

Conclusions by the Chair

The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) held its fifteenth Annual Conference (PAC) on 25 November 2021. Although originally planned as a face-to-face meeting in Warsaw, Poland, it was held online due to the deteriorating overall COVID-19 pandemic situation in the region. Mr. Adam Niedzielski, Minister of Health of Poland, hosted and chaired the Conference. Ministers responsible for health and social affairs and other high-level representatives of Partners participated in the PAC.

The PAC appraised the progress of the NDPHS since the last Conference held in Riga, Latvia on 28 November 2019. The Conference discussed Partnership's contribution to promotion of active and healthy ageing and adopted the NDPHS Manifesto "Connecting Minds Across the Ages," which aims to support the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 and lists the NDPHS' commitments in this regard. The Conference also discussed the NDPHS' strategic direction for the upcoming two-years period chaired by Sweden and co-chaired by Lithuania, and beyond.

Progress in 2020-2021

The PAC praised the commitment and flexibility of all NDPHS' actors who had swiftly switched to online working methods with the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic and not only kept the Partnership's work at the previous level but also scaled up activities in many areas. In particular, the PAC appreciated:

- Commitment of Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden to leading the NDPHS Expert Groups.
- Work of the seven NDPHS Expert Groups and emphasized that the most precious asset of the Partnership is the network of public health experts who facilitate mutual understanding, exchange of experience and best practices and policy learning.
- Close collaboration with the WHO and WHO's strong engagement in the work of the NDPHS Expert Groups.
- Funding provided by the Swedish Institute and Germany for the project "Roadmap to improve the health and well-being of the ageing population in the Baltic Sea Region" (AgeFLAG).
- Grant provided by the EU for the large-scale project "More Impact Together by Empowering Northern Stakeholders" (MITTENS)
- Strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation, including through close cooperation with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC) and the joint project "The Art of Staying Healthy," which aims to develop collaboration between the arts and health sectors and to pilot arts interventions aimed at increased health and well-being.
- Promotion of the Health in All Policies approach by engaging with a variety of stakeholders across sectors and using different platforms for spreading the message, such as the Northern Dimension Business Forum, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the EU Annual Forum of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- Strengthened NDPHS strategic communication and new visual identity.

Active and healthy ageing

The PAC welcomed the NDPHS' focus on the topic of active and healthy ageing and the work done so far within the AgeFLAG project, mapping the countries' needs and priorities to improve health and well-being of the ageing population and establishing the NDPHS Task Force on Active and Healthy Ageing.

Ministers and other high-level representatives participated in a discussion, based around the questions on measures aimed at promotion of active and healthy ageing and the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on older population groups.

The PAC took note of the outcomes of the PAC side-event, a Conference "Connecting minds across the ages" held on 23 November 2021, which focused on the themes of combatting ageism, promoting intergenerational contacts and inclusivity of older people in service design and policy making.

Following the discussions, the PAC adopted the NDPHS Manifesto "Connecting Minds Across the Ages".

NDPHS strategic direction

The NDPHS is recognized by its stakeholders as a valuable cooperation platform, thus the upcoming strategic period will not foresee radical changes in the cooperation model. Rather, 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 thematic focus of the Partnership's work shall remain on the themes of antimicrobial resistance, alcohol and substance use, HIV, tuberculosis and associated infections, non-communicable diseases, occupational safety and health, primary health care and prison health. The overarching strategic horizontal themes shall be active and healthy ageing, digitalization, integrated care and mental health.

People-to-people exchange will be the guiding light of the Partnership's work. The NDPHS' vision is to contribute to sustainable and inclusive societies with equal opportunities for good health and well-being for all people throughout their life course without any discrimination. The Partnership values a practical and agile approach to working where all Partners cooperate on an equal footing based on trust and respect. Through producing evidence-based scientific knowledge and policy advice, the Partnership advocates informed decision-making and seeks to inspire further action and activities in the strategic focus areas.

Final provisions

The PAC expressed its highest appreciation to the NDPHS Expert Groups, the NDPHS Secretariat and the Committee of Senior Representatives for their excellent work and support to the Partnership during the Polish Chairmanship.

The PAC appointed Sweden as the Partnership Chair and Lithuania as the Co-Chair for the period of 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2023.

The PAC noted that the next ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference is planned to be held on 30 November 2023 in Stockholm, Sweden and the following one in Vilnius, Lithuania on 27 November 2025.