

Welcome Speech by EUSUHM's President

Dr. med. Gabriele Ellsaesser

As President and Vice President, we are thrilled to host this event for the first time in Germany, at the Oberlin Schule. We are proud that after 2 years of preparation, networking and support by numerous cooperating partners, we succeeded in executing this inspiring event. For the first time, we teamed up across borders, bringing together Germany's Child and Youth Health Care Service (KJGD) within the BVÖGD, supported by the German Society for Social Paediatrics, and Switzerland's ScolaMed.

It's our great pleasure to warmly welcome our esteemed political representative from Brandenburg in person, the Health Minister Mrs. Ursula Nonnemacher and on behalf of the City Major of Potsdam, Mrs. Alexandra Mebus-Haarhoff, via a video address. Furthermore, we highly enjoy the attendance of the Federal Health Ministry on behalf of Mrs. Elke Bruns-Philipps, an expert colleague in public health. We are grateful for your time and commitment.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasise that EUSUHM's 14 member organisations out of 11 European countries are present together with numerous colleagues involved in the program as speakers.

Therefore, we would like to express a big "thank you" to all of the presenters. Besides our keynote speakers, you are the core pillar of the scientific program.

Thank you for coming! Enjoy your time sharing your knowledge and practical experience among each other.

Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the Oberlin Schule, Director Mrs. Katrin Rosenbaum, and the former principal, Mr. Uwe Plenzke, for opening their school during three days and for the kindness we are yet to experience.

Let us now briefly outline the key topics of the 22nd EUSUHM Congress.

Why was chosen "Sustainable health in children and students - reduce the gap?"

We know from scientific research that to ensure the health and well-being of our children and adolescents, we must invest throughout their entire lifespan. Starting with early support in early childhood, we want to highlight the importance of the first 1000 days, followed by continuous health support in their environments and throughout key transition.

However, to achieve this goal we need to address significant health disparities by social classes, diversity, chronic diseases, disability, migrant and asylum status and, lastly, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data from Germany's school entry health checks show significant disparities in child development, including speech disorders, obesity and psychological issues, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Post-pandemic, many German adolescents are experiencing increased anxiety and depression, contributing to higher rates of school absenteeism.

The lingering effects across Europe have prompted the WHO to develop a new strategy on child and adolescent health and well-being, reflecting similar findings observed throughout the region.

These insights from the core of our congress will help us to advice effective countermeasures to tackle these challenges. The program features 66 oral and 35 poster presentations selected from 102 submitted abstracts. I encourage you to join the 18 interactive rooms on Friday to share your experiences.

Well-resourced school health services are essential for ensuring the health of children and adolescents. They support academic success by monitoring health, addressing needs and promoting mental well-being. They reach all children, regardless of social status, in childcare centres and schools. For this reason, the conference will explore various health initiatives and programs in these learning environments.

To close the speech, we would like to express our special thanks to the Programme Committee, EUSUHM's Executive Committee, the congress organiser, sponsors, and NGOs for their strong support.

We wish everyone a wonderful congress.