

EUSBSR Policy Area Health Steering Group
Third Meeting
7 May 2024
Vilnius, Lithuania

Title	Meeting minutes from the 3 rd meeting of the PA Health Steering Group
Submitted by	NDPHS Secretariat/PA Health Coordinator
Requested action	This document outlines the main discussion points and decisions made during the 3rd meeting of the PA Health Steering Group The list of participants is attached as an annex to this document

1. Opening of the PA Health Steering Group meeting

Ms. Elīza Bērziņa, the Chair of the Policy Area Health Steering Group, and Ms. Ülla-Karin Nurm, Director of the NDPHS Secretariat, welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked the Lithuanian colleagues for hosting in Vilnius.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting **adopted** the agenda as submitted in document SG 3/2.

3. General updates of relevance to the EUSBSR and PA Health

NDPHS Secretariat presented ongoing and planned activities within the EUSBSR and PA Health, including (1) prolongation of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region -funded project PA EDU PA HEALTH until 2027, (2) plans for the development of a platform project on mental health and well-being under Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027, (3) a newly approved Interreg Central Baltic -funded project *SAFE - Solutions for Age-Friendly Employer*, which addresses ageism in workplaces, and (4) a workshop on transferability of social innovation with a focus on sustainable and healthy working lives, held in Stockholm in September 2024.

In addition, the Secretariat informed that the revision process for the EUSBSR Action Plan has started, which entails reviewing PA Health actions and indicators. Cross-sectoral work, resilience and emergency preparedness and climate change were mentioned as potential emerging priorities. The new Action Plan is envisioned to be adopted by January 2026.

The meeting **took note** of the presented information.

4. Updates from the “Arts on Prescription” (AoP) project

Ms. Wiebke Seemann, Project Manager at the NDPHS Secretariat, shortly presented the progress within the *Arts on Prescription* project since the last Steering Group meeting, including the piloting activities, the development of a prototype of the online Practitioner’s Guide, and applications for two follow-up projects that would transfer the Arts on Prescription model to Norway and Ukraine.

Ms. Inga Surgunte, a representative of the project consortium, presented experiences from the first round of piloting in Cēsis, Latvia, including how they set up the local approach, which referral channels they utilised, and what types of cultural activities they used in the piloting. Through a meticulous evaluation process, they have noted improved self-reported mental well-being among the participants, increased accessibility of cultural institutions, enhanced social cohesion, and reduced burden on social and healthcare services.

The meeting **took note** of the presented information and **expressed appreciation** for the novel approach to addressing mental health at the community level.

5. Updates from the “MentalHealthMatters” project

Ms. Saara Rissanen, Project Officer at the NDPHS Secretariat, presented the progress in the implementation of the *MentalHealthMatters* project since the last Steering Group meeting. The activities during the first 10 months of project implementation have focused on identifying gaps and needs for improvement in relation to (1) occupational safety and health policies and regulations, (2) data and knowledge on mental wellbeing of the workforce, and (3) education and training of OSH professionals and employers on psychosocial factors. In addition, the project consortium has explored together with small businesses the most commonly encountered challenges related to psychosocial issues in their workplaces.

Mr. Owe Österbacka, Chair of the NDPHS Occupational Safety and Health Expert Group, presented how the implementation of the project activities have been approached in Finland, including the national focus theme, stakeholders involved in the National Community of Practice, and the initial outcomes regarding the needs for improvement in Finland.

The meeting **took note** of the presented information.

6. Results of the PYLL (Potential Years of Life Lost) study

Mr. Pekka Jousilahti, a member of the NDPHS Non-Communicable Diseases Expert Group, presented the results of the PYLL (Potential Years of Life Lost) study that has been extended to include data until 2021. The results point towards an overall decrease in the number of premature deaths, albeit some increases can be observed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The differences between the countries covered by the project as well as the gender disparities on the national level remain notable. In recent years, alcohol-related mortality has increased in most of the countries, pointing towards an area where further prevention work is needed. The project results will be presented at the Nordic Congress of General Practice in Turku in June 2024.

Ms. Ülla-Karin Nurm thanked for the valuable information and highlighted that further discussion on how to utilise the PYLL data in the EUSBSR PA Health and NDPHS work is needed.

The meeting **took note** of the presented information.

7. Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme and discussion on Interreg post-2027

Ms. Elena Kolosova and Ms. Marta Ślęzak-Warszycka presented the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 and carried out a consultation about the future of Interreg, regarding the needs, challenges, and novel paths forward for transnational cooperation.

The participants highlighted the need for transnational cooperation on various health-related themes, for example, climate change and its impact on health and safety at work, emergency preparedness in the health sector, surveillance of antimicrobial resistance, digitalisation of primary health care, as well as management and care of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis. It was noted that long-term sustainability of projects and their results poses a notable challenge for transnational cooperation. The participants also thanked the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme for being accessible for newcomers, easy to administer and broad enough to accommodate a variety of health-related projects. In relation to the post-2027 programme period, the participants urged to include a funding option for micro projects that would enable low-threshold testing of innovative ideas.

8. An interactive session

The participants were invited to take part in an interactive session aimed to foster deeper connection and understanding among colleagues. During the session, the participants discussed aspects of their work that they enjoy doing and explored each other's strengths and interests. The exercise resulted in a greater overview of the diverse skills and talents within the PA Health and NDPHS.

9. Next PA Health SG meeting

The Chair informed that the next meeting of the PA Health Steering Group is planned to be held back-to-back with the meeting of the NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives, on 20-21 November 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania (tbc).

The meeting **took note** of the presented information.

10. Closing of the meeting

The meeting terminated at 17:00 EEST on 7 May 2024.

ANNEX
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Elīza Bērzina, Chair
Artūrs Oto Kivlinš
Ministry of Health, Latvia

Triin Uusberg
Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia

Päivi Karvinen
*Ministry of Social Affairs and Health,
Finland*

Radvilė Jakaitienė
Justė Pečeliūnaitė
Ministry of Health, Lithuania

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WHO Regional Office for Europe

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Blagovestka Riiser
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Silvija Geistarte
Saara Rissanen
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Emily Sellström
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Owe Österbacka
Päivi Hämäläinen
OSH EG

Irène Nilsson Carlsson
PHC EG

Pekka Jousilahti
NCD EG

Inga Surgunte
*Cesis Municipality,
Arts on Prescription consortium*