



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

Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association



## MEETING OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION HEALTHY CITIES CO-ORDINATORS

JURMALA AND RIGA  
LATVIA

15-17.6.2005

REPORT COMPILED BY  
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## 1. General

The meeting of the Healthy Cities co-ordinators (cities and national networks) in the Baltic Sea Region was organised by the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association. The meeting took place in Latvia, in the cities of Jurmala and Riga, June 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> 2005. There were totally 18 persons from 5 countries participating in the meeting. The representatives of the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association had separate meetings with the Mayor of Jurmala, Ms Inese Aizstrauta, and Deputy Mayor of Riga, Mr Janis Birks. The Mayor of Jurmala hosted a city reception on Thursday 16.6.

The programme of the meeting included the issues of

- (1) the Health Profile for the Cities in the Baltic Sea Region,
- (2) training on Health Impact Assessment and
- (3) learning/sharing from the experiences of Jurmala, Riga and the Health promoting Agency in Latvia.

The health promotion activities and campaigns “Promoting Health in the municipalities” of the Latvian Health Promotion State Agency were presented by Elina Vingré. The Healthy City plans and activities of Jurmala were presented by Laima Grobina and Janis Vilmanis. Baiba Berzina introduced the health promotion activities of Riga. A representative from the Finnish Embassy in Latvia participated the meeting the first day. Representatives of the Latvian National Healthy Cities network from Saldus district and from the HIV/AIDS Centre participated partly in the meeting.

## 2. Health Profile for the cities in the Baltic Sea Region

The current situation of the Health Profile for the cities in the Baltic Sea Region and the [www.marebalticum.org](http://www.marebalticum.org) website were presented by Heini Parkkunen.

The focus in the meeting was in the development of the Health Profile for the Cities in the Baltic Sea Region -pages. They include different type of information: qualitative and quantitative, individual and community, subjective and objective. There are four sub-categories information in the profile, and the division is based on the theories of human needs and - resources by Maslow, Allardt, UN etc. The first sub-category is descriptions of cities decision making system, service production etc. which have an effect on promotion. Secondly, the sub-category of experiences presents the Healthy Cities themes in the phase IV (2003-2007). Thirdly, there is information from the citizen's point of view of their health and living conditions and possibilities to participate. The fourth aspect is statistics based on the Healthy Cities baseline indicators, other statistical information and surveys about health and well-being.

### *Feedback discussion*

The experiences, benefits and future development of the Baltic Profile were discussed with the participants: opinions, experiences, problems, use and usefulness of the information etc.

The profile is an inspiring, positive and useful tool to be used in health, environment and economical development plans. It is a possibility to present the work in the city as a part of a wider European development in the own city and for the international visitors. It creates the members of the intersectoral Healthy Cities group a common understanding of the city, helps in decision making and in interpreting the health promotion into the language of the other sectors.

The profile must be flexible in terms of adding and removing indicators. Although, flexibility is good, but a structure is needed to be able to compare the information between the cities. Dividing information into the sub-categories is a successful solution: it is easy to find what you are looking for and to divide information under definite blocks. The decision making part is needed to know what is the organisation and how does it work to understand others. Also statistics and case studies are needed and What is Health for me –part contains information useful for HIA.

The problem is the general lack of local statistics/data. But the profile can be used to raise the issue known for the own local government: there is no local information, what should be done? As an information source all had used statistic data from state/national agencies.

It is easy to make promises to deliver the information. But collecting and rewriting the information in a suitable format for a website in English language is time consuming, where to find this time and people in the cities?

### *Challenges for the future development*

All the feedback and ideas from the meeting are valuable and will be taken in consideration in the future development of the profile. Several additions and changes were suggested, for example

- The name of the category “experiences“ was suggested to be changed into “case studies” and the information from the national networks should be added.
- A good and simple technical manual is needed for the co-ordinators.
- The Profile needs marketing and the concept should be introduced wider in each city and country.

The goal for the future is that the co-ordinators could update the pages themselves, with the support from the Baltic Office. Ingunn Jacobsen (Horsens) and Susanna Hyvärinen (Kuopio) have already successfully been piloting this work.

### **3. Health Impact Assessment**

Erica Ison (specialist practitioner in health impact assessment) presented the basics of HIA and the results and materials from the PHASE-project. The materials are available on the WHO password protected website <http://www.euro.who.int/healthy-cities/login>

The training created a more clear picture about HIA and confidence of the usefulness to promote the theme. But information, experiences and examples are still needed. The discussion included questions what have cities and networks done so far, what are they going to do next?

In the *Swedish National Network* the co-ordinator can encourage and support the network cities to do HIA. In practise, the network is going to organise a seminar with Public Health Institute in Sweden. HIA (and/or other IAs) has been done in Sweden already before. Goal now is to “reconstruct” the knowledge and skills – not presenting HIA as a totally new thing. For *Horsens* HIA is a new and innovative thing, which will certainly be useful for Healthy Cities. The Healthy Cities team will start processing how to promote HIA, the pilots should start from concrete things: children with obesity, food in schools as pilots, for example.

The Healthy Cities structures are open and waiting for political decisions in *Kaunas*. It is not relevant to start anything around HIA right now. There exists, anyhow, good examples related

to HIA. *Riga* starts from very beginning. Firstly, there is a need to understand what is HIA all about, then starts the training and promotion. In *Jurmala* there is need for support of the co-ordinator and others in the city. HIA can be used as a method in the HIV/AIDS collaboration

### *Agreements*

A common training in 2006 for the co-ordinators and 2-3 other people from the cities in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia should be included in the Baltic Office's Annual Plan 2006. The training could be realised together with Gabriel Gulis, who has worked in the PHASE-project and has experiences in promoting HIA in the newly independent countries. Around the Baltic Sea a network of support "buddies" could be established. This is a possibility for the un-experienced and experienced cities to contact a support person when ever help is needed.

## **4. Conclusions from the meeting**

The participants expressed a need and will to meet as a Baltic network. It gives a possibility for co-ordinators to meet, but also to include others in the city in the international network. The topics to work on in the future should support the realisation of WHO themes. HIA was regarded as a relevant issue also in the future. A Specialist/expert should be invited into each meeting.

The 2006 annual plan and projects for Healthy Cities in the Baltic Sea Region will include at least

- Baltic Profile: continue and develop
- Active Living
- HIV/AIDS
- Other WHO themes

## **5. List of participants**

Riitta Asanti, Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association, Turku, Finland

Baiba Berzina, Riga, Latvia

Laima Grobina, Jurmala, Latvia

Erica Ison, Specialist Practitioner in HIA, U.K.

Ingunn Jacobsen, Horsens, Denmark

Algimanas Kazemekaitis, Kaunas and Lithuanian National Network

Heini Parkkunen, City of Turku and Baltic region Healthy Cities Association, Turku, Finland

Suzanne Westberg, Swedish National Network

Janis Vilmanis, Jurmala, Latvia

Elina Vingre, Health Promotion State Agency, Riga, Latvia

Inese Aizstrauta, Mayor of Jurmala, Latvia	(16.6)
Janis Birks, Deputy Mayor, Riga Latvia	(17.6)
Indra Budnece, specialist of social work, Saldus district, Latvia	(16.6)
Ilga Kuze, project specialist, Saldus district, Latvia	(16.6)
Eevamari Laaksonen, Finnish Embassy in Latvia	(15.6)
Anda Lazdina, HIV/AIDS Centre, Riga, Latvia	(17.6)
Valdis Nagobalds, Director of Department of welfare, Riga, Latvia	(17.6)
Iveta Skripste, HIV/AIDS Centre, Riga, Latvia	(17.6)