

NDPHS Strategy 2023-2025

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NDPHS

Northern Dimension
Partnership in Public Health
and Social Well-being

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1. Prologue

The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) is a unique platform for cooperation, bringing together experts and policymakers from governments and organizations across the region, to provide a forum for health advocacy.

Established in 2003, the Partnership has grown into a mature and well-established network. The most precious asset of the Partnership is the network of like-minded public health enthusiasts who facilitate mutual understanding, exchange of experience and best practices, and policy learning. The NDPHS set-up and working methods are rather unique, as it comprises both experts and policy makers, as well as politicians on the ministerial level, therefore experts have a direct channel of communication with policy makers.

Throughout the years the activities of the NDPHS have focused on practical and useful expert-level exchange, such as gathering and sharing data for informed policy making, education and training. Advocacy has been important part of the work, presenting the economic case for investing in health and well-being, promoting work across the sectors and promoting the principles of leaving no one behind.

The Partnership's ambition is to do meaningful and impactful work every day, to stand by our values, and to continue sharing knowledge, learning from each other, and caring for people.

Entering the new strategic period 2023-2025, the Partnership is embarking on a thorough transformative process, aimed to review the political orientation, business model, and themes for expert-level cooperation. This debate was already ongoing in the Partnership, and it has been sped up by the unexpected turn of events and changed geopolitical situation in 2022.

This Strategy describes how the Partnership intends to be, change, and contribute to a better world in 2023-2025. This document is intentionally concise. As the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 have shown, our world can change in a blink of an eye, thus, we must be agile, yet durable. The aim of this document is to describe the core of our work and be the guiding light.

The Strategy was co-created with the Strategy Working Group, the Expert Groups, and the Committee of Senior Representatives. It is valid until the end of 2025 and will be prolonged or renewed after a review made in 2025. The intention is to revisit the Strategy every second year in line with the cycle of the Chairmanship of the Partnership and recommit the strategic priorities at the Partnership Annual Conference. The process of revision will be led by the Chair and co-Chair Countries of the Partnership.

The Strategy will be implemented through the accompanying Action Plan and annual Work Plans with specific goals, milestones, deliverables and timeline, prepared by the Expert Groups in collaboration with the Secretariat and approved by the Committee of the Senior Representatives (CSR).

During the Strategy implementation, the Partnership will assess the needs and level of interest amongst the Partners related to an emerging challenge or a specific theme and will adjust the focus accordingly in the annual Work Plans.

2. Our purpose

Our vision is to lead the way to sustainable and inclusive societies with equal opportunities for good health and well-being for all throughout the life course.

Our mission is to provide an inclusive cross-sectoral platform for health advocacy.

→ **Trust and respect**

In our work we will be guided by knowledge, and will promote these values: → **Practicality and agility**

→ **Inclusiveness and equality**

Our ultimate aim is promoting better health and well-being of people in our region. Our work contributes to the Agenda 2030 and the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

3. Our change

The debate that was already ongoing in the Partnership about the need for a change has been sped up by the unexpected turn of events and changed geopolitical situation in 2022. While the structure and mode of operation of the Partnership has produced many valuable achievements over the years, it has some limitations and challenges, as pointed out in previous evaluations of the NDPHS and at the design-thinking workshop alongside the 14th Partnership Annual Conference held in 2019 in Riga.

From 2023, the Partnership will conduct a thorough review of the challenges and opportunities, identify solutions that are adapted to the needs of the stakeholders, and prepare a roadmap for the change. This review will be conducted in an inclusive process resulting in a solution that is widely accepted within the organisation and owned by the Partners.

The 15th Partnership Annual Conference held in 2021 gave the following directions as regards the change that the Partnership shall strive for:

“...the emphasis shall be placed on the Partnership being better and more efficient in what it is doing already, such as providing more practical outcomes that are useful to the NDPHS stakeholders, more efficient communication and engaging new stakeholders from other sectors in the spirit of Health in All Policies approach.”

The need for more practical outcomes is well-acknowledged. The existing NDPHS Expert Groups are being or should be reinvigorated, and all Expert Groups shall strive towards more effective dissemination of the results of their work. For example, the information exchanged during the Expert Group meetings could be made available to a wider public by way of producing written briefs or webinars recorded during online meetings.

In addition, we will strive for more agility and for the whole Partnership working as one team. Flexibility of working structures, embracing new thematic topics for cooperation, ambition to assume the leadership role for health advocacy in the region, and ability of the whole Partnership to speak in one voice would be highly valued assets.

We will put emphasis on inclusivity in our work, and specifically strive to develop more cooperation with new stakeholders from civil society organizations and local level actors.

We will continue working with our key partner organizations, such as WHO, International Labour Organisation, International Organisation for Migration, Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Council of the Baltic Sea States, and we will explore closer connection with other international organizations and public health and well-being networks and alliances to realize our common goals.



Stockholm, Sweden © Secretariat

4. Our organizational set-up

Our organizational set-up has to a large extent remained the same since the establishment of the Partnership in 2003. Political guidance and support are provided by the Partnership Annual Conference. Senior Representatives of the Partners guide the operational-level work of the Partnership. Expert Groups share and create knowledge. And the Secretariat provides overall support to the work of the Partnership.

Some elements have changed over the years, priorities have shifted and re-emerged. The fundamental building blocks though, the underlying feeling of togetherness and being part of a family, have stayed the same throughout the years despite the changes; and we intend to preserve them at the heart of the Partnership, particularly during the times when the Northern Dimension policy as such is undergoing radical changes.

Our set-up and procedures can be discussed and reviewed. In the world that can change rapidly, we must be agile and practical as well as make the best use of our resources and talents. Therefore, governance must be efficient, and procedures lean. At the same time, we must cherish and preserve the structures that we have developed over almost two decades, therefore any changes in the organizational set-up of the Partnership and its procedures shall be thoroughly debated.

5. Our thematic focus

We strive for action that supports sustainable development of our region. As we operate in a wider regional and global context, we support and seek to contribute to the achievement of the national, regional, and international health goals and targets. We contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the WHO European Program of Work 2020-2025 “United Action for Better Health in Europe” (EPW), as well as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**. Therefore, to demonstrate our strong support, we have tied the goals of our work to the targets of these regional and global strategies.

Most directly, our Partnership contributes to **SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”** and its sub-goals related to our thematic priorities. In addition, our work also contributes to many other SDGs, specifically **SDG 1 “Zero poverty,” SDG 5 “Gender Equality,” SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation,” SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth,” SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”** and **SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”**.

OUR GENERAL THEMATIC FOCUS WILL REMAIN AS RE-CONFIRMED BY THE 15TH PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN 2021. THERE WILL BE TWO MAJOR CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC AREAS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTED BY ALL THE NDPHS ACTORS:

Active and Healthy Ageing will continue as an overarching cross-cutting thematic area. We will continue supporting the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing and our work will be guided by the NDPHS Manifesto “Connecting Minds Across the Ages”. We will look at active and healthy ageing from a life-course perspective, recognizing that all stages of person’s life, from prenatal to last days, are interconnected. Therefore, the themes of digitalization, integrated care and mental health will be an integral part of our work.

As the Coordinator of the Policy Area “Health” in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, our Partnership is uniquely placed to engage with other policy sectors to promote inclusion of health and well-being as a key component of policy development. While working across the sectors, the promotion of the **Health in All Policies** concept will be important cross-cutting thematic area. A fundamental shift in thinking is required to build communities that are good for the people and good for the planet. This Partnership is well-positioned to take a more ambitious role in promoting the concept of **Economy of Well-being**, engaging new stakeholders and increasing their awareness of their role in tackling regional health challenges and increasing their capacity to do so.

THE THEMATIC AREAS, PRIORITIZED BY THE PARTNERSHIP IN THE NEW STRATEGIC PERIOD, WILL BE THE ONES DEFINED BY THE PARTNER COUNTRIES DURING THE 15TH PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN 2021:

**Antimicrobial
Resistance**

**Alcohol
and Substance Use**

**HIV, Tuberculosis and
Associated Infections**

**Non-Communicable
Diseases**

**Occupational Safety
and Health**

Primary Health Care

Prison Health

All Partnership structures shall have a role in implementing the above-mentioned priorities. Expert Groups have the main responsibility for implementing the seven thematic priorities and the NDPHS Secretariat has the overall coordination responsibility for the horizontal themes, in cooperation with the relevant Expert Groups. The NDPHS governing bodies and Partnership Annual Conference will provide the overall strategic and political guidance regarding the implementation of the priorities.

The individual work programmes are described in detail in the annual planning documents.



6. Our work streams

WE HAVE IDENTIFIED FIVE WORK STREAMS, FIVE PATHS THAT WE AS A PARTNERSHIP WILL COLLECTIVELY TAKE TO LIVE BY OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES AND WORK ON THE PRIORITIZED THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS.

Connecting minds

In the next strategic period, we will continue meeting within the constellations that we are used to – the Partnership’s governing bodies, expert meetings and the high-level Partnership Annual Conference. We will continue close collaboration with our long-standing partners, such as the World Health Organization, to contribute to the achievement of the global and regional health targets.

We will also explore how to reach out to actors not yet well represented in the NDPHS work – especially those from other sectors – to promote the Health in All Policies approach. We must also ensure that the Partnership does not become a closed club of governments and experts linked to governments. Therefore, engagement with civil society organizations will be an important priority in the next strategical period. We will strive to define more clearly the target groups of the activities of the Partnership, with the goal of having meaningful impact on people in the region. Involvement of NGOs and grassroots organizations is therefore essential.

Sharing knowledge and learning from each other

The Partnership will continue providing a forum for sharing and producing knowledge and for learning from each other, to support informed decision and policy making. In the next strategic period, we will put in effort to ensure that the wealth of information shared and created among our experts is gathered more systematically and thus made more accessible and useful in practice, for example through producing policy briefs and reports.

NDPHS field visits and study tours have already proven themselves as a highly valuable way of learning from each other and have been highly appreciated as bringing good value to the members of the Partnership. In the next strategic period we aim to conduct them more often and systematically, while keeping the principle of optimal use of resources and organizing these visits adjacent to other NDPHS meetings.

Caring for people

Health and well-being of people must be always put at the center when defining our activities and their scope. We will continue advocating for health and well-being of all people throughout their life-course, and through our work will promote the concept of economy of well-being which puts people and their well-being at the center of all policies, and advocates for a growth model that is equitable and sustainable, good for the people and good for the planet.

We will continue piloting and testing initiatives on the ground through projects that will especially support local level interventions, cross-sectorality and innovative approaches.

Telling the NDPHS story

Partnership’s storytelling and communication will be upscaled. In the increasingly connected, digital and visual world, our communication and visual image must be effective, strategic, engaging and contemporary.

We will work on further improving our presence on social media and seek to strengthen our storytelling capacities through different channels and by giving the floor to the many storytellers that we have in the Partnership. We will also think how to speak more convincingly as a Partnership in one voice on matters of importance to us.

Securing funding for NDPHS activities

Availability of sustainable and reliable project funding is crucial for implementing and upscaling NDPHS activities. As our experience has shown, external funding possibilities are scarce and mechanisms sometimes too rigid. Ideally, the NDPHS would have its own project fund from voluntary contributions of the Partners, and we shall explore the possibilities of establishing such fund. In parallel, we need to continue improving the project application and management skills of all members of the network so that we can continue successfully applying for external funding for NDPHS project activities.

7. Our impact

We will continue building a strong alliance of the countries of our region, united by common values of promoting democracy and sustainable development in our region through improving human health and well-being and narrowing of social and economic differences.

We will know that this Strategy has been implemented successfully if by 2025 we see that:

-  All NDPHS structures, including PAC, CSR, Expert Groups and Secretariat, have a strong sense of ownership and are strongly invested in the Partnership's success;
-  All NDPHS structures have improved their capacity to set priorities and have enhanced their cooperation in addressing common challenges in health and well-being;
-  All NDPHS structures are speaking in one voice to promote the Partnership, its work, values, and to have more impact on policy making through coordinated communication at national and regional fora;
-  We have become more inclusive by developing a Partnership-specific method for engaging people across society and stakeholders across sectors in our work;
-  NDPHS has become a stronger regional leader – both as a political forum for promoting value-based cooperation, and as a recognized network of experts advocating for health and well-being;
-  Our communication and information produced by us is clear, precise and engaging.



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