



VNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

**Laudatio of Prof. Ilona Selma
Kickbusch given at the ceremony of
her investiture as Doctor 'Honoris
Causa' by the Universitat de València
by Prof. José María Martín Moreno**

València, 24th of march, 2023

It is a privilege for me to introduce Professor Ilona Kickbusch at the University of Valencia. She is an exceptional leader who steadfastly integrates an academic, research and service-minded spirit in the area of political science, sociology and health, which is proudly underpinned by a feminist perspective.

In particular, her contribution to the field of health promotion and global health has given her renowned prestige in Europe and throughout the world. In addition, as someone with a concern and passion for the dissemination of knowledge and equity, she is constantly evolving and is currently particularly interested in aspects of health leadership, global health innovation, health diplomacy, and digital transformation and its impact on health.

As a sign of the respect and admiration that she inspires, let us highlight from the beginning that Prof. Ilona Kickbusch has received many awards and prizes, among which the WHO Medal for her contribution to global health and the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany stand out. Furthermore, it should be noted that Professor Ilona Kickbusch has received previous appointments such as Doctor 'Honoris Causa' by the universities of Labem (Czech Republic, 2005), and the University of Girona (2009), in addition to an honorary doctorate from the University of Gothenburg (Sweden, 2005) and an honorary professorship at the Charité in Berlin (Germany, 2021).

She is currently a professor emeritus of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland; Principal Investigator and Co-Chair of The Lancet Commission on Governing Health Futures 2030 - addressing the challenge of

how to grow in a digital world; Co-Chair of the World Health Summit Council; advisor to the Director-General of the WHO; member of the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All; member of the Universal Health Coverage Movement Political Advisory Panel; Vice-President of the European Health Forum Gastein; founder and promoter of the Young Leaders for Health Network; founder and promoter of the European Healthy Cities Network; member of the Women in Global Health Advisory Board; and Scientific Director of the Sciana Health Leaders Network (in which I have the honour of co-chairing, together with her, Cohort 5 of this programme from 2022 to 2024).

In the Sciana programme, we share fascinating sessions at international events in different places and at different times of the year, especially during specific periods in May and November at the permanent headquarters located in the Schloss Leopoldskron palace, which is located a few minutes' walk from the old town of Salzburg and which has a worldwide reputation as the former family residence of a prince-archbishop, as well as being the original filming location of the film *The Sound of Music*. The Sciana programme is an initiative supported by a synergistic partnership between the Health Foundation (UK), Careum Stiftung (Switzerland) and Robert Bosch Stiftung (Germany) in collaboration with Salzburg Global Seminar, which brings together leaders in health policy and innovation from all over Europe.

In this presentation, let me look back to remember how this great woman was born in Munich, Germany, where she spent her early childhood, and later moved to Chennai, India, where

her father worked as a diplomat. From the beginning of her career, she stood out for her interest in political, sociological, equity and health issues.

In 1981, she graduated from the University of Konstanz, Germany, with a PhD in Political Science and Sociology with the highest qualification, completing her doctoral thesis entitled: “Women and Human Services: A Critique of Service Society Theories”.

After an initial period as a researcher and assistant professor in Women’s Studies, within the Department of Sociology of the University of Konstanz, Germany, in 1980 she joined the area of Health Education of the European Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO), based in Copenhagen, Denmark, to later lead the new area of Health Promotion, from which she coordinated the first International Conference on Health Promotion held in Ottawa (Canada), and which on 21 November 1986 drew up a declaration or the OTTAWA CHARTER that represents a before and after in the world of public health. This in turn complemented the previous conference held in Alma Ata in 1978, which had laid the foundations of Primary Health Care. The Ottawa Charter aimed to achieve the goal of “Health for All by the Year 2000” and was, above all, a response to the growing demand for a new conception of public health in the world, with the noble goal of reducing differences in health status, ensuring equal opportunities and providing the means to enable the entire population to develop their potential health to the fullest. This historic event has continued to the present through subsequent global health promotion conferences.

Continuing chronologically, after her time in Copenhagen, she was appointed Director of the Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communication at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, a position she held until 1998.

From there she became Professor and Director of the Global Health Division of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health of the Faculty of Medicine of Yale University, USA, until 2004, combining this role with that of Senior Advisor for the Millennium Development Goals of the Pan American Health Organization from 2003 to 2004.

After this period in America, she returned to Europe to become Senior Health Policy Advisor at the Swiss Federal Office for Public Health until 2010.

It was then that she returned to the arena of global health, fundamentally as Director of the Global Health Programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, based in Geneva, Switzerland, continuing to be an inspiring figure for all of us in the field of global health.

Allow me to return to the present, of which I will not repeat the many roles, tasks and responsibilities which she carries out with admirable energy and which I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation.

However, I would like to add that, in addition to her work in all the official positions described, Ilona Kickbusch has functionally contributed in a globally recognised way in the following areas:

- Among other contributions to women's health, she has been a promoter of the first project and comparative study of the WHO on women's health in Europe ("Women's Health Counts").

In the field of social determinants, she has been co-promoter of the 2011 World Conference on Social Determinants of Health.

- In the area of policy innovations for health including the concept of "Health in All Policies and Healthy Societies", which was adopted and continues to be applied in different countries, highlighting the experience of Australia for several years.

- In the field of health promotion strategies in environments and throughout life, she has contributed in an extraordinary way in the field of healthy ageing and in programmes such as: Healthy Cities (which is a great reference for us in our beloved city of Valencia), Health Promoting Schools, Healthy Workplaces, Health in prisons, and Health Promoting Hospitals (as an example the impact of this inspiration, it should be noted that the Hospital Clínico Universitario de Valencia has been part of the network of Health Promoting Hospitals since 2018).

- In the field of health literacy, Ilona Kickbusch has led the development of this concept which brought about the creation of the EU Health Literacy Survey and the new European Network on Patient Empowerment (ENOPE).

- Not to mention her outstanding role in the area of global health governance and global health initiatives. Today, she is considered one of the thought leaders on global health governance. Among many other things she promoted the first Fulbright programme in global health. She has also made and continues to make important contributions to EU policy in this area and launched Global Health Europe, a think tank to strengthen Europe's voice on global health.

- In addition to the above, she has a recognised role in the field of global health diplomacy, having developed a unique approach to executive education in this field, which has obtained significant support from the Rockefeller Foundation. The flagship courses are regularly taught in Geneva and have also been carried out in cooperation with local partners in China, Indonesia, Kenya, the United States and Canada. She has published extensively on this topic - including a textbook on global health diplomacy -as well as on the broader issues of global health and foreign policy, co-leading the Global Health Diplomacy Network (GHD-NET), and being the editor (along with Tom Novotny) of the Global Health Diplomacy book series, published by World Scientific.

In addition, and as an indicator of her adaptation to the times we live in, she is currently part of the group promoting a global treaty on pandemic prevention and control and she inspires us all with her ideas on digital transformations in our current world and why we must build a digital health citizenship.

If all the above were not enough, Professor Ilona Kickbusch has contributed to a vast field of sociological and health research embodied in hundreds of publications in international peer-reviewed books and journals and her work was internationally recognised and synthesised by the highly prestigious magazine *The Lancet* when, on 3 July 2017, it published an article entitled “Ilona Kickbusch: global health reformer”, describing her enormous contribution to global health.

I cannot end this presentation without making it clear that this appointment has been personally promoted by our Rector, Professor Mavi Mestre. For the first time since its creation in 1499, our University of Valencia is led by a woman Rector, who has a proven vision of solidarity, feminism and social justice. Hence the understanding of personalities which has inspired this appointment of Prof. Ilona Kickbusch as Doctor ‘Honoris Causa’.

In my opinion, with this ceremony we not only wish to express our gratitude to Ilona Kickbusch for her active collaboration with our team in lines of work with a gender and global health perspective, but we also believe that this investiture “enriches” the University of Valencia by incorporating a woman who has been able to interrelate political science, sociology, and health, in the search for a better world in which all people can develop their potential.



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