



*Northern Dimension*  
Partnership in Public Health  
and Social Well-being

**Northern Dimension Partnership in  
Public Health and Social Well-being**

**“Social welfare and health care” sector of  
the Northern Dimension policy**

**A progress report to  
the Northern Dimension Senior Officials Meeting  
8 November 2011, Reykjavik, Iceland**

This report briefly outlines major achievements of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension as well as the NDPHS' plans for future. Several issues for the attention of the ND Senior Officials have also been included.

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### **Annex**

NDPHS Partners and Participant

## 1. Introduction

Public health is an important factor in economic and demographic stability in the Northern Dimension area and an indispensable part of the efforts to achieve sustainable development. At the same time, however, **non-communicable diseases and accidents as well as the spread of infectious diseases pose serious threat to our societies** as they lead to high levels of mortality, morbidity and loss of work ability and productivity.

Consequently, “social welfare and health care, including prevention of communicable diseases and life-style related diseases and promotion of cooperation between health and social services,” have been **included as one of the priority sectors in the renewed Northern Dimension policy** jointly adopted by the EU, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation.

The **NDPHS, which operates within the framework of the Northern Dimension policy, provides a platform for advancing the work in this sector through a range of activities.** These include, but are not limited to supporting regional initiatives and policy development as well as stimulating and initiating project-based activities.

Currently chaired by the Russian Federation and co-chaired by Finland, the Partnership was established in 2003, and involves 11 governments, the European Commission and 8 international organizations; Denmark takes part in the NDPHS as a Participant (cf. Annex).

## 2. Focusing on objectives reflecting regional priorities: implementing the NDPHS Strategy

During the year that has elapsed since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension in 2010, the **Partnership ran a wide array of concrete and pragmatic activities** in accordance with its Strategy, adopted in 2009. These activities range from high-level ministerial dialogue, policy development, and project development and implementation, to networking solidification, expertise exchange, information production and dissemination, as well as advocacy.<sup>1</sup>

Facilitation of high quality projects addressing regional challenges and producing tangible results with measurable impact has been among the NDPHS priorities since its establishment. The **Partnership is currently developing eight regional projects** covering a broad range of issues, such as non communicable diseases, healthy lifestyles, primary health care, occupational safety and health, as well as communicable diseases with a focus on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Among those projects is a project jointly developed by the NDPHS and the Northern Dimension Institute, which is a good example of concrete cooperation within the Northern Dimension policy.

These project development activities are financially supported by the interested countries, as well as by the EU, through the ENPI Regional East Indicative Programme 2010-2013. In 2011, 100,000 EUR was allocated for support to the NDPHS activities in the above named Programme, which is highly appreciated. **However, it is clear that the Partnership could have produced more results if more funding were provided to it. In this regard, the NDPHS looks forward to a more equitable distribution of funding from the above-named programme during the coming years.** Also, co-financing for the implementation of the projects currently under development will need to be secured.

In 2011, the **Partnership undertook various actions aimed at policy development and implementation**, among them organization of a regional event “Healthy lifestyles – the cornerstone of public health” to be held on 24 November 2011. The outcome of the event will

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<sup>1</sup> The NDPHS progress and achievements are presented in detail in its annual progress reports available at [www.ndphs.org/?about\\_ndphs#Past\\_activities](http://www.ndphs.org/?about_ndphs#Past_activities).

be a **NDPHS Action Statement for implementation of the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2012-2016**, which will aim to help translate respective global and European policies into actions in the Northern Dimension area. The Action Statement will be submitted for adoption to the Partnership Annual Conference to be held at the ministerial-level on 25 November 2011. Another policy document expected to be adopted at the above-named Conference will be the below-mentioned **NDPHS position paper aimed to raise the profile of health and social well-being** in the forthcoming EU funding programmes operating in the Northern Dimension area.

### 3. Leading and coordinating health actions within the EUSBSR

In 2009, the European Commission developed a European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which was subsequently adopted by the European Council in October 2009. The NDPHS, at the European Commission's invitation **took the role of Lead Partner for the coordination of the health sub-area of Priority Area 12** of the EUSBSR Action Plan.<sup>1</sup>

Since then, the **Partnership took many successful actions to discharge its leadership role** in the implementation of the EUSBSR<sup>2</sup>, including **involvement of other regional stakeholders** in the NDPHS-coordinated activities for fostering macro-regional cooperation in health and making it more integrated and inclusive. Among others, the following stakeholders have been engaged: the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, the eHealth for Regions network, ScanBalt, the Union of the Baltic Cities. Discussions are in progress regarding the cooperation between the European Social Fund Baltic Sea Network and the NDPHS.

Other activities in this regard include **development of regional projects and strengthening of the policy development coordination** among the Baltic Sea Region countries. These activities are co-financed by the European Commission, which granted technical assistance for the implementation of the EUSBSR in the amount of 120,000 EUR.

### 4. Providing ample resources for the Partnership and joint regional activities

The NDPHS Partners have on several occasions agreed that **efforts need to be taken to provide ample resources for the Partnership**, most notably for running its Secretariat and the Partnership expert-level structures, as well as for the development and facilitation of concrete, project-based activities so that the Partnership would continue both delivering concrete and pragmatic activities and achieving tangible results benefiting people in the region. **The principle of co-financing from the Northern Dimension Partners needs to be underlined to that end, which was also stressed, in the context of the NDPHS, by the Heads of Government from the Baltic Sea States.**

Various forms of support were offered by Partners for the Partnership during the reported period, including voluntary contributions by Germany and Sweden, as well as the above-mentioned financial support provided by the European Union. Funding offered by Norway through the NDPHS Project Pipeline was equally appreciated.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the EU BSR Strategy is an internal EU strategy, the constructive cooperation with non-EU countries has been most welcome in order to attain its objectives. As noted by the European Council, "the Northern Dimension framework provides the basis for the external aspects of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region."

<sup>2</sup> The NDPHS progress and achievements in the implementation of the EUSBSR covering the period from mid-2010 until 2011 are presented in detail in a progress report submitted to the European Commission, available at: [http://www.ndphs.org/internalfiles/File/EUSBSR/EUSBSR\\_PA\\_12\\_subarea\\_HEALTH\\_progress\\_report\\_by\\_the\\_NDP\\_HS\\_2010-2011.pdf](http://www.ndphs.org/internalfiles/File/EUSBSR/EUSBSR_PA_12_subarea_HEALTH_progress_report_by_the_NDP_HS_2010-2011.pdf).

Recognizing the need to radically increase the amount of funding for health and social well-being projects within the ETC programmes operating in the ND area, the Partnership is currently developing a position paper aimed to contribute to the ongoing discussions about the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. In particular, the position paper calls for a **more visible exposure of social well-being and health in the cooperation programmes' priorities, which will, assumingly, lead to more resources being granted for joint regional activities in the field of public health and social well-being.** As mentioned before, it is expected that the position paper will be adopted during the Partnership Annual Conference to be held at the ministerial-level on 25 November 2011.

## 5. Establishing the NDPHS Secretariat with its own legal capacity

The NDPHS Secretariat, which has been in operation since 2004, is currently hosted by the CBSS Secretariat. While the NDPHS Partners highly appreciate the CBSS support in this regard, they recognize that it is indispensable that the NDPHS Secretariat would enjoy its own legal capacity. This should, *inter alia*, help ensure financial stability of the Secretariat and would make it able to fully exercise its functions and fulfill its objectives.

To that effect, several meetings of legal experts were held in 2010 and 2011 during which the text of the Agreement on the Establishment of the NDPHS Secretariat was further developed and finalized.

The final text of the Agreement has been disseminated to the Partner Countries in September 2011 with an invitation to start national legal procedures necessary for the Agreement to be signed. It is planned that **the Agreement will be signed during the forthcoming ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference to be held on 25 November 2011, in St. Petersburg, Russia.** Given the fact that the term for the NDPHS Secretariat as a CBSS Project will expire on 10 April 2012, **the process of authorizing the legal capacity to the NDPHS Secretariat needs to be completed as a matter of urgency.**

## 6. Concluding remarks

The "**Vision of the NDPHS in 2013**", adopted at the ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference in November 2009, provides, *inter alia*, for the following: "By the end of 2013, the Partnership has achieved tangible results in policy development and project facilitation; its activities help address common problems shared by the societies in the region, and contribute to the improvement of people's health and social well-being in a pragmatic way."

The track record of the Partnership's achievements since the adoption of the vision statement clearly demonstrates a **good progress towards implementation of the vision. However, for the Partnership to be able to achieve the above, a continued commitment of all NDPHS Partners, which should be reflected through their active involvement coupled with the provision of ample resources, is indispensable.**

## NDPHS Partners and Participant

### Partner Countries



### Participant Country



### Partner Organizations

