

**Partnership Annual Conference (PAC)
Seventh Conference
Copenhagen, Denmark
28 October 2010**



Reference	PAC 7/8/1/Rev 1
Title	A NDPHS report to the 2 nd Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension (revised)
Submitted by	Secretariat
Summary / Note	This revised version of the report takes into account revisions requested by Norway and the Russian Federation.
Requested action	For approval for submission to the 2 nd ND Ministerial Meeting



Northern Dimension
Partnership in Public Health
and Social Well-being

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

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

**A progress report to the 2nd Ministerial Meeting
of the Renewed Northern Dimension
2 November 2010, Oslo, Norway**

This report briefly outlines major achievements of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) since the 1st Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension as well as the NDPHS' plans for future. Several issues for the attention of the ND Ministers have also been included.

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Annex

NDPHS Partners and Participant

1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

2. Focusing on objectives reflecting regional priorities; a new NDPHS Strategy

During the two years that have elapsed since the 1st Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension in 2008, the **Partnership ran a wide array of concrete and pragmatic activities** ranging from high-level ministerial dialogue, policy development, and project development and implementation, to networking solidification, expertise exchange, information production and dissemination, as well as advocacy.¹ At the same time, following the outcomes of its five-year evaluation, the NDPHS embarked on the development of a new strategy.

Adopted at the ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference in November 2009, the new NDPHS Strategy builds around the “Vision of the NDPHS in 2013” and places focus on achieving specific, measurable and time-targeted objectives reflecting regional priorities. Eleven goals have been agreed upon, and within each of them at least one concrete and pragmatic regional action to be implemented no later than 2013 has been specified.² The implementation of the new NDPHS Strategy started with the beginning of 2010.

To ensure that the health and social well-being related activities in the ND area would be implemented in a coordinated and efficient way and involve all relevant actors, the new NDPHS Strategy correlates with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

3. Reforming the expert-level structures of the Partnership

Successful implementation of the **new NDPHS Strategy required that the then four operating NDPHS Expert Groups be reshaped and new groups established**, in order to ensure that – for the achievement of each adopted Goal and Operational Target – an expert-level structure with clearly defined responsibilities is in place. This process was completed in mid-2010 when the NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives adopted Terms of Reference for four Expert Groups and four Task Groups.

¹ The NDPHS progress and achievements are presented in detail in its annual progress reports available at www.ndphs.org/?about_ndphs#Past_activities.

² Cf. Goals, operational targets and indicators at www.ndphs.org/?about_ndphs#New_NDPHS_Strategy.

Consistent with their ToR, the expert-level structures of the Partnership have already taken a number of actions to implement priority actions included in the NDPHS Strategy and the EUSBSR Action Plan.¹

4. Increasing Partnership's visibility

Efforts continued to improve the Partnership's outreach and visibility. NDPHS presentations in external events, the cooperation with other regional stakeholders, regular issuing of NDPHS e-news and e-newsletter, and the production of NDPHS folder, fact-sheets and a leaflet in several languages have all contributed to that end. The assumption of the Lead Partner role for the Health priority sub-area in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was of great value in this regard, too.

However, the NDPHS Partners recognize that, for the Partnership to be effective in delivering towards the agreed health- and social well-being policies and actions, it requires proper arrangements and political support back in the Partner Countries. Consequently, they agreed during the Partnership Annual Conference in 2009 that **efforts aimed to increase the Partnership's visibility in the capitals of the Partner Countries need to be strengthened**. Whereas several efforts were recently taken to that end, further concrete endeavors have been agreed upon in the NDPHS Work Plan for 2011 to achieve this goal.

5. Establishing the NDPHS Secretariat with its own legal capacity

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

To that effect, the Partner Countries intending to establish the NDPHS Secretariat with its own legal capacity signed the "Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Establishment of a Secretariat of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being" during the Partnership Annual Conference in 2009. Further, several meetings of legal experts were held in 2010 during which the text of the agreement was further developed.

It is hoped that the process of authorizing the legal capacity to the NDPHS Secretariat will be completed as a matter of urgency.

6. Leading and coordinating health actions within the EUSBSR

In 2009, the European Commission developed a European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which was subsequently adopted by the European Council in October 2009. The NDPHS actively took part in the process by contributing its views during regional consultation events, as well as by presenting its position paper.²

Further, recognizing that there is a need to properly address the issues of public health and social well-being in the entire Baltic Sea Region, at the European Commission's invitation the

¹ Every year NDPHS progress and achievements are presented in detail in its annual progress reports available at www.ndphs.org/?about_ndphs#Past_activities.

² Available at www.ndphs.org/?database.view.paper.53.

NDPHS took the role of Lead Partner for the coordination of the health sub-area of Priority Area 12 of the EUSBSR Action Plan.¹

Since then, the **Partnership took many successful actions to discharge its leadership role and engaged several other regional actors** in the implementation of the EUSBSR. The most recent example is an organization of the NDPHS Seminar on project development and funding in October 2010. The event brought together representatives from the NDPHS expert-level structures, as well as other Baltic Sea Region actors, on the one hand, and a selected group of representatives of funding institutions and programs that could provide funding for the implementation of proposed actions, on the other. Eleven project concepts were developed before the event and presented to the participating funding institutions and programs.

7. Providing ample resources for the Partnership

The NDPHS Partners have on several occasions agreed that **efforts need to be taken to provide ample resources for the Partnership**, most notably for running its Secretariat and the Partnership expert-level groups, as well as for the development and facilitation of concrete, project-based activities so that the Partnership would continue both delivering concrete and pragmatic activities and achieving tangible results benefiting people in the region. **The principle of co-financing from the Northern Dimension Partners needs to be underlined to that end, which was also stressed, in the context of the NDPHS, by the Heads of Government from the Baltic Sea States during their summit in 2008.**

Various forms of support were offered by Partners for the Partnership during the reported period. Also, all interested actors were and are invited to channel their contribution for project-based activities through the NDPHS Project Pipeline, which is a mechanism to facilitate donor contributions and project application. During recent years, **several million euros were announced for health and social well-being projects through the Project Pipeline.**

8. Concluding remarks

The importance of good public health and social well-being has been widely acknowledged on many occasions, also at the highest political level. The track record of the Partnership's achievements clearly demonstrates that it is doing useful work, which contributes to improving public health and social well-being in the region.

At the same time, however, the NDPHS Partners recognize that, in order to continue being successful in its efforts, **Partnership needs to enjoy a commitment of all its Partners, which should be reflected through their active involvement coupled with the provision of ample resources. The Partners in the Northern Dimension policy have an imperative role to play in this respect.**

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

NDPHS Partners and Participant

Partner Countries



Participant Country



Partner Organizations

