

# **SCHOOLS FOR HEALTH IN EUROPE RESEARCH GROUP**

## **Position paper**

### **What is the SHE Research Group?**

The SHE research group (RG) is a consortium of researchers and research institutions from countries in the WHO European region, who are part of the Schools for Health in Europe (SHE) Network Foundation.

The SHE RG consists of scholars with expertise, capacities, and interest in further developing, researching and evaluating relevant issues and approaches on school health promotion and health education within the European context.

### **What is the main aim of the SHE Research Group?**

The main aim of the SHE RG is to support the development of school health promotion and health education in the WHO European region by instigating, facilitating, coordinating, upscaling and initiating theoretical and empirical research.

### **What are the objectives of the RG?**

The objectives are:

- (1) to facilitate and coordinate research development in the field of school health promotion and health education, contributing to conceptual development and research-based evidence for the development of the health-promoting school approach, and
- (2) to contribute to research capacity building and provide consultancy for the SHE members in collaboration with the SHE Secretariat.

### **How is SHE RG organized?**

The research group is coordinated and facilitated by a chair, co-chair and steering group. Working teams are created based on interest and/or need.

#### **The steering group**

The steering group coordinates and facilitates the work of the research group, in collaboration with the SHE Secretariat and the SHE Board. The steering group consists of seven RG members, including the chair and the co-chair. The members are invited by the chairs based on research experience (both juniors/seniors) and geographical location (north, south, west, east of the WHO European region). The steering group is nominated for three years. To ensure optimal communication and cooperation, the steering group cannot be replaced simultaneously. Regular

meetings are organized mostly in connection to existing RG meetings and conferences, or via Skype, and the meeting schedule will be agreed upon within the group.

The tasks of the steering group are (1) to give input on issues related to school health promotion research and other ongoing tasks of the SHE research group, (2) to provide insight and expertise on various fields related to school health promotion and health education, (3) to offer advice and support to the chair and co-chair with their responsibilities and task, and overall, (4) to provide strategic oversight and create a forum for critical reflection.

When referring to the steering group outside of the RG, the name “Steering group of the SHE RG” will be used.

### **Working teams**

Working teams consisting of the SHE RG members and external partners (if needed) will be established to build activities on specific questions, topics, or themes. The working team can be formulated 1) around specific research projects, funding applications, publications, and reviews 2) with a specific scientific event, or 3) concerning an interest in developing and working with specific topics. A working team is coordinated by a SHE RG member, who keeps the RG chairs updated on the team’s activity. Activity within a working team is concluded after the agreed period.

### **Yearly working plan**

The RG will develop a yearly working plan for the period of 2019-2022.

### **What are the research areas of SHE RG?**

The main overall research area is health promotion and health education in schools, with a particular focus on the Health Promoting Schools approach. Specific emphasis is to support existing research and create research evidence related to the links between education and health and how such links unfold within the school community as a whole.

Additionally, the group’s research can aim to link health topics (e.g., healthy eating, mental health, physical activity, disabilities, risk behaviours, etc.) and the whole-school approach to health promotion, focus on health determinants, a socio-ecological view of health, health inequalities, and sustainability in school health promotion and health education. Research informing school practices is considered important, as well as participatory research approaches. Equal value is given to the diverse theoretical frameworks, methodologies and epistemological points of view.

The main principles underpinning the research agenda are the SHE core values (equity, sustainability, inclusion, empowerment and action competence, democracy) and SHE pillars (whole school approach to health, participation, school quality, evidence, schools, and communities) which will be operationalized in specific research issues.

### **What are the activities/ways of working of the SHE RG?**

The SHE RG will support and encourage its members to:

- form joint working teams for research purposes (projects, funding applications, conducting research reviews, and events, etc.)
- participate in and establish a variety of activities, such as workshops in conferences, researcher (or student) exchange, joint PhD-supervision, sharing data, webinars and seminars, learning modules, finding keynotes or lecturers
- participate in capacity building workshops
- participate in scientific meetings and other recognized distinguished positions representing the SHE approach
- link with other (European and/or international) research groups, study groups (e.g., HBSC) and initiatives
- disseminate research findings through publications, conferences, and other scientific and public events

Collaborative activities between the SHE RG and the SHE Assembly are considered important to facilitate communication between them and to create a shared understanding of joint activities.

### **How are funding, accountability, and coordination done at the SHE RG?**

The work for the coordination of the RG will be included in the annual SHE work plan. Further funding for the SHE RG activities will be acquired by the members of the research group consortium, through joint research projects and/or activities. Fundraising for specific research projects and activities can also be undertaken by any of the SHE national coordination institutions, in collaboration with members of the research group and SHE steering group.

Members of the EU will get co-funding for joint events organized by the SHE. The members of non-EU countries will obtain their own funding.

The SHE RG chair is Marjorita Sormunen (University of Eastern Finland) and the co-chair is Kevin Dadaczynski (Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany). The chairs are elected by the research group for three years with an option for re-election. The Assembly approves the election. The chairs collaborate closely with the Secretariat (University College South Denmark).

### **How can you join and maintain the membership of the SHE RG?**

To become a full member of the research group, applicants should fulfill the following criteria:

- At least a Master's degree regarding school health promotion, health education or disease prevention (a wide range of disciplines will be considered, e.g., health sciences, social sciences, life sciences);
- At least three scientific publications (e.g., journal article, book chapter) concerning school health promotion and health education and;
- Participation in at least one research or development project on school health promotion and health education within the last three years

To become a junior member of the research group, the following criteria are needed:

- Current work or studies are related to health promotion or prevention (or related disciplines, e.g., medicine, health psychology, sociology) or education.

- The applicant is supervised by or collaborating actively with a senior researcher who is either a member of the SHE research group or is experienced in school health promotion research.
- Participation in at least one project (including PhD-studies) on school health promotion and health education within the last three years (confirmation: publication, conference presentation, or another relevant form).

There is no fee or end date for the membership. The member is considered to have a personal commitment to contribute to the group and expected to have an active involvement in SHE research activities (see “What are the Activities/ways of working of the SHE RG?”). The member list is updated regularly and a member who cannot be contacted or who no longer shows any activity in the RG, or who wishes to withdraw from membership will be removed from the list.

Non-EU-citizens can become members (either junior or full members) of the research group in similar conditions detailed above (exception: see funding).

Respectful communication is valued, as are understanding and appreciation of the variety of native languages among the members.

## **Term**

This Position paper is effective from 11.12.2019 and will be updated yearly.

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