

Looking back at the **Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2020**

Follow-up on recommendations to PA Health

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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NDPHS

Northern Dimension
Partnership in Public Health
and Social Well-being

On the occasion of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Annual Forum 2020, the Baltic Sea Youth Platform published recommendations to all Policy Areas of the EUSBSR. These recommendations were developed by young people from all over the Baltic Sea Region and represent their priorities for future policy action.

PA Health received the following recommendations:

- **Implementation of more advice for mental health focusing on young people.**
- **Volunteers shall visit schools and talk to youngsters in a safe space. This could help to reduce the stress in schools and create a better environment for youngsters to grow up.**
- **Implementation of social project to increase awareness on how important physical activities and healthy eating is, especially amongst young people to lay a foundation for a long healthy life.**

The recommendations have provided a valuable input to the work of PA Health and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), who is the coordinator of PA Health. Throughout the last two years, we have conceptually embedded the youth recommendations into PA Health Actions and NDPHS thematic priorities:

Promoting active and healthy ageing (PA Health Action and NDPHS cross-cutting thematic area)

Throughout its development, the PA Health policy action process on active and healthy ageing (AgeFLAG) has increasingly recognized that the foundations for a long healthy life are laid in childhood and youth. All activities and communications within our work on ageing emphasize the life-course approach and the need for adaptations to demographic change that meet the needs of people of all ages. Cross-generational approaches were highlighted as particularly promising solutions. Most importantly, we continuously communicate that ageism affects people of all ages, in particular young and old people.

Mental health (NDPHS thematic priority)

Mental health has been a thematic priority of the NDPHS since 2019, but the acuteness of the situation has significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people have particularly suffered from social isolation, loss of educational and work opportunities and exposure to domestic abuse. The importance of the topic has therefore grown both in the work of PA Health and the NDPHS.

Promoting the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach and the Economy of Well-being (PA Health Action and NDPHS cross-cutting priorities)

The 2020 recommendations of the Baltic Sea Youth Platform reflect the fact that action on youth mental health needs to happen not only inside the health sector, but in other areas, e.g. schools. We therefore increasingly work cross-sectorally.

One approach that we have focused on in the past two years is advocating for the use of arts and culture-based interventions for the benefit of the health (in particular mental health) and well-being of people of all ages.

Concrete actions

In the past two years, we have:

- Included the topic of mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially concerning children and youth exposed to domestic abuse, on the agenda of the Northern Dimension Future Forum 2020;
- Provided input to the Baltic Sea Youth Advocacy Working Group on 1 June 2021;
- Created a connection between BSYP and the European Health Parliament 2020 Committee on Mental Health and Healthy Workforce;
- Jointly with BSYP developed a list of helplines in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region for young people seeking urgent mental health advice;

Invited BSYP to the NDPHS conference “Connecting Minds Across the Ages” and committed to “strengthen intergenerational dialogue to develop policies and solutions that benefit people of all ages in our communities” in the NDPHS manifesto on active and healthy ageing;

■ Funded small-scale local initiatives piloting arts and cultural interventions to promote health and well-being, some of which were targeted at young people and children;

■ Conducted stakeholder mapping and fundraising for future actions.

From here onwards, we are planning to:

■ Conduct a mental health needs assessment for the Baltic Sea Region;

■ Continue working on the mental health promoting benefits of arts and culture, in particular through the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Project “Arts on Prescription” and assuring that the needs of people of all ages are reflected in the project activities;

■ Develop closer cooperation with other sectors, in particular education by developing a cooperation platform between PA Health and PA Education;

■ Continue and intensify our communication and cooperation with BSYP / BSRYP (Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum);

■ Continue fundraising for activities targeted at youth mental health and combatting ageism.

While the issues we face are immediate and urgent, the development of solutions and appropriate policies takes time. Achieving a big change requires many small steps. PA Health is committed take the steps that are in our reach, to amplify the voices of young people in our region and advocate for their concerns through the channels available to us. With that, we look forward to our continued cooperation on the youth recommendations of 2020 and receiving new impulses through the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022.

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