



**EG Chairs and ITAs
Nineteenth Meeting (enlarged)
Vilnius, Lithuania
18 September 2015**

Title	Minutes from the 19 th EG Chairs & ITAs meeting (enlarged)
Submitted by	Secretariat
Summary / Note	This document outlines the main discussion points and decisions made during the 19 th EG Chairs and ITAs meeting.
List of annexes	Annex 1 – List of participants Annex 2 – List of documents submitted to the meeting

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Thomas Ifland, the NDPHS Chair Country representative, the Federal Ministry of Health of Germany.

The participants introduced themselves.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Russia proposed to discuss agenda items 4 and 5 before item 3.

The Meeting **adopted** the Provisional agenda (submitted as document EG Chairs and ITAs 19/2/1) with the requested change included.

3. Information about the “PA Health Support” project

With reference to document EG Chairs and ITAs 19/3/Info 1, the Secretariat informed about the purpose and scope of project “Support to coordination and implementation of activities within the Health Priority Area of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan” (in short “PA Health Support”). It also stressed that the project contributes to the implementation of the horizontal actions of the NDPHS Action Plan. Further, it informed about the progress in the implementation of the project so far as well as the actions to be taken in the future, including a possible linkage to the NDPHS groups. It highlighted that many of the planned activities have already been successfully implemented. For example, the NDPHS side-event to the 24th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) featuring the topic “Health is wealth and wealth is health” has received very positive feedback from the participating parliamentarians and the conclusions from the side-event were reflected in the BSPC resolution.



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The Chair added that the speech of the Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Health of Germany, Ms. Annette Widmann-Mauz¹ during the BSPC increased the partnership's visibility.

The Secretariat proposed to further elaborate on the topic of the conducted study "The Importance of Health and Social Well-being for the Economy and Other Policy Areas" (cf. document 19/3/Info 2) and to plan activities addressing this issue in the future. Possibly, draft Specific Terms of Reference (for a Framework Contract) for a future project (possibly to be funded by the ENI Regional East Programme) could be developed. PPHS EG, NCD EG and Russia supported the proposal and suggested to further focus on health systems and financial health measurements.

Following the support, the Secretariat announced that it would, with input from the interested groups, prepare a document for submission to the CSR presenting a concept for further elaborating on the topic.

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information.

4. Joint regional interventions aimed to facilitate the implementation of the new Action Plan

The Secretariat informed about the progress in the process of approving the Action Plan, which is very close to finalization. After sending out a last draft to the CSR members on 3 September, comments have been received from OSH TG and NCD EG. The comments of the OSH TG, which were concerning revisions proposed by Norway during the previous consultation round, are discussed among the parties concerned.

The NCD EG Chair explained that one of his concerns was that prison health is only included in the planned actions and not sufficiently reflected in the objectives of the Action Plan. However, he **agreed**, that his comments would not be addressed.

The PPHS EG ITA explained that Prison Health was originally linked to objective 1, but that later discussions concluded that it is also concerning other areas and cutting across different objectives. Following the question from the HIV/AIDS & AI EG Chair how the fact that Prison Health actions are included in objective 1 should be dealt with in terms of the annual work plans, the Chair noted that to address this issue a good communication and cooperation between the future groups is needed. The Secretariat added that the responsibility for an entire objective does not just lie within one group. The responsibilities will be described in the groups' individual terms of reference.

Following a question from Finland about the added value of an NDPHS Prison Health Group and how duplication of WHO work can be avoided, the Chair responded that the WHO might become a member of the group and that the work of this EG will focus on developing more practical solutions and offering expert exchange, which is not done by WHO. Russia noted that the care of prisoners is at different times the responsibility of different ministries. To manage this situation is very difficult, but important.

¹ Available from: <http://www.ndphs.org/?speeches,2015>.

The Chair presented the proposal on timeline of the future steps and desire that all issues related to the action plan, EG ToR and EG members will be finalized before the CSR, so that decisions will be taken at the CSR, and adopted then, and later presented to the PAC. The Chair asked if the participants could agree to this proposal with regard to the timeline or if they see any constraints.

The ASA EG ITA questioned if the enlarged meeting of the Chairs and ITAs had a mandate to make such a decisions (agree on Chair country proposal).

The Secretariat clarified that the EG Chairs and ITAs meeting is not the body to make formal decisions on such matters and that the Chair had in mind that he would like to know if the participants would support such a proposal and if they shared his vision.

The Meeting **supported** the Chair Country's vision regarding the timeline except for the ASA EG ITA, who abstained due to the earlier mentioned reasons.²

The HIV/AIDS & AI EG Chair announced that the group would have a meeting immediately after the CSR. Together with the Action Plan, the NDPHS statement approved by the PAC 10 is basis of planning of further actions. In the next meeting ideas and practical issues will be discussed.

The Chair reminded, that the Chair Country had sent out a letter recommending to hold the next group meetings after the CSR meeting and asked NCD EG, and ASA EG to clarify what they expected from their meetings foreseen to be held before the CSR meeting.

The NCD EG Chair explained that the group had not had a meeting this year due to their unstable situation and has many issues to discuss before the CSR. However, it was still planning to have another meeting after the CSR.

The PPHS EG Chair stated that due to the unclear situation of who would chair a possible next group on primary health care, the PPHS EG has not had a meeting since the last CSR. Organizing a meeting after the CSR will be in the responsibility of the upcoming chair, which is why the current group cannot plan a later meeting.

The ASA EG ITA explained that the group did not have a meeting during this year as it was working with the other groups on the development of the NDPHS Strategy and Action Plan. Since Norway expressed its support to the ASA EG during the last CSR meeting, the group will have a meeting, during which the steps for the implementation of proposed action plan including preparation of the PAC side-event on alcohol in 2017 will be discussed.

The Secretariat emphasized that the situation is somewhat unpredictable for all groups but, even that, some of them continue working to achieve what is planned for the period until 2017. In this connection it expressed its concern that, in case the work does not progress well (and we will soon be already in 2016) the next evaluation will conclude that the planned actions until 2017 were not successfully implemented. This is why the current groups and their leaderships have the responsibility to ensure a smooth transition from the current to the new

² The ASA ITA abstained to support the Chairs' suggestions because he had learned about it only at the meeting, so he had no time to analyze it and discuss it with the Chair and the ASA EG beforehand.

groups, so that the reform process will not hamper the success of the Partnership. Good work can be done not only by holding meetings, but also by other means of communication. A good example of making progress in 2015 is the NCD EG that has secured funding for the future work.

Following a comment from the PPHS EG ITA that the group is developing a project idea, the Secretariat emphasized that the employment of the EUSBSR project assistant is also to the benefit of the groups, for example when it comes to support with fundraising.

The NCD EG Chair announced that the group is close to finalizing the development of the “Terms of references for international comparison of differences in premature deaths and their causes in the Northern Dimension Partnership area countries, measured by Potential Years of Life Lost indicator.” It still needs to go to tender, but the funding is hopefully secured.

In response to a question of Russia about the current process of assuming responsibility for group leaderships, the Secretariat provided an update about the state of affairs: Finland had confirmed its willingness to lead the groups on HIV/AIDS & AI and OSH. Norway had confirmed its willingness to lead a group on ASA. Germany had confirmed its willingness to lead a group on Prison Health. Sweden offered to chair a group on AMR and to be a vice-chair on an EG dealing with care and prevention of chronic and elderly, but also stressed that this commitment might have to be revised. Russia offered to chair two groups, one on NCD and possibly another one on primary care.

The Chair suggested that Russia and Sweden bilaterally discuss the outstanding issue of an expert group on primary health care.

Prof. Arja Rautio (The Northern Dimension Institute, NDI³) presented opportunities for possible future cooperation between NDPHS and the NDI as well as the Arctic Council⁴. The NDI is working on four topics, one of which is health and social well-being. 31 universities and research institutes are involved in the open network, of which about 16 are working in the area of health. The Arctic Council has six working groups, of which two are also concerned with human health. Both NDI and Arctic Council could possibly identify common topics with the NDPHS and exchange expertise.

The Secretariat added that during the recently held meeting of the NDI Steering Group attended also by it, it had been agreed that the NDI Coordinator would produce a matrix showing the universities working in the NDI network and their topical areas they are interested to collaborate on. This could be helpful to identify possible counterparts within the NDI for the NDPHS Expert Groups.

The Chair suggested that experts from the NDI network could also join the NDPHS expert groups.

The Meeting **thanked** Ms. Rautio for her presentation and **took note** of the presented information.

³ <http://www.northerndimension.info>

⁴ <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>



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5. Supporting successful implementation: Outreach to and collaboration with stakeholders from the EU, Norway and Russia

With reference to document EG Chairs and ITAs/19/5/Info 1, the Secretariat emphasized the great coherence between the NDPHS Strategy 2020 and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan, which demonstrates that one recognizes there is only one set of regional challenges in the health and social well-being area irrespectively of the cooperation framework used to tackle them.

Russia agreed to include information about the “Strategy of social and economic development of the North-West Federal District” in the table included in the document and to update it after the current revision process is finalized. The NCD EG Chair asked for the project “Healthier people: management of change through monitoring and action” to be included.

Further, the Secretariat informed about upcoming possible funding opportunities. It encouraged the groups to explore the opportunities of the ENI Region East Programme 2014-2020, which has funded the ADPY and HIV projects in the past and the ongoing NoDARS project, and will support the project planned by the NCD EG in the near future. Also, the ENI CBC Programmes offer a possibility to apply although CBC programmes are not the most optimal funding source for networks such as the NDPHS considering the very limited geographical area each of them covers.

Russia informed that the formalities for the Russian participation in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 would most probably be finalized by the end of the year. The Secretariat added that it was informed by the Chair of the BSR Programme 2014-2020 Monitoring Committee that a second call would be announced in December 2015/January 2016 and, in case the agreement is signed, will include Russia.

Moreover, a call for project proposals for the EUSBSR Seed Money facility is currently ongoing. Possible applications for a letter of support need to reach the Secretariat by 30 September 2015. The Secretariat will forward them to the EGs for advice, as appropriate.

Norway informed that it is no longer funding projects through the NDPHS Project Pipeline.

The Secretariat noted that the Swedish Institute announced Seed funding⁵ and Third Country Participation in the Baltic Sea Region (TCPBSR) funding⁶.

Germany informed that funding might be provided on an ad hoc basis, as for example for a supplementary project to the Northern Dimension Antibiotic Resistance Study (NoDARS).

Finland informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides funding for multilateral cooperation in the Arctic and Baltic Region.

Russia stressed that when projects are developed within the framework of the partnership, their financing should be considered a separate issue. Russia could possibly provide

⁵ Further information available from: <https://eng.si.se/areas-of-operation/scholarships-and-grants/baltic-region-seed-funding-grants>

⁶ Further information available from: <https://eng.si.se/areas-of-operation/cooperation-in-the-baltic-sea-region/baltic-sea-region-third-country-funding>



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additional funding for Russian partners' participation in a project receiving funding from other sources.

The Secretariat stressed that, despite available funding sources target at least partly different geographical areas, to enable truly regional interventions all interested actors should be given an opportunity to participate in NDPHS projects, regardless of where in the region they come from. To that effect, all involved partners need to be flexible and make an effort to combine funding from different sources to finance projects (possibly as several smaller projects under one umbrella theme).

Further, the Secretariat referred to the section "Funding opportunities outside the pipeline"⁷, which is kept updated by the Secretariat as far as its capacity allows. Finally, the Secretariat informed it would approach the groups for their requests/ideas in connection with the next application for financial support that is offered by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme to the EUSBSR Policy Area Coordinators. It is also hoped that a new funding opportunity for the NDPHS offered by the ENI Region East Programme 2014-2020 would be announced in the near future. The Secretariat will keep the EGs informed about it, too. The NDPHS Activity Fund could also be a possible funding source although the amount of funding available is relatively small.

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information and **agreed** that the message that all involved partners need to be flexible and make an effort to combine funding from different sources to finance projects should be forwarded to the CSR.

6. Preparations for the next CSR, ministerial PAC and its side-event

6.1. CSR 25 meeting

The Chair of the NDPHS ad hoc Working Group on Expert Groups' Terms of Reference (EGTOR 2015), Ms. Liis Rooväli, informed about the progress made in the EGTOR 2015 work. She summarized the process through which the current draft ToR have been developed and highlighted some crucial aspects of the future groups' set up: she expects there would be seven Expert Groups and no Task Group. However, the possibility of establishing a TG later still exists. She foresaw that, like it was so far, the Lead Country of a group would have the privilege to propose the Chair and a country that is interested in participating can nominate more than one expert to the group. She emphasized that both, the generic and the group-specific ToR should be adopted during the upcoming CSR 25 meeting.

Further, Russia requested to be included in the EGTOR and be sent the current draft for comments.

Following a remark from Norway, that the planned common drafting of the EGTOR within the group had not taken place, the EGTOR Chair proposed some further communication within the group and to possibly hold a teleconference.

The Chair and the EGTOR Chair welcomed the offer of the NCD EG Chair to help develop the specific ToR for his group and encouraged all other groups to do likewise.

⁷ Available from: http://www.ndphs.org/?pipeline,page,non-pipeline_agencies

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information.

Further, the Chair Country proposed that the newly set up groups would develop annual work plans, to be delivered in due time for submission to the CSR 26 meeting. They are encouraged to include “new approaches for future collaboration within the NDPHS (cf. document CSR 24/9.3/1)⁸ and to identify opportunities to interact with other regional stakeholders.

Following a question from the HIV/AIDS & AI EG Chair, the Secretariat clarified that its understanding was that a given group would not necessarily have responsibility for the whole given objective, but that the responsibilities would be clearly laid out in the groups’ individual Terms of Reference.

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information.

6.2 PAC 11 and its side-event

Germany, which will host the ministerial-level PAC 11 and its side-event, informed about the progress in the preparations for these two events. It stressed that those who want to attend the ministerial dinner before the PAC, need to provide their date and place of birth as well as their nationality, due to the high security requirements of the venue.

The AMR TG Coordinator announced that most of the planned speakers for the PAC side-event are confirmed, but that since a moderator is still to be found, suggestions are welcome.

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information.

7. Next enlarged EG Chairs and ITAs meeting

The NDPHS Secretariat offered to host the next enlarged EG Chairs and ITAs meeting in late February 2016.

The Chair reminded that after the following meeting hosted by the Secretariat it is again the groups’ responsibility to organize it.

The Meeting **took note** of the presented information and **agreed** to the Secretariat’s proposal.

8. Any other business

No issues were discussed under this agenda item.

⁸ Available from: http://www.ndphs.org//documents/4438/CSR_24-9.3-1_New_approaches_for_future_collaboration_within_NDPHS.pdf

9. Adoption of the meeting minutes

The Meeting **agreed** that the Secretariat will send out draft meeting minutes to the participants on 2 October 2015 and that comments on the draft will be due, at the latest, on 9 October 2015. The revised minutes will then be distributed on 14 October 2015 to be adopted *per capsulam* provided that no further comments are submitted within one week.

10. Closing of the meeting

The Meeting terminated at 14:20 hours on 18 September 2015.



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