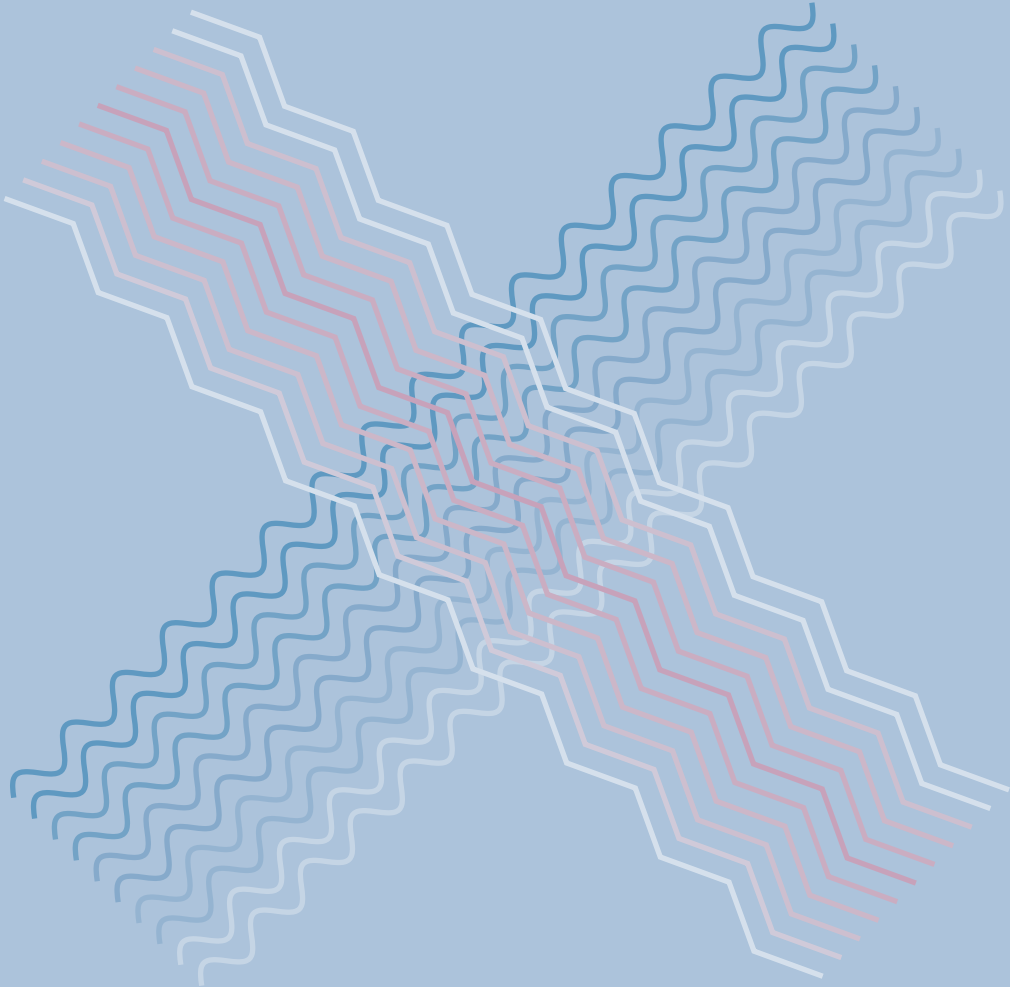


WORK PLAN

2023

Connecting minds
for healthy lives



NDPHS

Northern Dimension
Partnership in Public Health
and Social Well-being

Adopted by the NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives on 20 April, 2023.

List of abbreviations

CSR NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives

EEAS European External Action Service

EG NDPHS Expert Group:

AMR EG Expert Group on Antimicrobial Resistance

ASA EG Expert Group on Alcohol and Substance Use

HIV, TB & AI EG Expert Group on HIV, Tuberculosis and Associated Infections

NCD EG Expert Group on Non-Communicable Diseases

OSH EG Expert Group on Occupational Safety and Health

PHC EG Expert Group on Primary Health Care

PH EG Expert Group on Prison Health

EUSBSR European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

MP Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Establishment of the NDPHS Secretariat

ND Northern Dimension

NDPHS Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

PAC NDPHS Partnership Annual Conference

WHO World Health Organization

Table of contents

1.	Aims for 2023	5
2.	Future of the NDPHS -Legal Implications	6
3.	NDPHS Activities and Finances in 2023	6
4.	Bridging the Silos and Working with Other Sectors	9
5.	Communicating the NDPHS Work	11
	Annex	13

Vilhelms Purvītis "In Spring" (fragment), Latvian National Museum of Art





1. Aims for 2023

2022 was the most challenging year in the history of the Partnership. We received the shocking news of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, triggering one of the largest humanitarian crises in recent history with destruction, human suffering and millions of people displaced from their homes. Within our Partnership, this meant that continuation of cooperation activities with one Partner became impossible. This, in turn, led to most of the activities envisaged in the NDPHS Work Plan 2022 having to be temporarily put on hold because funding for their implementation by the remaining partners became unavailable due to a combination of political and legal reasons.

The work of the Partnership resumed in June 2022, and the remaining members of the NDPHS network re-confirmed their commitment to continue activities not involving the Russian Federation, found the impetus for a fresh start and made the necessary changes, so that we could start re-inventing the collaboration, develop and grow.

This Work Plan is not intended to be a comprehensive and exhaustive list of all the activities the Partnership will undertake. Rather, it allows room for experimentation and exploration of new methods for connecting minds to promote healthy lives. We believe that this approach will enable us to adapt and innovate as we continue to serve our mission and address the challenges facing our communities. This Work Plan is a living document and will be updated during the year if and as necessary, for example, when the Expert Groups, which are currently gaining momentum, provide more specific details about their future activities.

We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to collaborating with our partners and stakeholders as we move forward in this journey of transformation.



2. Future of the NDPHS – legal implications

One of the biggest takeaways from 2022 for the Partnership was that there is commitment and enthusiasm to continue the work. In accordance with the joint statement of EU, Iceland and Norway of 8 March 2022, the Partnership resumed its work. There are still things we want to change in our work to adopt to the new situation, and we are learning and evolving to strengthen the Partnership.

The NDPHS Secretariat is a legal entity by international law (agreement signed in 2011 and entered into force in 2012).

Since 2009, the NDPHS has had the role of the Policy Area Health Coordinator of the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy (EUSBSR). The EUSBSR Action Plan and its governance structure were revised during 2021-2022, including a renewed mandate for the NDPHS as a PA Health Coordinator and re-establishment of the PA Health Steering Group in 2022.

Actions:

2.1. The CSR members are in regular contact with their national ministries of foreign affairs regarding the future and modalities of the collaboration under the ND policy framework and to keep them informed of the NDPHS activities and work.

Responsible for implementation: the CSR Chair, Co-Chair and CSR members. Supported by the NDPHS Secretariat

Deliverables in 2023: regular reports at the meetings of the NDPHS governing bodies and ad hoc meetings, if required.

2.2. The 16th Partnership Annual Conference (PAC) at the ministerial level confirms the intention of the Partnership to continue the work and outlines the overall vision and modalities of the future collaboration in the new circumstances.

CSR Chair and Co-Chair, NDPHS Secretariat and CSR members

Deliverables in 2023: a Declaration on the future of the NDPHS adopted at the 16th PAC.



3. NDPHS Activities and finances in 2023

The Work Plan for 2022 was an ambitious one, with most activities to be funded by the EU DG NEAR's Grant financed through the European Neighborhood Instrument, a funding which became unavailable due to events that started on 24 February. The activities that were carefully planned since 2020 had to be stopped either mid-way or in their inception phase. The resources of already invested time and funds accompanied by the halt in the implementation of the long-planned-for activities has naturally led to initial feelings of discouragement by the staff involved.

Since then, enthusiasm has been regained. All Partners have agreed to an increase in their annual contribution, and in addition, Finland, Sweden, and Norway have awarded voluntary contributions to the Partnership's activities.

Some of the previously planned activities have found new potential sources of funding and some new project applications have been submitted for funding. In some cases, the ambitions had to be downscaled to match the available resources, which in majority of cases is the working time of experts, meeting costs and travel expenses to attend the events.

This has been a useful exercise in making our work sustainable – by diversifying funding sources and aligning the limited resources with the professional interests and values of the Partnership's members.

Actions:

3.1. NDPHS events

By September 2022, the NDPHS had resumed its activities at all levels. Face-to-face meetings have resumed after the Covid-19 pandemic and are supplemented by online meetings to ensure continuity and agility of work. Exploring new, creative ways of conducting meetings is encouraged. Combining the meetings with field visits is often relevant and efficient.

Respective chairpersons, with support of the NDPHS Secretariat

Particular attention will be paid in the coming period to reinvigorating the work of the Expert Groups that have been less active in the recent couple of years, namely, the Antimicrobial Resistance EG and Prison Health EG. The Prison Health Expert Group aims for a face-to-face meeting and a field visit, hosted by Estonia.

The primary aim of the meetings is the exchange of information in ways that contribute to the NDPHS strategic objectives as identified in the NDPHS Strategy 2023-2025.

The Expert Groups and other NDPHS collaboration formats are diverse, with multiple compositions and talents, and this shall be duly recognized and considered when planning the work. Sometimes we shall aim at publicity, greater visibility, and increased outreach. Other times, honest and open exchanges in a closed and trusted circle bring most benefits and added value to participants and Partners that they represent – and in that case, should be pursued. It is up to the chairpersons of each meeting format to determine what is the best use of the valuable time and expertise invested in attending the meeting.

Deliverables in 2023: all active NDPHS structures have resumed their activities in 2023. This includes the Partnership Annual Conference at the ministerial level on 30 November 2023, with a particular focus on the future of the NDPHS and, thematically, AMR, as well as a side-event the day before.

3.2. Projects

3.2.1. “Arts on Prescription” project

NDPHS
Secretariat

The NDPHS Secretariat has engaged as a project partner in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 project “Arts on Prescription,” led by Odense municipality, Denmark. The project duration is from 1 January 2023 until 31 December 2025, and it will develop a guide for establishing Arts on Prescription schemes that is adaptable to the local and regional circumstances. The NDPHS Secretariat has taken the leadership of Work Package 3 “Transferring solutions,” which will be implemented during 2024. In 2023, the NDPHS Secretariat will contribute to the development of the project and participate in relevant meetings, as well as facilitate connections with other projects linking well-being and culture where the Secretariat has been involved, namely, the Art of Staying Healthy and Culture for Health.

Deliverables in 2023: reports on project implementation status to the NDPHS governing bodies.

3.2.2. “Mental Health Matters” project

OSH EG
and NDPHS
Secretariat

In early 2023, the OSH EG and NDPHS Secretariat successfully applied for funding from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 for the project “Mental Health Matters.” The Lead Partner of the project is the NDPHS Secretariat. The project will be implemented from 1 August 2023 until 31 December 2025. The project strives to improve the preparedness of occupational safety and health professionals as well as owners and managers of small-to-medium sized enterprises to deal with psychosocial risks at work.

Deliverables in 2023: kick-start of the project in Autumn 2023 and reports on project implementation status to the NDPHS governing bodies.

3.2.3. Solutions for age-friendly employer (SAFE) project

NDPHS
Secretariat

The Secretariat plans to engage as a project partner in the “Solutions for age-friendly employer (SAFE) project, led by the Tallinn University Haapsalu College, submitted for funding to the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027. If successful, the project will create and pilot an age-friendly employer development model among healthcare and wellbeing sector companies. The NDPHS Secretariat’s main role in the project is to:

- Embed the project into the EUSBSR PA Health actions as well as connecting and forging synergies with other relevant regional projects, funded through Interreg CBC and BSR programmes;
- Take leadership in the development of policy recommendations based on the developed age-friendly employer model and the experiences of the piloting;

- Transfer results to key stakeholders, including policymakers, public health authorities, and regional health experts.

Deliverables in 2023: contribute to the submission of the project application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme by the project Lead Partner and report on project development status to the NDPHS governing bodies.

3.2.4. Securing funding for selected MITTENS project activities

Annexed to this Work Plan is a list of activities that had to be paused due to the termination of the MITTENS project, which the respective Expert Groups are still willing to implement but are lacking the necessary funding.

3.3. Studies and reports

3.3.1. Scientific article on “Better prevention, identification and reporting of work-related and occupational diseases and emerging risks.” OSH EG

In 2016-2017 OSH EG implemented a project “Better prevention, identification and reporting of work-related and occupational diseases and emerging risks,” which produced useful information, much of which is still relevant today, although some data needs to be updated. The results of the project have not been widely disseminated yet. Therefore, the OSH EG is planning to produce a scientific article during Q1 2023 – Q2 2024.

Deliverables in 2023: draft of the scientific article prepared.



4. Bridging the silos and working with other sectors

Breaking the silos has recently become a buzzword, suggesting that silos are always bad. But silos are often necessary and useful – clear boundaries between teams allow them to stay flexible, agile, and specialised. Issues arise when the silo mentality takes over and becomes rigid, which can lead to losing the sight of the bigger picture, as well as gives fewer opportunities for creative joint solutions. Often silos do not need to be broken, they need to be bridged. This applies both to NDPHS internally, as well as in our outreach efforts.

Actions:

4.1. NDPHS events

Respective chairpersons, with support of the NDPHS Secretariat

When relevant, the Chairpersons of the NDPHS structures are encouraged to invite to their meetings representatives of other NDPHS structures – other Expert Groups or CSR members. This is done on a case-by-case basis and needs to be practical and mutually beneficial and should not disrupt the normal work of the structure. For example, the CSR members and members of the Expert Groups from the country hosting the event can be invited to attend some of the agenda items and/or a field visit. Inviting staff from the Partner Countries' embassies can also be considered, as suggested in the most recent NDPHS external evaluation. Joint and back-to-back meetings of the NDPHS structures have proven to be useful and fruitful and are encouraged.

Deliverables in 2023: all NDPHS structures consider the most optimal composition of the meeting and, if relevant, invite representatives from other NDPHS structures, to promote mutual learning and exchanges across themes and sectors.

4.2. Mapping of potential external partners dealing with HIV and TB issues

HIV, TB & AI EG

The HIV, TB & AI EG aims to expand thematic collaborations and partnerships with organizations and networks dealing with HIV, TB & AI questions, including civil society organizations. The EG meeting, held on 3-4 April 2023 in Berlin, Germany, will map potential partners, networks, and projects in the domain of HIV, TB and AI and ways to approach them.

Deliverables in 2023: mapping conducted.

4.3. Network of local municipalities focused on preventive work to reduce harm caused by alcohol and drugs

ASA EG

The network was established in November 2022 at the initiative of the ASA EG. The government of Norway has allocated finances for the first meeting. The network is a place for exchanging experiences, best practices, challenges, and lessons learned between all relevant institutions working with alcohol and drug use prevention at the local, municipal, regional, and national levels. The network facilitates and strengthens new cross-country partnerships.

Deliverables in 2023: one face-to-face and one online meeting of the network conducted.

4.4. Working with other actors and other sectors

NDPHS
Secretariat

The NDPHS has already engaged in cross-sectoral work, through projects on culture and well-being, and has a close cooperation with the coordinator of the Policy Area Education in the EUSBSR, aiming to design joint activities.

As the Policy Area Health Coordinator in the EUSBSR, the NDPHS is well placed to further engage with other policy sectors to promote the Health in All Policies and Economy of Well-being approaches through dialogues with other policy areas, as well as initiating projects, thematic events and knowledge exchange in topics related to health and well-being.

In addition to collaboration within the context of the EUSBSR, the NDPHS works closely with its Partner Organisations, most notably WHO, ILO and IOM. In 2022, the Partnership initiated discussion about expanding the geographical collaboration to countries previously not covered. Continuing this process, close collaboration with the Partner Organisations is envisioned in order to further shape concrete NDPHS activities that address the humanitarian crisis brought about by the war in Ukraine.

Furthermore, the EU-level and WHO-level events provide good fora for engaging with new partners for collaboration and increasing the visibility of the NDPHS. In the first half of 2023, Sweden, the current chair of the NDPHS, is also chairing the Council of the EU. The NDPHS Secretariat and respective Expert Groups will participate as much as possible in the health and social well-being events organized by the Swedish EU Presidency in Stockholm and will promote the Partnership at the events.

During 2023, Sweden is also chairing the Northern Dimension Culture Partnership (NDPC) and will utilise the opportunity for further deepening the collaboration between the two Partnerships, building on the good joint work already done in the field of arts-based health interventions.

Deliverables in 2023: one project application promoting cross-sectoral work submitted; visible role at the EUSBSR Annual Forum to be held on 3-4 October 2023 in Riga, Latvia, depending on the participation options to be announced by the organizers.

5. Communicating the NDPHS work

NDPHS
Secretariat,
with active
participation of all
Expert Groups

In 2023 efforts will continue to upscale the NDPHS communications. This work is led by the NDPHS Secretariat, but it is important that all NDPHS actors engage in it.

5.1. Preparing high quality thematic content

The NDPHS Secretariat, jointly with the Expert Groups, will agree on the best

ways of preparing high quality thematic content for sharing within and outside the Partnership, and will promote the Partnership's work and raise its visibility.

Deliverables in 2023: a communication workshop and agreement on further steps.

5.2. Fine-tuning the new NDPHS website

A new NDPHS website was launched in 2022. It is an important tool both for promoting the NDPHS externally, and for organising our work. The aim is to create a website with the content and visual image that is effective, strategic, engaging, and contemporary. It is important that the website serves the Partnership and its members in the best possible way. Therefore, feedback from users is very much needed and appreciated to fine-tune the website. All users of the NDPHS website are encouraged to inform the Secretariat about their experience and suggest improvements.

NDPHS
Secretariat,
based on the
feedback from
the website
users

Deliverables in 2023: fine-tuning and improvement of the new NDPHS website performed, as necessary.

5.3. Further developing and promoting NDPHS podcast

In 2022, the NDPHS podcast Tune in Health was launched, hosted by the NDPHS Secretariat. It aims to discuss emerging health-related topics with expert guests and opinion leaders, to address trends and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes. The content produced has been of high quality – however, the podcast has not established a considerable audience yet. The aims for 2023 are to keep up the production of the podcast episodes at the same quality and frequency, and to work on further strategic promotion of it to reaching a wider audience.

NDPHS
Secretariat, with
support of the
NDPHS Expert
Groups

Deliverables in 2023: at least 4 NDPHS podcast episodes produced.

Annex

During 2023, the NDPHS shall explore the possibilities of funding for activities that were included in the terminated MITTENS project, and which have either been terminated half-way, or planned but not started yet, and the respective Expert Groups are committed to continuing the work.

Below are listed the activities that seek funding. The Partner Countries are invited to consider providing voluntary contributions to support their implementation.

1. Continuation of the Network of local municipalities focused on preventive work to reduce harm caused by alcohol and drugs. ASA EG

As described in the main part of this Work Plan in 4.3, the ASA EG managed to kick-start the work of the network, but the funding for further work needs to be identified and, until then, the network needs assistance from the Partner Countries.

2. Comparative analysis of EMIS data for ND countries HIV, TB & AI EG

The European Men-Who-Have-Sex-With-Men Internet Survey (EMIS) has so far been conducted twice – in 2010 and 2017 – to collect data in the MSM community throughout Europe about sexual health, behaviours, perceptions, needs, barriers, and interventions with relation to HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In 2022-2023, the HIV, TB & AI EG was planning to prepare a roadmap, extract EMIS data relevant to the NDPHS countries, conduct data analysis, present and validate results of the analysis at a feedback workshop with representatives of all countries involved in the analysis, prepare and submit a manuscript for publication at a peer-review journal, and disseminate the results of the study (a policy brief).

In 2022, before the MITTENS project was terminated, the HIV, TB & AI EG managed to obtain the datasets for analysis, prepared the initial analysis and a short summary of it. Funding is sought for data analyst's work to finalise the report, and for conducting a validation workshop. The policy brief can be prepared by the Expert Group.

3. Inventory of approaches to Latent Tuberculosis Infection (LTBI) in the NDPHS countries HIV, TB & AI EG

WHO's End Tuberculosis strategy has set the target for TB elimination globally in 2035. The TB elimination is impossible without management of LTBI. The WHO recommends that LTBI be tested and treated in certain risk groups that are susceptible to developing an active TB disease. The aim of the study to be implemented by the HIV, TB & AI EG is to gain knowledge of current practices of screening and treating LTBI in the NDPHS countries. The information gathered and analysed, together with a published scientific report and a workshop held, would be ideally a basis for a wide and practical discussion on how to develop LTBI diagnostics and treatment in the NDPHS Partner Countries.

In 2022, before the MITTENS project was terminated, the HIV, TB & AI EG managed to draft and circulate a survey form and collect the responses. Funding is sought for analysing information, preparing scientific report, and holding a workshop.

4. Policy brief on the regulation of novel nicotine and tobacco products ASA EG

The ASA EG seeks to develop an evidence-based study report and possibly a policy brief with recommendations for policy makers to tackle challenges related to the emerging of novel tobacco and nicotine products on the market from a public health perspective.

5. Thematic report on current and future directions of cannabis policy ASA EG

The report aims to increase knowledge and political awareness among decision-makers at national and regional levels to emphasize the public health dimension of cannabis policies.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE
LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER
CARING FOR PEOPLE

NDPHS Secretariat

Wollmar Yxkullsgatan 23
118 50 Stockholm
Sweden

secretariat@ndphs.org
www.ndphs.org