

**NDPHS Strategy Working Group
Second Meeting
Brussels, Belgium
2 March 2009**



Reference	SWG 2/3/Info 1
Title	Terms of Reference and Timeline for the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group (SWG)
Submitted by	Secretariat
Requested action	For reference

**Terms of Reference and Timeline
for the NDPHS *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group (SWG)**

1. Background

Following the conditions set by the Oslo Declaration to carry out an “overall review and evaluation of the Partnership...in 2008”, the NDPHS had established an Evaluation Team. The team was composed of CSR representatives from Canada (Chair), Denmark., Germany, Lithuania, Norway and Russia, which enjoyed the administrative support of the NDPHS Secretariat. It conducted the evaluation with the help of the NDPHS Partners and an independent consultant that was appointed by the evaluation team.

According to the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the Partnership in 2008 (c.f. CSR 12 minutes¹), the evaluation team was tasked to present a written evaluation report not exceeding 50 pages to the CSR. The CSR Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat was in charge of ensuring the progress of the evaluation, from the beginning until the delivery of the final report.

The Evaluation Team presented the consultant’s report, a selection of proposed consultant recommendations for follow-up and an overview of Partner country responses to the evaluation to the CSR 14 meeting on 23 September 2008 in Bad Neuenahr, Germany. The CSR agreed that an overall evaluation package was to be presented to the 4th Partnership Annual Conference on 19 November 2008 in Ottawa, Canada².

The CSR further suggested to establish an *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group amongst CSR members to ensure the timely follow-up of the recommendations presented by the Evaluation Team and mandated the evaluation team to draft a Terms of Reference and timeline for the newly to be established *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group (SWG), which had been submitted to PAC for approval.

¹ Available at www.ndphs.org/?download,1518,CSR_12_Minutes.pdf.

² Available at www.ndphs.org/?download,2399,PAC_5-7.1-1_NDPHS_Evaluation-A_compilation_of_reference_documents.pdf

2. Scope

The overall task of the SWG is to examine the recommendations as outlined in the consultant's report, and possible other recommendations coming from the CSR Partners and the NDPHS Evaluation Team and to propose a set of follow-up actions to the NDPHS Partners.

The SWG will address recommendations of the consultant report related to

- Strategic recommendations, including strategy, vision and organization (sections 3.1.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.4, 4.2.6, 5)
- NDPHS Expert Groups (sections 3.3.4 and 4.2.6)
- Additional recommendations made by NDPHS partners that were raised either during the CSR 14 or the PAC 4 meeting.

The SWG will not address those issues that may already be decided by PAC 5 or that can be carried out by the Secretariat, such as:

- Website improvement and PR material (section 4.1.4 No 1-3)
- Survey of all multipliers that the NDPHS may have to better promote itself (section 4.1.4. No 4)
- Review of Terms of Reference of the Secretariat (section 3.1.3 No 5)

3. Composition

The SWG is composed of the following members:

- Canada,
- Finland
- Germany
- Lithuania
- Norway
- Russia
- Sweden
- Any other country that that wishes to join³
- NDPHS Secretariat

The SWG will be chaired by Sweden.

The CSR Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat, holds the overall responsibility of ensuring the progress of the implementation of the recommendations listed in Appendix 1.

4. Approach to address the CSR-recommendations for follow-up

Strategic recommendations

For the follow-up of the strategic recommendations the SWG will work under the assumption that the legal capacity is already in place.

³ After the PAC 5, Poland announced her willingness to join the SWG.

Expert Group related recommendations

The SWG will establish a Sub-group when dealing with Expert Group matters. The Sub-group will be composed of the SWG members plus Expert Group representatives.

Development of a mid-term vision for the NDPHS

The SWG will develop a concrete proposal on a mid-term vision for the NDPHS, taking each recommendation into account. This can be done by considering if and how each recommendation or a group of recommendations should be implemented. If the recommendation calls for a review of a certain situation, the SWG will provide a consolidated piece of opinion. The total compilation of the comments for each recommendation will form a proposal for a mid-term/or long-term vision of the work of the NDPHS. The proposal will be presented to the CSR for consideration.

Accompaniment of the implementation of the Recommendations

Depending on the CSR decision, the SWG may be mandated by the CSR to further investigate into the feasibility of certain recommendations or suggestions provided by the SWG and revise their proposal if need be, so that a smooth implementation of the given recommendations can be ensured.

5. Recommendations to be taken into account

The list of all strategic and expert –group related recommendations that the CSR has agreed upon is part of these Terms of Reference and attached as Appendix 1.

6. Proposed timeline

November 2008:	Nomination of the Working Group members.
January 2009:	1 st meeting with assignment of responsibility for a set of recommendations to comment on.
February 2009:	2 nd meeting: consensus finding and status report on the progress of each of the individual recommendations.
April 2009:	Interim report to CSR 15.
May-Sept. 2009:	Additional meetings (if required).
Sept.-Oct. 2009:	Final SWG report to be submitted to CSR 16.

7. Amendments to the Terms of Reference and timeline

The Terms of Reference and timeline can be reviewed, if deemed necessary. Proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference shall be approved through consensus within the WGS before being submitted to the CSR for adoption.

Reference	Appendix 1 to the Terms of Reference of the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group
Title	Specification of the key recommendations for proposed follow-up
Summary / Note	This list provides an overview of all recommendations of the evaluation report that the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group (SWG) needs to address. As the recommendations were copied directly from the consultant's report, it is possible that some of the recommendations cover both, strategy and Expert Group-related recommendations.

Proposed follow-up actions for the NDPHS *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group

- Legal capacity (top priority!), and other Recommendations related to strategy, vision, organization (sections 3.1.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.4, 4.2.6, 5)

Section 3.1.3

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.

Section 3.2.4

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.

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 prerequisite, 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.

Section 3.3.4

1. NDPHS 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 health. 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. NDPHS 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. NDPHS 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.

5. NDPHS 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 consultant, 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.

Section 4.2.6

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-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.

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”).

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.

Section 5

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.

- Expert Group related (sections 3.3.4 and 4.2.6)

Section 3.3.4

2. NDPHS 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.

Section 4.2.6

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.

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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.