

Highlights from the meeting of the NDPHS governing bodies

In early April, the NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives, the Expert Groups' Chairs and International Technical Advisors, and the PA Health Steering Group of the [EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#) convened in Vilnius. The first part of the meeting day was dedicated to national-level developments, insights into regional health and wellbeing initiatives, updates from the Expert Groups, and the latest developments about the NDPHS project work on social prescribing, mental health at the workplace, and active and healthy ageing. Scroll down and read more about our project work in this newsletter.





Summary from the Expert Groups' updates

Antimicrobial Resistance Expert Group is focusing on the [BALTOHOP](#) project and work with the EU joint action on AMR and its collaboration with Ukraine to strengthen transnational cooperation.

HIV, TB and Associated Infections presented the ongoing Latent Tuberculosis Infection Inventory project financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, whereas the Finnish Lung Health Association (FILHA) study examines the [LTBI situation in the Nordic-Baltic countries and Ukraine](#). The project aims to examine and create an overview of the Nordic-Baltic countries' and Ukraine's approaches to handling LTBI and to compare those with the existing WHO and ECDC guidelines and recommendations. The results of the study will be published later this year.

Occupational Safety and Health Expert Group shared insights about the continued work with the MHM and SAFE projects. They have also worked closely with expanding their cooperation with Ukraine.

Primary Healthcare Expert Group highlighted the work done with [Effectively Prepared in Crisis \(EPIC\)](#) project financed by Swedish Institute.

Alcohol and Substance Use Expert Group is focusing on its ongoing projects on Screening and Intervention of Harmful Alcohol Use and Somatic Health among patients in hospitals in the Baltic region and Norway. ASA EG is one of the NDPHS Expert Groups of which Ukraine has become an official member.



The meeting participants were pleased to welcome **Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania** representative Vida Gintautaitė and to share a mutual motivation of closer cross sectoral collaboration in the future starting with the ministerial-level Partnership Annual Conference side event on November 14 in Vilnius.

Last but not least the NDPHS Secretariat presented the process and current state of the review of the EUSBSR Action Plan and more specifically, the review of the Policy Area “Health”.

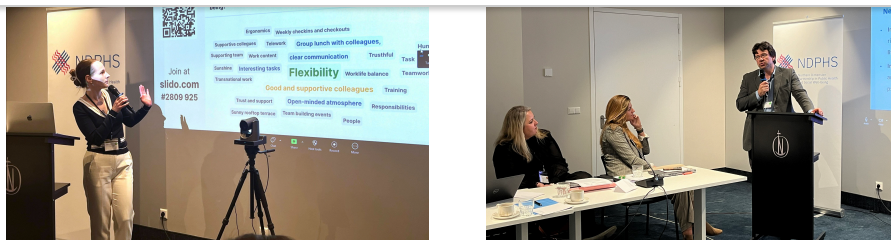
Thank you to all participants for a fruitful meeting, and to the NDPHS Chair, Jurgita Kinderienė from the Ministry of Health Lithuania for hosting us.

Photos: Ministry of Health of Lithuania

PROJECT UPDATES



On 3 April 2025, the MentalHealthMatters project held its final event in Vilnius, Lithuania. The project partners shared key findings from this two-year-long initiative to improve mental health in modern workplaces across the Baltic Sea Region. The event, which coincided with the EUSBSR Policy Area Health Steering Group meeting, showcased the project's achievements in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway, and Poland and explored future directions for collaboration in this area.



The project has aimed to pave the way for sustainable system-level change. The following key areas for future joint efforts in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond were identified:

- Two-way collaboration with European actors like the European Commission and EU-OSHA will use data and knowledge to inform EU initiatives and bring European actions to the national level.
- Learning from diverse policy and regulatory processes in the neighbouring countries.
- Driving social innovation and its transfer through transnational projects.
- Prioritising long-term transnational professional networks to ensure sustained progress.

A significant outcome of the MentalHealthMatters project has been the development of the First-Aid Kit, which will be launched later this Spring. This online tool is designed as a curated collection of evidence-based resources and tools for workplace leaders and human resources to improve workers' well-being. Tailored specifically for small businesses and organisations with limited access to OSH resources, it provides easy-to-implement, low-resource actions.

This first-aid kit transforms mental health at work



In conclusion, the outcomes that were presented underscore the importance of addressing psychosocial risks with the same seriousness as physical risks and highlight the necessity of collaborative and cross-sectoral efforts at both national and transnational levels to foster more sustainable working lives.





MentalHealthMatters receives financial support from the [Interreg Baltic Sea Region](#) and is co-funded by the European Union.

Visit [MentalHealthMatters](#) project page

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Central Baltic Programme

SAFE

Continuing about working lives but in the context of active and healthy ageing, our [Interreg Central Baltic project SAFE](#) seeks to improve employment opportunities for individuals aged 55 and above and will propose solutions for age-friendly practices at work. The first step in this process is to define what creates an age-friendly workplace and to evaluate current practices. During a project partner meeting hosted by the NDPHS Secretariat in Stockholm, we finalized the key steps in developing a self-assessment tool that will help companies determine their age and friendliness culture or a lack thereof. The online tool will be piloted later this year.



One of the main project processes and outputs is defining the relevant indicators for the self-assessment tool, which will be composed together with employers. This assessment is part of the recommendations for age-friendly workplace solutions that will be developed in the next project stages. The indicators play a critical role in guiding organizations and individuals in evaluating their age inclusivity and progress toward creating age-friendly work environments. The project SAFE experts and researchers have defined more than 80 indicators that will be narrowed down to a handy and straightforward questionnaire for employers.

The project partners also welcomed Åsa Olsson from the [National Board of Health and Welfare of Sweden](#), who presented strategies and initiatives undertaken by Sweden in the field of humanist workforce planning.





The project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund through [Interreg Central Baltic 2021-2027](#)

[Visit SAFE project page](#)

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RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

Arts on Prescription

Meanwhile, in the frame of the [Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region project](#), we participated in a workshop with the Ministries of Culture, Health, and Welfare of the Republic of Latvia to assess the current state of intersectoral collaboration between culture and health. The NDPHS Secretariat director, Ülla-Karin Nurm, highlighted the role of culture in enhancing people's health and well-being.

"Culture is more than just an art form; it is also a pathway to health and well-being. This represents a new and innovative approach to thinking", on behalf of the organizers emphasized Atis Egliņš-Eglītis, Deputy Chairman of Cēsis Municipality Council.



As a key outcome of the workshop, participants co-developed a roadmap outlining steps for national and local government institutions, NGOs, and the private sector to strengthen collaboration between the cultural and healthcare fields. Key recommendations included incorporating culture and health into the following policy planning cycle, developing a new cross-sector policy document, fostering new forms of cooperation between local government institutions, establishing a Culture and Health organisation modelled on international examples, and securing financial support for culture and health programmes at both the European Union and local levels.



In her presentation, Ülla-Karin Nurm introduced research highlighting the positive effects of cultural and artistic activities on physical and mental health. She also shared insights into how various Baltic Sea region countries have developed national support systems for promoting the concept of arts on prescription.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in structured activities, mapping out existing collaborative practices, identifying available resources and challenges, and, ultimately, agreeing on a set of concrete next steps. There was consensus among attendees that Latvia has yet to fully recognise and leverage the culture's potential in promoting health and well-being. While past initiatives have been implemented, they have largely been sporadic, lacking sustained cross-sector cooperation and long-term viability. To address this, participants highlighted the need for national-level policy frameworks and financial instruments to support such initiatives.



Arts on Prescription receives financial support from the [Interreg Baltic Sea Region](#) and is co-funded by the European Union.

Photos: Lelde Goba

[Visit Arts on Prescription project page](#)

We wish you sunny and joyful Spring holidays!



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