

Dear Colleagues,

As the year draws to a close, we take a moment to pause and reflect on the progress and milestones we have achieved together within our Partnership. With this pre holiday Newsletter, we want to express our appreciation for the collective efforts and collaboration that have defined our journey over the past months.

NDPHS Secretariat



Career opportunity for emerging professionals

[The NDPHS Secretariat](#) in Stockholm, Sweden, is seeking motivated interns to join our team. The NDPHS Internship Program is an opportunity to round out an academic career with hands-on experience in an international environment. Kindly share this announcement to help us connect with talented individuals seeking new career opportunities.

The internship is set to begin in February 2025. However, the program offers flexibility, and start dates can be adjusted on an individual basis.

The NDPHS Secretariat Internship Programme 2025

Organizational
governance

Mental health

Communications
and project support

6 months
Full time

Granted
scholarship

Send a motivation
letter and CV by
20 January, 2025

Highlights from the Transferability Workshop

Public health experts from Germany, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and Ukraine came together in Stockholm for a workshop focused on exploring framework conditions for social innovation transfer. Organized by the NDPHS Secretariat, the Transferability Workshop aimed to identify successful public health interventions in the Baltic Sea region that could be adapted and implemented in other countries facing similar challenges.

Like Nordic-Baltic countries share similar success stories and innovations in public health, they also grapple with issues like decreasing mental well-being, limited healthcare resources, and ageing population. Countries have developed various approaches to address these public health concerns, this was an opportunity to share knowledge about interventions that work, learn from each other, and gain insights into why some social innovations succeed while others struggle.



The workshop brought together participants from regional national ministries of health, research institutions, universities, small enterprises, and non-governmental organizations under three NDPHS projects “Economy of Well-being of People” financed by the Swedish Institute, “MentalHealthMatters” funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region and “Solutions for Age-Friendly Employers (SAFE)” funded by Interreg Central Baltic. Discussions focused on specific public health practices around mental health at work and age-friendly workplaces.



The workshop was the final event for the Swedish Institute–funded project Economy of Well-being of People, showcasing the methodology prepared during the project.

[Visit event page](#)



EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY
FOR THE BALTIC
SEA REGION

Policy Area Health

PROJECT UPDATES

MentalHealthMatters

The project MentalHealthMatters connects public health experts and employers to prevent psychosocial risks at the workplace. The project's Transnational Community of Practice gathered for a workshop in Stockholm and explored practices related to psychosocial work environments across the Baltic Sea Region.

During the workshop, promising examples from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway, and Poland were presented with the goal of examining how social innovations in this field have facilitated behavioural and organisational changes in workplaces.

For example, in **Estonia** workplaces are awarded Golden Label certifications for prioritising the mental well-being of their employees. The initiative encourages organisations to reflect on their work environments through the lens of mental health. It motivates employers to take intentional steps toward creating workplaces that support the well-being of people.

Finland has long been a leader in supporting people's ability to cope with their work. Central to this system is preventing work incapacity, for example, by ensuring preventive occupational health care for all workplaces and subsidising preventive work in small workplaces.

The online platform Strādā Vesels supports **Latvian** employers and occupational safety specialists in planning and taking preventive actions that support employees' health and well-being. It aims to raise awareness among these target groups, improve safety practices, and provide access to evidence-based tools. The initiative is driven by the Ministry of Labour, State Labour Inspection, and the Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health.

In **Norway**, public occupational safety and health authorities have collaborated with social partners to address challenges related to work environments, focusing on psychosocial, organisational, and ergonomic factors. The Work Environment Portal helps small and medium-sized businesses to work systematically on creating a healthy workplace, highlighting the importance of psychosocial factors. The aim is to reduce sickness absence by increasing knowledge of industry-specific challenges and providing research-based tools.

A **Polish** company Makówkpracuje has stepped in to fill a service gap in the occupational safety and health system in Poland. The initiative promotes a holistic, strategic, and systemic approach to workplace health and safety among employers, HR personnel, and safety service employees. It supports the management of psychosocial risks through awareness raising, training, and practical tools.

These successful social innovations will serve as an inspiration and input for the Transnational Community of Practice while developing one of the MHM project outputs - a Roadmap. The Roadmap will discuss policy options and practical actions for systematically improving people's mental health at work nationally and transnationally in the Baltic Sea Region. In parallel the project is in the process of developing an online First-Aid Kit which will provide practical guidance for employers, managers, and HR personnel in small businesses. This resource aims to help them address common workplace-related psychosocial risks and foster a supportive mental health environment.



[Visit MentalHealthMatters project page](#)

Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region



As a non-clinical and non-pharmacological approach to mental healthcare, Arts on Prescription bridges two sectors that at first glance do not seem to have much in common: culture and health. [The latest publication](#) introduces the Arts on Prescription model offering insights into its health benefits, economic advantages, and the unique features of the ‘Baltic model’ developed, tested, and evaluated in our Interreg BSR project.

Although there is growing interest in the field of Arts on Prescription (AoP), a framework for setting up, coordinating, and incorporating this approach into existing healthcare systems and mental healthcare services is still lacking. The Interreg BSR project “Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region” aims to bridge this gap. The project aims to demonstrate, through pilot programs across municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region, that this model is feasible and beneficial for both the cultural and the health sectors, as well as cost-effective and transferable.

AoP is one example of the broader concept of social prescribing. In this approach, healthcare providers like general practitioners or community health workers refer patients to non-clinical services in their community to improve their health and well-being. These activities can include painting, writing song texts, singing, dancing, sculpting, pottery, etc. The programmes are often initiated and carried out by local or regional public authorities in collaboration with cultural actors and referral channels. However, despite positive results from pilot programmes AoP has yet to be expanded and integrated into mental health care on a large scale in our region.



Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union



RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

Arts on Prescription

[Visit Arts on Prescription project page](#)

Arts on Prescription in Norway

Financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, Arts on Prescription in Norway will explore how to develop, adapt and integrate the concept of the AoP in the Norwegian healthcare system.



Arts on Prescription in Norway

Financed by:



The initiative has already shown promising results in Denmark, Finland, Latvia, and Poland through the Interreg BSR project and aligns with the focus on mental health of the Norwegian National Strategy for Reducing Social Health Inequalities. The first step of the project is to identify relevant stakeholders who can benefit from the experience of Interreg AoP project partners as well as Region Skåne in Sweden, which brings over a decade of experience and research on AoP. The project will analyse the suitability of the AoP programme concept for Norwegian municipalities and explore its potential to be embedded in the Norwegian Health Care system. Eventually the project partners will

identify Norwegian municipalities as AoP piloting sites and outline a workplan for the second year of activities. Plans include piloting AoP in Norway and potentially expanding activities to Iceland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Greenland, depending on feasibility.

“Solutions for Age-Friendly Employer” - SAFE



On 4-5 November, the partners gathered in Helsinki to advance the development of an age-friendly workplace self-assessment tool.

The goal of the SAFE project is to develop a toolkit that enables organizations to better understand the significance of age-inclusive human resources policies and reduces age discrimination within workplaces. By involving companies already in the development phase, we ensure that the solutions we create are not just theoretical but are shaped by the needs and expectations of both employees and employers.

The Helsinki meeting was kicked off with the Finnish start-up Nextmile CEO and founder Antti Harjuoja presentation on pre-retirement management, describing it as a strategy to extend careers and enrich the years when individuals approach their retirement age. Over two intensive days, the partners met with students from the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and by the end of the workshop they had crafted a preliminary set of indicators for assessing age-friendliness in workplaces.

Prior to the workshop, the Finnish and Estonian project partners held focus

group discussions with health and care sector organisations to gather input about the current age management practices and explore areas for improvement. Simultaneously, the Swedish partner conducted a literature review to understand the current pre-retirement policies, age management practices, and attitudes toward the older healthcare workforce in Sweden.

This groundwork allowed the partners to outline key themes and indicators for the upcoming self-assessment tool. The next phase of the SAFE project involves developing and testing the tool within health and care sector organisations in Estonia, Finland, and Sweden, with pilots planned for Spring 2025.

Interreg  Co-funded by
the European Union

Central Baltic Programme

SAFE

[Visit project page](#)

"Effectively Prepared in Crisis" - EPIC

The NDPHS Secretariat has embarked on a new project SAFE which has been selected for funding by the Swedish Institute. The project aims to strengthen transnational cooperation among Baltic Sea Region countries – specifically Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Sweden – in health-related crisis preparedness and response.

The project consortium comprises the National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden, the Ministry of Health of Lithuania and Latvia, and the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia. The EPIC project initiative follows up on the CSR meeting held in May 2024, where emergency preparedness and crisis management were highlighted as priority themes for collaboration. Currently in its early stages, EPIC will, over the course of time, develop strategies and build networks across the region aimed at enhancing health systems' resilience and improving response efficiency during emergencies.

On behalf of the Secretariat and the entire NDPHS family, we extend a warm welcome the new NDPHS Chair Nerijus Songaila and Jurgita Kinderiene from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. We are delighted to welcome you as our new colleagues and look forward to collaborating with you as we strive to achieve new successes together.

Thank you for being with us and see you in 2025!



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