Society for Social Medicine and Population Health WINTER Newsletter Volume 10, Issue 4 DECEMBER 2019





Our ASM in Cork seems a long time ago now, but I'm sure that those of you who attended will agree that it was an excellent meeting, so ably organised by our colleagues there. SSM has been fairly quiet since then and winter approaches and the weather has deteriorated. I hope none of you have been affected by the flooding that's affected various parts of England.

In the UK, we are now just past the 'lies, damned lies and statistics' of a general election campaign. Many instances of misleading statements have been noted, but I've been appalled by some of the statistics and graphs in the campaign literature from a party in my constituency. Even in primary school, I knew that 21% is not two-thirds of 57%, and that 19% is not two thirds of 21%, yet that's what a bar graph appears to show. I've written to complain, and have been told it's a 'podium graph' (something I'd never heard of in 40 years of working as a statistician!). This seems to allow bars to be of any height one choses – it's the order of the size that matters. But other 'podium graphs' I've found don't look like bar graphs. Truth, albeit an elusive concept at the best of times, certainly seems well hidden now.

Last summer our unit organised a public engagement event at our local Park Run on Southampton Common. Those involved in public engagement know that it is a two-way exchange and that we learn a large amount from those with whom we interact. However, I hadn't expected to be so inspired by the atmosphere at the Park Run to try to



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take up running myself. I'm now over half way through the NHS Couch to 5k and, with luck, will attempt the Park Run in 2020. Having had poorly-controlled asthma as a child and being unable to run, it gives me a great buzz to be able to do it as an adult – even though I'm very slow indeed. Southampton Common in autumn at dawn is truly magical.

They say it's never too late to get more active, and research evidence supports that too. However, I can't find any evidence of an evaluation of Couch to 5k. PubMed gives only one paper that mentions it, describing a crosssectional study of runners involved in Park Run. It found that those who'd devised their own training programme were more likely to be injured than those who followed Couch to 5k. But those who'd never got as far as Park Run haven't been assessed. So is Couch to 5k the appropriate way to learn to run, and what is the trade-off between getting fitter and being injured? We all want evidence-based interventions but those that get introduced and widely publicised often have limited, if any, research to back them up. I'm not sure how we address this problem. Should I abandon

Couch to 5k until there is evidence? (But, I'm enjoying it...!)

This is my last newsletter to you as president of the Society. It has been a huge privilege to serve SSM in this way and I've enjoyed it enormously. The committee has been wonderful to work with and I've been so well supported, thank you to them all. Very many thanks to Peter Tennant for all the work he did as honorary secretary, and to Sarah Gibney for taking on the mantle. We are now looking for someone to work with Sarah and are also looking for an honorary treasurer to work with Anna Pearce for her final year and then to take over from her. Those who do these jobs gain an enormous amount from it and widen their networks massively. Do think about these jobs for you. I am handing over to Kate Hunt who takes on the role of president from January. She will be an excellent president; I'm looking forward to working with her next year as past-president, and wish her well in the role.

Hazel



https://www.flickr.com/photos/joeprice/6347369096

Society for Social Medicine & Population Health



The Society's next Annual Scientific Meeting will take place between 9-11th September 2020: Hosted jointly by the <u>Institute of Public Health</u> at the University of Cambridge, the event will include a range of parallel abstract sessions, workshops and plenary sessions.

Our call for abstracts and workshop submissions will open at the beginning of February 2020.

Why should I attend?

Social medicine is the study of health in its widest sense. It covers a range of subjects including epidemiology, the medical and health needs of society, health services, and the prevention of disease. This conference spans all research that addresses important issues in population health sciences and includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Everyone interested in population health sciences can come together to share information and network in a rigorous yet friendly atmosphere.

Check our website or Twitter feed nearer the time for further details.



The 63rd Annual Scientific Meeting took place over the 5th—7th September 2019 at the University of Cork.

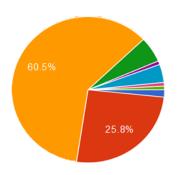
This report provides a short summary of the questionnaire responses received by the committee.

Thanks to the 125 delegates who completed the online questionnaire

Conference Report: Joint European Congress of Epidemiology & SSM Annual Scientific Meeting 2019, Cork Ireland

Delegates

About half the delegates who completed the survey were not members of either SSM or the International Epidemiological Association. It was the first SSM ASM for 43% of respondents (13 came from outside Europe). There were mainly full-time professionals (60.5% of respondents), followed by full-time research students (25.8%).



Organisation

Lay out for viewing posters and general siting thereof is often problematic and scored the most negative votes (36% and 25%, respectively). Delegates experienced issues seeing the posters and listening to the moderated poster sessions during which authors explained their research. Other problems were raised regarding some aspects of the registration and organisation: 13% of negative feedback were reported for the instructions for reaching the venue and 11% for the availability of re-

With a wide variety of responses, over two thirds of respondents gave epidemiology as one of their disciplines and the most commonly cited research areas were ageing (20%), cardiovascular disease (19%) and diet and nutrition (18%). The main motivations for attending (weighted score 3 if first, 2 if second, 1 if third) were finding out about new research in their field and wanting to present research.



freshments. There were requests for more hot drinks at the start of the day.

In terms of timing, nearly a quarter found the 9am starts too early on Thursday and Friday. Although not everyone in the career-level groups answered, there is clearly a need for more specific activities for each group, especially for the MCRs, 40% of those responding agreeing that there were not enough sessions.

Presentations

90 % who rated the oral session, 63% of those rating poster sessions and 77% of those rating rapid fire sessions said that they gained new ideas or perspectives for research at least half the time. All but a small number rated the scientific quality of oral sessions, posters and rapid-fire sessions high for at least half the time. The plenaries (by Prof Whitehead, Prof Beral and Prof Rothman) were given average scores of over 4 out of 5.

20 out of 125 did not look at the posters and a similar number did not attend rapid fire sessions. Perhaps we should see posters as an opportunity for displaying information that has a smaller catchment, recognising that not only the popular subjects are important.

Elizabeth Breeze (LSHTM)
Gilberte Martine-Edith (Loughborough University)

"Really enjoyable conference with good opportunities for networking and good presentations that were varied in topic."



Free place recipients 2019

Anna Le Gouais Ed Whittaker Eftychia Kotronia Emma Butcher Gargie Ahmad Georgia Chatzi Gilbert Martine-Edith Ines Mesa Jae Won Suh Joanna Blodgett Juwel Rana Kayleigh Easy Yi Lu Mingyue Gao Miriam Alvarado Phillipp Frank Rachel Proctor Rebecca Green Riyad El-Moslemany Sarah Buckingham Sarah Masefield Yun-Ting Huang Michal Shimonovitch Khawla Lamlum

ECR Free Place Reports

Every year, the Society offers a number of free places to attend the Annual Scientific Meeting, aimed at ECRs and others who would may be unable to secure funding to come and present their research. Recipients of these free places are asked to provide a report sharing their experiences and telling us what they thought about the conference. Here are some excerpts from this year's Reports:

Ed Whittaker

My initial impression of the conference was that of welcome, openness, and ample opportunity to learn from the experience of those around me. The keynote speakers were inspirational in their respective fields, offering insight and comment on pressing issues in the world of epidemiology and public health.

Anna Le Gouais

The health inequalities sessions were particularly interesting as this is an area where I have a personal interest, particularly as I am a school governor in a school with very mixed demographics, yet it is not an area of research that I am currently focussed on. The keynote speaker, Prof. Dame Margaret Whitehead set the tone for this well and the sessions on health inequality were varied and interesting.

Mingvue Gao

The Cochrane lecture was a highlight for me. Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead gave a lively and inspiring talk about the health in children from different SES circumstances and the impact of policy on their health.

I didn't seem to suffer any negative public health consequences from kissing the Blarney Stone and perhaps it helped with my networking during the conference dinner!

Michal Shimonovitch

My first presentation at an academic conference was by far the most exciting experience in my academic career thus far. After working on my project for a year in a bit of a bubble, I got to defend my arguments in a way I had never had to before. I was challenged on my thought process and the inclusion of certain methods. Before the presentation, I thought this was the nightmare scenario – now I fully understand the value of healthy and vigorous debate on progressing and improving research. My supervisors tried to calm my nerves by saying SSM was the best place to have my first presentation, and they were very right. . I am very grateful to have had this opportunity and look forward to SSM next year!

Ines Mesa

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for networking and everyone I met was very approachable and easy to talk to; a particularly good environment for an early career researcher. The social activities and the conference dinner, which included a Ceilidh dance were fun and helped to create a sense of community.

Jae Won Suh

From day one of the conference, I felt immediately welcome thanks to the friendly atmosphere. I was able to learn about cutting-edge research in my field of interest as well as in areas I had not explored before, which allowed me to look at my own work from fresh perspectives. I was delighted to be able to present a poster and discuss it with researchers who were interested in my work. Through this experience, I became much more confident about presenting and answering questions about my work. I had a wonderful time both socially and academically at the conference, and I am very grateful to SSM for allowing me to be part of such an inspiring event

From day one of the conference, I felt immediately welcome thanks to the friendly atmosphere.

Miriam Alvarado

This was my second year attending SSM, and I am very honoured and thankful to be part of such a thoughtful, inspiring and supportive community. This year, I was especially struck by two things: the opportunity to connect with fellow ECRs, and the emphasis on creating opportunities to gain methodological support and training.

Phillipp Frank

The conference provided me with the opportunity to network in a rigorous atmosphere, learn about cutting-edge research and discuss innovative methodological approaches with delegates. The event was well organised, balancing the scientific programme and social events perfectly.

LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARDS

Evidence into Public Health Action: Learning together for wider NCD prevention

A one day event for researchers, practitioners and policy-makers highlighting results from flagship studies of recent tobacco control interventions in Scotland and looking forward to future priorities for non-communicable disease prevention in tobacco, alcohol and food policy in Scotland and further afield.

To be added to the mailing list for registration and further details please email: lookingbacklookingforwards@stir.ac.uk

Friday, January 24th 2020 Pollok Halls, University of Edinburgh

Fantastic lineup of speakers include: Professors Kate Hunt, Sally Haw, Esteve Fernandez, Harry Rutter, Martin White, Mark Petticrew, Jamie Pearce & Linda Bauld and Drs Andrew Fraser. Sean Semple & Sheila Duffy.

The Scottish Government is associated with...







Reduced IEA membership!

As an SSM member you are entitled to reduced membership (\$25) to the International Epidemiology Association, allowing you to benefit from exposure to epidemiology on an international level, for a fraction of the normal dues. Members receive all the benefits available to normal IEA members including online access to the International Journal of Epidemiology. SSM members can apply for IEA membership here.



International Epidemiological Association

ECR Corner

Pre-conference workshop, farewells, and an interview about the experience of applying for a small-grant to support a workshop

Pre-conference SSM and IEA ECR Workshop

This year the ECR workshop revolved around developing ECRs' career in research and the challenges and opportunities that appear in a changing market. The pre-conference workshop was held on the 3rd of September. Thanks to funding from SSM, IEA and the Health Research Board (HRB) this year's workshop was the biggest yet with 70 researchers attending from universities and non-academic research settings in the UK, Ireland, France, China, Australia, and Nigeria. The funding offered a free event for ECRs, accommodation bursaries, and subsidised a dinner for participants.

Participants were welcomed by our ECR Subcommittee local officers Kate O'Neill and Niamh McGrath who organised a very successful event! The workshop hosted a number of speakers from a range of backgrounds and expertise and from different career stages. We heard from Dr Peter Tennant (SSM Honorary Secretary) about supporting the development of ECRs with mentoring. Ms Sarah Fink (Athena Swan Project Officer) talked about gender equality and the importance of supporting ECRs. Dr Linda O'Keefe (School of Public Health, UCC) offered unique insights on finding directions and creating our own career narrative while progressing from an ECR to MCR. Dr Fiona Geaney (Founder/CEO, Food choice) challenged us to think outside the box and create a bridge between academia and research. The late afternoon session included facilitated break-out sessions where participants had the opportunity to interact and discuss with the speakers and fellow ECRs on topics raised from the oral-presentations in the workshop.



We finished off the workshop with a dinner in a fantastic place, the Oyster Tavern at Cork City Centre. We would like to thank our speakers and participants for contributing to a very interesting and engaging event!

ECR Subcommittee changes

This time of the year has come to say goodbye to our chair **Kathryn Skivington**, and to welcome **Kate O'Neill**, the next ECR Subcommittee chair for 2020. We would like to thank for their hard work and commitment to the ECR Subcommittee the following departing members: **Janice Atkins, Georgia Chatzi, Naoimh McMahon,** and **Tarra Penney.** We asked our departing members to reflect on their time on the Subcommittee and write a few lines about it:

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the ECR Subcommittee. It has been rewarding to be part of such a supportive team and to get to know other ECRs. It has been a great opportunity to get involved with the Society and to support the development of both networking and mentoring. I'm excited to see how this will progress in the future." — Janice Atkins (Network Platform Officer and Mentoring Officer)

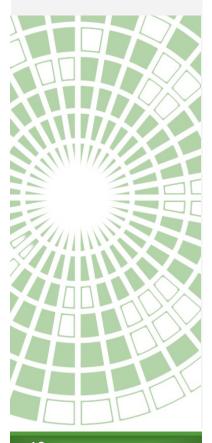
"I am very happy that I had the chance to serve the ECR Subcommittee as a Local officer and a Newsletter officer. The last three years, I developed my organisational skills and I gained valuable experience in interacting with fellow ECRs. As a member of the Subcommittee, I had the privilege to get involved with the annual scientific meetings and in general with the Society. I wish all the best for the Subcommittee in the future!" — **Georgia Chatzi** (Newsletter Officer)

"Being part of the SSM ECR Subcommittee has been a really positive experience. It's a fantastic opportunity to get to know other Early Career Researchers working in your area, while also having the chance to build links and networks with more experienced academics. I held a number of different roles on the committee which each provided a unique opportunity to better understand the challenges faced by ECRs and the steps that we can take in supporting them. Thank you for the opportunity and keep up the good work!" — Naoimh McMahon (Survey officer)

"My time on the ECR Sub-committee has been a wonderful chance

to get to know the Society, and fellow ECRs from across the UK. It has been a pleasure to serve as a voice for ECRs, and I wish the subcommittee the very best in the future – I hope our paths cross again one day!" – Tarra Penney (Chair Elect)





An interview about the experience of applying for a small grant to support a workshop: from this year's local officers Dr Kate O'Neill and Ms Niamh McGrath

Tell us about the institution that accepted to fund the ECR workshop

Each year, the SSM contribute funding to the annual SSM pre-conference early career researchers' event. This year, as well as funding from the SSM and the International Epidemiology Association (IEA), we secured funding from the Health Research Board (HRB) 2019 conference and event sponsorship scheme. The HRB is the leading funding agency for health research in Ireland. It is a state body, funded primarily through the Department of Health. As well as providing funding schemes for researchers at all career stages, its conference and event sponsorship scheme funds health research related events, workshops or conferences in Ireland.

How long does it take to write an application for a small grant?

It depends! It depends on the application itself, how well developed the idea is and, the applicants' grant writing skills. Event related grant applications, in Ireland at least, vary in their layout and the type of information required. The HRB Conference and event sponsorship scheme required the following details;

- (1) A summary outline of the proposed event; purpose, objectives, description,
- (2) Statement of the relevance, significance and timeliness of the proposed event to the funders' strategic goals/objectives,
- (3) Statement of the potential impact of the event
- (4) Description of how the proposed event fits with the grant criteria
- (5) Statement and justification of the target audience
- (6) Event programme other supporting documentation
- (7) Event budget

We were really fortunate that we had some experience of grant writing and this definitely made the process of preparing the application faster. Using the language of the grant application, the assessment criteria, and explicitly aligning it with the aims/objectives of the funding scheme throughout can help keep your application focused and coherent. Preparing the application was a useful event planning tool because it forced us to think the event through very well. In that way, even if an application is arduous and/or the event isn't funded, preparing the application is time well spent for planning purposes. If you don't have direct experience of grant writing, attending a workshop in this and/or asking a more senior colleague to review a draft could be really useful.

What is the procedure after you submit the application?

This may vary slightly depending on the funding body. HRB grant applications are subject to an initial eligibility check and those eligible undergo a peer-review process, based on pre-specified scoring criteria. Following the assessment process, the applicant is notified about the outcome of the application. If the application is accepted, there is some administrative work involved in transferring money and administrators in your institution should be able to assist you with this process.

In your opinion what made your application successful?

Our experience of contributing to other research grants, having a clear vision about what exactly we wanted the money for and why this was important to us contributed to the grant's success. We clearly outlined how the event aligned with the aim and objectives of the scheme we were applying for, and the funders' strategic priorities more broadly. Importantly, we ensured that we explicitly addressed each of the assessment criteria set out in the guidance notes for this grant.

What advice would you give to ECRs without experience in applying for funding?

- Seek or take opportunities to review or contribute in any small way to grants others' in your School/Department are preparing. This will help you to become familiar with the layout of grants and how the writing differs to research papers.
- Seek formal training in research grant writing. If you can't find workshops etc. on this topic,
 or existing ones do not match your timelines, consider arranging for someone in your institution to give a seminar or workshop on grant writing. You could also get in touch with your
 networks (including the ECR committee!) expressing interest in developing your grant writing
 skills.
- Practice. Practice. Practice...but start small. Seize opportunities to write grants. For example,
 if there is a training event you would like to attend, you could apply for a grant to arrange for
 the course to be delivered at your institution.
- Ask for help. If you are preparing grant applications, look for feedback from your colleagues
 with experience of securing funding in general or, with experience of securing funding from
 the particular call you are applying to.
- Try to keep linked in about upcoming grant application calls. For instance, if you are a member of a research group, this could be an item flagged at team meetings. Otherwise, your university research support office should be able to advise on funding bodies relevant to your discipline.

ECR Shout-outs!

The ECR Subcommittee is keen to put ECRs and their work into the spotlight. Therefore, we want to let us know of your academic achievements - be that papers you have just published, presentations you were proud of, or prizes you have won. We'll then feature your work in the next SSM newsletter and give you a well-earned shout out! Email us on ecr.ssm@gmail.com

Keep up to date with ECR subcommittee news and activities on <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u>, or via the SSM website <u>www.socsocmed.org.uk/ECR</u>

To register for ECR updates, please email us at ecr.ssm@gmail.com.

If you have a job vacancy in social medicine to advertise or you are an ECR who would like to receive notifications about vacant positions please email **ecr.ssm.jobs@gmail.com**.

Get in touch:



ecr.ssm@gmail.com





News from the MCR Section

The MCR Section has two new Chairs for 2020. **Emily Petherick** and **Shelina Visram** will take over as co-Chairs from Ruth Dundas. They will steer the MCR section next year and have some interesting plans.

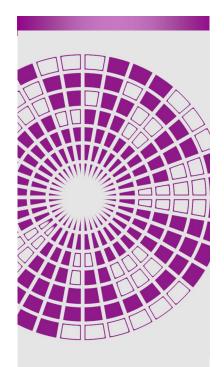
Events and Plans for 2020

In 2020 we will trial some new activities: a member survey and a workshop outwith the ASM. The MCR member survey will give us more information about the MCR members (who, where, sector etc); information on the issues faced by MCRs and how SSM can support MCRs. The idea of having a workshop outwith the ASM is to give people who are not able to attend the ASM, the opportunity to attend a shorter 1-2 day event and network with other MCRs. Do you have ideas for events that the MCR Section could run? Please feel free to get in touch and let us know what events would be useful for you. The MCR Section are always looking for ideas for events that we can help arrange for the MCR members.



The MCR Section is dedicated to the needs of middle career researchers. We focus on the challenges that face researchers who are no longer at an early stage, but not yet fully established autonomous researchers. If you are (in an academic career structure) between 5 years post-Doc and reader/professor level, then you are an MCR.

Would you like to shape the MCR Section? Then, please consider joining the Committee. It's a great opportunity to network with senior academics, peers and colleagues, and to get involved in discussions about the future of the research in this field. Watch out for nominations and elections.





mcr.ssm@gmail.com



@mcr_ssm

Who is who in the Committee?

Elected officers		
Hazel Inskip	University of Southampton	President
Kate Hunt	University of Sterling	President-Elect
Dorina Cadar	University College London	Communications Officer
Anna Pearce	University of Glasgow	Honorary Treasurer
Sarah Gibney	Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Services	Honorary Secretary
Elected Members		
Rebecca Lacey	University College London	Deputy Mentoring Officer
Co-opted members		
Carol Brayne	University of Cambridge	Chair of ASM LOC 2020
Catherine Hayes	Trinity College Dublin	External relations officer
Alastair Leyland	University of Glasgow	EUPHA liaison officer
Simon Capewell	University of Liverpool	Chair of ASM LOC 2021 & IEA Liaison Officer
Ivan Perry	University of Cork	LOC 2019
Subcommittee representatives		
Ruth Dundas	University of Glasgow	Chair of MCR subcommittee
Janis Baird	University of Southampton	Chair of SCR subcommittee
Kate O'Neill	University College Cork	Chair of ECR subcommittee
Administrative support	-	•
Harriet Noble	Hg3 Conferences	

Committee News

Dear Colleagues, as the year comes to an end it is a pleasure to be writing in the afterglow of an inspiring and thought-provoking ASM in Cork. This has been a year of collaboration for the Society. This year's ASM was jointly held by the International Epidemiology Association (IEA) European Congress of Epidemiology. International collaboration is an important and powerful vehicle for innovation in research, innovation, and cutting-edge insight, and we are now delighted to be offering a joint membership scheme with the IEA to support further cross-national engagement.

Innovation has also been a running theme this year as the Society strengthened its focus on communication, launched a new website, and found new platforms in policy debates. In the context of a growing culture of misinformation and a more complex health information landscape, robust and credible evidence is essential. We aim to support our members with multiple avenues to disseminate their research for impact and engage in meaningful policy dialogues, and we encourage all members to talk to our Communications Team, participate in the new Society Blog and Research Networks, and get active on our social media platforms as much as possible.

I would like to highlight the Senior Career Researcher subcommittee who were established in 2019 and are tasked with helping the Society to better support our senior members and their priorities. The subcommittee is chaired by Janis Baird (University of Southampton) and the other members are Simon Capewell (University of Liverpool), Tarani Chandola (University of Manchester), Aileen Clarke (University of Warwick), Mark Gilthorpe (University of Leeds), Ian Harvey (Retired, formally University of East Anglia), Kate Hunt (University of Sterling), Nick Payne (University of Sheffield), Jo Thompson-Coon (University of Exeter), and Martin White (University of Cambridge).

Finally I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Peter Tennant who has "passed the torch" to me as of September 2019. I thank Peter for his guidance, friendship and support as I take on this new role in the Society.

Turning to 2020, the Main Committee are convening in January to plan the year ahead and we look forward to updating you with new developments in the coming months. I also look forward to engaging with you throughout my term as Honorary Secretary.

Sarah Gibney



Sarah Gibney

Sarah is a senior policy analyst with the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service at the Irish Department of Health. Her work focuses on evidence-based policymaking and evaluation, and involving international research collaborations.

Sarah holds a PhD PERMIT (Promoting Epidemiological Research Methods in Irish Training) from University College Dublin and an MSc in Applied Social Research

Dates for your Diary!

January 2020

Preparing for the future II: international approaches to challenges facing the longitudinal population studies, 16 January, London

https://www.closer.ac.uk/event/preparing-future-longitudinal-conference-2020/

UK Society for Behavioural Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting, 16- 17 January, Bath http://www.uksbm.org.uk/asm-2020-bath/

JBI-accredited Systematic Review Training – Short Course, 13 - 17 January, Nottingham https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/cebhc/short-courses/jbi-accredited-course.aspx

Abstract Submission (closes 23 January) - British Society of Gerontology 49th Annual Conference, 1-3 July, Bristol https://www.britishgerontology.org/events-and-courses/bsg-annual-conference

February 2020

Behavioural Science and Public Health Network Annual Conference, 12 February, Derby https://www.bsphn.org.uk/428/Annual-Conference-2020

Transforming our future: Health ageing, 13- 14 February, Royal Society, London https://royalsociety.org/science-events-and-lectures/2020/02/tof-healthy-ageing/

SPHeRE Network 6th Annual conference Data to Policy, 25 February 2020, Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin

http://www.sphereprogramme.ie/conference/

Abstract submission (closes 28 February) – World Congress of Epidemiology: 13-16 September 2020, Melbourne

https://wce2020.org/

Upcoming

PopFest 2020 - the 28th Annual Population Postgraduate Conference, 22-24 June 2020, Florence, Italy

https://www.eui.eu/Projects/CLIC/Projects/Popfest2020/PopFest2020