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Title	New approaches for future collaboration within the NDPHS
Submitted by	Strategy Working Group
Summary / Note	This document was originally submitted to the CSR 23 meeting, however, due to time constraints, the discussion was postponed.
Requested action	For discussion and decision

**The Northern Dimension Partnership in
Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)**
Discussion Paper
on
“New approaches for future collaboration within the NDPHS”

I. Starting point

A total of nine governments, the European Commission and eight international organisations work together within the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). The latter’s primary aim is to promote the long-term development of the Baltic Sea Region by seeking to improve the health status and social well-being of the population. In this context, the Partnership set up eight working groups that focus, inter alia, on reducing the prevalence of communicable diseases, preventing non-communicable diseases and improving health care delivery.

The objective of the NDPHS is not solely the implementation of measures in the priority areas. Rather, the Partnership focuses on working together with regional actors so as to avoid duplication of efforts and utilise synergies. The resulting ability to take action specific to regional needs furnishes a strategic added value – both for the Partnership and the members themselves, as well as for other involved actors.

The Secretariat is financed by means of yearly contributions normally paid by NDPHS member states according to its size. In the past, Denmark’s and Canada’s cancellation of their membership, followed by Iceland’s after a two year exemption from contributions and Poland’s non-payment of the FY 2013 contribution, dealt a major financial blow to the Partnership. It has so far been possible to offset these shortfalls; however, it will not be possible to compensate for any further losses in contributions.

Spurred on by an externally conducted evaluation, the Northern Dimension is currently involved in an ongoing strategy development process. The objective is to develop a new goal-oriented direction for the Partnership taking greater account of available resources. In pursuit of this goal, it is very important that alternative methods of working are identified and considered. The overall objective is greater flexibility and improved networking with other health care actors in the region that can ultimately lead to greater efficiency and visibility.

Below we present various possible approaches to achieving this end.

II. Possible approaches

1. Identifying existing networking structures and ascertaining co-operation potential

- The expert groups are requested to identify potential partners/organisations/institutions at national and regional level. In doing so, they are to determine whether these are:
 1. suited to technical co-operation?
 2. active within the sphere of future Northern Dimension's priority areas?
 3. interested in some form of technical co-operation?
 4. in identifying potential partners, the possibility of involving the Partnership in already existing structures managed by other actors in the health system of the region must be examined.
- In addition to the expert groups, the CSR members involved in public health should also put forward their own ideas and, subsequently, consult with their individual government agencies to determine whether or where there is interest in an exchange.
- Options are, *inter alia*, networks involving universities, laboratories, health professionals, state institutions, self-help organisations, professional and scientific societies, Scan Balt and the like.

2. Incorporation of cross-sectional topics in the work of individual working groups

- Cross-cutting issues such as e.g. Prison Health and eHealth should be included, where possible and reasonable, in the activities of the individual working groups. This could be done, for example, by granting individual experts membership in the corresponding working groups or creating e.g. an independent eHealth Expert/Prison Health Group. Another option is the counselling (in writing) of existing working groups by external experts (in the case of eHealth, for example, by the eHealth for Regions Network, currently the NDPHS' Associated Expert Group). Also conceivable in this context would be, for example, the inclusion of the cross-cutting topic on the basis of a list of the special possibilities existing in a specific area.

3. Creation of study visit opportunities

- Study visit opportunities for national experts from partner states are should be created in all of the Northern Dimension's fields of activity. To this end, the demand is first determined and enquiries subsequently made at the relevant agencies regarding their willingness to receive guests for a study visit. This approach promotes 'learning

by doing' and enables the exchange of best practice. As a result, promising ideas can find their way into day-to-day practice.

4. Exchange of best practices

- Better networking among the actors, as well as study visit opportunities for international experts, will improve and strengthen the exchange of best-practice among the Partnership's members. Examples of these would be national strategies, programmes and campaigns.

5. Identification of multipliers

- The identification of national and regional multipliers by the expert groups and members of the CSR for inclusion in the working processes of the NDPHS.

6. Improvement of communication within and between the working groups

- Efforts need to be taken to increase Expert Groups' and Task Groups' level of activity in-between their meetings. To that end, the routes of communication within and/or among the working groups are to be further expanded at expert level, for example, by means of telephone and video conferencing, Skype etc.
- Furthermore, all of the expert groups' activities should be presented in a transparent manner and, as already advocated in the evaluation report, while all reporting on these activities should be brief, reports should be elaborated with reference to the Partnership's aims. The presentation of information on projects conducted by the individual expert groups should be integrated into the reports.

7. Cost comparison and funding

- The working groups that are being newly created or adapted as a result of the strategy development process will be revising their co-operation schemes, project ideas and additional proposals in respect of the incurrence and assumption of possible costs.
- Alternative forms of financing are being identified within the newly created co-operation schemes.

III. Desired results

- With the help of new or alternative forms of co-operation, the NDPHS's field of work can be broadened or deepened, as desired, co-operation between the partners and other national and regional actors in the Baltic Sea Region expanded or improved and, if necessary, inexpensive co-operation options identified and pursued.
- The inclusion of cross-cutting topics in the activities of individual working groups creates new paths of communication within the Partnership, thereby fostering exchange and networking among and between the working groups.
- Study visit opportunities encourage the exchange of information and experience at expert level, thereby ultimately strengthening co-operation and the exchange of best practice approaches. Furthermore, new knowledge gained by those involved is shared quickly.
- Open access to, as well as clear documentation and reports on, projects, strategy papers, progress, results and other aspects, contribute to transparency and comprehensibility of the NDPHS' working methods.
- By including multipliers in the NDPHS' work, demonstrable results and worthwhile measures can be spread among the relevant actors and civil society within a short period of time. This increases the visibility of the Partnership in the eyes of regional actors.

These measures are expected to lead to more effective and efficient working methods within the Partnership, thereby generating clear added value and a higher degree of visibility in the Member States themselves as well as among other actors in the Baltic Sea Region.

IV. Concluding overview

