm the importance of investing in innovative solutions to build a strong European Health Union.



**Opening message by Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President and European Commissioner for Democracy and Demography (12 October)**



# EUREGHA High-level Annual Conference 2021

On 9 December 2021, EUREGHA organised its High-level Annual Conference, moderated by EUREGHA Chair Giovanni Gorgoni. The Conference brought together EU civil servants, Members of the European Parliament, regional policymakers, and representatives of local health ecosystems to discuss how best to cooperate for an optimal health care system and work towards a European Health Union. Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the ITRE Committee, stated that political momentum, financial investments, and a general paradigm shift in the approach to health care policies are necessary elements for a strong Health Union.

Normunds Popen, Deputy Director-General, Director General for Regional and Urban Policy at the European Commission, explained the role of European Structural and Investment Funds within the context of the European Health Union. Maya Matthews, Head of Unit B1 Performance of Health Systems at the European Commission (DG SANTE), underlined the importance of sharing regional best practices, which the European Commission plans to facilitate through a Joint Action with twinning activities, replication pilots, peer learning programs, and more, kicking off after the summer of 2022. Irina Kalderon Libal, Policy Officer eHealth, Wellbeing, and Ageing at the European

Commission (DG CNECT), addressed the issues of demographic change and the European Health Data Space. During the roundtable discussion, EUREGHA members and regional health system representatives talked about the role of regional actors in the creation of a European Health Union. EUREGHA also launched a new booklet showcasing our members’ best practices in Cancer care.



**EUREGHA @EUREGHA - Dec 9, 2021**  
Maria Luisa Moro from @RegioneER, also a @EUREGHA member, pointed out that "We need to build up mechanisms that enable us to take advantage of #BestPractices across Europe, and share experiences on issues like #HealthcareEquity and community involvement."  
#HealthinAllRegions



**A live tweet from the EUREGHA High-level Annual Conference (9 December)**



**Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, MEP and Chair of ITRE Committee, speaking at the EUREGHA High-level Annual Conference (9 December)**



**Annual Conference event highlights**

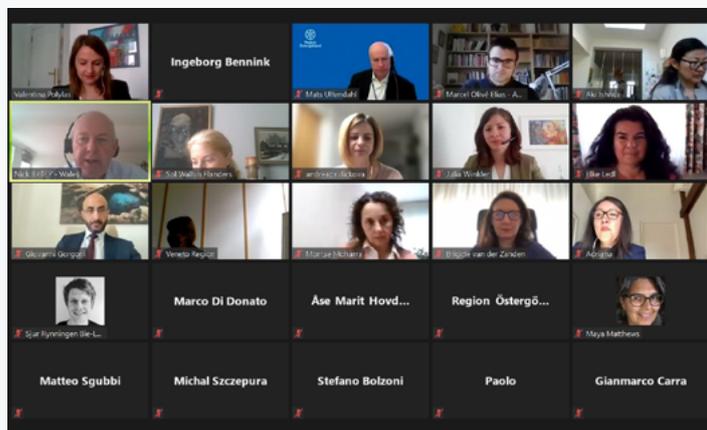
**Chair:** Apulia

**Co-vice Chairs:** Lower Austria & Östergötland

**Treasurer:** Scotland

**2020 Executive Board:** Flanders, Emilia Romagna, Wales, Catalonia, Scotland, Lower Austria, Östergötland, Apulia

**Secretariat:** The secretariat had a capacity of 3 full-time employees and was supported by 7 trainees throughout 2021 through a convention with the University of Bologna and the Vesalius College.



**EUREGHA General Assembly (26 April)**

## Core Activities

The General Assembly of 2021 took place remotely on 26 April and was opened by a keynote speech from Maya Matthews, DG SANTE. The General Assembly was the occasion to elect a new Executive Board: Nick Batey (Wales) passed his role as Chair to Giovanni Gorgoni (AreSS Apulia), and Markus Klamming (Lower-Austria) and Mats Ulfendahl (Region Östergötland) were elected as vice-chairs. Andrea Pavlickova started another term as the association's treasurer. The EUREGHA Director, Valentina Polylas, officially welcomed the Cross-border Institute (CBI) as a new associate member and presented the overall budget, the state of play around projects, EUREGHA's achievements and advocacy strategy for the upcoming years.

Throughout 2021, eight virtual Executive Board

meetings took place. During the first Executive Board of the year (29 January), members aligned on the priority topics for 2021 and agreed on the establishment of an internal Working Group on Cancer and the relaunch of the Working Group on Cross-border healthcare. It was the occasion to welcome in the Secretariat team Marco Di Donato as a new Policy and Project Assistant. During that meeting, it was presented the commitment of EUREGHA to coordinating interested regions towards the establishment of a Smart Specialisation Platform on health and wellbeing. This point was also strongly taken up in the following meeting (24 February).

During the meeting on 26 March, particular attention was paid to the search for new potential members, the involvement of regional experts in the activities of the association, as well as the organisation of the General Assembly and the Board elections.

On 26 May, the new EB members discussed the strategy to enhance the network's position in European fora and its participation in some calls for proposals dealing with strategic topics for the association, especially skills and procurement. Moreover, members were informed about the entry of the Liguria into the network beginning effectively from January 2022.

A month later (29 June), the meeting focused on the latest updates on EUREGHA's internal and external activities. Among the main topics, it was announced the endorsement of the ECL Statement on cervical cancer and the participation in the public consultations on the EHDS and the Cross-border Directive.

After the summer break, a new meeting was held on 17 September. During this occasion, EB members re-connected on the activities to carry on until the end of the year, especially the organisation of the event within the European Week of Regions and Cities and the EUREGHA Annual Conference. During that meeting, the EB welcomed the

new Communications and Project Officer, Robbin Kappelhof.

On 26 November, the EB met to trace the EUREGHA’s thematic path towards 2022, which saw as priorities three pillars under the “innovation of health and social care system” umbrella: the S3 platform on health, procurement, and skills. EUREGHA’s Chair informed members about his institutional mission held from 22 to 25 November and the meeting allowed the EB to update on the latest preparations for the annual conference in December.

The last EB meeting of the year, held on 22 December, was the occasion to reflect on the achievements of 2021 and set the prospects within the Work Programme 2022.



**Marco Di Donato,**  
**Policy and Project Assistant**



**Robbin Kappelhof,**  
**Communications and Project Officer**

## Newsletter

The EUREGHA Secretariat published three newsletters in 2021, less than usual because the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a number of initiatives and events from happening. Nevertheless, three newsletters were shared with our database of stakeholders and via EUREGHA’s Twitter account. Newsletters contained updates on EUREGHA’s activities, EU health policies, our projects, and interviews with EUREGHA members. In addition, the EUREGHA Secretariat provides its members with bi-weekly info-flashes with relevant updates on EU policies, funding calls, events, and more. While EUREGHA’s newsletter reaches a wider external audience, the bi-weekly info-flash is a members-only service.



## Communication and Social Media

The EUREGHA Secretariat has maintained its active online presence through its social media channels on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, and through the publication of 23 news articles on the EUREGHA website. The website is a rich source of information that provides access to EUREGHA’s mission, statutes, minutes of CoR IRGHW meetings and EUREGHA Annual Conferences, project news, and other relevant publications such as compilations of EUREGHA members’ best practices, submissions to public consultations, and annual activity reports. EUREGHA’s social media channels are important dissemination routes for these contents, while also serving to live-tweet events and to amplify communications from partner organisations.

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|--|---|-----|
|  | + | 294 |
|  | + | 92  |
|  | + | 621 |

## Participation in Conferences

- 8 JAN** Public stakeholder meeting on the approval and roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in the EU
- 11 JAN** BECA Committee Public Hearing – “Beating cancer: empowering patients and their caregivers”
- 19 JAN** “COVID-19: Remote consultations and

the future of doctor-patient interaction”

**22 JAN** “EU4Health Programme 2021-2027: A vision for a healthier European Union”

**26 JAN** EP Interest Group on Innovation in Health and Social Care meeting: “Integration of health and social care to tackle disease outbreaks”

**29 JAN** eHealth Stakeholder Group Webinar “Unlocking the potential of mHealth”

**03 FEB** Virtual Launch of the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan

**9 FEB** IN-4-AHA Kick-off Meeting

**9 FEB** Beyond Borders Breakfast Debate #1: Public service cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic

**9 FEB** “EURIPHI International Roundtable”

**9 FEB** EUREGHA-ERRIN Members-only Webinar: “Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan”

**29 FEB** IN-4-AHA Stakeholder Workshop “Innovation in AHA: Looking into the Future!”

**4 MAR** European Obesity Policy Conference “Addressing obesity: Unlocking the key to resilient health systems”

**9 MAR** EAVH First Network Event

**9 MAR** Webinar: “The future of Public-Private-Partnerships for R&D in healthcare: will the COVID-19 experience change the game?”

**10 MAR** Webinar: “Shedding a light on women’s health: Discussing the realities of living with breast cancer during COVID-19”

**11 MAR** Webinar: Towards a European Health Union: Have we failed to protect Europe’s people? The case for a European Health Union”

**16 MAR** Workshop: “How can the UPRIGHT resilience-based programme help schools in the COVID-19 pandemic?”

**18 MAR** COCIR virtual event: “Working together against cervical cancer”

**19 MAR** Workshop: “Cross-Border Telehealth Services in the EU: A Dream or a Reality”

**23 MAR** “Campaign for designating a European Year for Mental Health”

**23-24 MAR** Workshop: “Health technology in connected and integrated care”

**24 MAR** “Recovery from COVID-19 - Driving Healthcare resilience in the EU”

**24 MAR** Workshop: “EU4Health Programme 2021 Potential solutions for a healthier European Union”

**25 MAR** MEP Working Group on Cross-border Cooperation discussion on “Cross-border healthcare: what are the opportunities?”

**25 MAR** VOPD Final Conference: “The shape of healthcare & care to come”

**26 MAR** “Are current investments in medical research focusing on unmet health needs?”

**26 MAR** “IN-4-AHA Living labs: how to get technology in the users’ hands?”

**14 APR** “Taking the next step: health literacy and the fight against cancer”

**15 APR** CoR Workshop: “Smart Specialisation for the Recovery”

**16 APR** SEFAC Final Event

**19 APR** EHMA Webinar: “Managing sustainable and resilient healthcare systems”

**9 APR** EHMA Webinar: “Managing sustainable and resilient healthcare systems”

**19 APR** “Turning principles into a reality of more equitable healthcare”

**20 APR** European Health Forum Gastein: “Starting shot for vaccines: Early lessons from the ups and down of Covid-19 immunization roll-out”

**20 APR** “Oltre la strategia Europea 2020 sulla salute: opportunità finanziarie e priorità tematiche”

**20 APR** Launch event of the MEP Interest Group on Obesity and Health System Resilience

**21 APR** IN-4-AHA Workshop: “How to unlock the potential of stakeholders in the active and healthy ageing participatory design process?”

**22 APR** “Think, Act, EUnite: A post-COVID-19 paradigm shift in European healthcare”

**5-6 MAY** 15th European Patients’ Rights Day

**10 MAY** “Mental health and the pandemic: living, caring, acting”

- 11 MAY** COCIR Webinar: “How to ensure trust in Artificial Intelligence in healthcare?”
- 11 MAY** SAPHIRE webinar: “Stimulating regional personalised health industry: ecosystems and EU initiatives”
- 12 MAY** EP Interest Group on Innovation in Health and Social Care
- 14 MAY** “A step forward to remove the existing barriers to cross-border telehealth in the EU”
- 14 MAY** “Le reti europee in ambito socio-sanitario: struttura, obiettivi e attività”
- 18 MAY** “COVID-19 impact on people with mental health conditions and beyond”
- 19 MAY** “Regional Translational Ecosystems Supportive of Personalising Health Industry”
- 20 MAY** TO-REACH Final Conference: “Implementing and transferring innovations across health systems”
- 20 MAY** Workshop on the Indicators for the evaluation framework of the Cross-border healthcare Directive
- 28 MAY** Inaugural meeting of the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan Stakeholder Contact Group
- 1 JUN** “Is the future bright for Telemedicine – European Doctors’ Talk Digital”
- 9 JUN** Webinar: “Health and Environment Dynamics”
- 9 JUN** IN-4-AHA workshop: “Rethinking the scale-up model for innovation in AHA”
- 15 JUN** “EHP6 – Rethink Europe’s Healthcare for tomorrow: The next generation of healthcare is here”
- 15 JUN** SAPHIRE workshop: “From bench to bedside: Regional practices and strategies for implementing personalised medicine”
- 16 JUN** PERISCOPE webinar: “Impact of Covid-19 on mental health and wellbeing: from understanding risks to building resilience”
- 16 JUN** IN-4-AHA Stakeholder Workshop “How to Finance Innovation for the Active Ageing Market?”
- 17 JUN** IN-4-AHA Focus Group for service providers “Evaluating the impact of innovative services: Data management practices”
- 17 JUN** EACH virtual event: “Lessons from the crisis: how a value-based approach can make health systems more resilient”
- 18 JUN** PERISCOPE Workshop: “Holistic Policy Guidance on Pandemic Response for Health Authorities”
- 22 JUN** “Colorectal Cancer Screening: (Sharing the) Lessons Learned from Covid-19”
- 24 JUN** “AMR – How can we prevent the next pandemic?”
- 24 JUN** PERISCOPE Workshop: “Holistic Policy Guidance on Pandemic Response for Policymakers”
- 29 JUN** “Ensuring responsible antimicrobial use in EU food: MEP Interest Group on AMR Annual Meeting”
- 30 JUN** “Vaccines for all? Undocumented migrants and homeless people left behind”
- 1-2 JUL** Promis Summer School
- 23 JUL** IN-4-AHA webinar “How can AHA stakeholders find and share good practices?”
- 30 JUL** IN-4-AHA webinar “Impact assessment and innovation in AHA: What are we missing?”
- 9 SEP** IN-4-AHA webinar “Improving private/public collaboration in uptake of innovation in AHA”
- 16 SEP** Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health: “Hearing on European solidarity in public health emergencies”
- 24 SEP** IN-4-AHA workshop “Our strategy for stakeholder engagement in the IN-4-AHA community”
- 30 SEP** EURACTIV Conference: “Lessons from Covid-19: How can we make our health systems more resilient”
- 5 OCT** IN-4-AHA workshop “How end user involvement benefits the design process in the health and care sector”
- 5-7 OCT** 5° Forum Mediterraneo Sanità
- 12 OCT** EWRC Event: “Healthy Ageing in the EU: the potential of digital innovation for elderly health and social care”
- 19 OCT** IN-4-AHA workshop “Innovation scale-up model: Current state and approaches for AHA”
- 25-28 OCT** 26th Annual meeting of the WHO Regions for Health Network (RHN)
- 26 OCT** SHAPES Dialogue: “Diversity and empow-

erment: understanding the realities of older people”

**27-28 OCT** POLITICO Healthcare Summit 2021

**29 OCT** IN-4-AHA webinar “How can we capture citizens’ and civil society’s needs?”

**8-11 NOV** The Economist’s 7th Annual World Cancer Series

**16 NOV** Regions4PerMed Workshop: “Innovation Flow in the Healthcare”

**29 NOV** European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) exchange with European regions & cities on the Commission Work Programme 2022

**30 NOV** IN-4-AHA webinar “Cross-border cooperation: Lessons from twinning and matchmaking events”

**1 DEC** Let’s Talk Prostate Cancer campaign: “Prostate cancer in light of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan: EU and regional perspectives”

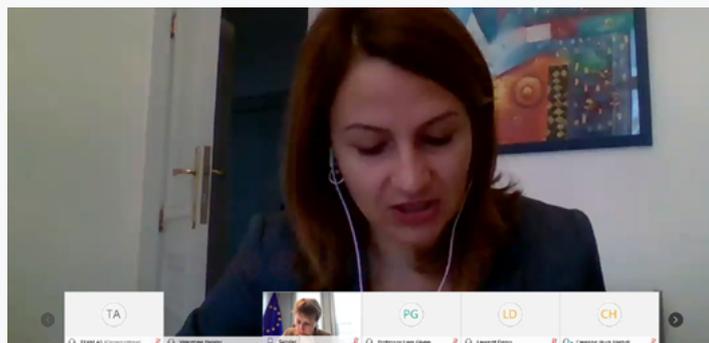
**7 DEC** IN-4-AHA workshop “Data management challenges in the health and care sector”

**9 DEC** EUREGHA High-Level Annual Conference “Make the European Health Union a reality: The regional perspective”

**9 DEC** PACT Webinar: “The Recovery and Resilience Facility in enhancing equitable access to healthcare: examining a new paradigm”

**14 DEC** DG SANTE Virtual Launch Event: “State of Health in the EU – Country Health Profiles and Companion Report”

**17 DEC** IN-4-AHA webinar “The COVID-19 pandemic in the EU: Lessons to remember for AHA”



**Valentina Polylas, EUREGHA’s Director, speaking at the MEP Working Group on Cross-border Cooperation discussion (25 March)**



**POLITICO Summit, Brussels (October)**

**EUREGHA is the reference network for European regional and local health authorities.** It brings together a critical mass of knowledge and expertise and encourage diversity with the purpose of helping our members to improve the efficiency and quality of health systems and services in Europe.

**EUROPEAN REGIONAL AND LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES**

Rond-point Robert Schuman, 11 – 1040 – Brussels, Belgium

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# Our members

**Apulia** (IT)

**Buskerud** (NO)

**Catalonia** (ES)

**Emilia Romagna** (IT)

**Flanders** (BE)

**German-speaking Community of Belgium** (BE)

**GGD South Limburg** (NL)

**Liguria** (IT) **NEW MEMBER**

**Lower Austria** (AT)

**Northern Ireland** (UK)

**Podlaskie** (PL)

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**Scotland** (UK)

**Skåne** (SE)

**Tuscany** (IT)

**Veneto** (IT)

**Wales** (UK)

*Associate Members:*

**Cross-border Institute of Healthcare Systems & Prevention** (NL)

**The Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives** (HU) **NEW MEMBER**

