



*Nijmegen, the Netherlands, February 2017*

## Editorial

Dear EAN friends,

As we reach the end of winter 2016/2017, we are back with the EAN newsletter! We have gathered many interesting articles for this issue.

We bring you news from ESCAIDE 2016 in Stockholm, and experience ESCAIDE through the eyes of the travel grant winner. We look back on the graduation of cohort 2014 and the annual EAN General Assembly.

We share with you who won the prize for best oral and poster presentations, and the best photo!

Emily MacDonald tells us where she is now, and you can read a great story from the field from freshly graduated EUPHEM and EPIET alumni working together in Cambodia.

We also introduce our new Board members – Alma, Lieke and Suzan - and welcome the new Head of Section - Public Health training at ECDC.

Enjoy the newsletter!

The EAN Board

## Board

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My name is Nivohanitra Perle RAZAFINDRAIBE and I am a fellow of the Indian Ocean Field Epidemiology Training Programme (FETP). Since I am a veterinary doctor and I am based in the national Department of Veterinary Services of Madagascar. In this department, I am responsible for the sentinel surveillance network of animal diseases in Madagascar and subsequently the treatment of the signals sent through this network in order to initiate investigations or application of sanitary and control measures. I did 5 investigations of animals' diseases and zoonosis during 2016. The signal for Newcastle disease in Mananjary which I presented orally during ESCAIDE 2016 was one of them ("Avian Newcastle disease: a farm case-control study in Mananjary, Madagascar, 2015 – 2016").



*Nivohanitra presenting her work on Avian Newcastle disease in Madagascar*

Firstly, I was really delighted to have had the opportunity to present our work at an international conference like ESCAIDE. Secondly, I gained a lot of knowledge through the various projects presented during the three days of the conference (it is true that the conference agenda is very full). I have made new epidemiologist friends and even up to now, we exchange emails for sharing news and helping each other professionally. Finally, I also enjoyed my stay in Stockholm to discover and explore things that I do not have in my country (especially snow, it was amazing and I loved feeling, seeing and tasting it!). It has been a dream for me to put my feet on the European continent and especially to let people know about my great island in the Indian Ocean.

I also enjoyed the celebrations including the reception and visit of the museum, the 10th anniversary and the EPIET graduation ceremony.

I would like to thank the EPIET Alumni Network for awarding me with this scholarship. A big thank you also to the organisers of ESCAIDE. And warm thanks to my coordinator Ariane Halm and the "Veille sanitaire" health project of the Indian Ocean Commission who are always a valuable help and support to me.



*Nivohanitra with her coordinator Ariane Halm*



*Nivohanitra enjoying the snow in Stockholm*

Participants from all around the world shared their scientific work at ESCAIDE 2016 through oral and poster presentations. As every year, EAN organised judging of these presentations and acknowledged those with the highest scores. There were many high-quality presentations this year. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the help of all judges scoring the oral and poster presentations and big thanks to ECDC for supporting the prize by giving free registration to the following ESCAIDE to the winners!

The winner was Iro Evlampidou (EPIET cohort 2012) with her presentation on “Refugees crisis in Europe: Health status, life experiences, and mental health problems of transiting refugees and migrants on the Balkan route in 2015”.

Congratulations Iro on an excellent presentation!

This year, three poster presentations were awarded the same highest score and therefore we could congratulate three winners:

- Lieke Wielders: “Prevalence of and determinants for carriage of extended-spectrum Beta-lactamase and pAmpC-producing enterobacteriaceae in the general population in a livestock-dense area”
- Agnes Hajdu (EPIET cohort 11/2005): “The added value of participation in the newly launched European surveillance of Clostridium difficile infections : the case of Hungary”
- Lara Utsi: “Water cooler talk: Use of qualitative data in the investigation of a large norovirus outbreak”.







The EAN photo competition, run in collaboration with ECDC, was back at ESCAIDE this year for the 5<sup>th</sup> time! Conference participants were asked to send in photos from their work in the field. We received beautiful shots, showing unique moments from all over the world which were displayed during the conference. Many people took the time to vote for their favourite photo and winners were revealed during the closing ceremony.

You can admire all the photos submitted on the EAN website at: [http://epietalumni.net/dt\\_galleries/photo-contest-escaide-2016/](http://epietalumni.net/dt_galleries/photo-contest-escaide-2016/). It might give you inspiration for the photo contest at ESCAIDE 2017!



1<sup>st</sup>: Laura Reques with "Le suivi est fini - The Bridge of Freedom"

3<sup>rd</sup>: Diogo Marques with "Happiness before vaccination"



2<sup>nd</sup>: Alessandro Miglietta with "Praying before the safe burial #Ebola Outbreak"





*Graduating EPIETs, EUPHEMS, PAEs and UK-FETPs with their coordinators during the Graduation ceremony & dinner*

Huge congratulations to cohort 2014 on graduating from the fellowship! The graduation ceremony was held at the beautiful Nalen venue.

Apart from all the fellows from cohorts 2014, 2015 and 2016, many coordinators, supervisors, FPO office staff, alumni and other friends of the fellowship attended.

Thanks to all for a great evening and hope to see you again in 2017!

## ESCAIDE - General Assembly

This year, for the first time, the EAN General Assembly was held in a lunchtime slot. Many different topics were presented by the Board and discussed by over 80 attendees.

We would like to thank all members for their time and input!

Many thanks also to Ricardo, Maria and Katherina who stepped down from their roles as Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively for their hard work during the past two (Ricardo & Katherina) to four years (Maria).

## ESCAIDE - Meeting cohort reps

Ricardo Mexia, Vice-President of the EAN Board met with the cohort representatives of cohort 2014, 2015 and 2016 during ESCAIDE to discuss several matters relating to the fellowship.



*From left to right: Amrish Baidjoe (EUPHEM 2015), Patrick Keating (EPIET 2015), Sabrina Weiss (EUPHEM 2014), Janko van Beek (EUPHEM 2016), Ricardo Mexia, Patricia Garvey (EPIET 2014) and Theofilos Papadopoulos (EPIET 2016)*

## ESCAIDE - Dinner & Drinks Night

We would like to thank all our members who joined us for the EAN Dinner & Drinks Night at Vapiano in central Stockholm, the night before ESCAIDE. It is always great to see "old faces" and meet new ones!

Emilie Peron (EPIET) and Horacio Gil (EUPHEM) from cohort 2014 (which they describe as “the best ever”) are employed by WHO Cambodia Country Office located in Phnom Penh, as epidemiology and laboratory consultants respectively in the Emergency Disease, Surveillance and Respond Unit (ESR). ESR is supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) of Cambodia to detect and accurately diagnose emerging diseases, as well as strengthen the system to respond in a timely manner and effectively control public health events related to emerging diseases.



*Selfie from the field*

Emilie: “It is my first time in Asia. For a long time, I wanted to come and work here. The job at WHO is to provide technical guidance to MoH on specific topics such as surveillance, risk assessment and response. I already had experience in this position in Africa but in a French speaking country at the time. Here, the language is a new barrier, I need communicate through a translator, which means that communication with some colleagues at the MoH and the population can be quite challenging.

My position is a perfect blend of desk work, meetings, field deployments (for trainings and investigations) and student supervision. I work in collaboration with different partners such as laboratories, others UN agencies and NGOs. What I like is to be able to adapt my talk to the different audiences and convince them with my technical skills. Cambodians are not very good at: organising traffic, managing noise (everything is SOOOO loud here!). They are very good at: cooking, smiling, tuk tuk riding and they build beautiful temples.”

Horacio: “I arrived to Phnom Penh at the beginning of December 2016 and I will stay until the beginning of March 2017. My job is to improve the laboratory capacities of the country. There are many different aspects that I am supporting such as the biosafety & biosecurity, the quality of the laboratories and training the lab staff, among others. Also, the laboratory antimicrobial resistant surveillance is currently being implemented which poses a lot of logistic and technical difficulties.

My work includes a lot of public health management, with meetings with the government and the different international organisations and NGOs which are working in Cambodia, quite different from working with the microbes on my lab bench! This is a unique opportunity for me to see how the decisions are taken and I already learned a lot from this experience.

My work is not only office-based and meetings; during my first weekend in Cambodia I participated in the investigation of a methanol poisoning outbreak in one of the Cambodian provinces, giving me the opportunity to see the reality of this country. So far, not too much time to get bored. I love the Asian food, especially the tropical fruits. Currently, I am close to suffering from a mango overdose!”



*Emilie & Horacio for the New Year wishes from the regional office. The 37 countries from the Western Pacific region were connected. Photo credit: WHO Cambodia Country Office.*



I first came to Norway in 2004 on a one-year exchange during my first degree (Geography). I subsequently went back to Canada but then returned in 2008 to do an MPhil in Health Economics, Management and Policy. I discovered within the first semester that this was not going to be my calling in life so I got in touch with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) to look at other options while I was finishing my degree. I then became involved in a project that looked at the role of clinicians and laboratories in reporting unusual public health events in the context of the International Health Regulations (2005) and have worked for the NIPH ever since.

In 2012, I joined the EPIET program as a MS-track fellow. Norway is an exceptional place to be a fellow, as working in a national institute in a small country means that it is possible to be involved in developing guidelines for Ebola preparedness but also in assisting with questionnaire development and data analysis for a local foodborne outbreak. Through EPIET I was able to participate in my first GOARN mission, which was to support surveillance in the Philippines post-Typhoon Haiyan. After EPIET, I continued working at the NIPH, primarily with food-, water- and vectorborne diseases, although during the Ebola outbreak, a lot of time also went to national preparedness activities. During this period, I did a second GOARN mission to support contact tracing in rural Guinea from December 2014 to January 2015. I also became involved in the Global Health Preparedness Program (GHPP), which is an NIPH initiative to strengthen the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) in several partner countries. The overall goal of the project is to support countries to assess the status of the core capacities, and then conduct activities to strengthen surveillance, preparedness and response to public health events. As part of a team including several other Norwegian EPIET and EUPHEM alumni, we have been working with our partner countries of Ghana and Malawi (where I have been involved), as well as Palestine and Moldova.

Since October 2015, I have been based in Lilongwe, Malawi, at the newly established Public Health Institute of Malawi in the Ministry of Health, to support the GHPP activities. The work in Malawi has been interesting, but diffuse in scope and challenging

in execution, with lots of potential complications to derail plans, from staff turnover to outbreaks to corruption scandals. From December 2015 to April 2016, an outbreak of cholera occurred in multiple districts, primarily among people from fishing communities living around Lake Chilwa and in temporary floating homes on the lake. Although I was not in Malawi to work on the emergency response efforts, the outbreak dominated activities at the time and demonstrated that there was a need to strengthen surveillance, both in the context of the outbreak but also in general. I witnessed impressive work despite limited resources, including at one treatment centre where the community health workers were keeping close track of their data – only stopping when they ran out of space on the one piece of poster paper they had.



*NIPH team during IHR assessment in Lilongwe in 2015. From left: Frode Forland, Line Vold (EPIET alumnus), Emily and Didrik Frimann Vestrheim (EUPHEM alumnus)*

Luckily, there haven't been any cases of cholera reported this year, giving the MoH a bit of a reprieve to work on other issues. Since April 2016, I have also been involved as a mentor and facilitator in the country's Frontline Field Epidemiology Training Program, a three-month long program funded by CDC for government staff actively involved in surveillance. We are now midway through the third cohort and if nothing else, I am constantly reminded not to take for granted the access to high quality data that is available in Norway, where we are exceptionally spoiled in this regard.

Lilongwe is not the most happening place but it is a hub of international organisations. This means that since arriving I have crossed paths with no fewer than five EPIET/EUPHEM alumni working with different projects in Malawi, showing how truly global this network has become. Living in Lilongwe is relatively comfortable, though even in the nation's capital the electricity, water and internet access are not reliable. My partner took leave from his job and has joined me for the last year. We bought our first car and have used our free time to see different parts of this beautiful country.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, I will be returning to Norway in the fall of 2017 but will likely stay involved in the project in Malawi. Although I previously worked in the Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and now work for the Department of International Public Health, the NIPH has been in a process of reorganisation since I have been away. This means that I will likely be returning to the new Department of Zoonotic, Food- and Waterborne Infections, a unit where I have great colleagues, many of whom are EPIET/EUPHEM alumni. I'm also looking forward to staying involved with the EPIET/EUPHEM networks. Last year, I was lucky enough to go to Spetses as a facilitator for the Intro course, where it was great to meet quite a few alumni from recent cohorts. It has only been a few years since finishing EPIET, but the program is still hugely important for my work – and hopefully will be in the future.



*Data collection during a foodborne outbreak investigation*

*Post-EPIET life in Norway*





# New Board members



**Alma Tostmann**  
**Vice-President**

As a child I was already fascinated by infectious diseases, but it was only at the end of my PhD that I discovered that I could actually become an 'outbreak epidemiologist'. During the field work for my tuberculosis research in Tanzania I had a chat with a former EIS fellow who told me about a 'program similar to EIS' in Europe: EPIET. The rest is history.

I did EPIET at PHE South West Region and graduated in 2011. Since 2012 I work as infectious disease epidemiologist in an academic public health network at the university in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. I supervise applied research at 'our' nine public health units and have a university teaching degree. Also, I worked as hospital epidemiologist for a few years and got involved in the exciting and relevant field of hospital infection prevention and control.

As a mom of three it is my second nature to have an eye for the needs of my 'dependents', to speak up and negotiate on their behalf if needed, and to facilitate connection and let us be a happy family. With that in mind, I am looking forward the vice-presidency in the EAN board.

Two years ago I fell in love with Lindy Hop: a swing dance style from the roaring 1920's. My time in the Board is complete when I have Lindy hopped with at least one of my new family members! Hoppy 2017!!!

After spending many happy days with my mom in the bacteriology lab (where she taught students microbiology) and my dad in the chemistry lab, it was not surprising I choose a lab-oriented study. I studied Medical Biology at the Utrecht University in NL, where I specialised in infectious diseases and Immunology. Fascinated by how microorganisms cause disease, I subsequently did a PhD on bacterial virulence strategies in Utrecht and a Postdoc on bacteriophage-bacteria interactions in Edmonton, Canada.

Wanting to apply my knowledge more practically and to actually improve people's health made me apply for the EUPHEM fellowship in 2011, which I did in Copenhagen. Since the fellowship, I have specialised as a Medical Molecular Microbiologist at the academic hospital Maastricht, where I now head the typing lab, develop/implement new diagnostics, teach at the university and am involved in hospital/regional outbreaks and surveillance.



**Lieke van Alphen**  
**Treasurer**

I have remained involved with the EUPHEM program by facilitating at the introductory course, and think it is important that alumni have an active role in the current program. In my job, I spend quite some time securing funds for projects and courses and as a treasurer in the EAN I want to find ways to keep the EAN and the EAN modules financially possible.



**Suzan Trienekens**  
**Secretary**

I was 13, and travelling through Egypt with my family when I was forbidden to swim in the water of the Nile. Hearing all about small parasites making people ill by penetrating their skin and how health behaviour could affect exposure sparked my initial interest in infectious disease control.

Before being selected as a UK FETP cohort 2014 fellow based in Liverpool, I worked as an infectious disease epidemiologist for national and regional teams at RIVM and Public Health England. During my fellowship I have been an active EAN member, designing several newsletters and participating in EAN training courses. Currently, I am based in Nigeria as a flying epidemiologist for MSF, supporting the different projects across the country including heavy metal poisoning, malnutrition, Noma, and vaccination.

I applied for the position of Secretary because I think communication is key in achieving our aims and I would like to contribute to EAN developing further as a strong international alumni network. I look forward to maintaining good and timely communication between the board and the members of EAN for the next two years!





Dr Carmen Varela Santos has been appointed as Head of Section - Public Health Training.

The EPIET Alumni Network would like to congratulate her and wish her well in her new role!



## Annual EAN membership fees

You will find the bank details for your fee transfer here below!

Do not forget that you can also pay directly on our EAN website (payments through personal accounts are not accepted). Note that payments are automatically processed and you will therefore have access to all EAN website features and EAN services directly after payment.

Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees.

If you require any further information on membership payment, we kindly ask you to contact the EAN board ([eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com)), putting "membership payment" in the subject line.

When making a transfer, please do not forget to indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com) to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer).

Thank you for your support!

### EURO ACCOUNT (€20 per annum)

**Bank:** HSBC UK  
**Address:** 18 London Street, Norwich, NR2 1LG, UK  
**Account holder:** Epiet Alumni Network  
**Account Number:** 71822755  
**Sort code:** 40-05-15  
**IBAN:** GB11MIDL40051571822755  
**BIC/Swift:** MIDLGB22

### GBP ACCOUNT (£18 per annum)

**Bank:** HSBC UK  
**Address:** 18 London Street, Norwich, NR2 1LG, UK  
**Account holder:** Epiet Alumni Network  
**Account Number:** 43922782  
**Sort code:** 40-35-09