

Hellenic School of Public Health [1929]

The Hellenic School of Public Health has contributed to the socioeconomic development of Greece, through the eradication of malaria, the partial control of tuberculosis and by the addition of 20 years to life expectancy to the Greek population and quality improvement of all health indicators [1930-70]. It is a founding member of the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region [ASPHER, Zagreb, 1966]. In 1989, the School commenced activities in the Balkans, which included technical aid and research supported by the Greek and European authorities and graduate studies for students in the region.

In 1992, the School conducted the 14th ASPHER General Assembly. It was held in the Goulandri HORN Foundation [Plaka], under the Acropolis and adjacent to the Tower of the Winds. Its agenda included Balkan Public Health and the European Nervous System [WHO health Information]. Distinguished Greek guests included Ministers Benaki [Education] and Giannakou [Health] and Academicians Merikas and Despotopoulos. Support of Greek and European authorities ensured the participation of 30 representatives from Eastern Europe. Of particular note were a lecture-recital on Greek music given by Mimi Pleassa and introduced by Dimitri Horn and lectures given in Delphi on Greek mythology and archeology.

ASPHER's public health response and role after the Maastricht Treaty of the European Union was debated and an award was inaugurated in the name of Andrija Stampar, a coworker of the Rockefeller Foundation and a World Health Organisation founding father. Two of the most recent recipients of the Stampar medal are Julio Frenk [2012] former Minister of Health, Mexico and now Harvard University and Peter Piot, Dean, London School Hygiene and Tropical medicine and pioneer in Ebola. Deliberations were also initiated for the transformation of the School into the National School of Public Health, 1994.

The Hellenic School is one of the first such institutions in Europe and is considered a sister School to similar entities in Ankara, London and Zagreb. It is one of two Schools inaugurated by Eleftherios Venizelos [Athens, Smyrna]. It just managed to get underway following a bizarre pandemic of dengue fever coming from Syria [1927-30, 80-90% morbidity, 6% mortality] that paralyzed Greece, caused panic in European capitals and brought about the intervention, in Greece, of the League of Nations [1929] and the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. Launching of the School catalyzed a short-lived revolution in public health.

Today, the School continues to promote Greek public health and is well connected with the international community for public health and health disaster management. It has undertaken studies on the consequences of austerity on the Greek population and it is working in the Balkan region on reconciliation after the horrors of ethnic cleansing and the need for enhanced human security, through a collaboration with the United Nations, University for Peace, Belgrade. Most recently, it has established a working relationship with the South Eastern Europe Health Network established through the European Stability Pact.