
Final Report – IN-PHASE Project

Submitted to: Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+)
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1. Executive Summary

The IN-PHASE project was launched as a strategic inter-university initiative to explore the possibilities for harmonizing pre-graduate public health (PH) education in Switzerland among SSPH+ partner universities. It aimed to assess the current educational landscape, identify training needs, and propose a framework for a national pre-grad PH Master program aligned with the ASPHER competences. Through four thematic workshops and structured collaboration among five key academic institutions (UZH, UNIGE, UNILU, UNIBAS and USI), the project has laid a foundation for future inter-university program development, curriculum integration, and mobility opportunities.

2. List of participants :

- Emiliano Albanese (USI)
- Rebecca Amati (USI)
- Kleona Bezani (USI)
- Maddalena Fiordelli (USI)
- Peter Odermatt (UNIBAS)
- Nicola Diviani (UNILU)
- Sara Rubinelli (UNILU)
- Rafael Luis Ruiz De Castaneda (UNIGE)
- Stephanie Dagron (UNIGE)
- Thomas Radtke (UZH)

3. Background and Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified awareness and demand for structured, high-quality training in public health. Despite having several excellent postgraduate programs, Switzerland lacks a cohesive, harmonized structure for pre-graduate (Bologna-type) Master's education in PH. This project aimed to address those gaps and respond to calls from national authorities for a more integrated PH workforce development strategy.

4. Objectives

- Explore and strengthen inter-university collaborations in PH education at the pre-grad level.
- Lay the groundwork for a harmonized, inter-university Master's program in PH.
- Promote ASPHER-aligned training across Switzerland's linguistic and academic regions.

5. Methods and Activities

The project was structured around four thematic workshops:

5.1. Workshop 1 – Exploration of Public Health education and training needs

Held in person in Lugano (Feb 8, 2024), this session introduced the IN-PHASE initiative, reviewed existing PH Master programs, and explored definitions of training needs and their assessment (Appendix 1). Key insights included the value of stakeholder engagement, difficulties in tracking alumni outcomes, and the potential of joint teaching activities over physical student mobility.

5.2. Workshop 2 – Mapping of the current national offer in pre-grad masters in PH disciplines

Conducted online (Mar 14, 2024), this session focused on aligning courses with the ASPHER competences, identifying core content, and discussing harmonization using Bloom's taxonomy (Appendix 2). The idea of creating a formal framework for specialization tracks and minor recognition also emerged.

5.3. Workshop 3 – Identification of content, pedagogical modalities, and outcome opportunities gaps in existing Masters

Held online (Apr 18, 2024), this session focused on finalizing a national survey to map teaching content and pedagogical approaches in line with ASPHER (Appendix 3). The REDCap survey was designed for local dissemination and will inform inter-university collaboration on teaching models.

5.4. Workshop 4 – Discussion and agreement about the content and structure of the PH pre-grad offer in CH

Held in Lugano (May 21, 2024), this session addressed regulatory barriers, institutional collaboration, and the feasibility of joint degrees or specialization models. Participants discussed accreditation, mobility complexities, and pedagogical innovations like block courses and integrated teaching weeks (Appendix 4).

6. Outcomes and Deliverables

- Core curriculum draft and major specialization proposals across partner institutions.
- ASPHER-aligned course mapping tool and alignment matrix (Appendix 2).
- REDCap-based survey for cross-institutional analysis of pedagogical gaps (Appendix 6).
- Draft plans for mobility, specialization, and joint intensive teaching formats.
- Recommendations for future harmonization and institutional support.

7. Dissemination and Strategic Engagement

The project was presented at the SSPH+ Annual Meeting (May 7, 2024) in a session titled 'Assessing Pre-Graduate Training Needs in Public Health' (Appendix 5). This event engaged faculty across institutions in dialogue around continuous training needs assessment and curriculum innovation. The session featured a pilot study presentation, collaborative group work, and a plenary discussion.

8. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Administrative differences and the lack of systematic alumni tracking were notable challenges. However, strong collaborative engagement and the willingness to share and co-

develop models were key enablers. The reluctance toward physical mobility from international students highlighted the need for virtual and modular alternatives.

9. Last Steps

- Analysis of survey findings and publication.
- SSPH+ follow-up working group for pre-grad Public Health training and education programs across SSPH+ affiliated institutions (with Julia Bohlius and Murielle Bochud).

10. Integrated Insights from Research and Dissemination Activities

Beyond the IN-PHASE initiative, complementary activities were carried out to deepen understanding of the supply landscape for pre-graduate Public Health (PH) education in Switzerland. These included a national survey, and an interactive session at the SSPH+ Annual Meeting 2024.

9.1 ASPHER-Aligned Survey and Data Collection

The ASPHER-based survey—developed collaboratively during IN-PHASE Workshops 2 and 3 and finalized in Workshop 4—was implemented using REDCap, a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases.

Data collection was conducted across all participating institutions between December 2024 and April 2025. The survey gathered course-level data on content, delivery methods, and alignment with the ASPHER competence framework (Appendix 6). It served not only as a mapping tool but also as a foundation for future analysis, curriculum development, and policy dialogue. This activity extended beyond the original scope of IN-PHASE and established a valuable precedent for ongoing monitoring and harmonization efforts across Swiss PH Master programs. A collaborative manuscript resulting from this additional activity is in preparation and will be submitted to the International Journal of Public Health.

11. Broader Implications and Conclusion

While Swiss pre-grad PH training programs do not fully cover the ASPHER framework, they encompass additional areas relevant to national and international public health priorities. The diversity of programs offers an opportunity for targeted specialization and innovation, such as block courses, joint teaching weeks, and modular learning tracks.

As ASPHER updates its competences and EU-level reforms progress, Switzerland is well-positioned to align with and contribute to this evolving educational landscape. The IN-

PHASE initiative has successfully laid the groundwork for a harmonized and modernized PH education offer, and future steps will include analyzing the collected survey data, developing actionable recommendations, and seeking institutional and SSPH+ support for sustained collaboration.

12. List of Attachments

The following materials are included as annexes to this report:

- Appendix 1 : Workshop 1 – Agenda and PowerPoint presentation (08.02.2024)
- Appendix 3 : Workshop 2 – Agenda and PowerPoint presentation (14.03.2024)
- Appendix 3 : Workshop 3 – Agenda and PowerPoint presentation (18.04.2024)
- Appendix 4 : Workshop 4 – Agenda and PowerPoint presentation (21.05.2024)
- Appendix 5 : Application for IN-PHASE session at the SSPH+ Annual Meeting 2024 (07.05.2024)
- Appendix 6 : Final version of the ASPHER-aligned survey circulated across institutions (REDCap export)
- Appendix 7 : Financial report