



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

**Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association**



# **BALTIC REGION HEALTHY CITIES ASSOCIATION**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2003**

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## 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 program. Members of the Association include the City of Turku, University of Turku, Social Insurance Institution, Åbo Akademi and Turku School of Economics and Business Administration. The region of operation covers the entire Baltic Sea area, and clients in the region include the cities of the WHO Healthy City Network (in 2003: Dresden, Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Horsens, Kaunas, Kuressaare, Copenhagen, Lodz, Pärnu, Riga, Sandnes, Torun, Stockholm and Turku), and national Healthy City Networks in various countries (approximately 100 cities/communities in 10 countries), as well as cities/communities interested in joining these networks. In September 2002, the Association and its Office were given the WHO Collaborating Centre status for a period of four years.

The Association maintained the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Office (Baltic Office). It is located at Lemminkäisenkatu 14-18B, on premises rented from the University of Turku. In 2003, the staff consisted of a full-time project secretary/office assistant Mari Siimar. Based on the co-operation agreement between the Association and the City of Turku signed in 2002, the Healthy City of Turku and the area coordinator Heini Parkkunen gave her work contribution to the Association and the Baltic area. The City of Turku was responsible for her salary. The Association had no CEO in 2003.

Association Board Members in 2003 were

Assistant City Manager Kaija Hartiala, Chairman of the Board

Master of Business Administration Ulla Achrén, Vice-Chairman of the Board

Public Health Nurse Riitta Eklund, Board Member

Professor Markku Koulu, Board Member

Assistance Director Jorma Järvisalo, Board Member

Financial Manager Matti Wendelin, Deputy Board Member

Provincial Medical Doctor Sakari Suominen, Deputy Board Member

Project Manager Pirjo Saari, Deputy Board Member

Leading Social Researcher Jouko Lind, Deputy Board Member

Planning Director Seppo K. Markkanen, Deputy Board Member

City Secretary Reino Tiainen, Board Secretary

A board meeting was held four times during the year of operation. Spring meeting was held on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2003 and fall meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2003. In these meetings, matters required by the Association's regulations were discussed, in addition to which the alteration of the Association's regulations was decided on. During the year of operation, two development seminars were held for the board members and the representatives of member organizations.

## **2. FINANCING**

In 2003, the Association received € 70 000 as operational funding from the City of Turku and € 46 000 as separate project funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Membership fee proceeds amounted to € 1 800 and project incomes were € 1 700.

## **3. OPERATIONS**

The Association's Plan of Operations in 2003 was based on the framework established by WHO, on the needs of the cities in the Baltic Region Healthy City Network, and, conforming to the instructions of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, consisted of projects. The six projects included in the Plan of Operations were based on co-operation carried out earlier. All the projects in the Plan of Operation were completed during the year, although some in smaller scale than planned.

In 2003, the Association's staff resource was less than 1.5 people, which was less than in earlier years. However, the commitment and participation of member organizations improved significantly during the year, which brought along the much-needed extra drive to our operations.

With the projects that were carried out, the Association supported the cities in developing and incorporating the Healthy City principles in their own activities. The projects promoted the realization of the Healthy City themes, such as the health and well-being strategy and the City Health Development Plan. The Baltic Health Profile project represents the foundation for the activities of the Association. Special consideration was given to the visibility and communication of the program, for instance by having an exhibition wall in different events.

### **3.1. CO-OPERATION WITH MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS, MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND WHO**

In 2003, co-operation between the Office and the Association's member organizations was significantly increased. In the spring, negotiations arranged by the Chairman of the Board were held with the management of each member organization, and in August, a meeting was held between the Association and experts assigned by the management of member organizations. These negotiations consisted mainly of planning upcoming activities in the years 2004 – 2006. In addition, detailed discussions of concrete co-operative projects were carried out with Turku School of Economics and Business Administration (Reima Suomi) and The Centre for Continuing Education at Åbo Akademi University (Paula Lindroos). The outcomes of these discussions will be seen as new projects in the 2004 Plan of Operations. Separate reports have been written on these negotiations.

Dr. Agis Tsouros, Director of Healthy City operations in the WHO Regional Office for Europe visited the Board's development seminar in June. Negotiations with him have acted as the basis for the 2004 Plan of Operations, that is, the tasks of the Association in Phase IV of Healthy City operations. In addition, the Association's contribution to the Belfast Healthy City conference was discussed. Dr. Tsouros discussed emphasizing the visibility of the strong competence of the member organizations, and the means to increase its use for the Association's benefit and suggested that the Association should focus on a few areas of specialty. Also, feedback from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on the operations and future plans supported the views

presented by WHO.

## 3.2. PROJECTS

The projects in 2003 are presented as they are in the Plan of Operations. The amount of euros spent of the funding from the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has been marked at the end of each project. The expenses do not include salaries or the costs of office maintenance.

As required by WHO, the Association spent € 10 005 during the year in assisting Healthy City coordinators, or persons designated by them, from the Baltic Countries, Russia and Poland, in their participation in meetings, such as the Belfast Conference and the Gothenburg meeting.

### 3.2.1 BALTIC HEALTH PROFILE

The Health Profile project represents the foundation for the activities of the Association. In 2003, the purpose of the project was to clarify the status quo by a) listing the activities and projects being implemented in the Baltic region, b) surveying the technical solutions that are being utilized, and c) drawing up a recommendation regarding the content of the profile and the technology for the use of the cities in the region.

For drafting the Health Profile, information was collected from the Baltic region cities belonging to the European Network, in accordance with the WHO indicators. The cities were also asked to briefly describe their "best practice" activities in their Healthy City operations. This information was collected into a document and on exhibition walls and was presented at the Belfast Conference.

Co-operation partners were appointed from member organizations to create an information system, and in November the Association and Turku School of Economics and Business Administration made an agreement to prepare a preliminary survey. On basis of the information collected from the cities, and in co-operation with the department of Information Systems Science in Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, a framework was created, and its contents were discussed at the coordinator meeting in Gothenburg in November. The coordinators of the Nordic National Networks also presented their Nordic Profile project here. A decision was also made at the coordinator meeting that the Association's work on the Health Profile and the Nordic Profile projects will be combined into an entity that will serve the entire Baltic region. The Finnish national Healthy City Network's Welfare Reporting Model and the Welfare Indicator Bank collected by Stakes (the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health), the Turku area Healthy Region Centre of the Regional Centre program and Turku Polytechnic have also been involved in the making of the Profile.

The researcher compiling the preliminary survey examined the info-technical implementations in existing profiles (e.g. the Nordic Profile, Publikit in Norway, Pasely in Ireland). These examinations and the results of a questionnaire given to coordinators will act as background information in the preliminary survey, which will be completed in January 2004. The study contains recommendations for the Profile's contents and the technical solutions that are based on the needs and requests of the cities. At the end of the year, the Association's work related to the Health Profile was integrated into the international eHarmony project, for which funding will be sought from EU's 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.

### 3.2.2 IMPROVING THE VISIBILITY OF HEALTHY CITY OPERATIONS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION BY SYSTEMATIC COMMUNICATIONS

In 2003, the aim of visibility and communications was to create a commonly recognizable and a visible image for the Baltic Region Healthy City concept, one that is both locally and internationally known. A plan for a systematic communications strategy, which was a goal for 2003, was not made.

A brochure and a mobile exhibition, which are the basic material for improving visibility, were produced. Four e-news letters were sent to the Board Members, Deputy Board Members and co-operation partners. For the conference in Belfast, the Association took part in the printing costs of the Healthy City 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication "WHO Healthy Cities in Europe: a compilation of papers on progress and achievements", and produced its own publication "Exchange of Experiences, Collaboration of Co-ordinators" on the information produced by cities regarding the work done on the Health Profile.

The exhibition wall was presented at a Baltic NGO meeting held in Turku, at the Association's Board Meetings and in meetings with experts of member organizations, and internationally most visibly at the Belfast Conference.

#### *A) Healthy City Conference in Belfast*

Six participants from Turku were present at the Belfast Conference in October, which was also the final meeting of the Healthy City Phase III. Among the participants were the Association's Chairman of the Board, the Project Secretary and the Healthy City coordinator of Turku. Information collected for the Health Profile was presented at the conference on the exhibition wall. As required by WHO, the Association assisted in having coordinators from the Baltic Countries, Russia and Poland – altogether five people – attend the conference. A separate report on the participation at the conference is attached.

#### *B) Arranging the Baltic Coordinator Meeting*

WHO requires an annual Baltic Region Coordinator Meeting to be arranged. The meeting in 2003 was the third one held. It was held in Gothenburg alongside the Nordic Profile Project Meeting in November. The main theme of the meeting was Health Profile, but WHO's Healthy City Phase IV, beginning in 2004, its objectives and plans made by the cities were also discussed, as well as the 2004 Plan of Operations.

The Coordinator Meeting once again offered an opportunity for the coordinators of the Baltic region cities and national networks to convene in a smaller group, without the entire European network, to discuss and exchange experiences on important shared issues.

Nine coordinators from seven countries and the Association's Deputy Board Member Sakari Suominen, researcher Reetta Raitoharju from Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, Heini Parkkunen and Mari Siimar participated in the Coordinator Meeting. Approximately 30 participants attended the Nordic Profile part of the meeting, among them representatives of universities in the Nordic Countries. The Association gave travel/accommodation assistance to participants from Turku, the Baltic Countries and Russia,

and was responsible for some of the meeting arrangements. A separate report was made on the meeting.

### *C) Other Meetings, Trainings*

The European National Healthy City Network Meeting was held in Copenhagen (Denmark) in February 2003. Project Secretary Mari Siimar attended the meeting. Topics at the meeting included the role of national networks in Phase IV of Healthy City operations, and assessment of the achievements of previous years as well as the present state of the network. At this meeting, another convening took place where the 2003 Plan of Operations was discussed with those responsible for the WHO Healthy City operations. A separate report was written on the meeting. APPENDIX 5.

A representative of the Association was asked to give a presentation at a seminar on family policy arranged by the University of Hanover, held in Gelsenkirchen (Germany) in May. The presentation was given by Heini Parkkunen, in which she presented Healthy City functions in general and in the Baltic region. The main focus of the presentation was on the promotion of well-being of children and the youth in Finland and Turku, presented when effective operational models were introduced. Operational models presented were the School Health Study (Kouluterveytutkimus) and the Welfare in Schools Project (Hyvinvointi koulussa) by Stakes, and the work done by the workgroup Well-being of Children and the Youth of Turku (Turun Lasten ja Nuorten Hyvinvointi) and the Children's Exercise Wonderland (Lasten Liikunnan ihmema). The organizers of the seminar took care of travel and accommodation expenses, and a separate report was written on the seminar.

Project Secretary Mari Siimar attended the Estonian National Healthy City Network Meeting "Healthy Environment and Sustainable Development" in May. Topics of the meeting include good practices of improving the health of network cities and implementing national programs (Agenda 21, Sustainable Development 2012 program) on local level. A separate report has been written on the meeting.

In Finland, the Association presented its operations at the Healthy Municipality Event arranged by Stakes in January. The staff also attended the Nordic Dimension partnership event held in Helsinki by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and seminars on welfare policy in Lieto and Tampere. A lecture on Neighboring Area Co-operation was given to the Turku Polytechnic students of Sustainable Development in November.

### 3.2.3 DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE ESTONIAN HEALTHY CITY NETWORK

The aim of the project in the Estonian Healthy City Network was to

- develop knowledge and skills on how to assess and improve the environmental health situation
- increase the clarity and comparability of the collected information on environmental health
- create efficient co-operative networks in the field of environmental health in Finland and Estonia
- learn from Finland's experiences on how to implement tools

The Finnish project experts and the authors of the "Developing Environmental Health" workbook (Ympäristöterveyttä kehittämään) Erja Alanen / State Provincial Office of Western Finland, Sirpa Halonen / Turku Polytechnic met with the representatives of the Association in March to prepare their part of the project. Both experts were willing to attend expert meetings and also to help in planning training. A meeting with the Finnish experts and the representatives of Estonian Network and Tallinn Technical University was held in Tallinn in April. At this meeting, the need of training on environmental health in Estonian municipalities was discussed as well as the contents of the project, division of labor, schedules and funding. Dividing the responsibilities of the project and tasks regarding planning the training program for the year were decided on.

The Association had the "Developing Environmental Health" workbook translated into Estonian during the summer. In September, the translation and the project strategy were presented to the representative of the Public Health Department of the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs. Training that was planned for 2003 was not yet carried out, but was moved to year 2004. It was decided in the negotiations that the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs is mainly responsible for the realization and funding of the project in 2004, and that they will carry it out in co-operation with the Association of Estonian Cities and the Universities of Tallinn and Tartu, with the support from Finnish experts. In December, the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs was given a draft of a training program made by Finnish experts, and the actions to be taken in 2004 were decided on.

#### 3.2.4 HEALTH MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR THE DECISION MAKERS OF THE CITY OF RIGA AND FOR THE LEADERS OF LATVIA'S HEALTHY CITY NETWORK – WELL-BEING, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HEALTH-ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGIES AS EXAMPLES

The aim of the project was to support Healthy City operations in Latvia through training, and to give information about the Finnish national Health 2015 public health program. Another goal was to prepare a training program for strengthening health management, which would be implemented in other Baltic region cities as well, but this goal was left to be realized in the future.

Two 2-day training sessions on promoting the well-being of the City of Riga and the country's National Network were planned to be arranged in Latvia. In practice, only one was carried out in April. The speaker at the session was Heini Parkkunen. The target audience for the training was the leading administrators and elected officials of the city of Riga and the Latvian Healthy City Network. The coordinator of the Riga Healthy City took care of arrangements locally. About 20 people participated in the session.

The main theme of the training session was the City Health Development Plan, as required by WHO, and the city's strategies. The City Strategy of Turku and its processes were presented as well as best practice strategies of health-enhancing physical activities, substance abuse and the well-being of children and the youth, and the Health 2015 public health program. A separate report has been written on the training session.

### 3.2.5. INCORPORATING THE SUPPORT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFE MANAGEMENT INTO THE ST. PETERSBURG PROJECT FOR PROMOTING MEN'S HEALTH

The City of Turku has coordinated two projects funded by EU's TACIS program. In October, European Commission gave funding for a new project, in which experts from Turku and Rotterdam train officials of the Health Care Committee of St. Petersburg and teachers of the Macaroon Maritime Academy to produce material for health promotion applicable in the St. Petersburg region. As a result of this project, a "Knowledge Centre" for health promotion will be established in St. Petersburg.

The purpose of the Baltic Association in 2003 was to provide training related to mental health and life management in the above mentioned project for trainers and trainees, and to make sure that the support of mental health and life management is a thoroughgoing theme in the health promotion material being prepared.

Because funding for the project was not certain until the end of the year, the Association arranged one training session during the year. In November, five trainers from Turku and five from Rotterdam, and four trainees from St. Petersburg met in Turku to discuss and create a common view on the importance of life management and mental health as part of health promotion. The trainers decided on how to implement these issues into their own training, material etc., which will be used in St. Petersburg during the project.

### 3.2.6. REPORT ON THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH-ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGIES IN THE BALTIC REGION HEALTHY CITY NETWORKS

The Association participated in an Interreg IIIA project coordinated by Turku University Continuing Education Centre entitled "Developing co-operation between Southern Finland and Estonia in the field of physical activity at the local level". The aim of the project was to create a strategy between the state, municipalities and associations in the region, with a model of an exercise and sports activities co-operation network and to bring forth exercise as a shaper of healthy environment. The Association enabled having the cooperation with the Estonian Healthy City Network added into the project. In October, the Association arranged the final seminar for the project in Pärnu (Estonia). The outcomes and experiences of the project were presented at the seminar. There the Association also organized a workshop to the Estonian Healthy City network municipalities presenting "The Turku Model" on health-enhancing physical activity strategies and its implementation. In addition, operations of the international workgroup Active Living were presented.

The City of Turku coordinated the European Healthy City Network's Active Living activities, which enhance health. The Active Living workgroup met in Glasgow in May, and this meeting was attended by the new Baltic Region cities Stockholm and Horsens.

The goal of the Association was to write a report on the need of health-enhancing physical activity strategies in the Baltic Region. This goal was only partly accomplished. Information from three Baltic Countries was collected at the Active Living seminar and from the Interreg Project. Based on feedback, enhancing exercise is considered an important means of promoting health in the cities, and there has been a shift from supporting competitive sports towards basic exercise. However, getting exercise to affect the planning or strategies of the entire city was a

common request from the Estonian Network and the Cities of Stockholm and Horsens. Although many measures have been taken towards promoting exercise, a comprehensive view is still missing.

### 3.2.7. OTHER PROJECTS – CO-OPERATION WITH UBC

Joined communications – and other co-operation, like combining premises – was actively planned with the Environmental Secretariat of the UBC at the beginning of the year. In practice, Heini Parkkunen and Mari Siimar attended the kick-off meeting of the T-BestC Project coordinated by UBC in Kaunas (Lithuania) in May. One of the themes of the project is environmental health, for which the Association could offer concrete tools; the Pro Healthy Life CD-ROM and the “Developing Environmental Health” workbook. Both representatives of the Association took the floor, presenting these tools and relevant developmental work done in the Estonian National Network. The UBC Environmental Secretariat has written a separate report on the meeting. APPENDIX 9.

## 4. ASSESSMENT

The best outcomes of the operations during the year were the meetings with member organizations and, following from those, the genuine co-operation and new projects. Negotiations and new contact persons will take us far in the future and produce new co-operational projects and activities, which will benefit the Association as well as its member organizations.

All the projects presented in the Plan of Operations were carried out. Some were realized in a smaller scale than planned, but on the other hand, new projects and co-operation partners joined in, which were not written in the Plan of Operations, and to whose challenges we were able to respond.

The amount of activity by the Association was considerable, taking into account the small staff resources. Lacking a CEO did not affect the activities during this year, but the issue needs a clear resolution in the future. Especially at the beginning of the year, the realization of the projects was almost solely carried out by Heini Parkkunen and/or Mari Siimar. Only at the end of the year did the commitment of member organizations become noticeable through the participation of other people in planning and realization of projects.

For the first time, co-operation covered the entire Baltic Region, and it continues – and hopefully grows – in the coming years. Operations that were solid in the Baltic Countries and Russia in previous years spread to the Nordic Countries through the work done on the Health Profile.

Co-operation with WHO Regional Office for Europe was tightened. Activities by the City of Turku and the Association, e.g. the work on the Global Strategy for Physical Activity, Diet and Health Document, strengthened the role of the Association in WHO's perspective as an active participant in the Baltic Region. The Urban Health Office responsible for the Healthy City operations in the WHO Regional Office for Europe engaged in notable work for the Belfast

Healthy City Conference in October. The Association informed WHO of its operations on regular basis, but due to the aforementioned reason, not much feedback was received from their side.

Expenses caused by the projects have been divided according to the co-operation agreement between the City of Turku and the Association. This brought savings in costs as well as flexibility in operations. The savings made it possible to attend the UBC Meeting and begin co-operation with Lithuania, for instance, which was not included in the Plan of Operations.