

Centrum für Evaluation



Evaluation Report

Center for Evaluation

CENTER FOR EVALUATION – SAARLAND UNIVERSITY

Independent Evaluation of the NDPHS

on behalf of
the Secretariat of the NDPHS

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0 Executive Summary

The NDPHS as an organization is part of a wider political framework, the Northern Dimension Policy. The Northern Dimension Policy originated in the desire to include Baltic States and the Russian Federation in a process of discussion and political inclusion after the end of the Cold War. In order to facilitate this process, “soft” topics have been chosen as a focus of activities. By doing so, existing political tensions could be eased out of the discussions with the aim of creating an atmosphere of trust and cooperation of “technical” issues where everyone could basically agree in problem-identification and solution.

The consultant is of the opinion that NDPHS can play a viable and useful role in health-policy in the ND-area, not only in regard to cooperation with the Russian Federation, but also in congruence with the EU’s current efforts in regionalising its own activities. There is a good chance that because of the amount of experts involved in NDPHS, the danger of duplication of efforts is relatively small and can be avoided.

Major results of this report in regard to the political coherence of the NDPHS are

- that goals stated and declared are in full coherence with overall ND-policies but
- some challenges exist in regard to coherence when it comes to the role of specially dynamic partners vis-à-vis more passive members, the awareness of NDPHS-representatives about the necessary foreign-policy-framework, the imbalance towards health-issues in regard to content and the role of a more pro-active and equal Russian Federation.

In regard to its organizational structure, the major findings are that, while the organization and especially the Secretariat has improved its performance with commendable engagement and efficiency,

- many important aspects of the organizational setup are not, or not well defined and remain sometimes in ambiguity. Especially the issue of the definition of membership, the exact definition of the role of the Secretariat including its legal status, the exact relationship and role-definition between Chair and Secretariat and other, more minor issues, remain to be solved.
- Rules and procedures to establish, maintain, monitor and dissolve Expert Groups are more or less non-existent and that not all associated Expert Groups seem to be positively functional as a fruitful added value to NDPHS-activities.

In regard to the partnership’s visibility, this report commends the efforts in regard to the new website and the thematic folders. These should be taken as a first step, which is in need of improvement if the visibility of the partnership should increase in the future.

Related to results and impacts, the consultant is of the opinion that so far the partnership lacks a clear definition about what it would like to describe as its own success. Results are mostly discernible in activities directly linked to the network; here some concrete projects both facilitated by the Expert Groups as well as conducted by the Secretariat are good examples. Especially the database/pipeline-project can be highlighted as a successful example of a project achieving a multitude of results and a good potential for impact at the same time. The thematic reports are a viable attempt in focussing activities and build a common knowledge-base, but some shortcomings have been identified. Unfortunately, until now, NDPHS does not make use

of evaluation-tools to gather experience from the ground in order to formulate policy-recommendations sufficiently.

This report recommends *inter alia*

- that NDPHS should review procedures, regulations, guidelines and standards in regard to the establishment and support of Expert Groups, the ways of reporting and facilitation of projects and the definition of the roles of institutions of the partnership as well of membership-issues
- that NDPHS should enhance and professionalize its public-relation-activities and its efforts in mainstreaming and dissemination, using both external expertise as well as the vast experience which can be tapped through the Expert Groups
- that NDPHS should make basic strategic decisions, especially towards the way projects should be facilitated or implemented, while the consultant suggests that the network should not turn itself over into an implementation agency, but should concentrate on giving ideas, scrutinizing progress and learning from results
- that NDPHS has to concentrate efforts to ensure that the Secretariat will attain a legal status in order to improve important aspects of its activities
- that NDPHS should use evaluation as a tool to be not only a facilitator of projects, but also a facilitator of ideas in order to connect to the national level and advice in policy-formulation

Therefore, if asked for the right strategic decision, the current development towards more concrete activities can only be commended by the consultant. But at this point of time, as the report has shown, the regulative framework and the standards for this kind of increased sophistication are either not in place or in an early stage of development. Here, additional efforts are necessary. It is also necessary to seriously address the imbalance in NDPHS' activities in regard to social issues.

1 Introduction

The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS) decided in its foundation process that after five years of existence an external evaluation should be conducted in order to make a thorough assessment of challenges and achievements and gather information for future strategies and endeavours.

The Center for Evaluation at Saarland University (CEval) has been assigned with this task at the beginning of 2008. Most part of the work has been sub-contracted to a free-lance consultant, who has conducted a variety of interviews and other research activities during the evaluation process up until July 2008. This report is the final version of its findings, submitted to the "Evaluation team" of NDPHS and, subsequently, to the 14th meeting of the Committee of Senior Representatives (CSR) end of September in Germany.

Basis of this report are the "terms of references" as formulated during the tender-process and agreed upon in finalizing the contractual agreements between the CEval and NDPHS-secretariat. Please see the annex for details in regard to the TOR, the list of interviewees and the general time-plan of the evaluation.

The whole evaluation process has been conducted in an atmosphere of fair and constructive discussion. Difficult and challenging issues in the process of the network's activities were put forward openly and all partners expressed interest in the outcome of the evaluation process. The acceptance of the evaluation has been considerable and therefore the willingness to participate great. Especially the "Evaluation Team" as well as the NDPHS-Secretariat has been instrumental in providing important support to make this evaluation happen. Therefore, the consultant would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment and support. This report wouldn't have materialized so easily without the common effort of all partners involved.

This report will not dive too deeply into the history of NDPHS and only touch historical issues where they are necessary to be described in order to understand certain bottlenecks or structural issues. It will present recommendations at the end of each chapter.

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July 2008

2 The political dimension of NDPHS

2.1 Coherence of stated goals

The NDPHS as an organization¹ is part of a wider political framework, the Northern Dimension Policy. The Northern Dimension Policy originated in the desire to include Baltic States, Poland and the Russian Federation in a process of discussion and political inclusion after the end of the Cold War. In order to facilitate this process, “soft” topics have been chosen as a focus of activities. By doing so, existing political tensions could be eased out of the discussions with the aim of creating an atmosphere of trust and cooperation of “technical” issues where everyone could basically agree in problem-identification and solution. Aside from a political consultation process on the level of foreign ministries, two sub-organizations were founded in order to develop a framework for topic-oriented cooperation: One for environmental issues and one for public health and social well-being, the NDPHS².

The “Declaration”³ which led to the formation of NDPHS on the 27th of October 2003 says inter alia:

“The overall objective of the Partnership is to promote sustainable development in the Northern Dimension area through improving human health and social wellbeing.”⁴

And later on:

“The activities (...) should contribute to greater political and administrative coherence in the area, narrowing of social and economic differences, and to a general improvement of the quality of life and of the demographic situation.”⁵

These specific overall goals of the partnership reflect well on the major goals formulated in the “Political declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy”, adopted during the ministerial meeting in 2007, which says inter alia:

“(The partners) declare their firm commitment to cooperate actively within the framework of the Northern Dimension policy on the basis of good neighbourliness, equal partnership, common responsibility and transparency..”

¹ NDPHS is not an international organization in a formal sense; it does not have a legal entity on its own (so far). Despite this fact, NDPHS has the features of an international organization and will therefore be addressed as such in this evaluation report, without assuming any legal implications.

² At present, a third sub-organization is in its formative stages, dealing with issues of international transport.

³ Declaration concerning the establishment of a Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being, adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in Oslo on 27th of October 2003

⁴ Declaration, chapter 1.

⁵ See above.

And

“(The partners) confirm their readiness to contribute efforts to ensure that the Northern Dimension Policy provides concrete and pragmatic activities with the objective to achieve tangible results (...)”⁶

In the attached “Policy Framework Document”, it is stressed inter alia:

“The Northern Dimension Policy will aim at providing a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation (...)”⁷

Subsequently, the Framework Document especially refers to the activities of the NDPHS in chapter 4, listing the priority areas of ND cooperation efforts.

The two priority areas of NDPHS match up well with these overall goals:

1. Reducing the spread of major communicable diseases and preventing life-style related non-communicable diseases.
2. Enhancing peoples’ levels of social well-being and promoting socially rewarding life-styles.

In summary, it can be stated without doubt that the official policy of the Northern Dimension, as described in the current policy documents, is **well reflected in the official goals** of NDPHS, therefore, on a declaratory basis, coherence has been achieved⁸.

2.2 Coherence of political background and partner’s motivations

To judge properly about the political background of the NDPHS’ work, it is necessary to shortly leave the official declarations and announcements, because in order to assess the organization’s embeddedness into the political framework of the ND-policy, it is important to point out some issues not well reflected in the official paperwork. The consultant wants to stress the following points:

- The Northern Dimension Policy is mainly a brainchild of the government of Finland, and was accepted by the other partners as a means to include the Baltic States, Poland and the Russian Federation into a policy framework to pull them closer. After the Baltic States and Poland have become members of the EU, the focus concentrated on the Russian Federation. It is important to keep in mind that despite the wording of declarations which emphasizes the whole ND-area, the major impetus for many ND-member states remains the **facilitation of cooperation with Russia** above everything else.

⁶ Both citations: Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy, point 1 and 3.

⁷ Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document, effective as 1 January 2007, point 10.

⁸ The question, in how far NDPHS has actually fulfilled this self-given promise in a practical sense will be deliberated later in this report, although it is not too early to suggest that during the past five years, NDPHS has only earnestly tried to fulfil one half of its task and left some of the “social well-being” part of its focus to be desired.

- Given this, the motivation of member-states as well as member-organizations to participate in NDPHS is **not necessarily based on a mutual understanding** and common approach. While some member-states are visibly more interested in shifting the focus on the ND-area as a whole, therefore “reducing” the attention towards the Russian Federation to a “normal” level, others still define their engagement within the NDPHS very clearly and unmistakably through their desire to get Russia “on board” a shared policy-framework.
- This issue is deeply connected to the fact that Russia’s role within the partnership has **changed gradually**. Has the Federation in the beginning more been a “recipient country” of “aid”, later since the G8-summit in Moscow the foreign policy standpoint has undergone a change. Russia sees itself as equal partner among equals, and not only as a “recipient”, but also as a potential “donor”. This must have influence on the partnership’s setup, as the impetus of activities is clearly to be effected in the future.
- In addition to this, NDPHS has attracted within its members, especially on the level of organizations, a number of “**free-riders**”⁹, for whom political considerations are of minor importance, but who are members obviously in order to “have an eye” on developments, with the option to participate more actively if an issue of interest arises, but staying dormant for the time being.
- In regard to content, the two-fold approach enshrined in the name and declaration for NDPHS of both health- and social-policy is **not properly reflected** in the partnership’s activity.
- Finally, some member-states **lack political coherence in their own governmental structure** in regard to their approach to the NDPHS. Most countries are represented by Health ministries¹⁰, only few add representatives from social ministries to meetings. It can be assumed that the encountered problems of internal communication between the responsible ministries, especially also in regard to the respective foreign ministries, are not in any case singular events¹¹. Therefore, it is right to assume that the outlook of e. g. health ministries and foreign ministries do not always concur even within one national administration.

⁹ In the discussion of international political organizations, two forms of “free-riding” occur: One is by members of international setups who do not contribute in money or in kind but receive benefits in money or in kind, and therefore live on other’s resources (which is not the dominant case in NDPHS), the second is by members of international setups staying more or less dormant, without withdrawing formal membership, in order to observe and participate if a specific topic of interest arises, to “reserve the chance of participation”, without straining other’s resources in the process (which seems to be the dominant case in NDPHS).

¹⁰ With the exception of Finland and Sweden, who have the portfolios of health and social affairs in one ministry.

¹¹ The scope of the evaluation, limited by time and budget, did not in detail deal with the national government structures of all partners involved and has therefore not been able to analyze the relationship between the ministries in every national setup. Examples discussed from the cases of Germany, Denmark and Sweden indicate that it is both possible that responsible ministries either do not communicate or have different standpoints or do communicate and come to similar views. To achieve political coherence on an international level, political coherence on a national level is a necessary precondition, this precondition is obviously not always met.

2.3 Challenges of political coherence

The aforementioned issues pose a number of challenges in regard to political coherence between the NDPHS in specific and ND as a whole. The consultant wants to stress the following issues:

- In a worst case scenario, the focus of NDPHS on “health and social issues only” might be **contradictory** to the foreign-policy-outlook of member-states in those cases, where the decision-makers come, based on different assumptions, to different conclusions. This might occur if a health-ministry-official decides that a certain action is not feasible or asked for from his viewpoint (be it a technical, organizational or political), while an official from the foreign-ministry might disagree and claim overriding political considerations to be of higher importance. The internal discussion – or the lack there of – in the German government in regard to the NDPHS-membership might qualify as an example, most probably not the only one.
- The role of more dynamic partners within NDPHS can be a critical factor if the dynamics lead to **political agenda-setting** in a certain direction which is not necessarily consensus with everyone. This report will show ample evidence that strong partners, even strong individuals, have the “soft” power of setting agendas and influencing decision-making more than others who regard themselves less involved.
- During the evaluation process it became evident that especially on the level of Expert Groups, the political framework and imperative of the ND was **not always clear** and therefore issues of political coherence were either not considered or taken for granted. Questions about the outreach and focus of NDPHS’ work were either only considered based on the specific topic of the EG in question or answers were, again, taken for granted¹². When dealing with a specific health issue, it is likely that the wider political framework is in danger of drifting out of attention, so occasional reminders are in order.

2.4 Recommendations

In regard to the political coherence of NDPHS with the overall ND-policy, the consultant has the following recommendations:

1. Governments of member-states should scrutinize if and in how far their **internal political coherence** in regard to ND-policy in general and NDPHS in particular lacks communication and cooperation. If that is the case, internal communication should be improved and common ground should be established. Through this, both foreign-policy considerations as well as the more “issue-oriented” approach of responsible e. g. health ministries can be put together on national level, a precondition to allow the same process on international level.
2. During either CSR-meetings or PAC-meetings, it might be useful to organize side-events with a wider scope than just the work of NDPHS. Inviting foreign-policy-

¹² In many different ways: Geographically e. g. either „our focus is on Russia“ or „our focus is on all of ND“ or „our focus is the less advantaged member states“ or other examples. It means that either this issue was only reflected upon in regard to one’s own EG-topic or the question never arose in the mind of the interviewee.

representatives and/or external experts reflecting in short seminars or lectures about the **wider impact and objectives of ND-policy** might be helpful in also reminding EG-members of the political framework they operate in. Differences in definition of this political framework – i.e. the interpretation of the policy documents – can be discussed and consensus-formulae be found. As actors and their outlook change over the years, these kinds of exercises to define the common ground and philosophy could be repeated in regular intervals.

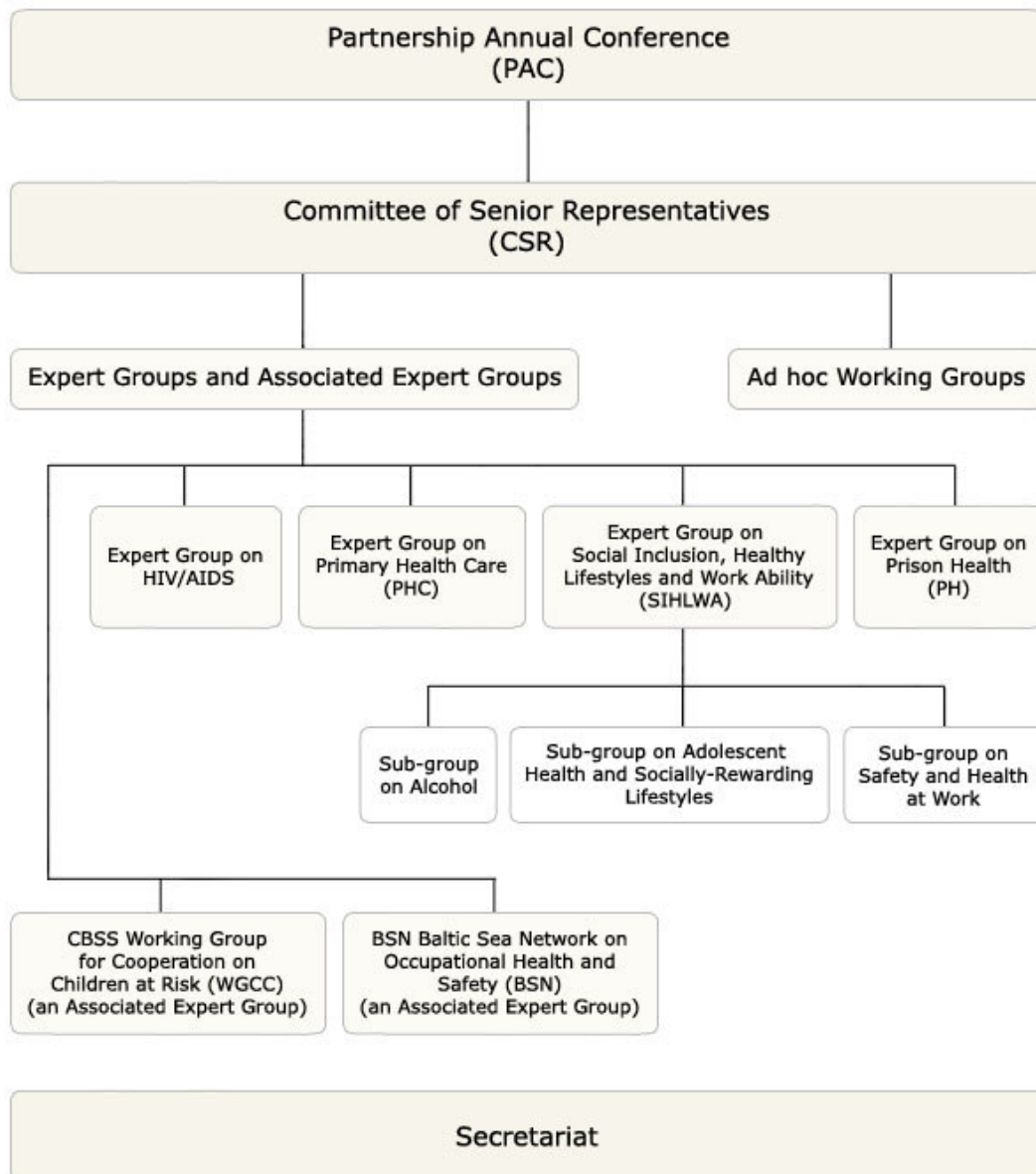
3. The new self-esteem of the Russian Federation's foreign-policy should be taken into account **with more vigour**. While initially, NDPHS had the chance to engage with Russia in a meaningful dialogue, now the partnership has the chance to cooperate with Russia for everyone's benefit in the whole ND-region. How this can be done concretely is difficult to assess for the consultant, as it involves a deeper insight in current Russian politics, its administrative setup and policy agendas, issues, which have not been evaluated sufficiently in the course of this assignment to make definite statements.
4. Aside from the fact that the Oslo Declaration gives general guidance for the NDPHS, it seems to be necessary to break the general goals down to **medium-term targets** which should be achievable in a shorter timeframe. The annual working plans are a good step into that direction, but are, on the other hand, already too "short-term". A vision for milestones "in between" might be helpful for orientation.

3 Organization of NDPHS

In this chapter of the report, issues of organization and procedure are to be discussed. While it is true that the content of work cannot always be totally separated from organizational aspects, this report will try to focus on impact and results in chapter 4. Nevertheless, findings from chapter 3 might be repeated or highlighted again when it comes to the analysis of progress on the content side.

The official organigram of the NDPHS, as shown on their website and in some publications, is slightly misrepresenting the true organizational structure of the organization and while it might be helpful as a starting point, it is not sufficient to describe the structure of NDPHS completely.

Graphic 1: Organigramme of NDPHS (according to the website)



If we read the organigramme as a hierarchy, it is true that the PAC is the most important and final decision-making body of NDPHS, with the CSR as the intermediary structure which prepares decisions and discusses the “day-to-day”-work of the organization. Surely, the Expert Groups are the core of NDPHS’ work, they are in charge of the content. The Secretariat is everything but the bottom-line of the organization, as it fulfils – as we will see – an absolutely crucial role for the overall functionality of the organization. Totally omitted from this picture is the Chair of NDPHS (as well as the quite instrumental EG-chairs), normally a representative from a partner-country, who together with a Co-Chair – from another partner-country – directs the work of the Secretariat and Chairs the most important meetings. Depending on the availability of resources for the Chair given to him/her by the country he/she is representing, the Chair can be quite influential and proactive and can shape the work of the NDPHS, if interested. It is therefore only logical to start with the two, as for now, most important components of the organizational setup, and then focus later on the different kinds of meetings which occur on a regular but non-permanent basis.

3.1 The Chair and the Secretariat and their functions

The role of the Chair and the role of the Secretariat are interconnected in many ways, therefore both will be described in the same chapter. First, it is important to stress the fact that as of now the NDPHS-Secretariat – as the whole organization – is not a legal entity on its own. Therefore, despite all protocols and agreements, both the Chair as well as the Secretariat work in a – legally speaking – limbo, which can either be used creatively by a dynamic actor or can pose serious challenges.

3.1.1 The Chair

The basic structure of NDPHS is outlined in chapter 5 of the “Oslo Declaration”. The Chair is not mentioned separately, but under the sub-chapter 5.1 “Partnership Annual Conference (PAC)”. It specifically says:

“The PAC will elect a Chair and a Co-Chair among its member-governments to lead the Partnership for a period of two years. The proceeding of the PAC will be based on the principle of consensus. The Chair will in accordance with established international practice issue ‘Conclusions by the Chair’. (...)”

The Chair is again mentioned in regard to the “Partnership secretarial function”. There it says:

“The secretariat will function under the direction of the CSR Chair”

Finally, the Chair is mentioned again in sub-chapter 5.4 “Partnership co-ordination/Focal point”, which says:

“Partners and Participants (...) will establish and maintain a focal point for regular contacts with the CSR Chair.”

This all the “Oslo Declaration” is outlining for the office of the NDPHS-Chair. From these few sentences it is evident that

- The NDPHS-Chair is supposed to be a moderator of a discussion and decision-making process
- The NDPHS-Chair is supposed to be a point of monitoring of events unfolding within the NDPHS-activities

Given the fact that the NDPHS-Chair also represents the organization in the Steering Group of ND, one might also assume that

- The NDPHS-Chairperson acts as representative on a higher level of ND-activities (e. g. in the steering committee of ND) and
- The NDPHS-Chairperson might act as a representative in other international and national fora, if asked to do so and the possibility arises.

Consequently, the NDPHS-Chairperson has mostly “**soft power**” to **steer the proceedings** of the organization. He/she has to convince through his/her **personal integrity and experience**, and depends both on the support of the Secretariat and the resources the government he/she belongs to is willing to provide to execute the task. Evidence from the history of NDPHS shows that these resources provided by governments can be quite limited, in these cases the Chair is much more dependent on a strong and well-functioning Secretariat. On the other hand, theoretically, if a Chair is provided with sufficient resources by his/her government, it is possible for him/her to sideline or work in ignorance of the Secretariat if she/he pleases himself to do so. The role of the Secretariat is clearly defined as being “under” the Chair, but that is a one-way-description. The Chair has no duty whatsoever to rely on the resources of the Secretariat or ask the Secretariat for advice or use it in any other way, if he/she does not decide to do so.

The Oslo Declaration does not include any specific duties or tasks for the office of the Co-Chair. It is assumed that the Co-Chair steps in if the Chair cannot perform his/her duties and that the Co-Chair complements the fulfilment of the Chair’s duties with his/her own activities.

3.1.2 The Secretariat

The exact role and function of the Secretariat is not written down in any terms of reference or legal paper so far. A draft for a TOR exists and is under consideration, but has not been officially approved yet. The draft has been made available to the consultant, but it will not be quoted directly. This notwithstanding, the TOR-draft already describes the reality of the Secretariat’s work quite well.

Legal status

Before we can talk about the performance of the Secretariat, it is necessary to elaborate shortly on its legal capacity. When NDPHS was formed, the NDPHS-Secretariat was put under the umbrella of the CBSS-Secretariat in Stockholm as “**temporary project**”. At that point of time, not much consideration was invested into the way it was supposed to work within CBSS’ administrative framework as it was planned that the “temporary” status of the Secretariat would continue for only a limited amount of months. Unfortunately, the Secretariat is now in its **fifth year of being “temporary”** and most recently this status has been prolonged until 2009.

The challenges in regard to the establishment of the legal status are manifold. Judging from the documents available and the different viewpoints of the interview-partners, the consultant gathered the following stumbling-blocks:

- Some governments are **disinclined to establish “another international organization”** and therefore are apprehensive in granting the Secretariat a legal entity on its own,
- Some governments are voicing **concerns about their own legal requirements** for accepting a legal status for the Secretariat, which would involve high-level decision-making and therefore a good deal of bureaucratic paperwork,
- Some governments **don’t seem to be too concerned with the legal-status-problem**, as the Secretariat has performed its tasks quite well within the current administrative setup and therefore immediate need for action is not seen.

In order to assess the magnitude of the challenge properly, it is necessary to shortly outline the problems deriving from the lack of legal capacity:

- In regard to the Secretariat’s relationship to the member-states of NDPHS, a number of governments have expressed **problems in paying annual membership-fees** for the sustenance of the Secretariat because of the lack of legal capacity¹³.
- In regard to the Secretariat’s relationship with international donors, the lack of legal capacity poses **administrative problems in applying for and conducting projects** in full responsibility without the necessity to refer to third parties in administrative measures.
- In regard to its day-to-day work, the embeddedness of the Secretariat into the CBSS-structure has its **advantages and disadvantages**.
 - Advantages are: direct political contact within the sub-region of CBSS (which is nearly identical with NDPHS-membership), access to current information, cooperation on certain issues (see chapter 3.3 and following) and benefiting from the international legitimacy of CBSS for its own work.
 - Disadvantages are: being forced to adhere to administrative and procedural standards without much influence to change them, leading to the disparage situation that on the one hand the head of the Secretariat is working politically

¹³ The consultant would like to add, with all due respect, that this argument has not always been very convincing. It seems that sometimes, governments use the lack of legal capacity as an excuse to not pay their share in time or at all. International organizations and networks around the world have proven that if a government really intends to support a given structure, political will normally transforms itself in sometimes innovative ways in transferring funds without legal concerns blocking the way.

and content-wise under the Chair of NDPHS, while on the other hand in administrative and budgetary issues under the Director of the CBSS-Secretariat.

Keeping these issues in mind, it seems to be clear that the **lack of legal capacity is a bottleneck** which hinders the Secretariat to develop its full potential to be a benefit for the NDPHS as a whole.

Staff and infrastructure

At this time, the Secretariat has two full-time employed staff working on content: a head of Secretariat and a senior adviser. In addition, the Secretariat's budget provides for partial payment of salaries of administrative staff in the CBSS-Secretariat in order to provide these services for the NDPHS-Secretariat as well¹⁴. In regard to the staff, the following remarks are of importance:

- The staff currently working in the NDPHS-Secretariat is **well qualified and motivated**. In all interviews made during the evaluation exercise it was mentioned and stressed that since the new head of Secretariat has started to work, the performance and dynamics of the Secretariat's work has increased tremendously and NDPHS has benefited considerably from these renewed efforts.
- It is also clear that for a small international organization like NDPHS, two senior staffs are **generally sufficient** for the normal day-to-day-work. It has also been shown quite clearly that in phases of increased and extra-activity – like the database/pipeline-project – the capacity of the Secretariat is not sufficient and a lot of extra-time has to be invested. This asks for consideration in case that the NDPHS decides to apply for new projects run directly by the Secretariat as soon as the currently being implemented database/pipeline-project has ended.
- The staff is currently employed in three-year-contracts, subject for renewal or prolongation. Experience from other institutions show that, despite the fact that three-year-contracts are still widely popular, they are **evidently ineffective**. Within a three-year-cycle, about six months are necessary to get used to the challenges of the new job. At least one year before the end of the contract, especially if a decision about prolongation has not been announced in time, staff tends towards concentrating on finding a new occupation. Within a structure like NDPHS, where the institutional memory is ingrained in the persons and with the crucial role the Secretariat is playing for the performance of the whole organization, this can lead to detrimental consequences.

¹⁴ Despite a common, written agreement between the NDPHS- and the CBSS-secretariat in regard to the accessibility of administrative staff for the work of the NDPHS-secretariat, the consultant had during his interviews in Stockholm the impression that NDPHS senior staff is forced to take over a good deal of „secretarial“ work as well, because the availability of administrative staff in CBSS is not always guaranteed and is competing with the demand of the CBSS-secretariat on an unequal basis. Therefore, if given legal capacity, it seems to be worthwhile considering the expansion of staff for the NDPHS-secretariat at least in some administrative areas, which does not necessarily has to trigger higher costs.

Scope of activities and processes

The work of the Secretariat can best be described as follows:

- Administrative and organizational preparation of CSR and PAC-meetings, development of agendas, venues, travel-assistance, dissemination of information and registration of participants, writing of minutes, protocols and other documentation
- Administrative and, to a limited extent, organizational support for EG-meetings and -activities, if asked to provide, e. g. writing of minutes, providing logistic support, general backstopping
- Execution of self-organized projects (like the database/pipeline project funded by the EU)
- Assistance for the activities of the Chair, as far as requested
- Focal point for production/ collection and dissemination of all kinds of information within the partnership, either by maintenance of the website or by email (e-newsletter)
- First stop for information to interested parties outside the partnership, official contact point for NDPHS¹⁵
- Development of a draft-budget and subsequently administration and execution of the adopted NDPHS-budget; administration of the NDPHS Appropriations Account; contribution to the preparations of the annual audit of the secretariat's books and dealing with other financial aspects.
- Preparation of annual progress report and annual action plans
- Preparation of printed information-material
- All additional activities necessary for effective networking within the partnership (including frequent trips to meetings and visits to conferences and activities of partner-institutions)
- Orientation of new representatives joining the NDPHS network to the NDPHS process

The Secretariat plays an **absolutely crucial role** for the functioning of the whole NDPHS-structure. This can easily be proven by the difference the Secretariat made for the partnership after a new, and obviously well organized and energetic head took over from his predecessor. While some of the implemented reforms, especially some of the administrative "burden" laid upon the shoulders of partners on all level of organization, has not completely been welcomed by all partners, there is a clear understanding that without a vigorously working Secretariat, none of the tentative successes of NDPHS after an initial period of lying more or less dormant would have been possible.

The Secretariat has performed this task, especially with the current staff involved, in a **professional and engaged manner**. During the high-time of responsibilities coming with the pipeline/database-project, the work-load stretched the available sources of the Secretariat to and beyond the limit. It is clear that the functioning of the Secretariat and the execution of addi-

¹⁵ Officially, that is the duty assigned to the Chairperson. But in practise, as the contact address most distributed is that of the secretariat and as the secretariat is working under the Chairperson, this task falls more into the realm of the secretariat (which is comparable to other international organisations, when the official task and its practical execution are practically divided).

tional projects will only be feasible in the future if the staff-requirements for these activities are met.

During the evaluation process, while the work of the Secretariat has won praise by all interview-partners, **modest criticism** in the current style of activities has been voiced. This criticism centred around the fact that the Secretariats' administrative requirements and processes – especially the so-called “coding” of documents, the repeated reminders of certain activities and documents by email and the strictly formalized way of presenting and updating these documents – are slowly becoming tiresome to follow and the danger of an inherent “administrative burden” seems to be imminent. Critics claimed that, if not contained, these kind of regularities might overshadow or negatively influence the more informal and laissez-faire approach of proceedings which made work within the NDPHS enjoyable.

The consultant has no difficulty in understanding these concerns, as they appear frequently in international organizations, especially when the level of sophistication is slowly improving. As this report will discuss in chapter 5 more deeply, the NDPHS has currently arrived in a specific “crossroads”-situation which asks for some very profound decisions about the future course of the organization. The consultant's impression is that the formalized way of communication and especially dissemination of crucial information is **imperative** in order to make everyone understand that a certain level of involvement is necessary to make the partnership work. By “forcing” information on participants through a formalized process, no one can escape by claiming that “he/she didn't know” in a certain situation – and transparency is assured as well.

In addition, as the partnership is, judging from the proceedings of the last CSR-meetings and reflecting on the “thematic reports” of the Expert Groups, steering towards an increasingly project-oriented approach of work, this will inevitably lead to even more “bureaucracy” and need for proper documentation and dissemination. As this report will elaborate in more detail, if the NDPHS endeavours to become more active in concrete projects, the “administrative burden”, if only perceived or truly existent **will most considerably increase** and surely not decrease.

It is not possible to run a successful international organization, based on a diversity of work-cultures and individual's engagement, without a certain degree of “coding” and administrative “rituals”. While the criticism is understandable and the fear of “burdens” valid (especially from a viewpoint of a technical expert, who is not always doubling as a bureaucrat): from the consultant's view **there is no alternative**.

Future challenges

The future challenges of the Secretariat's work depend highly on the general development the NDPHS will take as a whole. If we take the current dynamics in the development of the partnership as an indicator for things to come, then it is likely that the following possible developments should be considered:

- With a legal capacity on its own, the Secretariat will be able and more likely willing to **execute projects** on its own, outside the framework of the Expert Groups, or to take over administrative responsibilities for “flagship”-projects initiated by the EG in order to **take away some bureaucratic burden** from them.
- With an increased international outreach of NDPHS in collaboration with partner-organizations, especially the EU, but also others, the need for the Secretariat's presence at international fora, especially where the Chair might not be able to attend, will

undoubtedly increase. As it is the Secretariat's task to promote, disseminate and foster the goals of NDPHS as a permanent institution, "**promotional**" activities in conferences and meetings will increase with increased sophistication of the EG's work and projects implemented or facilitated.

- With that, it is evident that the Secretariat will have **assume new responsibilities** complementing the Chair, for which necessary competencies might not be available at this point of time (e. g. in regard to public relations).

3.1.3 Recommendations

The consultant recommends that

1. the formal relationship between the Chair and the Secretariat will be described better and more clearly than done so far in the Oslo Declaration. The consultant suggests that the Chair benefits from the Secretariat's services before he or she comes back to national resources, in order to make sure that the Chair is primarily a Chair of NDPHS and less a delegate of his/her national government.
2. the formal relationship and authority of the Chair and the Co-Chair will be defined more properly and procedures for contingencies are defined. If the structural performance of NDPHS should be enhanced, it seems to be necessary to outline the Co-Chairs area of responsibility and activity with more clarity. Until now, especially the Co-Chair works under certain non-described assumptions, which is asking for trouble in cases of stress and uncertainty.
3. a mechanism should be in place to smoothen the handover from one Chair to the next one and to ensure that experiences made by one Chair will not disappear after the term of office has expired. This can be solved through a process of continued common consultations by inviting the former Chair to meetings of the new Chair and Co-Chair, so that knowledge about challenges as well as experiences can be shared well into the new term
4. the issue of legal capacity will be pursued with great vigour and that the need for this challenge to be tackled will be communicated well to all stakeholders involved. The incorporation of the NDPHS-Secretariat within the CBSS-structure may persist, but on a new legal platform, which will make it possible to keep the benefits of cooperation and networking while avoiding the disadvantages of administrative dependency.
5. the NDPHS might consider, as soon as the Terms of Reference for the Secretariat are ready for decision-making, to prolong the duration of work-contracts for Secretariat's staff to five, as it has already been agreed upon during the discussions about the Terms of Reference for the secretariat.
6. the NDPHS should encourage the Secretariat, after the current EU-funded project ends, to apply for additional project-oriented funding, either for a technical or a content-oriented purpose, either in self-responsibility or in collaboration with Expert Groups. The Secretariat should build up and maintain its competencies in regard to project-application, project-management and project-monitoring in order to have sufficient practical day-to-day experience. This will be not only helpful to provide a higher output of NDPHS as a whole, but it will also put the Secretariat in a place of functioning as a centre for advise in case of project-implementation-activities by the EG.
7. if the NDPHS is happy with the perspective of the Secretariat to continue as an agency of project-implementation, it should be considered to increase the number of the permanent staff of the Secretariat at the level of senior-adviser by at least one person. The consultant advises against outsourcing project-implementation beyond the administrative duties outside the Secretariat. Experience shows that outsourcing project-

implementation makes monitoring and quality-management much more difficult, while mistakes and shortcomings reflect directly to the network.

3.2 The CSR and the PAC

The CSR and the PAC are the major decision-making bodies within NDPHS. PAC is the senior one in this respect and every second meeting is supposed to give political leverage by representation from ministers of the participating countries. This setup is not unlike that of many other international networks and follows more or less well established rules & regulations. This chapter will therefore only deal with a few issues in regard to the performance and setup of these bodies. Before doing so, it is necessary to shortly reflect on a basic issue which is of concern for the consultant: the problem of membership in the NDPHS.

3.2.1 Membership-issues

How to become a member of NDPHS is relatively clearly regulated: The partnership has devised “Rules of Procedure for approval of new NDPHS Partners and Participants”, adopted in March 2007. The Rules of Procedure refer themselves to the Oslo Declaration, which divides membership into “partners” and “participants”. Partners are the Founding Partner, the EU Member States and the ND Partner Countries, the EU-Commission, regional cooperation bodies, international organizations and financing institutions. Participants are “sub-national administrative entities” in the ND area.

Interestingly, the membership-reality of NDPHS looks a little bit **different**. Here we do not only have partners, but also “associated partners”. The term of an “associated partner” is **neither mentioned in the Oslo Declaration nor in the “Rules of Procedure”** of quite recent times. This status came about to accommodate certain concerns by the German government which lead to a halt in regular membership-payments. In order to keep Germany involved, the status of “associated partner” was invented – more or less ad-hoc – and later on attributed to other countries that either felt reluctant to pay regularly or claimed not being able to due to legal reasons.

Currently, the NDPHS-website lists as “associated partners” aside from Germany also Canada and France. The first two countries do pay into the NDPHS-budget, but not in a regular fashion as contribution to the Secretariat’s activities, but on occasion and directed towards specific activities. Still, they seem to enjoy similar voting rights within the CSR and PAC – Canada is even hosting the upcoming PAC-meeting end of 2008. Other “full” partners, like France (when it has been a “full” partner and Russia), did/do not pay their regular membership-contributions, but their status has not been “relegated” to “associated partners”, **nor do they suffer in their rights to partake in decision-making or representation**.

In addition, international organizations or regional bodies which are full partners do not have to pay membership-fees, but have equal voting rights, even if they have not exercised them for some time, are not active in Expert Groups or contribute in any other way to the progress of the Partnership.

In summary, the membership-situation of NDPHS **puzzles the outside observer**. There is no clear cut **definition of membership-status**, and if there is, criteria are not adhered to, and

indicators of membership are not well monitored. It is evident that the ambiguity of approach on this matter is deeply connected with **overriding political concerns** which shape the “liberal” definition or re-definition of membership according to prevailing circumstances. This might have supported the partnership well to weather the initial storms during the formation period and the subsequent crisis.

Aside from paying its dues, which related only to member-states, the “Rules of Procedure” quite clearly point out **certain criteria by which international organizations** should be scrutinized:

- long-term commitment
- relevant competence
- international character
- authorization and representation

Interestingly, neither not meeting the duty to pay membership-fees, nor the total absence of activity – or commitment – to the NDPHS does seem to have **any consequence** for being a NDPHS-partner or not. Judging from the CSR-minutes, the issue is only contemplated on the level of paying membership-fees, but only scarcely with visible determination or even questioning the membership. While currently a total of four countries are not paying regular membership-fees and some of the international organizations – like UNAIDS or IOM – are nearly not present in any Expert Group or visibly active in CSR- and PAC-meetings, there is **no apparent mechanism** within NDPHS (like automatic suspension of rights for decision making or participation in PAC-meetings or whatsoever) to react to these shortcomings.

As has been conceded above, this “liberal” approach surely has been helpful during those difficult times of the partnership where its very existence seemed to be questionable and activities were very limited. If, and that seems to be the case, the partnership endeavours now to reach for higher grounds and attain a new and more sophisticated level of activity, the question of being a member or not will become more important as well. Therefore, it is obvious from the consultant’s point of view that some changes are in order.

3.2.2 CSR

The CSR is the intermediary decision-making body between the yearly PAC-meetings and takes place two times a year. The consultant has only been able to partially witness one CSR-meeting, therefore his insights are restricted to feedback from interviews and the documentation of the meetings on the NDPHS website. While the CSR is not making final decisions on important issues concerning the partnership – this is solely the role of the PAC -, decisions to be taken are discussed and prepared here. If we compare the composition of members attending CSR and PAC-meetings, it is evident that the congruence is big and that normally a CSR-“decision” is, in most if not all cases, a pre-determination of all relevant PAC-decisions, which therefore become more of a formal acclamation of a process which has already ended.

Judging from the organizational setup and the proceedings and reflecting on the feedback gathered during the interviews, it is the overall impression that the CSR is performing its task more or less **as can be expected from such kind of body**. The width and length of the dis-

cussions cover all important areas of the NDPHS' activities and conflict and dissent are dealt with in a professional manner. Outspoken criticism has its place within the CSR-proceedings as well as overall reporting of progress and consideration of future steps. While the CSR does not seem to be the focus of innovation of NDPHS – the impression is clearly that important decisions are prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with the CSR-Chair (and on certain occasions in consultation with the EG-chairs and ITAs) and then presented to the CSR for elaboration -, that **doesn't mean that the CSR simply nods its agreement** to all proposals. Quite recently, the postponement of a planned “pledging-conference” proposed by the Secretariat and energetically defended by its proponent shows that decision-making is still relatively open and arguments brought forward can still “win the day”.

The minutes taken and subsequently published are reflecting **the meetings' progress well** and are changed upon feedback from all partners after sending around a draft version. The minutes are more than just reflection of decisions but also a mirror of the way the discussion went, which makes it easier for partners who did not attend to learn about the current state of affairs. **Documentation and transparency in regard to the CSR can therefore only be described as excellent.**

The frequency of meetings is **adequate** for the CSR's purpose. Nevertheless, it might be noteworthy that a number of CSR-members – or people who are expected to be present at CSR-meetings – have complained about the general **frequency of meetings**. If someone is an EG Chair, it is possible that he has to attend not only two CSR-meetings, but also one PAC-meeting, the meetings of his EG and meetings of EG-Chairs. Depending on the availability of time and money and the constraints of other obligations – see chapter 3.3 in that respect – it is understandable that the multitude of meetings can develop into a burden. Already now, the Secretariat tries to schedule meetings in such a way that multiple obligations can be met at the same time. If the workload of NDPHS will increase in the future, depending on its strategic decisions, it will be necessary to have a deeper look into issues like schedules and multiple attendances for key functionaries of the partnership.

In summary, the CSR is performing its task according to its purpose. It is heavily dependent on the input and contribution of all partners and can therefore only be both effective and efficient if it works as a sum of all its components. As soon as it has a driving force – an effective Chair and/or an effective Secretariat – steering the agenda, **it can perform well.**

3.2.3 PAC

The annual PAC is the major decision-making body. Normally, a ministerial PAC is accompanied by content-oriented side-events, which foster the connection between the NDPHS and the issues the partnership is dealing with. In addition, every second PAC is supposed to be organized on a ministerial-level, i. e. attendance by ministers or at least deputy-ministers is supposed to give the NDPHS political leverage and underscores the partnership's legitimacy in regard to its organization as well as its issues.

The PACs so far have encountered some **challenges**, especially when it comes to representation on a ministerial level. Response from the partner-countries has at best been lukewarm,

and while the engagement and activity of smaller member-states should not be described as less welcome and needed, the bigger member-states have been **notably absent** on the ministerial level. If we compare the attendance of CSR and PAC-meetings, it becomes obvious that the PACs are not more than “**expanded**” **CSR-meetings**. Therefore, more or less the same persons who have prepared the PAC’s decisions in the CSR are those who, wearing the “hat” of a PAC-member, formally endorse these decisions. This is nothing to criticize in itself, as one will find similar approaches in other international setups and the division between a decision-making-level and a level which is responsible for the “middle-management” is a commonplace.

While the PACs have surely fulfilled their task in formally approving decisions already made beforehand on CSR-level, they have – so far – more or less **failed in providing significant political leverage** through high-ranking endorsement of its activities. This is understandable: until recently, there were not too many results which could have been endorsed or praised by representatives from a high political level. But as more results and developments are coming in or are to be started, political leverage and therefore political legitimacy is becoming more and more important.

The PAC has not played a distinctive role for the NDPHS so far. It will not play a distinctive role in the future as long as CSR-membership and PAC-membership remains to be more or less identical and the PAC is just a formal way to approve decisions already prepared. But if the political dimension of NDPHS will become more apparent and important, changes might be needed in the way the PAC is operated or fit into the overall NDPHS-system.

3.2.4 Recommendations

The consultant recommends that

1. the legal and financial requirements for becoming and staying as a member should be **revised and made as concrete as possible**. This might include the **abolishment of the arbitrary introduced “associated partner”-status and replacing it by an “observer”-status** for those not interested or capable of full involvement, but without any rights in decision-making. This might also include certain mechanisms in regard to membership-status in **cases of non-payment of membership-fees or non-activity** in the NDPHS-bodies for a certain period of time, e. g. minimum criteria like activity in at least one Expert Group and regular attendance of at least PAC-meetings etc. As membership of the NDPHS is closely linked to membership in the ND in general, some of these reforms might need the blessing of a higher level of decision-making in order to ensure conformity and avoid possible conflicts.
2. it is necessary to be increasingly aware of the multitude of schedules which might constrain the ability of some CSR-members to attend all meetings always or work effectively in preparation of meetings they are supposed to attend. A deeper **analysis** of individual resources in time and money might be called for if the performance of the various bodies of NDPHS should increase with new challenges and new projects.
3. the PAC-meetings will be held only **every second year instead of annually** – like e. g. already practised in the sister-organization CBSS -, and that the last CSR-meeting of a non-PAC-year will be officially mandated by all partners to be a decision-making-body for everything which has to be dealt with in the meantime. This saves one additional meeting and therefore reduces strain on resources.

4. the bi-annual PAC-meeting will then be specifically designed and prepared to allow the generation of **political legitimacy and endorsement of the best possible quality**. Wide-range lobbying of participating ministries in regard to participation will be a pre-requisite, a side-event-programme which targets also a wider audience and serves as a public-relations-event and inclusion of media-representatives¹⁶ should also be considered.

3.3 Expert Groups

The Expert Groups are supposed to be the core of the partnership's activities. They are dealing with the actual content of the partnership and are supposed to be the major providers of results. It is therefore necessary to elaborate quite in length about their activities and eventual challenges of their work. Before we turn over to the topic in specific, a general issue has to be discussed which is reflected by the existence of current EGs: The balance of topics within NDPHS.

As has been mentioned already in chapter 2, the task of NDPHS is twofold: It should deal with issues related to health as well as to social policy. If we scrutinize the current setup of topics, we discover that of a total of six EGs¹⁷, only one can be described, **with some difficulty**, to cover at least partly an issue of social policy. As we will learn in the following chapter, the emergence of Expert Groups can best be described as "organic", using seeds which were already put into the ground by others or responding to dynamic proponents with a distinct content-oriented agenda in their mind. Due to this process, NDPHS has developed a strong focus in regard to health issues with a nearly total neglect of social issues. If we recall the main activity areas where the partnership is supposed to be active...

1. Reducing the spread of major communicable diseases and preventing life-style related non-communicable diseases.
2. Enhancing peoples' levels of social well-being and promoting socially rewarding life-styles.

... it can easily be claimed already at this point of time that NDPHS **has concentrated on task no. 1 and neglected task no. 2**. Again, this is understandable from the review of how the EGs came about and under what circumstances. Despite this, the activities of NDPHS, judged upon its official goals, are **severely unbalanced** and ask for either clarification or change.

¹⁶ Public relation issues will be more closely discussed in chapter 4.1. At this point, the consultant only wants to point out that by "media" neither tabloids nor general interest media of other kinds are meant. Media representatives from special publications, like those of professional organizations linked to issues at stake, will more likely respond to an invitation and report about NDPHS-proceedings to an audience more likely to be interested in the matter than any general public.

¹⁷ The consultant does not count the SIHLWA-group as one EG. All information provided shows that it is indeed only the "cover" for three quite distinct EGs, therefore the total is six, not counting associated or ad-hoc-groups at this point.

3.3.1 The emergence of Expert Groups

To clarify the process of the emergence of Expert Groups, it is necessary to reflect shortly on the history of NDPHS so far. To limit the length of this report, not all details will be provided at this point, but a general assessment of how the EGs came about. As has already mentioned, the early history of NDPHS has been mostly about serious challenges which needed to be tackled. During the first years of existence, NDPHS had no Expert Groups and was only consisting of a not very functional Secretariat and regular CSR- and PAC-meetings. The crisis of the organization was well analyzed by stakeholders in the process and actions to remedy the situation were taken. Part of these actions was to **revitalize and put into practice the idea of Expert Groups** in order to achieve tangible results after a certain period of dormancy. Therefore it can be said that the emergence of EGs within NDPHS is quite a recent development, surely something which should have happened much earlier. It also was grown out of a certain sense of desperation, as the feeling seems to have been: *We have to do something in regard to content – and we have to do it urgently!*

It is therefore understandable that part of the process of establishment of EGs has been shaped by looking for already existing groups and/or tested ideas to take up and incorporate into NDPHS' activities.

In summary, the current six EGs of NDPHS emerged through two different avenues:

- The EGs HIV/AIDS, Prison Health and Primary Health Care were either **continued or rejuvenated activities** of the defunct Baltic Sea Task Force for Communicable Diseases, with members who share an experience of cooperation which lasts – in the case of the HIV/AIDS-group – well back into the 80ies. While it is true that these three EGs are continuations of efforts, it has to be said that the hiatus at least of the PH and PHC-groups has been of considerable length and their “rejuvenation” has been, in essence, a re-establishment from more or less zero activity.
- The three groups put together under the umbrella of SIHLWA were formed mainly because of the **energetic proposal by WHO representatives** who claimed that the focus on communicable diseases is everything but sufficient to deal with health-problems in the sub-region, therefore EGs attending to non-communicable diseases are necessary. Accepting that argument, the SIHLWA-subgroups were inaugurated in 2005, with one sub-group shared as an associated EG with the Baltic Sea Network (see chapter 3.3.3).

In summary, the historically understandable and justifiable emergence of the EGs points to certain lacks in regard to the mechanism to establish these groups. The consultant would like to point out the following:

- There is no **clear-cut** and regulated mechanism or process in place which administers the decision-making about the establishment of new Expert Groups (or, for that matter, the dissolution of old EGs), aside from a relatively vague provision in the Oslo Declaration.
- There is **no indicator-led or criteria-based process of identification, analysis and prioritization** of topics “good enough” to legitimize the establishment of an Expert Group to deal with the identified matter.

This leads to

- the possibility that EGs are established within NDPHS because energetic actors, be it institutions or individuals, put something on the agenda and argue convincingly, but

without consideration to a due process or regulation, therefore making the assessment if a new idea is worthwhile or not difficult, and the process itself not sufficiently transparent. The impression might occur that **EGs can be established more or less “by chance”**.

As has been said, the history has been well understood by the consultant and the justification of the process in the past is evident, especially as it helped to bring NDPHS out of a certain crisis and has helped to produce results. The consultant doesn't want to linger too long in the past, but would like to make certain recommendations for a change of process in the future which might enhance credibility of the selection and decision-making in regard to the establishment of new Expert Groups (see chapter 3.3.4).

3.3.2 Challenges in the work of Expert Groups

In this chapter, organizational challenges in a wider sense will be discussed. Challenges in regard to content will be discussed in chapter 4. During the interviews made and after scrutinizing the written questionnaires returned by EG-members, the major challenges can be described as follows:

- **Resource-challenges.** The biggest constraints for EG-members to participate regularly and with great engagement in the Expert Groups seem to be of a financial nature, closely followed by constraints of available time. Many EG-members, who stated that they have not been able to attend every EG-meeting since they joined their respective group, and who have not been able to nominate a substitute as well, singled **monetary restrictions as the major impediment**. While a big majority is financed through institutions they belong to, especially in regard to their travelling-costs, a smaller number has to find funds somewhere else. Even for those supported by their institution, it seems to be a fact that **money is not always available when a meeting is scheduled** and/or that **other assignments are in the way of participation** and are regarded with a higher priority than NDPHS. Despite this impression, only very few respondents claim that it is difficult for them to communicate the need of participation to their superiors. As has already been mentioned, some EG-members, especially Chairs and Co-Chairs, who are not only responsible for their EG but are also supposed to take part in other activities of the NDPHS, the multitude of meetings and the consistent expectation to be visible everywhere is regarded as a strain which has increased considerably especially during the last two years.
- **Motivational challenges.** While in most EGs members seem to be ready to participate at least with a minimum of motivation, in some more recently re-activated EGs the motivational factor seems to **play an adverse role**, especially in the EG Prison Health. It has been specifically difficult to engage EG-members in the development of the “thematic reports” and the annual action plans. The questionnaires show that there is a substantial number of EG-members who claim that they do not participate in anything else than just the general discussion during the meetings. Motivational challenges can partly **be attributed to content-issues**. If a specific content does not touch the immediate need and desire of both the individual as well as the institution, it does not generate motivation, and therefore the participation in the deliberations is only seen as a “duty”, which is **discharged with minimum effort**. This seems to be evident especially for the EG Prison Health, but there are also indications for that in the EG Primary Health Care.

- **Organizational challenges.** Work in some of the EG, even in those already in existence for a longer period of time, has been constrained by difficulties in identifying ITAs and getting them involved efficiently. Currently, this problem seems to have been overcome as the situation has improved everywhere considerably. As this is only a quite recent development, the lack of an effective and efficient ITA is still quite vivid in the memory of many EG-members and therefore mentioned as a constraint.

Generally said, there seems to be a challenge in getting both everyone engaged on a persistent level as well as avoiding a too top-sided approach to the work on specific projects, especially e. g. the thematic reports. There are differences in those EGs where project-activities have come quite far – e. g. in the OSH-subgroup of SIHLWA, which is a special case anyway and will be elaborated more in the following chapter -, which seems to indicate that as more concrete and worthwhile the planned effort, the more engagement of EG-members can be expected.

In an organizational sense, the internal structure of EGs, their work-plan and their focus are **well developed**, because the **quality of documentation has increased** considerably. The pipeline/database-project has also been **very fruitful** in this respect. Still, there is the danger that in some EGs – like Prison Health – even these documents do not reflect properly the “will of the group”, but much more the interest of specific stakeholders, who, more or less desperate about diminishing or non-existent responses from their membership, decided to set the agenda themselves **in order to meet a deadline**.

For the consultant, another challenge lies in discerning **the exact role of the ITAs**, their relationship to the EG-Chairs and to the Secretariat. On the one hand, financing of the ITAs comes from various sources, mostly from project activities funded by the lead-country of an EG. On the other hand, ITAs differ in the level of involvement, depending on their individual ability and workspace, but also in relation to more or less energetic and active EG-Chairs, who might be willing or forced to give the ITAs more or less space to “do their thing”. Thirdly, the ITAs are, aside from the Secretariat, the only additional “staff” the NDPHS has, irrespective from the sources of funding from them, as they work prominently for the NDPHS-goals. They are, in a way, monitored by the Secretariat in order to streamline activities, but report officially to their Chairs, and by contractual means, are primarily responsible to those who provide the funds for their activities. The consultant **has not been able to fully discern what this potential multitude of loyalties** has as a consequence in the end; it might heavily depend on the individual ITA’s outlook on his work and the “working culture” of his EG. As some ITAs have only started to be active quite recently, it may be too early to come to conclusions in this matter; still, the issue will be taken up in the recommendations.

In summary, it is important to note that the main impediment for progress is not of financial nature. Normally, when a common vision is established and everyone involved is satisfied with the scope and focus of that vision, financial considerations can be addressed more successfully. If the money is around, but those supposed to do something with it lack both focus as well as motivation, the financial resources are irrelevant. In those EGs where progress has been slower than anticipated, the main impediment has been motivational challenges. Therefore, NDPHS has still a way to go to harvest its human resources the most effective and efficient way.

3.3.3 Associated EGs and ad-hoc working groups

Aside from the “regular” Expert Groups there are so-called “associated” Expert Groups or “ad-hoc”-Groups. Again, there are distinct rules for the formation of associated Expert Groups. They are supposed to be already existing groups from other organizations who participate within the NDPHS-network as well. The CSR has to invite this already existing group or the interested group might apply for participation, meeting some more or less formal criteria quite similar to those for international organizations who’d like to join NDPHS as partners. So far, two associated Expert Groups exist: The CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) and the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN). While both groups are formally on the same level of cooperation, reality draws a very different picture:

- The WGCC is not more than a **relatively uninvolved and not well integrated appendix** to NDPHS. Its activities, with a wide range of programmes and projects directly executed in CBSS-member states, are reflected somewhat in the NDPHS’ reporting and documentation. Aside from that, a relevant involvement of the WGCC in NDPHS-activities on the one side, and of NDPHS-actors in WGCC-activities on the other side is not discernible, leading to current deliberations by the WGCC ITA if and how far a continued cooperation is fruitful for the WGCC’s purpose or not.
- The BSN on the other side is **deeply integrated into the SIHLWA-subgroup on Occupational Health and its programmes are contributing to the discussion** of the subgroup. Involvement is much more significant and activities look more integrated. While the BSN is eager to safeguard a certain degree of autonomy, especially when it comes to the execution of a variety of programmes and projects in Russia, it sees the participation in NDPHS as added-value and is ready to contribute to SIHLWA’s work.

In addition to these two associated Expert Groups, there have been so far three ad-hoc-working groups dealing with specific issues. These are the “Working Group on Secretariat’s Legal Capacity”, the “Project Database Project Steering Group” and most recently the “Evaluation Team” supporting and steering the independent evaluation of NDPHS. All three groups can best be described as **technical working groups** in order to solve a distinct problem or fulfil a specific, time-bound and well-defined task. In these working groups, not necessarily all members of NDPHS are represented.

In summary, the idea of “associated” Expert Groups has proven only to be meaningful when both sides **are actively involved and interested in the chosen topic and deeper cooperation**. With WGCC, there is strong indication that while WGCC itself sees a potential for cooperation, the reception from NDPHS can only best be described as lukewarm. BSN on the other hand, not being backed by another “big” network like the CBSS, obviously has both a vital interest in getting a wider leverage of its activities as well as maintaining its autonomy in executing its expertise in specific programmes and projects.

There is nothing to be said about the ad-hoc-working groups, as from the review of their minutes and looking at the results of their work, they **perform their tasks well** and stick to their mandate, therefore their existence and modus operandi seems to be worth keeping. The lack of progress in regard to the legal capacity-problem cannot be blamed to the working group itself but to circumstances mostly outside its capacity, as the solution of the problem lies with the initiative and political will of the partners.

3.3.4 Recommendations

The consultant recommends that NDPHS

1. should decide if the **two-fold approach towards health and social well-being** is to be maintained or the current focus in health issues should be made official policy. This could either lead, in accordance with a new process of EG-development the consultant will recommend in the following, to a better balance of the two issues or, if so decided, to abandon social policy and totally concentrate on health¹⁸. In any case, if the international prominence of NDPHS will increase due to increased activity, it will be highly unsatisfactory if the current imbalance between the officially stated goals and the activities performed remains to be.
2. should elaborate and develop **clear criteria and a transparent process upon which new Expert Groups should be established** and/or old Expert Groups can be dissolved. Newly founded EGs should have not only a **clear mandate** from the beginning, but also be restricted in regard to the **duration of their existence** and the focus of their activities. Changes in focus and time have to be formally approved and criteria not met should be viewed as an indicator which can lead to the dissolution of the EG. Decisions towards the establishment of new groups should be **based on clear indicators** as well as a **unanimous political** will to pursue the matter, with clear, documented commitments by all relevant partners to participate.
3. should consider the **establishment of a mechanism which forces Expert Groups to defend** – in regular intervals, yearly or every second year – their own existence, with the possibility of dissolution of the Expert Group in the case of failure to legitimize its continuation. Every Expert Group should be forced **to bring forward arguments for its continued existence**, with the reservation by the CSR that if the arguments are not totally convincing, knowledge about the subject is not sufficient or additional deliberation is needed to employ an external expert to make an assessment of these arguments in order to support or contradict them. This could generally include a peer-review-process in certain intervals, conducted by experts in the respective fields, all depending on available funding.
4. should carefully **monitor the role, relationship and loyalties of ITAs** attached to the Expert Groups and should decide, depending on this observation, if and how far the role and relationship of ITAs to major institutions of NDPHS needs further regulation and definition. Depending on the decisions how the EGs should work in the future, it might even be an alternative to attach the ITAs to the Secretariat instead to the Expert Groups, as this will enhance the quality of monitoring, quality-management and focus of content. On the other hand, remaining the ITAs within the realm of the EG-Chairs might strengthen their role as support-resource for the Chair and the EG as a whole as they can be focussed on the immediate needs defined by the EG itself. At this point of time, the consultant does not have a more specific recommendation in regard to this matter and only wants to direct the attention of NDPHS to this issue for future deliberation.
5. should **review its collaboration with WGCC** and discern in how far NDPHS is really benefiting from the groups status as associated Expert Group and decide if and how the cooperation can be intensified or the formal bond should be abolished. For the con-

¹⁸ This decision is surely one to be made on a ministerial level during a PAC. The consultant is also aware of the fact that the Terms of his contract expressively did not include questioning the overall goals. The evaluation shows on the other hand that it is not the consultant, but NDPHS itself – implicitly through its practice – which is indirectly questioning these goals.

sultant, it is more or less useless to “boast” an associated Expert Group where the association is only on paper and exists mainly through putting the WGCC’s annual report into the NDPHS-documentation.

4 Results and impact of NDPHS

A major challenge of evaluations is always to define and scrutinize the relationship between an activity and the following assumed impact. Normally, planned projects, if they followed the philosophy of project-cycle-management, have included both indicators for success as well as methods to measure those indicators. Even not so well planned projects have at least an inclination about what they are trying to achieve and on what level impact can be expected.

The same is surely true for concrete projects which are linked to NDPHS activities – like the many projects facilitated in one way or the other through the Expert Groups or, more concretely, the database/pipeline-project implemented by the NDPHS-Secretariat. But for the organization as a whole, “success” or “impact” is nearly impossible to measure. This has not only to do with the fact that because of a difficult formation period “real” NDPHS-activities have only started relatively recent. It also has to do with the fact that while NDPHS has goals and priority areas, it has not given itself any indicators or criteria on which the organization’s success should be measured¹⁹. This makes it quite difficult for an evaluator, as he cannot “invent” indicators or criteria which are supposed to be common agreement of all partners. It is also necessary to reflect on the fact that aside from concrete indicators, it is normally also important to define on what level an impact is to be expected. The most simple level will be the mere existence of a product – like e. g. the thematic reports produced by the Expert Groups -, which is, surely, a tangible result. But this product is supposed not just to exist, but to have an influence, an impact on activities, and therefore it is too easy to claim that an Expert Group has been “successful” or “result-oriented” after something like a report or plan has been formulated, it is the follow-up that defines success or failure. These issues will be elaborated a little bit more deeply in chapter 4.2.1.

For many of these kinds of activities, it is too early to come to a conclusion, as they just have started. Some of the Expert Groups don’t have any projects they facilitated, and the database-project is indeed the first attempt by a re-animated Secretariat to provide certain results on its own. Therefore, the assessment of this chapter can only be tentative, and there might be, in some instances, more reflection on potential for impact or success and less about actual achievements.

Some additional words are necessary in regard to the general development of NDPHS so far. During the interviews some interviewees expressed their **concern** about the lack of progress especially during the first years of existence, and judged this as a burden for current developments. Comparing NDPHS’ progress with that of other more informal setup, the consultant would like to stress the following points:

¹⁹ There are some reporting elements developed and adopted. But these are more formal: As long as the general goals of the Oslo Declaration are not broken down in mid-term targets and these are not attached with a clear description of indicators or criteria upon these targets are supposed to be measured, a more formalized reporting does not suffice.

1. It is a quite **common experience** that newly founded international networks, organisations or institutions have problems to adjust themselves after the initial drive of the founding process into a suitable working pattern. **An orientation period** is therefore quite common. The duration of this period depends on a **variety of factors**: political will of participants, individual skills and commitment of important personalities, diversity of stakeholders, procedural agreements etc. While the consultant is ready to acknowledge that the starting period of NDPHS has been one of multiple challenges and many delays, this is **not an uncommon experience**. Generally, a formation and orientation period of at least two years is not surprising, although the complexity of challenges to overcome can vary heavily.
2. For the future of NDPHS, it **will not help to ponder the past** and its problems too much. Past developments should be regarded as an important phase of getting opinions, activities and visions into a first alignment of consensus. Despite the sometimes critical developments during the first years, it is much wiser to view them as a necessary **process to identify potential and real pitfalls** of the prospective work and an opportunity to make the right adjustments and decisions. The more dynamic progress of the last two years has given evidence that decisions have been taken and adjustments made. With that, the view should be **about the future**, not so much the past.

4.1 Visibility of NDPHS-activities

As has been said before, NDPHS had a difficult formation period. For quite some time since its inauguration, it has not been possible to expect “visibility” of the NDPHS when there has been “nothing to show”, as tangible results even in the most modest definition did not exist. Only with the emergence of more active Expert Group and a more energetic Secretariat this situation changed slowly. Consequently, one should not expect too much at this point of time. Still, it is worthwhile to look at the efforts of NDPHS to make itself more visible, in order to make recommendations on the steps taken so far and the likelihood of increased prominence in the future.

4.1.1 The website

The current website (www.ndphs.org) is a result of the database/pipeline-project and therefore has been well funded. This is clearly evident in the positive features of the organization’s virtual complimentary card:

- it covers **exhaustive and detailed information** about the NDPHS and its activities
- it provides a **high degree of transparency** as all documents, minutes, proposals and papers are freely available online
- it is permanently **updated** and therefore current
- it provides avenues for **additional** and regular information (e-newsletter, press releases, e-news and speeches)
- it provides **real service** for interested users through the database, and that free of charge (which is not common for professional databases)

In summary, the website is an **excellent tool** to refer interested parties to, who query for additional information about NDPHS, its actors and its activities. It is also the place where the activities are documented for “internal” use, where activists of the NDPHS can collect or recollect information and where conferences and meetings are prepared virtually.

On the other hand, the website is **a difficult terrain for the outsider** who doesn’t have the time to wade through the ocean of information provided. The interested journalist, the ministerial staff who has twenty minutes to summarize NDPHS for his boss, the master of ceremonies who wants to quickly glance through some information in order to present the NDPHS-guests on his panel sufficiently – all of them will face the problem that the navigation and the way the information is **presented should be more accessible**²⁰. Here, it is not the technical aspect

²⁰ This report cannot replace a professional website-evaluation, which is a distinct task with additional methods to be employed. If funding is available, the consultant suggests to employ an expert evaluator in that field in order to assess the website.

the consultant likes to consider, but the way information is digested and how the time-pressed visitor might be irritated by the website's structure.

- Presenting **acronyms** in a navigation right from start is a safe and reliable way to repel possible visitors and to make sure that no one will ever access the information under "PHC EG" or "SIHLWA EG".
- Short, to the point information is **missing**²¹. Even the texts under "About NDPHS" are too lengthy, covered with too many additional links (it is e. g. not necessary to link directly to all the documents every time they are mentioned) and not well structured, they look like a long, not too attractive narrative

While there is nothing wrong with the width and depth of content of the NDPHS-website, it seems to be necessary to make it more **user-friendly** especially for a casual visitor who just wants to know the basics or doesn't have time to delve deeply into the content. If NDPHS' prominence will increase due to additional activities in the future, the website should be able to cater for these kinds of needs.

Finally, looking at the **statistics** available in regard to hits on the website, the numbers accumulated since May 2007 show a quite impressive number of more than 140.000 hits. If we look into details, though, we find that a majority of these hits (around 30 %) is from Sweden (and most probably from the NDPHS-Secretariat's staff working on the content). This is supported by the fact that in regard to sub-domains visited, the admin-area ranks third, with the important sub-domains for external visitors - /partners and /about – rank second and fourth. As the Calendar ranks very high as well, it seems that – all in all – most visits on the website are done by people connected and working with NDPHS, much less "interested outsiders", as soon as they are leaving the top-level-domain (which ranks first on all hits, but is a logical entry point for everyone). This is supported by the fact that around 70 % visits come from bookmarked links and around 20 % through search-engines like Google. Links from external sites finally amount to only around 5 %. The most looked for search word since March 2008 has been "Vilnius" (17 %), again supporting the fact that individuals related to NDPHS used the website to gather specific information e. g. in preparation for a meeting or conference.

4.1.2 Public relations material

Activities by NDPHS to produce PR-material in the widest sense are quite recent and are, again, connected to the database/pipeline-project, which has included some funds for this purpose. Currently, the only printed information material available is a newly produced folder with information about the general setup of NDPHS and the various Expert Groups. The folder in itself is a step in the right direction and can easily be distributed during conferences and workshops, in ministerial meetings, and can be sent to interested parties who do not like to click

²¹ The website's statistics indicate that more than 70 % of visitors stay not more than 30 seconds on the website, with another 10 % staying for up to two minutes. Only 5 % use up to five minutes of their time going through the content. In designing information, **these "attention spans" have to be considered.**

through websites a lot²². Therefore, the idea to produce this material should be **commended** and additional initiatives in this direction should be considered.

Having said that, the current condition of the information provided has some of the challenges witnessed in browsing through the website, especially as the folder has been originally produced to provide information “on the desk of ministers” for a specific meeting in 2008: Having a minister in mind whose attention-span in sifting through papers, especially when these papers are not of high importance, is relatively short. The fact sheets include **too much information in too long texts** without an orientation for the fast and time-pressed reader where the “really important” message is hidden. It seems that especially for those recipients of printed material who should have an overview and should be lead by the material to come to certain conclusions about NDPHS, its activities and its successes, more focussed material is badly needed. From the consultant’s point of view, the existing fact sheets are “**second level material**”, i. e. material provided for *additional* information after first and initial material has been read and recipients have asked for more.

4.1.3 Presence in national and international fora and conferences

NDPHS is an expert-body, a facilitator of practice and of knowledge. As such, it is to be expected that the organization is regarded as a source of experience and knowledge in questions related to health and social issues. To discern the “visibility” of NDPHS, the organization’s presence in international and national conferences is a valid indicator.

The NDPHS annual reports try to monitor the presence of NDPHS-stakeholders in conferences and other events as well as the oral reports of the chair and the secretariat during the CSR-meetings and the secretariat’s periodic progress reports. The interviews conducted and the annual reports provided give also a certain indication that the visibility of NDPHS has, together with the overall increased dynamics of development, increased as well. It is not possible for the consultant to give specific numbers. Still, it seems that more could be done.

The interviews conducted through the questionnaire sent to EG-members give the impression that many EG-members are wearing a “variety of hats”, being responsible of representing their organization, government, ministry or whatever on different levels both nationally and internationally. It is the consultant’s impression that this potential has not been harvested systematically by NDPHS for the purpose of spreading the news even of its very existence to potentially interested third parties in the field.

²² One of the great illusions in public relations is that with having a nice and informative website it is not necessary anymore to provide any printed or written material. As with the illusion of the paperless office – which is only mastered by highly disciplined and extremely well organized individuals -, “paperless public relations” does not exist. There are still more than enough people in many professions out there who will prefer a leaflet, a brochure or a folder over a shiny website. Therefore, it’s never an “either – or”, it’s always an “and”. It is encouraging that NDPHS is aware of this fact.

On the other hand, signs of increased activity in this regard, especially through the greater involvement of the EU-Commission in NDPHS-activities, are evident. It is only to be expected that serious efforts in reaching out into the field were only started as soon as profound activity within NDPHS began. Therefore, one should not expect too much at this period of time. But as the activities of the partnership increase, this should also give leverage to a greater visibility in the field, both nationally and internationally.

4.1.4 Recommendations

The consultant recommends

1. to **review the current structure of the website** in regard to its accessibility for fast information and research. A navigation leaving out puzzling and mysterious acronyms should be the first step. A simple entry with headers like: “About us – our partners – our projects – our database”, from where more detailed information can be accessed, should be totally sufficient. Information should be much less provided in long and narrative form, but in condensed, pointed ways, followed by additional links leading into a deeper structure not necessarily of interest for the casual observer from the outside.
2. to create **more focussed printed PR-material** with less emphasis on too detailed information, but short, to-the-point summaries, providing the core of the message of NDPHS. A small leaflet, a short brochure and material both designed and written by PR-experts should be considered if funding is available.
3. to create **more issue-related traffic** on the website from the outside of NDPHS, efforts should be made that a link to ndphs.org should be available on all important international and national website related to health and social issues: Ministries, ministerial agencies, research-institutes, databases etc. This will spread the accessibility of the website and might attract more visitors interested in the content²³.
4. to make a **complete survey** of all NDPHS-representatives, especially EG-members, to find out their exact position and membership in additional national and international setups, with the distinct aim to discuss in how far they can be actively approached to function as multipliers generally or specifically in order to enhance NDPHS’ visibility in fields of interest.

4.2 Challenges of results and impact analysis

It is normally part of every evaluation, aside from scrutinizing processes and structures, to evaluate impact. This is specifically difficult in regard to any international organization, because

²³ Past efforts by the secretariat to encourage this have not been too successful; many partners do not have a link to NDPHS on their websites yet. This is not a sole responsibility of the secretariat, but of every stakeholder representing an organisation with internet-appearance.

– as mentioned – the NDPHS has general goals, which are not really connected to indicators by which the organization's success or failure is supposed to be validated. As it has not been the evaluator's task to analyze the different projects which have been – directly or indirectly – facilitated by NDPHS (each of those evaluations would have been a totally new, additional endeavour) and as the EGs themselves **have not compiled any comprehensive evaluation** of projects they are claiming to be attached to their activities²⁴, it is difficult to even have a sketchy idea about the performance of these projects. Therefore, the assessment in this chapter is based on quantitative indicators – things are “existing” or “have been done” – and less on qualitative ones. In addition, recommendations to overcome this challenge are surely in order.

Having said that, and in view of the analysis of the preceding chapters about organisational matters, it is important to state that since the problems of the initial period have been overcome, the NDPHS has increasingly **made good use of its resources** – both material as well as immaterial. There have been and there remain challenges in the scope of resources available – both in regard to finances as well as human resources²⁵ – but those available have been used to their maximum effect.

4.2.1 Definition of “result” and “impact”

For the purpose of any evaluation – and this includes impact- or result-oriented monitoring and self-evaluation as well as external efforts – it is necessary to clearly differentiate between a result and an impact and attach indicators, where possible, in order to measure them correctly. NDPHS, at this point of time, lacks these definitions nearly completely²⁶.

The NDPHS, on the cover of its folder, uses the term “**tangible results**”. The term “tangible” is **relatively ambiguous**, as it can both refer to the very immediate possibility to “touch” a result – therefore the term “product” might be the better description – or it can also include the meaning of a result, whose impact can be easily “witnessed”, therefore mixing the terms result and impact into one. The consultant would describe as “result” a concrete product, be it a paper, a plan, a decision taken or an experience summarized and reflected upon, while the “im-

²⁴ The consultant is only aware of two comprehensive evaluation reports available about projects somehow connected to NDPHS: Bjørnkilde, Thomas/ Wynn, Alexandra: Social and Health Sector Projects in Russia. Final Report. SIDA Evaluation 04/17, Stockholm 2004 and Holm-Hansen, Jorn/ Aasland, Aadne/ Malik, Larisa S.: Health and Social Affairs in Norway and Russia. The cooperation evaluated, NIBR Report 2007:20, Oslo 2007.

²⁵ It is necessary to note that the mere existence of human resources is not the relevant indicator. It is the way they are used and harvested, which indicates resource-effectiveness. As has been said in regard to some of the Expert Groups, there is still need for improvement.

²⁶ The consultant is confident that within the projects facilitated through NDPHS, these definitions do exist in accordance with the various project-cycle-management needs. It has not been the evaluator's task to analyze all these projects. Nevertheless, it might be a useful exercise for NDPHS to go through all the applications and compare and summarize result and impact definitions as a guiding light for its own effort in this area. A proposal in that direction has already been made by the chair of the EG HIV/AIDS and should be taken more seriously.

“impact” is the follow-up, what has been done with it and about it. To take this evaluation as an example, the report is a “result”, but the impact can be either “zero” – because it will be put in a drawer and duly forgotten – or anything from implementation of reforms to discussion of content.

At this point of time, it is very difficult to assess the impact of NDPHS, leaving aside the few examples of which some have been mentioned already in this report. This is because:

- The consultant is **hesitant** to describe existing products – as the thematic reports or the database – as impact because of their mere existence and prefers to refer to the fact that they have been prepared just as a “result”.
- The consultant **had major difficulties during his evaluation process to define a chain of causality between the existence of e. g. an Expert Group, its “facilitation” of projects and the subsequent results and/or impact of these projects as a direct outcome** of the work of NDPHS. The impression is that many activities attributed to NDPHS by itself have a more correlative relationship to the partnership, i. e. they would have come about also without the existence of NDPHS, they didn’t necessarily “need” NDPHS²⁷.

The consultant is quite aware of the difficulty to attribute concrete project-results and impacts to the work of a still relatively loose network like NDPHS – and also of the need to “claim” success for the purpose of legitimacy where the relationship can best be described as feeble. Still, it is in the consultant’s point of view necessary to **be as honest as possible with the definition of results and impacts stemming directly from an intervention** by NDPHS, to make sure that not too many actors involved claim responsibility for success at the same time. For this purpose, it seems to be necessary for NDPHS to define for itself the amount of “ownership” they rightfully can claim on a certain activity in order to attribute it as legitimately “theirs”. Please refer to recommendations in chapter 4.2.6 for this purpose.

4.2.2 Projects

When asked what kind of “tangible results” one should expect from NDPHS, most answers centred on the belief that concrete projects, “facilitated” by NDPHS, should deliver these kind of successes. As has already been mentioned, it has been difficult for the consultant to exactly discern what can honestly be described a “NDPHS-project” because of the problem of causality and correlation. Nevertheless, the **positive impact of being connected to projects** – to use a quite vague term here – is undeniable:

- Projects help to stay connected “to the ground” and gather experience from the field which would be otherwise only accessible through secondary data, probably already very refined and quite abstract.
- Successful projects can prove that certain policy recommendations are valid or can lead to valid recommendations, which in turn can inspire additional projects in countries where these experiences have not been made yet.

²⁷ It might be interesting to note that in the above mentioned evaluation by Bjornkilde/Wynn, which contains a number of HIV/AIDS-projects in Northern Russia, NDPHS is not mentioned once.

- Projects can lead to more sophisticated theoretical work – like in thematic papers – and can support NDPHS to be regarded as a viable source of experience and knowledge about certain issues by others.
- Successfully facilitated projects increase credibility and legitimacy of the whole partnership in general.

While the rejuvenated EGs for Prison Health and Primary Health Care are just in the beginning of proceedings in regard to projects – the thematic reports include some recommendations in that respect – the sub-groups in SIHLWA and the HIV/AIDS-group are more familiar with the project-approach. The **philosophy seems to be different between the two groups**: While the HIV/AIDS-group members seem to enjoy being involved in as many ongoing projects as possible, SIHLWA-representatives obviously feel more comfortable with the idea of so-called “flagship-projects”, where activities are concentrated on one or few projects of exemplary character. It corresponds with these different views that the string of causality between the activities of the Expert Group on HIV/AIDS to “their” projects and between SIHLWA-groups and their activities on the ground respectively is different. HIV/AIDS is at maximum a facilitator in the sense that ideas are tossed around and then others are the implementers, while in SIHLWA more concrete involvement in execution is visible.

The only project which can be **very directly and unmistakably** linked to NDPHS is the database/pipeline-project executed by the Secretariat (with support from the Expert Groups), which did not only lead to the existence of the website, but also the included database – linked to other databases -, the project-pipeline to facilitate funding (but not to provide funding itself by NDPHS), the info-folders about the NDPHS-activities and the thematic reports by the Expert Groups. For this project, the positive results and the impact can be clearly described as follows:

- **Results** are the existence of a quite sophisticated website, the information folders, the project-pipeline, the database and the thematic reports.
- **Impact** is the increased visibility of NDPHS, the increased dynamic of EG-work in particular and NDPHS in general, the funding channelled through the pipeline by two countries so far²⁸, greater transparency of NDPHS-activities for the interested public, a more engaged and constructive involvement of the EU-commission in the partnership’s work and finally the common awareness of potential benefits of future projects directly executed by the Secretariat on behalf of the partnership.

For the consultant, the database/pipeline-project is a clear example of a **successfully implemented project-activity with a variety of positive “spill-overs”, or, “non-intended impacts”**, especially in regard to the “psychology” of the partnership. This positive and quite impressive result wouldn’t have been possible, as has been mentioned earlier in this report, without the extra effort by the Secretariat. If there has been a “tangible result” both in the definition of “result” as well as an “impact” in the recent past, then it has been this one.

²⁸ It can only be expected that countries or donor-organizations will channel funds through the pipeline. It has to be mentioned that international organizations who are members of NDPHS – with the exception of the EU – are not donor, but recipient/executing organizations, and therefore it cannot be expected that they will be able to contribute to the pipeline.

As has been said, the consultant did not evaluate the other projects either facilitated or executed by Expert Groups²⁹. Therefore, no honest qualitative assessment of these projects can be made. The drive towards projects is visible all over NDPHS. Pressure on until recently more or less defunct EGs to come up with project-proposals and see them put into reality is mounting.

The different approach signified in the short description of projects by EG HIV/AIDS and EGs under SIHLWA is also clearly a division which cuts across NDPHS-stakeholders. Both the questionnaires as well as the personally conducted interviews shed light on a **very basic difference** in their approach:

- One side clearly prefers **NDPHS to exert full responsibility** for the planning, application, funding, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects (with same variation in this respect, e. g. some would agree that the implementation or the funding should be outsourced, but all in all a greater involvement is advocated). These also mostly speak for a good quantity of projects, not only some very few.
- The other side advocates few or one “flagship”- or “best practice”-project by EG. Most of these interviewees see NDPHS’ role primarily in **giving the right ideas**, supporting the development of application together with partners – NGOs maybe – who will be responsible for application, for implementation and for monitoring, while NDPHS again should come back on the issue of evaluation.

Please find the consultant’s recommendations in chapter 4.2.6.

²⁹ Both mentioned evaluation reports have a very positive opinion of those projects they have looked at. There is no reason for the consultant to doubt their conclusions.

4.2.3 Thematic reports

As has been mentioned, the database/pipeline-project has supported the “offspring” of a variety of products, among them the thematic reports prepared by the Expert Groups. In a way, these thematic reports are the first fully grown content-oriented publications the NDPHS has produced since the basic documents setting up the partnership³⁰. The thematic reports are an effort to focus the Expert Group’s activity and link them at the same time to concrete projects, especially for those EGs without any projects in the field yet. Still, the thematic reports have both strengths and shortcomings.

Strengths are

- A comprehensive overview over the situation in regard to the chosen focus, including legal background and description of most of the important sub-regions within the ND-area.
- Examples from already existing projects in the field, therefore connecting the policy-level with experience from practice, making the thematic report more than just a policy-overview but also a reflection of reality, sometimes with great care for details.

Shortcomings are

- In some reports – like the one by the EG Prison Health – recommendations for policy-actions and recommendations or ideas for projects **are mixed up**, leading to a certain degree of confusion. An extra chapter specifically for project-planning, with some more detailed recommendations for applications in the field, would have added more value and could have been more helpful for facilitating projects in a next step. The report on occupational health is as well not very clear in regard to concrete project proposals.
- Some **formal** problems which make readability in some cases a challenge, e. g. nearly indiscernible graphs in the thematic report of the PHC Expert Group.
- At least in regard to the versions available to the consultant, the reports lack a common **format**. While it is necessary to make reservations in regard to the peculiarities of the chosen topics, a common reporting-format should have been adhered to. The reports vary heavily in structure and layout³¹.
- It is evident that the **participation of the EG-members** with the preparation of the reports has varied heavily from group to group. Both the written questionnaires as well as the statements by the EG-chairpeople and ITAs indicate that in some cases – like the EG Prison Health – the reports have been prepared by a very small number of authors, without even any significant comment by the group’s members. In other groups, the participation has been more widespread. The reasons for this variation can be plentiful, from constraints in time to lack of interest.

The thematic reports are surely a **step into the right direction** and give a good impression about the expertise assembled in the Expert Groups. This path should be followed in the future.

³⁰ With the notable exception of the SIHLWA sub-group on occupational health which has benefited from the BNS associated Expert Group’s activities. There are also studies and papers provided by the HIV/AIDS Expert Groups, but at least some of them will predate the existence of NDPHS.

³¹ The latter will most probably be edited by the secretariat before final publication.

4.2.4 “Soft” results through mainstreaming and dissemination

Mainstreaming and dissemination is a pair of terms borrowed from EU-programmes. “Mainstreaming” can best be described as inducing an idea, practice, recommendation or knowledge into the mainstream of discussion and practice in a given field. If a project is very successful, its results can be mainstreamed so that regular services or other project-organizations take over the experience and put it into practice on their own. If a concept proves to be viable, it can be mainstreamed so that it will be transferred into law, regulation or any other way of official policy. Dissemination is more or less “spreading the word”, fulfilling the general task of transparency and making information about one’s doing available for everyone.

In this report, the issue of dissemination has already been raised in regard to the website and the new folders. How now to find out if the dissemination has had any results, any impact? From the consultant’s point of view, this is, at this time, **impossible to assess**. There was no room in the current evaluation for a stakeholder-exercise outside NDPHS. Still, the consultant thinks it might be important to evaluate this, and it can be done by NDPHS with a relatively small effort. Please refer to the recommendations in chapter 4.2.6 for this issue.

One might also consider the current influence of NDPHS in national decision-making, therefore reflecting more on mainstreaming. While it cannot be said that NDPHS has notable influence in all of its member-states, there is clear evidence that it can actually have an impact as soon as it has been able to identify a pressing issue and subsequently involve the relevant stakeholders to be involved. As the example of the Occupational Health Subgroup and its OSH strategy shows, this impact can be directly translated into action plans and rising awareness of stakeholders. While this positive example is, at this point of time, quite outstanding, it gives evidence for the positive potential NDPHS has if it uses its resources effectively and if it can open certain doors to relay its messages. Unfortunately, in some other areas – like e. g. Prison Health – this potential is limited by the fact that additional ministries have to be involved and intra-governmental cooperation is not always easy to achieve in all member-states. The challenge is to “put the nose in the wind” and have the right feeling for the right topic which can open doors at a specific point of time. On the other hand, the multitude of experts involved in NDPHS provides sufficient knowledge to be able to identify the right opening.

Finally, the first contacts between NDPHS and the South Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) is another possible venue for dissemination and mainstreaming. Current plans to allow the SEEHN to use the NDPHS-website-code to develop their own internet-presence are a good example in how to benefit from best-practise and to avoid duplication of efforts.

4.2.5 Monitoring, documentation and evaluation

As has been mentioned already, the new website offers an excellent and very transparent documentation of all NDPHS-activities, meetings, reports and plans, including all internal discussions and deliberations. Everyone interested in the progress of the partnership enjoys therefore ample opportunity to get informed and updated on a regular basis. Aside from that, it

is the Secretariat which provides an additional monitoring by looking into the progress of the Expert Groups and offering assistance where needed. It is also responsible for the monitoring and documentation of its own database/pipeline-project³². At this point of time, it is sufficient to say that the monitoring and documentation needs for a partnership of the size of NDPHS are fulfilled and that in a satisfactory manner.

Aside from that, and this has been mentioned as well, evaluation is not a habit deeply ingrained into the activities of NDPHS – and that despite continuous claims by EG-members to be otherwise³³. While the consultant is of the opinion – and follows the majority of interviewees easily in this point – that evaluation should be one of the main tasks of NDPHS in order to have a method to gather information from the field elevated to a higher policy-level, aside from the individual efforts by certain EG-members, there is no clear-cut and common approach to this issue by the partnership as a whole. As the partnership has some evaluation-experts among their activists, it should be easy either to develop a common framework for evaluating projects facilitated by NDPHS or to summarize information from secondary data into such a framework for comparative purposes. Neither of these exists.

In regard to the evaluation of NDPHS itself, the current exercise is the first one on the history of existence³⁴. For the consultant it is very important to point out to the fact that in his impression there has been no clearly defined mechanism described in the planning of the evaluation about how to deal with the results. The most likely approach will be a deliberation by the CSR, but the monitoring of implementation or non-implementation of decisions taken based upon this evaluation report has not been clear from the beginning.

4.2.6 Recommendations

The consultant would like to recommend that

1. NDPHS should reflect and consult itself about the indicators and criteria by which it wants to measure its own success as an organization. There will be need to differentiate between the cumulative “results” of all Expert Groups and the Secretariat and between the impact of the organization itself, which is supposed to be more than just the addition of its components. Possible indicators could be reflection about NDPHS-

³² With a full report on the database project available on the NDPHS-website which includes certain success indicators directly linked to the project.

³³ The consultant has no doubt that individual activists of NDPHS have great and professional expertise in evaluation. The consultant’s doubt is that this individual experience is translated well into something one might call “institutional knowledge” of NDPHS.

³⁴ A first attempt in self-evaluation has been tried with a written questionnaire send around in 2005, but the results have not been very conclusive and detailed. Despite this, the evaluator does not argue against methods of self-evaluation, if implemented and monitored consistently. In addition, parallel to this evaluation process, a questionnaire with three quite general questions has been send around the partners. The consultant has not been informed about the results of this questionnaire before finishing the draft of this report; therefore information given there has not been included in this report.

activities in the issue-oriented media, invitations to international fora and conferences, instances of advice-seeking and advice-giving from governments or international organizations, projects implemented through the project-pipeline, amount of users accessing the database etc. Future evaluations might benefit from a self-definition of success-factors and it will be important for impact-monitoring by the Secretariat and for reporting purposes.

2. The Expert Groups should be tasked with the duty to compile and assess evaluations available for projects they claim to have facilitated one way or the other. This compilation should be updated on an annual basis and contain summaries of evaluations (be it self-evaluations or external evaluations) in order to have an overview of results and impact of these projects. EGs should in addition seek funds to conduct evaluations themselves or motivate external experts linked to NDPHS to apply for evaluations of facilitated projects in order to build up its own evaluation capacity and to compile worthwhile information about “best practice” which can be translated into general conclusions. The current database could be extended with a separate access to evaluation reports (which is quite different from just “papers”), which will enhance the overall credibility and attractiveness of the website.
3. NDPHS should ask Expert Groups to identify and describe openings for dissemination and mainstreaming of their own topics in national decision-making in ND-member states, in order to be able to organize targeted activities – like workshops or information-exercises – to access decision-makers probably not yet involved in NDPHS and to influence important issues in health (and maybe social) policy. EG experts should be able to elaborate who and where in their respective country a specific topic might be received with open minds, so that the visibility of NDPHS and its impact can be increased.
4. NDPHS should define clearly how the term “facilitation” should be used in the future and what it includes if an Expert Group claims to have “facilitated” a concrete project. Does it mean that the Expert Group has drawn the tender? Does it mean that it has written the application or just given a general idea? Does it mean it has conducted its own evaluation or at least assessed existing ones? Does it mean that individuals and organizations connected to NDPHS are personally or institutionally responsible for the project and wouldn't have conducted them without the “facilitation” of NDPHS? There is room for definition here, and the consultant would like to stress to define the term more strictly than too loose. This definition should be decided upon unanimously and afterwards should be adhered to in all reporting and monitoring, so that the claim to describe a project as “NDPHS” can be made with a higher degree of validity.
5. NDPHS plans for at least one continuous project directly applied for, implemented, monitored and evaluated by the Secretariat, in order to have a certain, beneficial activity permanently linked to the partnership. Projects should be chosen for an overall benefit for the whole partnership, therefore they will either touch on issues of research or fill in loopholes within the partnership's activities which are not addressed by the Expert Groups and which, based on the decision of the partnership, do not call for a new Expert Group at this point of time. This can be the case when a NDPHS-stakeholder proposes to deal with a specific issue that fails to get sufficient support by all members to be dealt with in a new Expert Group, but seemed to be important enough to be a topic of a project, therefore dealing with it on a more focussed and clearly more temporary basis.
6. NDPHS Expert Groups facilitate, support in application and evaluate at least one “flagship project” per Expert Group, and at maximum two or three. If the numbers are higher, danger is that with current resources available supervision of these projects will be only tentative and results will not feed sufficiently in NDPHS more theoretical work, e. g. policy recommendations. NDPHS should only involve itself in concrete implementation where the framework for this is ideal and sufficient capacity apparently exists.

Evaluation should be taken more seriously if NDPHS wants to rightfully claim a genuine, autonomous learning-process. These projects, which link their existence clearly to NDPHS, should be featured prominently on the website (maybe with a distinct category “NDPHS projects”).

7. NDPHS should develop strict formal guidelines for future publications prepared by the Expert Groups in regard to structure, wording and other format-issues. NDPHS-documents ought to look like coming “from the same mould”, despite individual differences within the texts. Formal guidelines from other international organizations – like e. g. those of the World Bank – could be taken as an example.
8. NDPHS should emphasize that Expert Groups should develop their proposal to the CSR about the focus of their activity always in an inclusive way, adding ownership to the topics chosen. Topics which are at the heart of only a few members will not gather sufficient motivated support from other EG-members to participate fully in any task connected to it. If it seems to be difficult to find a common denominator – that is, if no proposed focus finds the goodwill and engagement of a majority of EG-members – than this is a possible indicator in regard to the future viability of the problematic EG as a whole. Here, some minimum standards of participation should and could be defined and adhered to. A working group in which only a chosen few are working and the rest is looking is futile. If the topic is nevertheless regarded as important by the stakeholders of NDPHS, other forms of organization – like a project run by the Secretariat with external experts – could be considered instead of an EG.
9. NDPHS should, in regard to evaluation of itself, repeat the exercise of an external evaluation every four or five years to update the look from the outside. To make this external evaluation more easy and therefore probably cheaper, self-evaluation activities could be performed in regular intervals (like e. g. yearly questionnaires); if recommendation 5 will be accepted, this will also help future external evaluators tremendously.
10. NDPHS should assign the Secretariat with distinctly monitoring and reporting about the follow-up of the current evaluation process, especially in regard to the recommendations taken up or dismissed, decisions made and executed and the state of affairs thereafter. This could be a distinct chapter of the next annual report and a distinct topic of oral reports during the coming three or four CSR-meetings.
11. NDPHS should evaluate the audience’s response to material and information provided in order to collect sufficient feedback for improvement. In particular, the consultant suggests that the recipients of the information folders outside the NDPHS should be asked with a small questionnaire or informally by phone about their impression in regard to the material and recommendations for additional information to be disseminated.

5 Conclusion and general recommendations

In this chapter, the consultant will not repeat the recommendations already made. The purpose here is to make general remarks about NDPHS and its future, without referring to too many details.

The evaluation of NDPHS revealed to the consultant an organization slowly finding its way and position in the international arena. It seems that a lot of concerns and criticism is based on past, negative experiences in the formative stages of the network, which undoubtedly have had their lasting impression on those participating since the beginning. The consultant is of the opinion that these concerns should be taken seriously in order to avoid the underlying processes to repeat themselves. For this, NDPHS seems to be on a good track. This clearly also includes the problematic issues e. g. of non-payment of membership-fees or the discussion about membership in general. As soon as clear guidelines are in place and everyone knows what to expect, this kind of challenge will be overcome one or the other way. NDPHS has the historic opportunity both to intensify the discussion about health-policy in the region as well as continue to build a bridge towards the Russian Federation, and hopefully to countries like Ukraine and Belarus in the foreseeable future. Regionalisation within the EU proves to be another good avenue where NDPHS fits in. As long as the partnership has no intention to duplicate efforts, it has a good potential in identifying and working on special areas of interest which are, probably, not yet in the full mainstream of political considerations. To find the niches and to identify the loopholes in the general stream of policy will be one of the challenges for the partnership in the future, but also its greatest opportunity.

During the evaluation process it became evident for the consultant that due to NDPHS' "late start" because of its initial challenges, the evaluation is actually coming at exactly the right time: a time of increased dynamic development on the one hand, and a time still full of formation and "molding the shape" of NDPHS on the other hand. Therefore, the consultant would like to point out some very basic observations:

So far, NDPHS has been a quite informal, free-floating network of a variety of experts, meetings to discuss certain health-oriented issues and much less concrete project activities – with the already mentioned notable exceptions. It is apparent from the deliberations during the last CSR-meetings and the discussions with the EG-persons that there is a certain drive towards more practical, project-oriented work. This is also partly to accommodate criticism by some partners that NDPHS has been too much of a "talking shop" so far and lacks concrete activities. On the other hand, more project related activities will inevitably lead to more of those things some of the representatives within NDPHS begin to watch with suspicion: more administration, more regulation, more "paperwork", be it a real or virtual one.

Despite all the documents and minutes and declarations, NDPHS is still a quite informal and not well-regulated partnership in regard to many important aspects. This is an environment well suited for many experts who often dislike too many restrictions. On the other hand it is not

helping in attaining credibility, sophistication and – in the end – “tangible results”, or, more precisely, results and subsequent impact.

The consultant would like to recommend:

1. NDPHS should be more oriented towards project-activities, but avoid the pitfalls of being too much an implementing agency on its own, and take the idea of facilitation seriously. Under facilitation, the consultant wants to summarize
 - a. taking the initiative to formulate project proposals in collaboration with suitable implementing agencies
 - b. taking note of developments within these projects by receiving and scrutinizing monitoring reports from the implementing agencies
 - c. evaluating the impact of these projects by either
 - i. conducting its own evaluations, depending on funding or
 - ii. facilitating external evaluation by others, depending on funding or
 - iii. receiving and scrutinizing evaluations already planned and conducted and putting all three of these into a common framework
 - d. raising the findings from project-level to a policy-level with the aim of
2. being not only a facilitator of projects, but foremost a *facilitator of ideas* and concepts, working and functioning as a mainstreaming and dissemination agency into the level of political decision-making in all of its member-states, a work for which the current database/pipeline-project can only be one stepping-stone.

The consultant is aware of the dangers of a more formalized, more concrete and more project-oriented approach. Fears about this have been mentioned during the evaluation process. But this is unavoidable. If NDPHS would like to be result- or impact-oriented and if NDPHS would like to silence critics who are not happy with a too theoretical and abstract deliberation of core-issues, if NDPHS wants to identify and successfully work on its “niches”, it will be necessary to professionalize, to increase regulation and internal as well as external benchmarking and, inevitably, to reach for more complex administrative processes. In order to “protect” experts in Expert Groups who would prefer to concentrate on the content, an effective and efficient Secretariat is absolutely necessary and no effort should be spared in strengthening this vital institution, including a more stringent regime in regard to payment of membership-fees.

Therefore, if asked for the right strategic decision, the current development towards more concrete activities can only be commended by the consultant. But at this point of time, as the report has shown, the regulative framework and the standards for this kind of increased sophistication are either not in place or in an early stage of development. Here, additional efforts are necessary. It is also necessary to seriously address the imbalance in NDPHS’ activities in regard to social issues. The consultant sees the Oslo Declaration as an unquestionable concept which the partnership has to follow if the higher political level does not decide otherwise. Taking this as granted, there is no alternative for NDPHS than to look more seriously in including matters of social policy into its activities, or to begin efforts to change or renew the declaration with the goal of making the NDPHS a NDPH. Ambiguity in its basic goals and especially in the execution of efforts leading towards these goals should be avoided under all circumstances. If the public profile of NDPHS will increase by producing more “tangible results”, public scrutiny will increase as well. NDPHS should be duly prepared for this moment.

Annex

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the Partnership in 2008

(adopted on 16 October 2007

CSR 12, Kaliningrad, Russia)

1. Background

As stipulated in the Oslo Declaration “an overall review and evaluation of the Partnership will be carried out in 2008, in accordance with a procedure to be established by the CSR.”

While these Terms of Reference serve for the first five year evaluation of the Partnership, they may also serve as a basis for future Partnership evaluations, unless decided otherwise by the CSR.

2. Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation will be conducted by an NDPHS evaluation team, consisting of CSR representatives from Lithuania, Norway, Canada, Germany, and Denmark. The membership in the evaluation team is open to other Partners, too. The team will be lead by Canada who will assign the Chair for it. The evaluation team will review the Partnership and the Chair of the evaluation team will present a written evaluation report not exceeding 50 pages to the CSR. The report will be structured according to findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation and will also include an executive summary.

2.1. Findings

The findings cover; *inter alia*; the assessment of

- the political dimension of the Partnership (links to the Northern Dimension Policy, political and legal documents, etc)
- The overall structure of the Partnership (sustainability, resources, organization, financial aspects):
- Measuring progress and commitment of Partners (and Associated Partners); Expert Groups (and Associated Expert Groups) as well as the Secretariat:
 - o Partnership's ability to implement tasks and goals;
 - o Partnership's working methods (including CSR and PAC as well as other meetings and mechanisms);
 - o internal functioning of the Partnership, including the relation between financial basis of the Partnership and its tasks and objectives;
 - o Partnership's development and changes during the period under review
- Identification of political, technical and administrative areas where the Partnership can make/makes a good impact;
- Visibility and opinions outside the Partnership structure about the NDPHS.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the current situation of the NDPHS will be based on the findings.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions presented, the evaluation will present an overall assessment of whether the Partnership's tasks are well served by its present organizational structure and practices and formulate recommendations as to how Partnership can improve its performance, if necessary. The review also addresses the readiness of the Partnership to meet future challenges and take into account the feasibility of the proposed changes, including the means for follow-up actions of the proposed recommendations.

3. Implementation of the evaluation process

The CSR Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat will be in charge of ensuring the progress of the evaluation, from the beginning until the delivery of the final report. This includes, *inter alia*, establishing a work plan and a timetable with meetings, as well as other organizational issues.

Annex 2: Time-line of evaluation (2008)

March 12th

First meeting evaluation team in Brussels, beginning of document research

April 21st-22nd

First round of interviews during CSR-meeting in Brussels

June 5th

Second meeting evaluation team in Berlin, second round of interviews

Up until June 15th

Collecting of questionnaires of EG-members

June 25th-26th

Meeting in NDPHS-Secretariat in Stockholm, third round of interviews

July

Reporting

August 6th

Submission of report

September 3rd

Third meeting evaluation team, discussion of report

September 23rd-25th

CSR-meeting in Bad Nauheim, final meeting evaluation team

Annex 3: List of interviewees

Boisnel, Marc (France)
Ekstedt, Anna (CBSS)
Ellingsen, Ingrid Lycke (EG PH)
Husberg, Wiking (EG SIHLWA, BSN)
Ifland, Thomas (Germany)
Jasczyk, Jadwiga (Poland)
Jørgensen, Mogens (Denmark)
Karvonen, Outi (EG HIV)
Kaurin, Jorgen (Norway)
Kötschau, Gabriele (CBSS)
Leinikki, Pauli (EG HIV)
Löf, Lars (CBSS)
Luthman, Sten (Sweden)
Maciejowski, Marek (Secretariat)
Meižis, Viktoras (Lithuania)
Ödman, Kerstin (Sweden)
Ollila, Liisa (Finland)
Opira, Gertrude (CBSS)
Pia de Palo, Maria (NCM)
Piha, Tapani (European Commission)
Reitenbach, Dagmar (Germany)
Rocher Nielsen, Toril (Norway)
Shearer, Robert (Canada)
Shevyreva, Marina (Russian Federation)
Slastnyk, Evgeny (Russian Federation)
Suski, Boguslav (EU-Commission)
Thors, Carl Erik (EG PHC)
Tomilov, Juri (BSSSC)
Treichel, Bernd (Secretariat)
Usberg, Triin (Estonia)

Vienonen, Mikka (EG SIHLWA)

Voss, Jan-Axel (Germany)

Witso-Lund, Lis (Denmark)

Annex 4: Abbreviations

BSN – Baltic Sea Network

BSSSC – Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Cooperation

CBSS – Council of the Baltic Sea States

CSR – Committee of Senior Representatives

EG – Expert Group(s)

EU – European Union

IOM – International Organization for Migration

ITA – International Technical Advisor

NCM – Nordic Council of Ministers

ND – Northern Dimension

NDPHS – Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

PAC – Partnership Annual Conference

PHC – Primary Health Care

PH – Prison Health

SIHLWA – Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability

UNAIDS – JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

WGCC – Working Group for Cooperation in Children at Risk

WHO – World Health Organization