



*Newsletter of the EPIET Alumni Network*  
*Summer & autumn edition*

[www.epietalumni.net](http://www.epietalumni.net)  
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Photo credits:

'Rise and shine' @ Lorenzo Pezzoli, EPIET C2006; 'Autumn rocks' @ Timothée Dub, EPIET C2017; 'Street art' @ Zsafia Igloi, EUPHEM C2016

## EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

In this issue, we thought it would be a good time to [reflect on how the pandemic has affected our work](#) over the past 21 months. To this end, four members share their experiences with us, discussing the highs and lows of their work during these unprecedented times.

There are some common threads to working in the time of COVID-19; most of our contributors mention how politics overtook evidence-based decision making, the increasing challenges of risk communication and how difficult it was to see existing prevention and control mechanisms being overlooked or challenged anew.

It hasn't all been bad though; our contributors all agree that the pandemic has created some exciting new job opportunities and increased awareness and respect for our professions. More recently, several of our contributors experienced greater flexibility in their working patterns as "working from home" became the new normal.

Elsewhere in this issue, we share an [interview with Adam Roth](#) (head of EPIET & EUPHEM fellowship programme at ECDC) where we invited him to tell us a bit more about himself, the challenges faced by the program during the pandemic and his vision for the future. We also bring you the [highlights from a series of career sessions](#) organised by and for current fellows.

We are excited to announce the launch of the [new EAN discussion forum on Discord](#). We hope this will provide our EAN discussions with a more permanent, searchable home and be a good supplement to the active EAN WhatsApp group.

Last but not least; some members of the **EAN board** will be stepping down at the next General Assembly. Although we will be sad to go, we warmly encourage both EPIETs and EUPHEMs alike to have a look at the profiles for the [open positions](#) and submit their candidature for the next board elections in November.

Enjoy the Newsletter!

### The EAN Board

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## WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT: IN THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION

Dear EAN friends,

Hope you all managed to at least have break time with your loved ones this summer. We are heading into an autumn which still contains much uncertainty. This is a period in which we will have to work to a new 'normal' and find new innovative ways of dealing with COVID-19 being endemic, ways that find a better and more flexible balance between reducing the risk of disease outcomes and everything that makes life great. That will continue to require a lot from us. Being courageous enough to think outside of the box, realizing the uncertainty is something we have to deal with, clashing between scientific insights, pushing against political narratives, resisting lobbyists, dealing with societies where tensions are increasing because much more is escalating aside from the direct health impact as a result of this pandemic. It will also require us to rethink if public health did function at its best during this pandemic, what lessons we will learn and will be willing to learn. For me personally, the most important lessons lay in collaboration, which I have observed many times during these last months. At the same time there is serious disappointment in how we as a European continent failed to work together. With the many challenges lying ahead of us, aside from the technical tools and thinking, I believe the 'working together' and 'leadership' aspects will be pivotal to face the complex challenges to come, especially within the Field Epidemiology and Public Health Microbiology world.

That brings me to EPIET and EUPHEM. In the years before I took the seat of EAN president, the relationship between EAN and the fellowship office wasn't always easy. Things have improved, but still much work needs to be done. There is an intuitive link between the fellowship programs and the EAN and I hope we will be seriously developing opportunities for collaboration in the future. It will be key for the network of alumni to pay attention to how the program is developing; part of that should include sitting at the table whilst these discussions take place and asking for involvement where needed. I especially see worries around the cohesion of the fellowship programs, looking at how cohorts struggle with keeping in touch with each other, now that the whole program is virtual. The help of the network will also be much needed to advance the programme curriculum and help with facilitation during modules. Again, collaboration is an absolute necessity.

This will also be the last 'words from the president' by my hand. It has been a great four years, with rock-solid board members that made it a joy to work with. It was a pleasure to represent the network and meet so many of you where we could have nice constructive and critical conversations in which I struggled especially in the last two years to find the time to solidly dedicate time to EAN activities. As EAN we managed to get better engaged with the membership, organize webinars and social activities, and finally launched the [EAN membership survey](#) (fill it in please 😊). However, much came to a halt due to the pandemic, not only because of travel restrictions, but mostly because of busy agendas in which we were also trying to find some form of balance between work and life. This is something that has always been challenging but is so very important. The EAN is very much a network that is alive. Much depends on a board that consists of volunteers; I have always hoped we could make a serious move to professionalize the network, so that it would not only be dependent on an (albeit great) board of volunteers. I still see opportunities for that, especially looking at the high needs in terms of professional development and the need for strong advocacy for field-epidemiology and public health microbiology in Europe and beyond.

In the words of the famous disease detective Kostas, "don't become a dictator".

Wishing you all well,

Amrish



[Photo credit @ Elisa von Brockdorff / ESCAIDE]

### COVID-19 & the trials and tribulations of public health activism

Arnold Bosman

My name is Arnold Bosman and I got in touch with EPIET in 1998 as an external participant on the introductory course. The course was the result of an award for my masters thesis in public health on Legionnaires' Disease. Those three weeks in Veyrier du Lac infected me with the EPIET spirit, and this infection has remained chronic to date! What followed were inspiring years as facilitator, coordinator, and head of public health training at ECDC, before I decided to close the book on 25 years in public service. In 2016, I founded a public health learning support enterprise named "Transmissible" that focuses on using storytelling and game-based techniques to train communicable disease specialists. Competence is more than knowledge and skill.

When the pandemic took hold, all classroom-based learning stopped, as did face-to-face consultancy. This changed a minor, yet very enjoyable, part of my work. The virtual collaboration and zoom-based teaching that had already been a major part of the work, now became all there was.

Having been involved in training so many staff in pandemic preparedness, I found it very difficult to witness many situations where the decisions made were questionable. It seemed in the country where I am based, pandemic control was dominated by political decisions, while relevant facts and figures were ignored.

What inspired me immensely are the many positive citizen initiatives that have contributed constructively to the pandemic response. I have observed excellent data analysis from experts who had never previously worked with communicable disease datasets. Some wonderful surveillance websites were built as private initiatives, that should trigger envy from national public health institutes. We should embrace such initiatives more in future.



*"When 'let's generate natural herd immunity and let the disease spread in a controlled manner' became the national policy direction, I could not remain silent; I spoke up whenever the opportunity arose, called out dubious decisions and questioned the rationale and evidence".*

As this got noticed by the media, a string of TV interviews followed, and like-minded critical colleagues joined. By July 2020, this had become an interdisciplinary group of 12 and we named ourselves the "Red Team", inspired by a private sector custom to invite organized counterarguments and debate, in order to identify flaws in a process and strengthen the organisation. When infection rates started to double again, we wrote a letter to the minister of health and prime minister, requesting immediate action. To be sure the letter was not binned, we copied the eight-o'clock news. That attracted attention, and while the cabinet remained on vacation, the parliament responded by inviting us to brief them. The next day, the minister decided to invite us for a meeting, and we had an opportunity to present our analysis and recommendations for zero-covid control measures. What happened next is that our advice was referred to by future cabinet press conferences, yet the policy actions remained the same. Only the words had been copied. The government continued to pursue a mitigation-based approach characterised by "controlled transmission to achieve natural group immunity". This was hard to accept and even frustrating.

Since we had a critical mass of highly experienced and motivated experts in various disciplines, we started to write reports with evidence-based policy proposals and critique of the herd immunity policy. All that changed is that the cabinet copied those words and used them as new labels to a further unchanged policy. By December we decided to stop our public reporting, as it was clearly not effective. Ever since, we kept up the tradition of meeting every Monday to exchange ideas and this has become one of the tools to protect our professional sanity, as the sources of frustration remained. You can read more about the Red Team's exploits (in Dutch) [here](#).

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### Gynaecology to intervention epidemiology and back again

Ignacio Garitano

My names Ignacio Garitano, from EPIET Cohort 14. I am a family doctor, epidemiologist, and gynaecologist by chronological order. I started the crisis as a gynaecologist and ended up again as a gynaecologist. Between 28<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, I played many roles, which I will explain in this newsletter.

I usually work as a gynaecologist at a teaching hospital in the capital of the Basque Country, Vitoria--Gasteiz, in Northern Spain. On 28<sup>th</sup> February, all that changed when a colleague developed mild symptoms after a trip to southern Spain and in-line with the hospital protocol, was tested by PCR for SARS-CoV-2. The test result was positive, and she was later identified to be part of a nosocomial outbreak. The following day, I volunteered to leave my regular post and take part in the response to this novel infection. I started forming and coordinating teams of nurses whose task was to take samples at the homes of suspected cases.



I fell sick for a couple of weeks and developed a high fever. Two negative PCR tests, at that time made me think it could have been the flu (although afterwards we learned that flu was not circulating; besides I had been vaccinated).

*“During the days that followed, I felt the call to contribute to the response and generate information for action. I asked myself: why don't we ask people whether they are sick or not?”*

I contacted a couple of cousins of mine that work in communication and social media in Madrid, and a friend who is the president of an NGO whose aim is to offer information about infectious diseases and travel health advice (Fundación Io) to check the feasibility of the idea. I finally contacted a computer scientist to get the idea up and running. We would circulate an anonymous questionnaire with the official COVID-19 case definition, and with videos disseminated on online social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.). The result was amazing; we got responses from 5.5% of the Basque population ([Garitano et al 2020](#)) during the first week and 0.7% of the Spanish population. ([Linares et al 2020](#)).

We had established a rudimentary free of charge, symptom-based surveillance system capable of informing about the magnitude of the problem. Due to a limited testing policy and lack of surveillance, we found that estimated incidence based on the respondents to our survey was at least six times higher than that found with microbiological tests. All the data from this study was offered for free, in real time to any institution who found it useful, including the Spanish ministry of health, Basque department of health, ECDC and WHO.



After this experiment, I continued my work at a hotel that was used to manage discharged patients to free up space at the teaching hospital. In April I was contacted by the department of health to put in place a surveillance system for cases and close contacts. I spent the following months coordinating this network, which included family and community specialized nurses, public health officers, occupational health professionals, and others. I was also asked to be a spokesman for the department of health. In the meantime, we conducted a PCR screening campaign among field workers in the Basque Rioja region during the vine harvesting season, using a Basque "Pelota" pitch ("Frontón"). We also managed the isolations and quarantines, using resources for this migrating population such as hotels. In January 2021 I went back to my

gynaecology service and handed over all my epidemiology tasks.

Looking back on this experience, risk communication has been particularly challenging. I received this training during EPIET, but most decision makers probably haven't. Additionally, the context made many players act at the same time; health care workers, health structures, society, patients, politicians, public health professionals and lobbyists. This has also been difficult to manage and coordinate. Ten months into my voluntary secondment, I began to feel that my role was turning from that of a technician to a spokesman of the health department. This, linked to some internal difficulties to accomplish my job ultimately led to my resignation and return to my original post as a gynaecologist. Until then, a sense of duty and social justice kept me going (as it had when I was working for MSF).

Throughout this period, I have experienced that people who joined the response found new challenges and took on opportunities that would not otherwise have presented themselves or would have taken longer to come. Personal growth has been quicker (as usually happens in complex emergencies) and new doors are being opened! On a personal level, although I am back to delivering gynaecological services, I have also been recruited by the University of Deusto, in Bilbao, to teach epidemiology and evidence-based medicine to medical students. Another new challenge that has landed on my desk is a research management position in the public sector. Who said crisis cannot be turned into opportunities?

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## Delivering public health microbiology on the frontline

Zsofia Igloi

My name is Zsofia Igloi, and I am a EUPHEM alum of cohort 2016. My background was in academia (virus research) prior to EUPHEM, but I felt the call to do some real-world practical service work. This is how I ended up in public health.

It was a crazy year for me: working at a renowned viral science department, we quickly became inundated with requests to set up SARS-CoV-2 research and diagnostics projects.

*“Besides the increased workload, our public health research projects were informing government decisions directly, hence the pressure was often intense.”*

Large projects were launched at short notice, with many diverse stakeholders who had various levels of expertise and differing interests. Between these projects there was often no time to recover. All my old projects were pushed aside. I tried to revive them every time I found a spare moment, but as everybody else was also busy with the pandemic, all collaborative projects suffered. These were intense and challenging times, but the silver lining for me was that in this context I could fully use my public health training and knowledge.

The flexibility of new working conditions under anti-covid measures has helped a lot to cope. Previously, I used to work 5 days a week with a two-hour commute; I now enjoy a more flexible working pattern, with a mix of working from home combined with the possibility of going into my place of work only when needed. I can compensate for overtime where possible. I also find myself paying more attention to my work-life balance.

As time went on, there were other silver linings too; due to the pandemic, I got fantastic opportunities to run large projects, gained a lot of new skills and had the satisfaction of feeling that I was really putting my knowledge to good use. I was leading two evaluation pilots using the SARS-CoV-2 antigen rapid test; the first was a general evaluation which later led to the development of a diagnostic tool. The second project was the implementation of a community walk-in testing centre to try to decrease some of the practical obstacles around testing and understand them better. We later did a saliva antigen test study, which will be now repeated with a self-testing component. This means I've pretty much spent the last year with my beloved antigen test :) My contract was extended and working hours became more flexible. I got to know a global network of new collaborators, which will be extremely useful for my next planned career step as a consultant. I feel that our profession got more recognition overall.

Now that the waters seem to be calm for a short while, I'm trying to revive my old projects which were swept aside and I'm very much looking forward to a proper holiday!



## Adrenaline rush: pandemic life as a current fellow

*Bojana Mahmutović*

My name is Bojana Mahmutović. I come from Zagreb, Croatia and I am currently an EPIET fellow on the member state track, cohort 2020. I am also an epidemiology specialist at the Institute for Public Health in Krapinsko Zagorska county, Croatia. I qualified and have been working as a medical doctor since 2010 and as an epidemiologist since 2014. My daily work includes surveillance and monitoring of communicable disease; in Krapinsko Zagorska county we deal with a lot of endemic tuberculosis, listeriosis, scabies, legionellosis, pediculosis and waterborne epidemics, vaccinations, and vaccine opposition, as well as vaccination advice and delivery for travellers and those with special occupational requirements. I also cover surveillance of vector-borne diseases (my mentor and supervisor first discovered *Aedes Japonicus* in Croatia) and teach the public and occupational population about food safety.

For the last year and a half, I have been working mostly on COVID-19, performing contact tracing and follow up of cases and their contacts. More recently, I have been helping with COVID-19 vaccinations; in the past six months I vaccinated more than 5,000 people.

To accommodate the extra workload, my working hours changed. I am on duty every fourth week for 7 days in a row, 24 hours a day. My colleagues and I mostly deal with COVID-19; everything else has been put aside. We work a lot, and there have been some very tough days, but we have become like one big family; we feel united, and we have the same goal.

One thing I have found particularly challenging about this pandemic is that we are facing a lot of new situations, in which we have to make quick decisions about a new disease that we knew, or still know little about.

*“On the other hand, epidemiology has suddenly become a rapidly evolving profession full of excitement and adrenaline.”*

We need to use these difficult times to strengthen our unity and work to emerge from this epidemic as better people.

## INTERVIEW WITH ADAM ROTH, HEAD OF THE EPIET EUPHEM FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

This interview was conducted in September 2021 by Annika Wendland.

**We recently received intelligence from Florian, a reliable, unnamed source that Adam Roth, head of the fellowship program, is using an advanced Romulan cloaking device to hide the secret location of his COVID-19 bunker kitchen closet. We felt inspired to reach out to Adam and ask him for a long overdue introduction to the network...**



**Adam, you have joined the EPIET and EUPHEM programme at an unusual and difficult time and our alumni have not had a chance to meet you yet. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself? Where are you from, what is your professional background and when did you start as the head of the fellowship programme?**

Sure! I'm a Swedish medical doctor and associate professor and did my medical studies at Lund University. I started veering towards public health already during medical school through a health promotion project in South Africa and an internship at WHO EURO in Copenhagen. After the MD exam in 1999 and some clinical practice, I started a PhD in epidemiology at Copenhagen Statens Serum Institut (SSI), stationed in Guinea-Bissau. Although my PhD focussed mainly on vaccine epidemiology, Bissau was also a great experience in on-the-ground work in field epidemiology, and I was hooked for life. After my PhD in 2004, I started a post-doc at SSI, continuing to drive studies in Guinea-Bissau, as well as doing register-based studies in Copenhagen. I mixed these projects with a specialization in Clinical Bacteriology and Virology at Lund University hospital until 2012. My family and I then moved to Noumea, New Caledonia, where I worked as team leader for surveillance and operational research at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. My team supported public health surveillance in 22 Pacific Island countries and independent states spread over the Pacific Region. Apart from strengthening surveillance systems and supporting outbreak investigations, we also worked on developing field epidemiology training for the Pacific. In 2015 I started at the Public Health Agency of Sweden in Stockholm, and I headed the unit for Vaccination Programs for two years before starting as Head of Fellowship Programme at ECDC in May 2020.

**What led you to your current role as the head of the fellowship programme?**

First of all, I love teaching. I also find that building and strengthening people and networks is what in the long run makes the big difference, and to me this is more rewarding than most other work I've done. Also, the EPIET has been a source of inspiration since I first heard of it in Guinea-Bissau back in 2000. Since then, I have most of the time worked close to or collaborated with EPIET and EUPHEM fellows or alumni in some way. When setting up epi training in the Pacific, I also got the chance to look closer at the ECDC and other fellowship programmes. To head and develop the Fellowship Programme I think requires a mix of skills in teaching, leadership and content expertise that I like, and it is to me an honour and a challenge that ties up most professional threads I've been working with so far.

**Those of us who have spoken with you on video calls know the Teams office background well. We do however have evidence of you working from what looks like a kitchen cupboard. How did that happen?**

This was a due to a (luckily temporary) low among other lows during COVID-19. We were banished during daytime from our apartment (and our relatively well-working home-office) for a few months due to a need to change the water and sewage pipes. My wife and I therefore sometimes shared a very small one room flat as an office. Hence the cosy kitchen cupboard - great for meetings!

**Having joined the fellowship programme around the time of a pandemic, what have been the challenges you have observed for the programme?**

The main challenge has been for fellows to hang in there and keep the mood up, despite the fellowship not turning out the way they had hoped or expected. The experience and challenges have been different for the different cohorts and also very different for each fellow and site. Trying to meet this, grab the possibilities when they come, adapt and find ways of supporting and building a sense of belonging has been challenging. Turning training into virtual versions has also meant a lot of extra work for the scientific coordinators and facilitators. As the fellowship builds on commitment from training sites in several ways, it has naturally not always been easy to mobilize people given these special times.

**One big component of the fellowship is building a strong European public health network. The face-to-face modules have in the past been a cornerstone of this. How has ECDC approached this in the past 18 months?**

Firstly, and most importantly, we've kept going and delivered the programme despite the challenges. In the beginning we tried to keep the structure with one-week modules as similar to the original format as possible, since this was common to all and part of the compact with training sites.



However, following evaluations and more time to adapt, we are gradually changing modules in ways that work better virtually, such as limiting the length of days, giving more possibilities to non-synchronous teaching/learning, giving some of the content on separate inject days as well as introducing monthly forums for discussing COVID-19 related work among fellows. Importantly for the network building, we've started meeting the current cohorts regularly, as well as introduced monthly supervisor meetings and quarterly national focal point and training site forum meetings.

**Do you have a message to current fellows who have had very little or no opportunity to meet in person to date?**

Hang in there. Continue trying to get the most out of this unique experience. When possible, there will be time to meet and network.

**How do you see the future of FETLPs post pandemic? Do you feel that there were any important lessons learnt for FETLPs in the past 18 months?**

This is a big question, and I don't have the answer to it yet. I think we will have opportunity and momentum post-pandemic to raise awareness and show the importance of the program. I think we need to grab this opportunity in the

network together, and it will require time and dedication. In the roadmap for improving the programme, it is planned to revise the curriculum next year, and I think this is very timely to build on lessons learned from the pandemic. Clearly the lowered threshold for us all to collaborate digitally means some great opportunities that also in the long term can add value to the fellowship. That said, a clear lesson (re)learnt is also that we need to meet in person to thrive and build our relationships and networks.

**Since you started as the head of the programme, have there been any highlights you would like to share with the network?**

Although meeting only virtually somehow takes a little light out of the highlights, there are many great moments from the past year: talks with fellows and coordinators on COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 projects; holding a speech for the first cohort to graduate since the start of the pandemic; talking about our future plans for ESCAIDE; the first monthly meetings with the supervisors; starting up the closer collaboration with MediPIET and getting the roadmap for the way ahead for the programme approved; to mention a few.

## NETWORKING DURING A PANDEMIC: CAREER SESSIONS FOR CURRENT FELLOWS

*Katja Siling, Jason Doran & Joaquin Baruch (Cohort 2020)*

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of millions. Due to travel restrictions in most European countries, networking opportunities for EPIET/FETP/EUPHEM fellows around Europe have been limited. While networking may not rank high on the wider public health agenda, it plays an important role in supporting achievement of the fellowships' objectives. In particular, it supports fellows in integrating public health knowledge across Europe, strengthens FETP programs worldwide and creates a homogenous community of intervention epidemiology and public health microbiology experts.

During a chance meeting at ESCAIDE 2020 between Jason (UK FETP rep), Joaquin and Katja (EPIET 2020 cohort reps), an idea was born to proactively create opportunities for networking between current fellows and alumni. We agreed EAN is a great platform to support something like this and with support from Stine, the EAN vice-president, we set to work, organizing our first career session. The objectives of the career sessions are not limited to networking between alumni and current fellows but also meant to foster a sense of belonging to the wider EAN network for current fellows, to connect EPIET, EUPHEM and FETP fellows and to give fellows an opportunity to learn and explore different career paths. Based on previous experience attending similar sessions, we felt it was important that fellows had an opportunity to ask questions and that the sessions would be tailored, as much as possible, to their needs.

Our first career session took place on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021. We had a fantastic discussion with EAN alumni, who generously shared their experience; thank you to the first panellists (Cornelia Adlhoch, Naomi Boxall, Michael Edelstein and Ioannis Karagiannis) for their wisdom and insight!

Together with Stine, we decided to share some key tips and advice from this experience with the rest of the network. Here they are:

- Feel free to email alumni and say hello or ask for a chat over some coffee.
- The era of formal applications is over. Job offers are sometimes reached through LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media. Don't be afraid of leaving your comfort zone!
- A PhD is not a solution to all your future career opportunities. However, not having one may sometimes limit your opportunities. It's not about the subject that you do it in, but rather that you can show that you have the tenacity to go through a PhD program.
- Networking is everything - speak to people who are in organisations you'd like to join. Be bold. Sell yourself.
- It is often more important to be a person people like to work with, rather than someone who knows a huge amount but isn't pleasant to work with.
- Prepare a short "elevator pitch" that can be used during networking or during subsequent interviews. Practice this pitch with your peers.

We encourage the readers who are part of the EAN network, to ask yourselves:

1. Would I like to be part of these career sessions as a speaker?
2. Would I like to offer a one-on-one coffee with a fellow?
3. Could I somehow help with integrating the fellows?

If you found yourself answering yes to any of these questions, then you should send an email to:

- ✓ Katja ([katja.siling@gmail.com](mailto:katja.siling@gmail.com))
- ✓ Jason ([Jason.R.Doran@phe.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.R.Doran@phe.gov.uk))
- ✓ Joaquin ([joaquinbaruch2@gmail.com](mailto:joaquinbaruch2@gmail.com))

Please do introduce yourself and we will do the rest!

## WORLD FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY DAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2021

The 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 marked the first ever [World Field Epidemiology day](#); this was an opportunity to celebrate what we do in the face of growing recognition of the importance of our skills in the context of this pandemic. An activity log of events held around the world on this day was hosted by TEPHINET; you can browse, catch the highlights and be inspired for next year [here](#).

The day was also celebrated at ECDC, where four current EPIET and EUPHEM fellows posted a celebratory video (available on YouTube [here](#)).

ECDC also published a podcast interview with Adam Roth, which you can find and listen to [here](#).

Lastly, a special issue of the journal *IJID* was organised by TEPHINET. You can read the editorial of this special issue by Rebecca Martin and Ibrahima Socé Fall here:

[“Field Epidemiology Training Programs to accelerate public health workforce development and global health security”](#)

Happy belated World Field Epidemiology day from all in the EAN board!

## EAN DISCORD DISCUSSION FORUM IS LAUNCHED!

### **EAN Discord: a new forum to discuss and share information within the network**

*Timothée Dub*

Following the success and intense use of EAN’s COVID-19 Slack channel and WhatsApp group since the beginning of the pandemic, we looked for a long-term and structured system to host an EAN discussion forum and chose to open a Discord server.

On our server, you will be able to get the latest EAN-related information, share some opportunities, whether they be job-offers, trainings, conferences, etc...

You will also find some more technical channels where you can discuss analytics, surveillance or outbreak investigations, public health microbiology, as well as a channel where you can share latest news on specific diseases; and many more.

Since we believe it is vital for the network to be able to stay in touch informally, we created some channels where you

can just hang out and catch up with other alumni you have not seen in a while.

And guess what! We have also created a few “audio” lounges that you can use to hop on a call and have some ad-hoc technical (or social) discussions.

We hope that this server will evolve to serve the needs of the network and will be very happy to hear your suggestions.

To join the EAN discord server, click on the link below:

<https://discord.gg/Uj985NB65J>

You will be directed to the welcome-and-rules channel when you can read more about all the different features and learn how to use the server. Once you are done with that, please come and tell us a few words about you in the [#introducing-yourself](#) channel!

We hope this will be a good supplement to the EAN WhatsApp group and that the EAN’s discord will foster a lot of high level and friendly discussions among our members and friends of the network.



## EAN NOTICEBOARD: UP-COMING EVENTS AND RESOURCES

### EAN member survey – open until 30 September!

To all our survey respondents so far (around 175 people) – thank you for taking the time to fill it in, we really appreciated it! On average it takes 30 minutes to complete. Please help us by reminding all in your cohort and other EAN friends and colleagues to also fill the survey. The EAN needs your input! We want to know where our members are working and what you would like the EAN to focus on in the future. For those of you who have not yet had a chance to complete it, please do so before **30 September 2021**. You can complete the survey at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BQGKJ9K>

### EPIET Scientific Coordinator position at RKI, Germany:

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) is currently looking for alumni to join the EPIET coordination team through an RKI contract. RKI is one of the European public health institutes with a framework partnership agreement with ECDC for hosting EPIET scientific coordinators. Anyone potentially interested please contact Katharina Alpers at [alpersk@rki.de](mailto:alpersk@rki.de) ASAP.

### ESCAIDE 2021 programme now available:

The ESCAIDE 2021 programme (16 – 19 November 2021) is now available. It's all online and free to attend, but don't forget to register in advance:

<https://www.escaide.eu/en/conference-programme-escaide-2021>

Save the date for these EAN activities at ESCAIDE:

- ✓ *EAN Career compass:* 16 November 2021 @ 18:30 – 20:00
- ✓ *EAN General Assembly:* 17 November 2021 @ 18:30 – 20:00
- ✓ *EAN BarCamp:* 18 November 2021 @ 18:30 – 20:00
- ✓ *EAN photo contest:* Submission details to be shared soon

We hope to see you (virtually) there!

### EAN webinar on vaccine equity:

While high-income countries are implementing third vaccines for the entire population and vaccines for children, the high-risk population in the global south is still waiting for the first shot. What can our community of field epidemiologists and public health microbiologist do about this? Let's have a brainstorming session on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 20:00 CET**. If you are unable to make it, but you are still interested in this topic, please reach out to Emily Meyer ([meyere@rki.de](mailto:meyere@rki.de)).

### EPIET25 videos – new content:

There are now 12 video testimonies from alumni and former scientific coordinators celebrating the 25-year anniversary of the EPIET programme available on our website (click [here](#) to view).

Please do have a look and feel free to post some feedback and/or share your own EPIET and EUPHEM memories with us, we would love to hear from you!

We have also now uploaded the webinars that were held in March 2021 on our website (available [here](#)).

Some of those are only available for paying members, so if you would like to update your membership, please go to the end of this newsletter for more information.

### The Epidemiologist R Handbook:

The Epidemiologist R Handbook is a free, open-access R reference manual for applied epidemiology and public health. Written by epidemiologists, for epidemiologists, the handbook includes sample R code and tutorials addressing a wide range of data management and visualization tasks with epidemiological examples. An offline version is available for use in settings with low internet-connectivity. We welcome you to visit the site and appreciate you sharing it widely: <https://epirhandbook.com/>

## EAN DINNER & DRINKS: PARIS, BERLIN AND SESIMBRA (SAVE THE DATE - COMING UP!)

### Saturday 09 October 2021 from 19:00:

*What:* Paris EAN D&D meetup  
*Where:* (venue TBD) Paris, France  
*RSVP:* [Timodub@gmail.com](mailto:Timodub@gmail.com)

### Tuesday 12 October 2021 from 17:00:

*What:* Berlin EAN D&D meetup  
*Where:* [Eschenbräu](#), Triftstraße 67, 13353 Berlin, Germany  
*RSVP:* [BoenderS@rki.de](mailto:BoenderS@rki.de)

### Saturday 16 October 2021 from 14:00:

*What:* Marion Muehlen's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday – EAN welcome!  
*Where:* [Lagoa de Albufeira](#), Sesimbra, Portugal  
*RSVP:* [epi.dmica@gmail.com](mailto:epi.dmica@gmail.com)

We are delighted to announce that we were able to host our first face-to-face EAN Dinner & Drinks session in a long time

in Berlin this month. It was extremely well attended, with over 50 participants, including new and old PAE, EPIET and EUPHEM fellows, supervisors and friends of the network.

If you missed it, never fear as Sonia Boender has kindly organised another meetup in Berlin on 12<sup>th</sup> October (perhaps to be repeated every second Tuesday)!

We'll also be hosting an EAN dinner & drinks event in Paris on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021, to coincide with the board's next face-to-face meeting. Watch this space for details and we hope to see you there!

Last but not least, there is also a chance for EAN members in Portugal to come together in October! [Marion Muehlen will be celebrating her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday](#) and is kindly inviting members of the EAN family to join her on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

## GRADUATION AND WELCOME TO NEW COHORTS

### Welcome in-coming cohort 2021!

To the new fellows: we are very excited to welcome you to the EAN!

We are here to hear your thoughts about the challenges and opportunities that present themselves as your fellowship progresses. We are in contact with your EPIET and EUPHEM cohort representatives to catch up and see where we can support you. You can also contact us anytime via [our email](#) or via any of the other EAN platforms: [Website](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Facebook](#) accounts. We wish you the very best for your fellowship and look forward to meeting you soon - even if initially only virtually.

### Congratulations graduating cohort 2019!

We would also like to [congratulate cohort 2019](#) on their graduation – as soon as we can we hope to celebrate with you and in the meantime, we wish you all the best for your next ventures!

As newly minted alumni, we hope to welcome you to EAN as voting members during the next EAN General Assembly on 17 November 2021 at the (virtual) ESCAIDE conference.



Photo credit @ Charlotte Hammer, Introductory Course C2019

You can find out information on how to pay your membership fees to become a full member at the end of this newsletter.

## BECOME PART OF THE EAN BOARD IN NOVEMBER 2021

The EAN General Assembly (GA) at the ESCAIDE conference is where we elect our EAN Advisory Board Members to represent the Network. The members of the Board are chosen from amongst, and by, active EAN members (members up to date with their membership fees).

This year during ESCAIDE, we welcome members to submit their candidature for four open positions on the board. Below is a description of the duties of each of the four roles - however note that this is not an exhaustive list; in the board we all work closely together and shift tasks around according to people's interest and availability. We try to have 1-2 board meetings per month. Currently, we usually meet every second Tuesday at 7.30pm CET.

### President / Vice-president

The president represents the EAN, acts as chairperson at the annual General Assembly, ensures that the posts on the EAN Board are filled, ensures that the decisions made by the EAN Board are executed, runs and controls the general administration of the EAN association, is the legal and public representative of the association, represents the EAN in the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee, represents the EAN in the EPIET/EUPHEM Training Site Forum (TSF), represents the EAN in the EPIET/EUPHEM Selection Committee (can also be delegated to other board members), represents the EAN in collaborations with any other association or organisation (e.g. ECDC, TEPHINET etc.), and deals with any other task that may be decided in consultation with the other board members.

The vice-president supports the functions of president and is in close contact with the current fellows through the cohort reps. Our current VP (Stine) is considering running for president, but this means we will need a new VP.

### Secretary

The Secretary and his/her deputy provide operational support to all the activities of the EAN board, are responsible for arranging invitations for meetings, taking minutes of meetings, EAN correspondence, including management of the EAN inbox: labelling of emails, filing of relevant emails, liaison with EAN Members, weekly sending of EAN bulletin (including job listings, relevant courses and conferences etc.) to the network, updating and maintenance of the EAN website as well as the EAN Facebook profile and association page, contribution to setting of agenda's for regular EAN board meetings, contribution to logistic arrangements for EAN Annual General Assembly during ESCAIDE, contribution to logistic arrangements to ensure teleconference link ups, responsible for the coordination of the quarterly EAN newsletters (all board members contribute to the newsletters), and deals with any other task that may be decided in consultation with the other board members.

### Treasurer

The Treasurer and his/her deputy are responsible for maintaining the accounts of the EAN, paying bills and using the funds according to the instructions of the Advisory Board, downloading bank account statements every month, updating the membership fee database, administering EAN travel grants, finding new sponsors for grants, reimbursing

fees after ESCAIDE, updating new board composition to the French prefecture where we are registered after the GA, and updating administrative details with our bank accounts to keep us running financially. As for all members of the board, the treasurer also deal with any other task that may be decided in consultation with the board members.

### General Board Member

The general board member is a new role and Zsofia has been the first one to take on this challenge. The idea is that this person helps with various concrete tasks on the board (there is plenty to do!) e.g., making the member survey happen, preparing events, supporting the secretary tasks etc. We still need to better formalise this role, but it's very nice to have some extra hands on the board.

#### Some notes on eligibility to stand for election:

We strongly encourage applications from all our active members, both EPIET / EAP and EUPHEM alike. Being part of the EAN Board is a great opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the Network and the future of intervention

epidemiology and public health microbiology. It is also an opportunity to get to know other alumni and current fellows better. Last but not least - it's a lot of fun too!

If you are eligible and interested in standing for election, please let us know by email to [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com).

Please be reminded that only active members of the EAN Association can apply for and vote on the new Advisory Board Members. You can check your membership status and update your membership through our website or send us an email. If you are not up to date, it is not too late to go ahead and make payment for the coming year or 10 years (please see payment details at the end of the newsletter).

Please be advised that current fellows are welcome to attend the elections, but they do not have the right to vote in the general assembly.

The EAN Advisory Board Member elections will take place during the [EAN General Assembly at ESCAIDE on 17 November 2021](#).

## IN THE NEXT EDITION...

The Board will present a summary of their plans and main activities in the new year:

- ✓ An introduction of the new cohort 2021 fellows
- ✓ Some results from the EAN member survey
- ✓ Information on forthcoming EAN mini-modules, webinars, dinner & drink sessions

... and much more!

## MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ The **annual membership fee is now €30 / £28 GBP**.
- ✓ **Ten-year membership is available at €250 / £230 GBP**.

Please note that membership year runs from **1<sup>st</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> October** of each calendar year. **Make a payment now and have your membership extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 (or 2032)!**

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

Your membership fees can be paid as per instructions on our [website](#). If you are an EPIET, EUPHEM or EAP alumnus, you will already have a profile created on the website, and you can make a payment via bank transfer (see details below).

### EURO ACCOUNT (€30 per annum)

**Bank:** TransferWise Europe SA

**Address:** Room S52, Avenue Louise 54, Brussels 1050, BE

**Account Holder:** E.A.N. (EPIET Alumni Network)

**IBAN:** BE88 9670 3610 1241

**BIC/Swift:** TRWIBEB1

**Please indicate your name and year of graduation as reference in the bank transfer** (this is important, as sometimes names are not correctly displayed in the bank transfers).

If you do not have a profile on the website yet, you can fill in this [form](#) to request joining the network.

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

Thank you for your support!

### GBP ACCOUNT (£28 per annum)

**Bank:** TransferWise

**Address:** 56 Shoreditch High Street, London E16JJ, UK

**Account holder:** E.A.N. (EPIET Alumni Network)

**IBAN:** GB22 TRWI 2314 7095 5404 40

**Account Number:** 95540440

**Sort code:** 23-14-70