

EAN MONTHLY NEWSFLASH

April Edition

Spotlight on EAN alumni : Interview of Susan

In this issue, we interview Susan Hahné (cohort 5, 1999), senior epidemiologist at the National Immunisation Programme department of the Centre for Epidemiology and Surveillance of Infectious Diseases (EPI) of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) in the Netherlands.



Could you tell us about your involvement in vaccine-preventable diseases epidemiology and your latest book?

My involvement with vaccine-preventable diseases (VPD) really started with the vaccinology module that I did as an EPIET fellow; at the time it was a ten-day module in Glasgow, UK. Prior to starting EPIET, I thought I wanted to do zoonoses and doing EPIET in Wales was a good option. I bought a book on zoonoses prior to moving to Cardiff, but the vaccine module changed my focus. It was a great module with great experts, including very senior experts from Finland and other experts including Natasha Crowcroft from cohort 1. I understood that vaccines were the key intervention that could make a huge difference for public health. I like the fact that working with vaccines in public health requires you to embrace very different topics, ranging from behavioural sciences to "hardcore " immunology and everything in between. I enjoy seeing the overall picture and how it all comes together. It's more diverse than working with, for example, STIs, because the intervention is so effective and directly visible and really has population impacts.

I have been lucky enough to be able to teach in the EPIET vaccine modules with Hanna, Richard and Paolo. I also worked in other areas, which I combined with working on our most recent [book](#) over the last seven years. It was a great opportunity to bring together the experience from the EPIET vaccine modules and the experience of Paddy Farrington and Kaatje Bollaerts, my co-authors. It was a very creative process which I loved. We

examples also for e.g. case studies, makes the learning value much less.

I'm still working on COVID-19 but also on other VPDs. It's always busy. The exciting news is that since mid April I'm the new Editor-in-Chief of Epidemiology and Infection! I'm taking over this role from Professor Norman Noah, which is a real honour for a journal that is dedicated to our area of work already since 1902.

Congratulations on that! How do you think vaccination programmes and the challenges they face have changed in the last few decades?

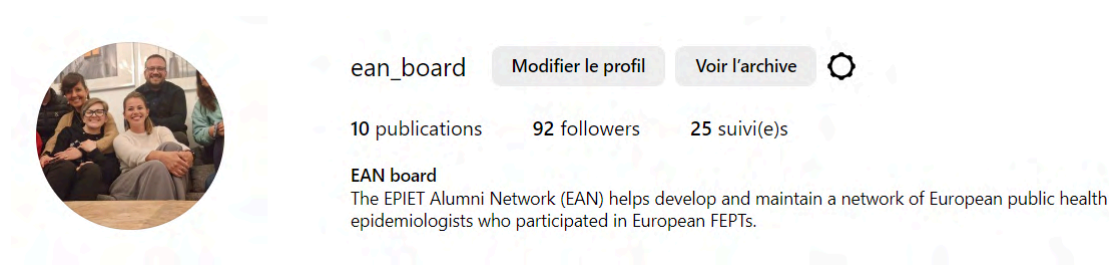
The number of vaccines typically included in a vaccination programme has increased a lot. That is generally a really good trend because we can prevent more morbidity and mortality. There is of course a lot more attention to suboptimal coverage and heterogeneity in vaccination rates, as well as ways to tackle these. It is difficult to disentangle the reasons behind low coverage. Often people jump to the conclusion that it is vaccine hesitancy, while it could be due to very different reasons.

What are the next steps after this book?

The book has a wealth of examples from real life in blue boxes. You can have a look, it's free access! The book could be redone focusing solely on COVID-19, as all the methods mentioned in the book have been used in COVID-19, too. It would be a great opportunity to document all the (methodological) lessons learned, which might help with the next pandemic. This could also be a challenge for an EAN member who would like to take this on.

Thank you very much, Susan, and good luck with your next endeavours!

EAN celebrated alumni for World Immunization Week



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Laurène Peckeu is an epidemiologist with varied experience across field epidemiology and research.

She worked at Santé publique France, INSERM, RIVM (where she did her EU-track EPIET fellowship, cohort 2018) and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM), among others.



in Public Health, but her main interest is vaccine preventable diseases. A year ago, she started working on health policy.

She is now part of the Haute Autorité de Santé (HAS) in the team that is responsible for evaluating vaccines and implementing vaccination strategies in France (French NITAG).



During her early education, **Morana Tomljenović** developed an interest in medicine and biology. After completing her medical degree for physicians, she began working at the medical university's Department of Epidemiology and Social Medicine in Rijeka, Croatia. Later, she was employed at a regional public health institution in the Department of Epidemiology. She developed a

specific interest in infectious diseases, with a particular sympathy for zoonotic diseases. In addition, among other things, she is also actively participating in a vaccination program, confronting all the challenges that mandatory and voluntary vaccination encounter in the present day. Nowadays, she is involved in the management of the largest pertussis outbreak in the last 40 years in Croatia, providing preventive measures, including vaccination, to the vulnerable population.

In 2017, she became a Field Epidemiology Path (EPIET) fellow. The program started several years ago in Croatia. It has been shown that this was an amazing opportunity to become involved in "international" epidemiology. To observe differences and similarities between countries in the organization of primary health care systems, surveillance, approaches, structures, and responses in various contexts and instances related to infectious diseases and vaccination.

Sanja Vuzem is a medical doctor, public health specialist and EPIET alumni (cohort 2016). She has been working in epidemiology of communicable disease for more than 10 years now, ranging from field epidemiology with outbreak detection and management to working in a vaccination clinic, advising travelers, promoting vaccination in media and raising awareness about the safety and importance of vaccines throughout her career.



collaborations, however she never forgets to check her vaccination status and makes sure her vaccinations are up to date.



Sabrina Bacci completed EPIET in 2009 and was based at the Statens Serum Institut in Denmark. She is a Medical Doctor with a medical speciality in Hygiene and Preventive medicine from the University of Rome La Sapienza, Italy and with a Master in Epidemiology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Vaccine preventable diseases and immunisation have always been Sabrina's major area of work, including during the time she spent at the Istituto Superiore di Sanita' and at the States Serum Institut. During her time at EPIET, she was deployed to the WHO Regional Office for Europe to support the actions and assessments related to the 2009 pandemic.

She is currently working as Head of Vaccine-preventable Disease and Immunisation at European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, and before that she worked in the same group for more than 10 years.

She believes EPIET was an important step in her career and it contributes to the EU sense of belonging and mutual understanding, which she continues to observe when working with other ex-EPIET fellows at ECDC, around Europe and with other international organizations.

In her current position, she continues to support the EPIET programme through the work of her group with a focus on the Vaccinology course. Over the years she has supported opportunities for fellows to interact and develop through the work of ECDC in vaccination.

Note from the field :

Maria João Cardoso with the EU Health Task Force



Fellow cohort 2022 placed at the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety, in Vienna, and I was the first fellow collaborating with the EU Health Task Force (EUHTF). But let's go back. It was June 29th, 2023, when we all received an email through EVA alerting us about a new international mission. This mission was with ECDC, to work remotely on risk factors for invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) disease in the EU/EEA. I was familiarized with the surge of iGAS cases, having dedicated several months to working on that topic at a national level. However, my focus was on conducting a genomic surveillance study. Therefore, I saw this mission as an opportunity to work on my surveillance, data collection and analysis skills.

I applied and got called for an interview at the beginning of July, which turned out to be already the first meeting for the project. I found myself in the unique position of being the sole applicant for the mission, which, surprisingly, led to my automatic selection. After a few questions and a brief explanation of the process, off we went! The initial phase unfolded rapidly. We were meeting regularly, and the work progressed promptly. Together, we developed the questionnaire and presented our comprehensive plan to interested countries. Meanwhile, I was working for this project remotely, at a 50% pace, and the mission was supposed to last for 12 weeks. Weekly, I submitted reports to the EPIET office detailing my activities on the international mission, in an email chain including a lot of people.

Progress was smooth sailing, until we encountered little miss sunshine, bureaucracy. Data sharing agreements were needed for this study, so our data collection was frozen until these agreements were signed by both sides. It was summertime, everything was progressing at a slower pace than anticipated. Time stretched on so much, that by the end of my 12 weeks, I had not begun working with the data. That was when, by mistake, I asked permission to extend my international mission to everyone in that email chain. In my defense, I was very busy and probably multitasking. Unintentionally, I ended up seeking permission from the fellowship office administrative instead of my frontline coordinator, likely due to a momentary lapse in thought.

Naturally, I was reprimanded for not following the chain of command, which was deserved. Immediately thereafter, it was pointed out that I couldn't take on another project, as my matrix was already packed with projects from my hosting site. However, just 5 minutes later, Adam responded to my ill-advised email saying that I could represent the fellowship at ECDC by making the international mission my research project. My matrix needed to be rearranged for that to happen, but it was possible. My international mission had just become my Public Health Research project.

Since then, I have successfully managed to work with the data, assist in preparing presentations, and deliver our progress reports at both the EUHTF meeting and to the

The last data sharing agreements were finalized in December, and by January, we had received data from all participating countries. Currently, I am in the process of drafting the manuscript.

While my experience is currently unique, I anticipate that in a couple of years, it will become more commonplace. The EUHTF has extracted valuable lessons from this experience, ensuring that future collaborations with fellows will be considerably smoother. I can only speak highly of this project. Given my limited exposure to epidemiological or statistical methods at my hosting site, I have gained invaluable knowledge from my project supervisors, Vivian Leung, Agoritsa Baka, Dorothee Obach and Emma Löf. Additionally, during my visit to ECDC for the EUHTF meeting, I have been warmly welcome by everyone, especially Ettore Severi. I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity and for how everything unfolded. All I can do is recommend to my fellow fellows and future fellows to engage in projects with the EUHTF as I am sure they will have an unparalleled experience addressing public health issues in the EU, working alongside a team that welcomes them with open arms.

Be part of the community : ways to stay involved and connected!

Do what you love to do!

You'd like to get active on a project for our community? An experience you'd like to share or a topic you'd like to educate on? Please reach out to us at eanboard@gmail.com if you'd like to discuss your idea and want our support. We are available to help you bringing your ideas come to life.

Support us with mini-assignments

Our community lives from all of us and the capacities of the board alone are limited. Every now and then, we may reach out to ask for your help on specific tasks or activities to get the best out of it for all of us.

Activate your membership

Many benefits are lined up for active members of the network (GOARN requests of assistance, bulletins, discounts on mini-modules, access to specific ressources on our website...).

Membership runs from Nov. 1 until Oct 31 of the following year - but you can activate your membership at anytime! **The annual membership fee is now €30 / £28. There is a**

Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees. We have added a new payment option for credit cards to make membership renewal a bit easier. To use this option, please go to our website and follow the instructions there.

The details for how to transfer fees by online banking are also on the [EAN webpage](#); if you require any further information on membership payment, we kindly ask you to contact the EAN board (eanboard@gmail.com), putting "membership payment" in the subject line.

Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to eanboard@gmail.com with a copy of the receipt/invoice to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer). Thank you for your support!

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