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Public Health and Human Rights: the first edition

The first edition of the in focus seminar on “[Public Health and Human Rights – Current Challenges and Possible Solutions](#)” took place at the **European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation on 19 May 2016**. [EIUC](#) would like to thank all lecturers, chairs and participants for their contributions and for making it a successful and intellectually stimulating event.

The day started with a welcome address by **Dr. Andraž Zidar**, E.MA Programme Director, followed by an inspiring key-note speech on “Universal ethics for public health and human rights” by **Prof. Stefano Semplici**, a former Chairperson of the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee and renowned scholar at the University of Rome Tor Vergata.

The seminar was divided in three panels: the first panel on national, regional and international perspectives included three presentations, respectively, by **Prof. Brigit Toebes**, “The right to health as a claim on public health: what are the challenges?”, **Dr. Sondus Hassounah**, “The right to health in the Arab world” and **Dr. Chamundeeswari Kuppuswamy**, “Right to development, health and India’s new innovation policy”. The successive panel on global health security had three interventions: the first by **Prof. Stefania Negri**, “International threats to public health (Ebola, Zika) and human rights”, the second by **Prof. Stéphanie Dagon**, “The Tuberculosis epidemic and human rights” and the last one by **Ms. Rossella Miccio**, “Global security, complex emergencies and human rights: a feedback from the field”. The final panel on public health systems and prevention consisted of four presentations: **Prof. Sarah Hawkes**, “Public health and prevention: problems and prospects”, **Dr. Gorik Ooms**, “The global responsibility for global health and the United Nations”, **Prof. Vesna Švab**, “Stigmatization of patients with mental health

problems: non-governmental and European experiences” and **Mr. Matteo Dembech** “WHO human rights approach on the strategy and action plan on refugees and migrant health in Europe”.

All panels were followed by interesting discussions and comments that helped in moving forward the frontiers at the **intersection between public health and human rights**. The main substantive points that came out of presentations and discussions were the following:

- a framework of universal ethics for public health and human rights should be established and applied to concrete areas such as disease prevention and health promotion; environment; working conditions; vulnerability and marginalization; and international collaboration;
- the right to health is not only an individual right but a societal and systemic concept as well (e.g. “health for all approach”);
- qualitative and quantitative analysis in the area of public health and human rights should be brought together with an aim to encourage inter-disciplinary research and dialogue;
- a better awareness of tensions between public health and human rights helps in accommodating these tensions in concrete areas and situations;
- scientific data demonstrates that epidemics – of infectious and non-communicable diseases – are growing, which necessitates the inclusion of human rights in adequate health strategies and programmes of action;
- the concept of social responsibility should be fully integrated in programmes on public health;
- accountability for activities of transnational corporations with regard to health should be established and their consequences monitored;
- civil society is extremely important in activities related to public health and its participation in health related governing bodies should be encouraged;
- strategies and measures aimed at preventing and combating stigma and discrimination of patients should be adopted and applied in practice;
- the respect for human rights of patients importantly contributes to the improvement of their health condition;
- a community based approach for treatment of persons with mental health disabilities should be encouraged;
- national and international institutions should adopt and implement effective measures for the protection and improvement of health of migrants and refugees.

Photo Gallery