

**EG on SIHLWA
Fourth Meeting
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ANNUAL REPORT 2006

NDPHS¹ Expert Group² “Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles & Work Ability”

SIHLWA

¹ Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing

² previous title was “Non-communicable diseases and promotion of healthy and socially rewarding lifestyles”. New title was approved in November 2005.

SIHLWA³ Annual Report 2006

Following the recommendation made by the Oslo Ministerial Conference of Northern Dimension Partnership⁴ in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (2003), new Expert Group on “**Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles & Work Ability**” (“**EG SIHLWA**”) was established in 2005. It held its 1st meeting in Stockholm in November 2005, where Finland and Lithuania pledged financial support for its operation.

The **EG SIHLWA** consists of 3 sub-groups:

- Subgroup on alcohol (periodic/ “binge” drinking)
- Subgroup on adolescent health and socially-rewarding lifestyles
- Subgroup on Occupational Safety & Health

The biggest health challenge facing Europe is that of non-communicable chronic diseases causing 86% of deaths and 77% of disease burden in Europe. Yet, health promotion and the prevention of non-communicable chronic diseases have a relatively small share of the health system budget. According to OECD, on average, only 3% of total health expenditure in OECD countries goes toward population-wide prevention and public health programs, while most of the spending is focused on “sick care.” Added to this, donor agencies and international aid efforts are mainly directed at the communicable diseases, deflecting attention from the main contributors to death and disease burden in a Region such as Europe. Cardiovascular diseases cause 46 times the number of deaths, and 11 times the disease burden, from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined in Europe.

The focus on non-communicable chronic diseases is very timely for several reasons. Presently Russian Federation is in the process of negotiating a World Bank loan for “Adult Health” especially focusing on the prevention and treatment of above mentioned chronic diseases, which have lead the country into “demographic crisis (about 700,000 people less every year). This question was raised in President Vladimir Putin’s recent speech on the “State of the Nation” in May as “the number one problem for Russia”. However, none of the countries of Northern Dimension Partnership can claim that we do not have the problem. WHO has recently published the global report on NCD “Preventing Chronic Diseases - a vital investment”, and is in the process of development of a European NCD Strategy to be submitted for adoption by the Regional Committee in September 2006. In 2001 the Declaration on Young People and Alcohol, has offered paths for development and implementation of effective measures. The new Framework for alcohol policy in Europe has recently been adopted by the WHO Regional Committee (September 2005) reinforcing the European alcohol action plan and reflecting new developments and challenges in this area. Additionally, latest developments within the

³ SIHLWA = Expert Group on **S**ocial **I**nclusion, **H**ealthy **L**ifestyles & **W**ork **A**bility

⁴ NDPHS consists of following members: 5 Nordic countries, 3 Baltic States, Russian Federation, Poland, Germany, France, Canada, Nordic council of Ministers, Council of Baltic Sea States, Barents Sea Collaboration, WHO, ILO, IOM.

European Union have alerted several countries in the Northern Dimension region to review their alcohol policies and to start corrective measures. Especially rising consumption and problems related with it due to lower prices will require urgent action from the public health side.

For Adolescent Health, the recently adopted WHO European Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health and Development provides region-wide policy framework and guidance in this area. The other important development providing a baseline is the International Survey Report on Health Behavior in School-aged Children: Young People's Health in Context.

The magnitude of the global burden of occupational injury and disease as well as the impact of poor working conditions on ill-health, absenteeism and productivity has been more clearly recognized. The ILO has adopted the "Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health" in 2003. A mechanism to put into practice the ILO Conventions 155 on "Occupational Safety and Health" and 161 on "Occupational Health Services" has been developed in the ILO Management systems Guidelines "ILO OSH 2001".

Northern dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing/ Expert Group "SIHLWA" is now committed and geared to give a booster in moving forward in the right direction. Countries should be assisted by:

1. Bringing together key stakeholders from the core health constituencies within the health system and broader society, including those other government sectors whose policies impact on health;
2. Carrying out a situational analysis, which analyses the size of the problem and identifies the priority areas for action;
3. Evaluating what is already in place, strengths and weaknesses, and identifies current gaps;
4. Strengthening international, bilateral and multilateral cooperation we could start by developing of an alliance for advocacy and action on NCDs which unites major international players in Europe, including intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and others;
5. A special challenge for this Expert Group will be how we can best benefit from the synergy that the three subgroups will pose. Expert Group and its secretariat supported specifically by Lithuania and Finland, has now started the elaboration of viable and practical project proposals in NDPHS countries;

Starting from 1 February, Mikko Viononen, former head of WHO in Russia, has acted as Expert Group Coordinator/ Chair.

Subgroup on alcohol (periodic/ "binge" drinking) was chaired by Mr. Kari Paaso, Regional Adviser, WHO/EURO. As co-chair acted Dr. Evgeny Krupitsky, Chief, Department of Addictions, Research Laboratory, Leningrad Regional Center of Addictions, Leningrad Region, RUSSIA.

Subgroup on Occupational Safety & Health was chaired by Mr. Wiking Husberg, Senior OSH Specialist, ILO, Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, RUSSIA. As co-

chair acted Dr. Remigijus Jankauskas, Director of Occupational Medicine Center, Institute of Hygiene under the Ministry of Health, Vilnius, LITHUANIA.

Subgroup on adolescent health and socially-rewarding lifestyles was chaired by Dr Mikko Vienonen, SIHLWA Coordinator, Specialist in International Public Health, FINLAND. As co-chair acted Ms. Rita Sketerskiene, Head of Division of Public Health Care, Department of Public Health, Lithuanian Ministry of Health, Vilnius Lithuania.

The following activities have taken place:

- A fact finding mission to Lithuania was conducted 14-17 March when Minister of Health Dr Žilvinas Padaiga was met and also thorough and useful discussions with Dr Viktoras Meizis (Head of International Department/ MoH) and his staff were conducted.
- The coordinator has also mapped potential partners for EG SIHLWA in Finland, such as National Public Health Institute (North Karelia Project), National Occupational Health Institute, STAKES, and others. Similar background work was conducted in St Petersburg prior to the CSR meeting.
- It is important to note that already since 2005 an Occupational Health and Safety and Health (OSH) project in north-Western Russia (about 300.000 €) has taken place under the auspices of SIHLWA implemented by ILO/Russia. This is the first and so far only project within this framework of NDPHS. Therefore, it is a very important example for us. Presently through ILO extension is sought for 2007-2008 (total budget about 550.000€). In 2006 the project was implemented in Leningrad region and in the Karelian Republic. More information is available at www.ilonw.safework.ru. This was in 2006 the only actual project under the SIHLWA umbrella, and hence provided an example what practical action would be possible.
- SIHLWA Coordinator participated in the CSR-8 meeting in St. Petersburg 6-7 April, briefing about the preparations for expert group activities. Especially the input and feed-back on the mandates and terms of reference of NDPHS expert groups was important, and guided the discussions in upcoming SIHLWA EG meetings. The Coordinator also met with several actors in St. Petersburg, who potentially would benefit from and provide input to SIHLWA's activities in the future.
- Expert Group SIHLWA held its 2nd meeting in Helsinki, 16-17 May, sponsored by the MoSA&H/ Finland. The agenda of the meeting focused on organizational issues, in order that the expert group could become fully operational. It was paramount for the group that we elaborated on 1) Mandate, 2) Terms of Reference/Strategy, and 3) Work Programme (priorities), possible project proposals and reporting on situation and progress in non-communicable diseases and their prevention in Northern Dimension Partnership countries for the Nordic Council of Ministers, during the Finnish chairmanship in 2007.

- In June 2006 SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen together with Chair of Sub-group on alcohol Kari Paaso (WHO-EURO) visited WHO Regional Office of Europe in Copenhagen and discussed with Director Gudjon Magnusson and Assistant director Haik Nikogosian discussing collaboration on alcohol prevention and noncommunicable diseases in general. The resolution on European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (to be adopted at the Regional committee in September 2006) is a very important guiding document for EG SIHLWA. Ways to explore closer collaboration with WHO-EURO and Dr Magnusson's department on Technical Services was considered especially important.
- In June SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen together with Chair of Sub-group on alcohol Kari Paaso (WHO-EURO) visited Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat in Copenhagen and Discussed with Ms Maria-Pia de Palo and Ms Carita Peltonen about project proposal on "alcohol and drug prevention among youth in St. Petersburg". The financial scope would be approximately 80.000 € with additional funds from Finland and Sweden making the whole project up to approximately 120.000 € Project application has since then been approved by the NCM and presently Coordinator is seeking for potential implementing partners in the west and in St. Petersburg. It is expected that administrative supervision would take place through the NCM office in St. Petersburg with technical expert supervision through SIHLWA secretariat. This project will be on the agenda in the next SIHLWA meeting in Vilnius in November
- Initiated by the NCM, in the pipeline we also have a project under title "Children at Risk". This project would be about 500.000 € in size and would require still thorough project planning with a wide range of experts. In short, the project would explore and experiment children's and women's shelters and support services to prevent and manage home-violence and social exclusion of children. This project will be on the agenda in the next SIHLWA meeting in Vilnius in November.
- To broaden knowledge and understanding of SIHLWA in the Northern Dimension area, Coordinator Mikko Vienonen attended in June the Estonian Health Promotion Conference and highlights strategies against non-communicable diseases, which relate to unhealthy lifestyles. The strategies and operational models of NDPHS and SIHLWA were explained to the audience. In a similar manner the coordinator attended the annual workshop between North-Karelia project/ Finland and their counterpart in the Republic of Karelia/ Pitkyaranta/ Russia. This provided an opportunity to explore their willingness to participate in the future work of SIHLWA. We concluded that such collaboration would be mutually beneficial.
- End of August SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen attended the NDPHS Secretariat's business meeting for expert group Chairs and International Technical Advisers. We especially focused on streamlining and elaboration of expert

groups' terms of reference and strategic documents. Work-plans and ways of working in the most effective way were also discussed.

- End of August SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen made a technical visit to Sweden and met counterparts in the “Socialdepartementet” (Ministry of social Affairs/Sweden) and also Swedish Public Health Institute. Sweden will launch a study on “Cost of alcohol” made by the University of Stockholm, and reviewing this work would be the main task of the SIHLWA Sub-Group on Alcohol at our next meeting end of November. To explore the possibility to replicate certain selected parts of the study in some of our member countries would be very useful. Discussion about this issue and the study will be continued under Council of Baltic Sea States sponsorship as part of Swedish Chairmanship activities tentatively in a conference in Latvia in February 2007, which SIHLWA Sub-Group on Alcohol would organize.
- In September SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen attended the EU Conference on “Partnerships between Stakeholders at Frontline Level Responding to Drug Problems”, held in Turku/Finland 6-7/9. The meeting provided good information for the SIHLWA adolescent health sub-group and the upcoming project on “Alcohol and Drugs Prevention among Youth in St. Petersburg. Additionally in September SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen attended the EU Conference on “Health in all Policies”, organized under Finnish EU Presidency in Kuopio/Finland. The Coordinator attended the workshops on alcohol prevention which also provided useful information for the St. Petersburg project and also strategies for the sub-group on alcohol. 18-21 October the Coordinator also represented SIHLWA at the WHO-EURO Healthy Cities Conference in Turku/ Finland facilitating a workshop for politicians on obesity and another workshop on alcohol related problems and their prevention.
- In October SIHLWA Coordinator Mikko Vienonen attended the “2nd Neighborhood Seminar” between the Republic of Karelia and the Region of Eastern Finland. This provided an opportunity to widen the understanding of NDPHS and SIHLWA in particular, and to strengthen contacts with different actors in the Republic of Karelia/ Russia.
- Following the recommendations of 2nd SIHLWA meeting in May in Helsinki, Coordinator Mikko Vienonen has been discussing with STAKES/ Finland the ways how to implement the “Stakeholder Analysis” and “Project Review” for SIHLWA. A funding request to the MoSA&H/Finland was sent in November 2006. However, the funding decision by the MoFA was negative in December and therefore in 2007 new funding sources need to be identified.
- The 3rd SIHLWA EG meeting was successfully held in Vilnius 30 November – 1 December sponsored by the Ministry of Health / Lithuania. The Subgroup on alcohol focused on possible project to elaborate on effective short interventions of alcohol victims and on the “Cost of alcohol. The Subgroup on adolescent health and socially-rewarding lifestyles focused on the WHO-EURO strategy for the Prevention and control of Non-communicable Diseases and project preparation for “alcohol and drug prevention among youth” and Children at

Risk. The Subgroup on Occupational Safety & Health also focused on practical project implementation issues. In other words, the 3rd SIHLWA meeting was more practical oriented than the last May meeting, which focused more on administrative and work-plan issues.

- SIHLWA Coordinator participated in the CSR-9 meeting in Paris 26-27 October, briefing about the preparations for expert group activities. The meeting approved the ToR for SIHLWA, and provided important forum for discussion on the partnership and clarified SIHLWA membership.
- SIHLWA Coordinator participated in the CSR-10 meeting in Oslo 11 December,. The meeting approved the Action Plan 2007 for SIHLWA, and provided an opportunity to brief about the recent Vilnius meeting and upcoming projects for 2007. Especially the CBSS sponsored conference on alcohol related short term interventions to help victims of alcohol problems is timely and urgent, planned to take place in Riga/ Latvia 12-13 March 2007 during Swedish chairmanship of CBSS.
- In 2006 SIHLWA coordinator developed close collaboration with the NDPHS secretariat in Stockholm and the new Director Mr Marek Maciejowski. Also the links with SIHLWA EG Lead Partner MoSA&H/Finland (Ms Helena Puro and Ms Seija Saana) and Lead Co-Partner MoH/Lithuania (Dr Viktoras Meizis and Ms Virginija Ambrazeviciene) became frequent and most useful.

In summary, we know more than enough about the epidemiological changes of unhealthy lifestyles and what will be the consequences to population health. The message is clear: all our countries are already in public health crisis and it is getting worse. Unhealthy lifestyles are not a natural catastrophe but it is a man-made problem. It can also be reversed by man-made policies and practical measures. It will require strong political action supported by integrated action by health-, social-, education- and other sectors. New innovation, holistic approach, and international collaboration will be needed, where the NDPHS Expert Group on Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability (“SIHLWA”) can act as catalyst.

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**NORTHERN DIMENSION PARTNERSHIP
IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELLL-BEING (NDPHS):**

**EXPERT GROUP ON SOCIAL INCLUSION,
HEALTHY LIFESTYLES & WORK ABILITY (“SIHLWA”)
SIHLWA**

List of Chairpersons and Co-chairpersons

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2) Subgroup on adolescent health and socially-rewarding lifestyles

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3) Subgroup on occupational health and safety

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