



BALTIC REGION HEALTHY CITIES ASSOCIATION

**WHO Collaborating Centre for
Healthy Cities and Urban Health
in the Baltic Region**



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ANNUAL REPORT 2002

1. ADMINISTRATION

The Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association was founded in 1998 to promote health and well-being of cities following the principles of the Healthy City programme. Members of the Association include the City of Turku, the University of Turku, the Social Insurance Institution (KELA), Åbo Akademi and the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration. The region of operation covers the entire Baltic Sea area. In September of 2002, the Association and its office was granted a status of a Collaborating Centre by WHO for four years (2002-2006).

The Association was responsible for the Baltic Office in 2002. The office is located at Lemminkäisenkatu 14-18B, on premises rented from the University of Turku Centre for Extension Studies. In 2002, the staff included a part-time Executive Director, docent Märten Kvist (20 % work time) and a full-time Project Secretary, Mari Siimar (100 % work-time).

The Association signed a co-operation agreement with the City of Turku (City Board Meeting on May 20th, 2002, section 544) confirming the co-operation of the Turku Healthy City operations and the Baltic Office, and the dedication of time by the Turku Healthy Cities Coordinator to the Baltic Sea Region operations.

Board members in 2002:

Riitta Liuksa, Chairman of the Board, City of Turku, until Oct. 30th, 2002

Kaija Hartiala, Chairman of the Board, City of Turku, beginning Dec. 17th, 2002

Ulla Achrén, Vice-Chairman of the Board, Åbo Akademi and the City Board of Turku

Riitta Eklund, Board Member, City Board of Turku

Markku Koulu, Board Member, University of Turku

Jorma Järvisalo, Board Member, Social Insurance Institution (KELA)

Reino Tiainen, Board Secretary, City of Turku

Deputy members:

Acting Financial Manager Matti Wendelin, Deputy Board Member, City of Turku

Researcher Sakari Suominen, Deputy Board Member, University of Turku

Project Manager Pirjo Saari, Deputy Board Member, City of Turku

Social Researcher Jouko Lind, Deputy Board Member, Research Department of the Social Insurance Institution (KELA)

Planning Director Seppo K. Markkanen, Deputy Board Member, University of Turku

A Board Meeting was held five times during the year of operation. The Association's Spring Meeting was held March 22nd, 2002, and the Fall Meeting December 17th, 2002. Obligatory matters required by the Association's rules were discussed at the meetings. In addition, an extraordinary meeting was held, at which a decision was made to elect a new member on the Board to replace Riitta Liuksa, who has requested for resignation. On August 9th, a development seminar was held to the board members and the deputy members.

2. FINANCING

In 2002, the Association received 51,000 EUR of operational assistance from the City of Turku, and 34,000 EUR from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Membership fee proceeds amounted to 1,800 EUR and project incomes were 12,107 EUR. Total proceeds of 2002 were 97,107 EUR and the expenses, according to preliminary financial statements, were 100,432 EUR.

3. OPERATIONS

Year 2002 was characterized by changes, rearrangements and waiting. The main achievement of the year was the acceptance of the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre status designation in September, after a long application process. A significant change was the beginning of co-operation with the Healthy City operations of the City of Turku, which actually got under way – despite the agreement – only in late fall.

The Collaborating Centre designation was officially announced on November 29th at an international seminar called “The Importance of Collaboration in Promotion of Health and Well-being”, held at the meeting of the Healthy Cities and National Network Coordinators in The Baltic Region, and also at city reception. Representatives of WHO and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and Healthy City coordinators from Stockholm and Kuressaari spoke at the seminar, and representatives of the Association’s member organizations also spoke briefly.

3.1. Baltic Region Healthy City operations (training, negotiations, meetings)

a. Co-operation in the Baltic Region

The office arranged two meetings for the Baltic Region coordinators in 2002. The first one was held in Rijeka (Croatia) at the WHO meeting of the European Healthy Cities network on September 25th-28th. Sixteen coordinators from the European Network cities and national networks participated in the meeting. Topics at the meetings included the needs and forms of co-operation in the future, and the Collaborating Centre designation of the Baltic Association was also reported. The coordinator of the Latvian National Network was provided with financial support from the Association’s funds to join the Rijeka meeting.

A two-day coordinator meeting was held in Turku in November (28th-30th). This meeting was attended by 15 coordinators from 7 countries and 10 cities. In addition to the Network coordinators, experts from the Public Health Department of the University of Turku, the National Network in Finland, the City of Turku and Duodecim also gave presentations. Time was also reserved for discussion to plan mutual activities during 2003-2006. A separate report of the meeting is available on the web-site www.marebalticum.org. The representatives of the Baltic Countries and Russia were provided with financial support from the Association’s funds to participate in the meeting.

Holding coordinator meetings and participation in the European Network meetings are requirements of the World Health Organization. A separate report of the 2001 meeting was given in March.

Training on intercultural communication was given at the *Baltic Region Intercultural Communication and Leadership* conference on March 14th-15th in co-operation with the University of Turku Centre for Extension Studies, Åbo Akademi Centre for Continuing Education and the Estonian Business School Executive Training Centre. Originally, the training was intended to be part of the so-called FIN-BALTIC WELFARE CENTER/FIBA project, which was included in the 2002 action plan, but after EU funding was stranded, it was nevertheless decided that the first part of the co-operation project be carried out as planned. There were a total of 48 participants, health professionals, for instance, representing many different organizations and corporations. Participants from Finland, Sweden, Estonia and Latvia attended the meeting.

The Executive Director attended the *Forum on the Northern Dimension in Social Protection and Health* seminar arranged by the Council of State in Joensuu on

September 16th-17th, where he met with leading officials of the Foreign Ministry. Mikko Vienonen, a WHO special ambassador in Russia, said that WHO is planning to open an office in St.Petersburg, and he was hoping to receive some support from the Baltic Region Healthy Cities office in operational guidance to support the local projects in health development.

b. WHO

In May, the Deputy Mayor of Turku and the Healthy City Coordinator negotiated with the WHO representatives about operations in Turku and the Baltic Sea Region, and their operational integration. It was stated, that this integration is acceptable by WHO, but they expect sufficient emphasis on the Baltic Region.

The Executive Director attended the European National Networks meeting in Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) February 28th- March 2nd.

c. Estonia

The Project Secretary attended the constitutive meeting of the Estonian National Network January 27th-28th, 2002, the purpose of which was to make the Estonian National Healthy City Network official. Also in the meeting, the City of Pärnu was officially designated a member of European Healthy City Network by WHO representatives (Agis Tsouros and Jill Farrington). An Estonian translation "Veenvad tõendid" of the WHO publication "The Solid Facts", which describes the social factors of health promotion, was also presented at the meeting.

The Association arranged training on developing environmental health at the Estonian National Network meeting in Võru on October 10th-11th. Representatives of Turku Polytechnic and the State Provincial Office of Western Finland presented their workbook called "Ympäristöterveydenhuolto kehittämään" (Environmental Health in Development, free translation). Also the Pro Healthy Life CD-ROM, in the making of which the Association and the City of Turku were partners, was presented. The meeting produced a training program plan, in which the above-mentioned tools could be utilized to plan local environmental health programs in the Estonian Network cities by the end of 2005.

d. Latvia

Representatives of the City of Turku and the Association were invited to speak at the Riga Forum held on September 5th-6th. The Executive Director spoke as a representative of the WHO at the "Modern City" Mayors' Meeting and the Coordinator spoke at the "City of Future" Youth Conference. Training given to the administrative members of the National Network of Latvia and the City of Riga to strengthen the know-how of health care was also discussed at the meeting. The training is incorporated in the 2003 action plan.

e. Russia

In June, the Coordinator of the Russian National Network arranged a meeting in Kalingrad regarding the city's joining the Healthy City Network. The Executive Director and the Project Secretary were present at the negotiations with the city management, after which the city appointed a contact person for the Healthy City operations.

In a co-operation project with the Turku Board of Health, the Turku Healthy City Coordinator gave training to three members of the Committee on Public Health in St.Petersburg in June. During the training, future projects with the City of St. Petersburg, which are included in the 2003 action plan, were discussed.

f. The Nordic Countries

Stakes, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health of Finland, arranged a meeting for the coordinators of the Nordic National Networks in September (2nd-3rd), in which the Turku Healthy City coordinator acted as secretary and wrote a separate report on it. The meeting focused on preparing a Nordic Health Profile, "Nordiskt Hälsoprofil", which would primarily concentrate on developing indicators. The task of the Baltic Region Association would be to create a databank for the entire Baltic Sea region, which would include useful information about different activities etc.

g. Finland

The Turku Healthy City coordinator was a board member of the National Healthy Municipality Network, and participated in two Network Meetings (in February and November), in which she reported of the Baltic Region operations.

Together with Stakes and Turku Polytechnic, the Association arranged an Information and Discussion Meeting on August 8th, 2002 to partners in the region, on the subject of Northern Dimension and neighboring area cooperation. Twenty-four representatives from municipalities, regional administrations, schools and organizations attended the meeting. Stakes and Foreign Ministry have agreed to prepare two significant action plans on social and welfare issues in the surrounding areas of Finland. The meeting was one of the seminars in the starting phase of co-operational work, in a series of seminars arranged in different parts of Finland, aiming for neighboring area cooperation. The objective of the seminars was to offer local parties an opportunity to discuss their views on the needs and focus points of social and health issues in the neighboring area.

Domestically, the Executive Director negotiated with several background organizations and other parties such as the University of Turku, the Baltic Institute of Finland, the Social Insurance Institution, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Stakes, WHO, and the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, about the issues of co-operation and funding possibilities.

3.2 Projects

a. Health-enhancing Physical Activities

In 2002, the University of Turku Centre for Extension Studies received funding for a project on Health-enhancing Physical Activities, in which the Association is a partner. This project is based on the "Development of Exercise Co-operation in Southern Finland and Estonia" project co-ordinated by Southern Finland Coastal Zone and funded by Interreg IIIA. The objective of the project is to create a comprehensive model of the exercise and sports co-operation network (regional administrations, municipalities and sports organizations) to cover all the provinces. In 2002, the Project Secretary participated in the guidance work and attended the meetings. In the fall of 2003, the Baltic Association will arrange a closing seminar, with the Estonian Healthy Cities Network as the main target audience.

b. New Projects

During 2002, six projects to be started in 2003 were prepared in mutual co-operation. These projects are based on co-operation this year or earlier, and they have been

created from the needs of the Health City networks in this area. Plans were presented to the Baltic Region Association board in December 2002.

4. VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Baltic Region Healthy Cities Office had an *exhibition department* at the WHO European Network meeting in Rijeka (Croatia), and information material at the Riga Forum and the Estonian Network Meeting.

After the Collaboration Centre designation was confirmed, a small *brochure* on the Association's principles, clients and services was printed, which was given out at different events during the last part of the year.

The Association's *web-pages* were updated regularly during the year, especially regarding contact information and city networks (maps).

Abstracts made by the Executive Director and the Coordinator were published in the Riga Forum abstract book, and the Coordinator's abstract was also in the book published of the Estonian Network meeting. The Coordinator wrote separate *reports* of the 2001 Coordinator Meeting and the Nordic Countries' Coordinator Meeting.

Together with the University of Turku Centre for Extension Studies, the Association made the EU funded Pro Healthy Life CD-ROM, which deals with environmental health issues. The *publication* of the CD-ROM took place on January 17th, in the premises of Yleisradio (the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation).

Business trips and meetings abroad are reported in separate *travel reports*.

5. ASSESSMENT

a. Feedback from Coordinators

The "clients" of the Association include all the cities belonging to the Healthy City Networks (cities and national networks). In practice, the closest co-operation takes place between the coordinators. During the year, ideas and suggestions about future activities of the Association and feedback from past operations were gathered from the coordinators. They felt that the close co-operation with partners in the surrounding area and the possibility to discuss and share experiences in the meetings were most important. The Baltic Sea is a connecting factor in many aspects.

b. Execution of plans

Co-operation with WHO, which was included in the 2002 Action Plan, was executed as planned: training and support was given in many of the operations mentioned above. In addition, meetings in various cities with co-operation partners enabled the planning of new projects for 2003. Drawing a line between the "WHO operations" and the "basic operations of the Office" is difficult, as all operations serve the objectives set by WHO.

The employment contract of the Association's specialist ended at the end of year 2001, and co-operation with the Turku Healthy City Coordinator enabled a flexible co-operation with the City of Turku. The co-operation, however, did not get started until the end of the year, but it will be fruitful for the Association's operations in the future.

Of the projects mentioned in the action plan The Fin-Baltic Welfare Centre/FIBA, developing social security, planning urban health and the information management of health risks), only the environmental health program, realized by the Estonian National

Network and the local participants, was completed. Re-applying for the FI-BA project was discussed at the end of the year together with the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, but the application was postponed to 2003 and the realization of the project together with VASSO (The Southwest Finland Centre of Expertise in Social Affairs) and the "Hyvinvoiva Aluekeskus" (Healthy Region Centre, free translation) program.

Several negotiations were held during the year to find new partners and funding possibilities. There was interest from many directions, but nothing concrete was achieved this year.

Network co-operation was tightened especially with the City of Turku (co-operation agreement) and the National Healthy Municipality Network. The intended tightening of co-operation of the Association's member organizations was realized only in the development seminar in August and the Board member meetings, and clearly requires extra emphasis in the coming years, both in research and other mutual operations.

Co-operation with UBC was started at the end of the year, and it will be strengthened in 2003. The City of Turku is planning on creating an "Itämeritalo" (Baltic Sea House), in which the know-how and the Association's networks can also be utilized.