

Conclusions by the Chair

The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) held its fourteenth Annual Conference (PAC) on 28 November 2019 in Riga, Latvia. Ms. Daina Mūrmane-Umbraško the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia, hosted and chaired the Conference. Ministers responsible for health and social affairs and other high-level representatives of Partners and also Dr. Hans Kluge, the Regional Director Nominee for the WHO Regional Office for Europe participated in the PAC.

The PAC appraised the progress of the NDPHS since it was established in 2003, discussed the current and emerging challenges in health and well-being in the Northern Dimension Region, emphasised the need for establishing stronger links with national Sustainable Development Goals' responses and set priorities for the coming years. Furthermore, the PAC explored the need to search for novel approaches and ideas to strengthen the capacities on all the layers of the Partnership while dealing with challenges ahead. The renewed NDPHS Prison Health declaration was adopted as detailed further down to reflect the NDPHS' views and commitment to future action in this area.

Health and social well-being: appraising the progress and discussing the future

The PAC noted the overview of the NDPHS' five-year evaluation (carried out by the external evaluator contracted by the European Commission) presented by the Chair of the NDPHS Evaluation Steering Group. The Partners agreed that there is a need for new approaches in dealing with existing and upcoming challenges in area of health and social wellbeing.

Furthermore, the PAC welcomed the keynote speech by the WHO Regional Office for Europe Regional Director nominee Dr. Hans Kluge focusing on importance of international collaboration in health and how it contributes to development of national policy and facilitates achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly highlighting the unique importance of the NDPHS.

The PAC welcomed the overview about the PAC side event - a workshop on innovative methods and design thinking in governance, presented by Mr. Roberts Baltiņš - the facilitator of the side event held on 26-27 November just before the PAC. During this side event participants were engaged in using creative techniques to gain a fresh perspective about the NDPHS purpose and opportunities to increase its impact and revamp the modalities of work accordingly. The PAC noted the outcomes of the side event and agreed that these conclusions should be considered while drafting the new Strategy for the next planning period. Furthermore, the PAC expressed the appreciation about using new meeting formats within the NDPHS and encouragement to further explore novel ways of work.

The PAC underlined the special role that the NDPHS performs as the platform that brings together stakeholders in the region for cooperation in health and social well-being, helping to bridge priorities and efforts related to policies and strategies, e.g., the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The PAC emphasized that the NDPHS is recognized by the EU as the Coordinator of the Policy Area Health in the EUSBSR Action Plan and will continue to fulfil this role also during the new planning period as the Action Plan is being revised this autumn taking into account the interests of all Partners.

The PAC noted the Conference statement of the 6th Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum, held on 18–20 November 2019 in Bodø, Norway and the conclusions of the 6th Senior Officials' Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension held on 5 March 2019 in Brussels, Belgium. Furthermore, the PAC took note of the outcomes of the 28th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference held on 25 – 27 August 2019 in Oslo, Norway. Altogether, the PAC appreciated the commitment of all stakeholders to further develop and strengthen the Northern Dimension and its partnerships, including recognising the NDPHS and its contributions in fostering regional cooperation in the health and social well-being areas.

Setting priorities: the NDPHS Strategy after 2020

The PAC thanked the Partners for the support provided to the NDPHS so far, not least Finland, Germany, Norway, Russia and Sweden for their leadership in the Expert Groups. In addition, the PAC acknowledged and expressed gratitude to all Partners for the project funds provided up to today and for the pledged future support for the activities to be implemented by the NDPHS during coming years in such areas as occupational safety and health, non-communicable and communicable diseases, primary healthcare, prison health, healthy ageing, AMR and addiction reduction.

The PAC took note of the strategic priorities submitted to the Secretariat by the Partners and notes with satisfaction that Partners value the NDPHS as a sustainable and well-established network of seven well-functioning Expert Groups, each covering a specific area of expertise, which is still of relevance for the upcoming strategic period.

The PAC acknowledged and adopted the existing seven thematic areas as relevant for the NDPHS' work in the next strategic period after 2020:

- antimicrobial resistance;
- alcohol and substance abuse;
- HIV, TB and associated infections;
- non-communicable diseases;
- occupational safety and health;
- prison health;
- primary health care.

In addition, the PAC recognised four identified cross-cutting themes, that should be addressed:

- healthy ageing;
- integrated care;
- mental health;
- digitalization.

Furthermore, the PAC emphasized that alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals shall be the underlining principle of work in all thematic areas.

The PAC noted that the Strategy Working Group has been established and tasked to draft the new Strategy. The PAC highlighted that it is important that the new Strategy after 2020 and its Action Plan take stock of the relevant priorities and efforts related to existing policies and strategies in the Northern Dimension area.

Further, the PAC recognized that the NDPHS should focus only on issues and actions where it can bring regional added value, considering the work done by the national governments, the WHO and the EU. It highlighted that the NDPHS' work, and foremost the activities of the future NDPHS Expert Groups and Task Forces, should focus on achieving the specific, measurable and time-targeted objectives that will be included in the new NDPHS Strategy and its Action Plan.

Prison health - the NDPHS' perspective and response

The PAC welcomed the presentation by Dr. Marc Lehmann, the Chair of the NDPHS Prison Health Expert Group and recognized the importance and necessity for maintaining close links or integration between prison health and public health services in order to have a safer and healthier societies in the Northern Dimension area. The PAC expressed determination to ensure the same standards of health care that are available in the community and to ensure providing access to necessary healthcare services to prisoners without discrimination. It was recognised that there is a need to improve cooperation between the national authorities responsible for health and social affairs and those responsible for the penitentiary system. In addition, it was highlighted that it is crucial to improve monitoring and surveillance systems on the health of people in prison in order to bridge the gap between evidence and policy.

Following the discussions, the PAC adopted the renewed NDPHS Prison Health declaration.

The NDPHS Chairmanships and hosts of NDPHS meetings

The PAC adopted the revised list of rotating NDPHS Chairmanships and hosts of NDPHS meetings. The CSR 31 meeting in 26 April 2019 in Moscow agreed on the list of rotating NDPHS Chairmanships.

Year	Chair Country/ Co-Chair Country	Spring	Autumn	
		EG Chairs & ITAs + CSR + MP	EG Chairs & ITAs + CSR + MP	EG Chairs & ITAs PAC + MP
2018	Latvia / Poland	Latvia	Latvia	
2019		Russia		Latvia
2020	Poland / Lithuania	Poland	Finland	
2021		Norway		Poland
2022	Lithuania / Sweden		Estonia	
2023				Lithuania
2024	Sweden / Norway			
2025				Sweden
2026	Norway / Russia	Norway		
2027				Norway
2028	Russia / Finland			
2029				Russia
2030	Finland / Germany			
2031				Finland
2032	Germany / Estonia			
2033				Germany
2034	Estonia / Latvia			
2035				Estonia

Final provisions

The PAC expressed its highest appreciation to the NDPHS Secretariat for its excellent work and support to the Partnership during the Latvian Chairmanship.

The PAC elected Poland as the Partnership Chair and Lithuania as the Co-Chair for the next two years.

The PAC decided to hold the next ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference in 2021.