



Building Healthy Communities

Newsletter

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Indicators and Criteria for a Healthy Sustainable Urban Development

Reflections from first BHC workshop held in Lodz (PL) on 8 and 9 June 2009- by Antonella Cardone, thematic expert to the Building Healthy Communities network

Four out of five European citizens live in urban areas, and their quality of life, well-being and health is directly influenced by the state of the urban environment, economic and socio-cultural factors. Cities are aware of the importance of health and quality of life in urban regeneration and development, although, there is a clear lack of competences and tools to support healthy sustainable urban development.

Of the 10 cities directly involved in BHC only Belfast has any substantial experience in using Health Impact Assessment (HIA), although, it has never used it within an integrated approach in non strictly health related issues. The other cities of the BHC network have expressed their interest in developing mechanisms to enhance the use of HIA and other mechanisms to promote a sustainable development in their city. Some cities are already developing tools or setting up scenarios to implement HIA.

HIA can influence the decision-making process at any level, and especially the city level, by addressing all determinants of

health, tackling inequities, and providing a new impetus for participation and empowerment. Given that health needs to be integrated into all policies and a coordinated action is needed among the EU, the national, the regional and the local level, there is a clear need for a common understanding at different levels and in various contexts of what health quality of life and sustainable urban development is.

During the first transnational BHC workshop on the theme of “Indicators and Criteria for a Healthy Sustainable Urban Development” organised in Lodz, Poland, on the 8th and 9th of June 2009, we aimed at:

- Sharing experiences on developing HIA or other integrated Impact Assessment tools
- Starting the process to identify relevant indicators to assess the impact on health and quality of life of an urban regeneration plan

In order to provide the opportunity for all participants to actively participate in the discussion, after the presentations in plenary, we worked in three groups each, one focusing on one aspect of urban health:

1. Economical development
2. Socio-cultural cohesion
3. Environmental regeneration



During the first part of the working group participants shared their experience on developing impact assessments in their field of work. It emerged very clearly that only in a few cities there had been an attempt to assess the impact on health of the implementation of a new policy, project or action. Even if Health Impact Assessment has been carried out, it has often been done so in a fragmented and not very comprehensive manner. In the second part of the working group participants brainstormed on which indicators are relevant and can realistically be measured in their city. The results were quite amazing given the limited experience of the participants in this field and the limited time available.



Workshop on Health Impact Assessment Belfast 28-30 September 2009

Having started the process of identifying indicators together has been also a good method to share difficulties and points of views among the participants. I will continue with the work developed at the workshop and will elaborate a proposal of core indicators that should be tested by the cities when developing the urban regeneration plan included into their LAP.

I will aim to identify key issues for each theme as well as common objectives and will propose a set of indicators for each theme. The sets of indicators should be discussed within each Local Support Group and the whole experience will be part of a toolkit which will be complementary to the toolkits already existing. The partnership will make sure not to overlap with existing works and not to reinvent the wheel or re-do the work that has already been done.

I would like to thank all the participants of the workshop for their active participation and look forward to working with them on these issues in the next few months. A complete workshop report is currently under preparation.

Belfast City Council is one of ten European Cities that has received funding through Urbact II “Building Healthy Communities”. In Belfast we have already undertaken a lot of work in the areas of healthy urban planning and Health Impact Assessment (HIA). We are pleased to share our experience with other BHC partners during the Health Impact Assessment workshop taking place in Belfast from 28-30 September 2009.

The purpose of the workshop is to give partner cities an understanding of the concept and process of HIA and to see how it has been applied in Belfast. The workshop has been

organised by Belfast's local support group which is chaired by Joan Devlin from Belfast Healthy Cities.

The training will be provided by Erica Ison, HIA specialist who has a wide range of experience in doing HIA's in Belfast. The training will involve HIA theory but will have a practical focus. This will include HIA case-studies of the Regeneration Strategy of the Lower Shankill from Mary McDonnell, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and site visits to the Shankill and East Belfast.

Joan Devlin will close the second day of the training by showing the Belfast experience of introducing HIA into city and region, including how HIA is being used to integrate health into regeneration in the City through the URBACT funding. Participants will have the opportunity to meet a number of Belfast's key people including Dr Eddie Rooney, the Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency and the recently appointed Lord Mayor Naomi Long.

In Belfast, health impact assessment (HIA) is strongly endorsed in the public health strategy - Investing for Health, even though it is not a legal requirement. Belfast Healthy Cities have led several HIAs in Northern Ireland. You can read more about our city in the city profile of this issue.

For more information about the planned workshop please contact:

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Torino Management Team meets Lodz Local Support Group

Following the BHC transnational workshop which took place in Lodz, Poland, the Torino Management Team



had the opportunity to meet up with the Local Support Group from Lodz. The Local Support Group consists of members from a wide range of community based organisations and municipal departments ensuring an integrated approach in the development of the Local Action Plan for Lodz. A lively discussion took place around the planned project activities and members of the LSG were in particular interested in finding out about EU level funding possibilities concerning issues around urban environment. Project manager Luisa Avedano informed members of the EU's LIFE programme which supports actions directly related to the urban environment and quality of life.

WHO European Healthy Cities Networks conference.

Iwona Iwanicka from the BHC Lodz Local Support Group participated in a conference on the theme of "Striving for Health and Health Equity in all local policies" which took place in Viana do Castelo, Portugal from 18-20th June 2009. It was hosted by the City Council and Healthy City Office as part of the WHO European Healthy Cities Networks.

Promotion of mental health and well-being in children and young people

The BHC network has been asked to present the BHC network at the EU conference “Promotion of mental health and well-being in children and young people”, which is being co-organised together with partners in the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. The conference will take place on 29/30 September in Stockholm with the support of the Swedish EU-Presidency. One of the themes of the conference will be “The role of Community Environments”. The event will be the first of a series of thematic conferences to implement the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being established in June 2008. John Svensson from the Local Support Group of Lidingö (SE) will participate at the event to present the work of our network.

Interview with Rostislava Dimitrova, Policy officer, Unit “Health Strategy and Health Systems”, DG SANCO, European Commission

Why is health a European priority?

Health is a growing priority in Europe for a number of reasons: firstly, because health is of top concern to EU citizens, together with unemployment, cost of living and pensions. People have high expectations about their health and quality of life; they demand quick access to safe and good quality healthcare.

However, health systems are confronted with a number of challenges, which are threatening their sustainability, such as growing health-care costs due to the ageing population, an increase in chronic diseases, including lifestyle-related diseases, the rapid development of new technologies; and the threats of pandemics, such as the A H1N1 influenza pandemic that has gripped the world. All these challenges need to be tackled in the difficult context of the economic crisis which is adding pressure to the health budgets and may have implications on citizens’ health status.

This leads us to the second reason for growing EU action: in order to effectively tackle these formidable challenges, with a more consistent and strategic approach, cooperation at EU level is needed. It should also be noted that health is an important part of the EU policy on sustainable development, growth and jobs. Healthy Life Years (HLY) have been recognised as a factor in increasing productivity and economic development.

What is the EU Health Strategy?

In order to meet the EU’s health challenges, the European Commission has developed a Health Strategy outlined in the White paper “Together for Health” 2008 -2013. This document sets out clear principles for EU

health policy and has three general objectives. The first objective is to foster good health in an ageing Europe by putting health promotion and disease prevention at the forefront of EU initiatives, and by encouraging healthy lifestyles throughout the lifecycle from childhood until old age. The second objective is to protect EU citizens from



Rostislava Dimitrova presenting the EU health strategy during the first BHC workshop in Lodz, Poland

health threats. The third objective is to support dynamic health systems and new technologies, including assisting Member States in evaluating and using health technology.

Which kind of activities is DG SANCO interested in promoting?

The EU health strategy outlines a number of areas where effective cooperation with regions and cities, could support in achieving EU health policy goals. For example; improving health literacy, developing effective health promotion and disease prevention programmes, including work on nutrition and physical activity, cancer screening, reducing health inequalities, improving access to safe and quality healthcare, supporting sustainable health work-

force, developing efficient e – health solutions.

According to the EU Treaty, the Community action in the field of public health shall fully respect the responsibilities of the Member States for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care. The Community shall encourage cooperation between the Member States and lend support to their action. As a result, the health and consumers directorate general (Dg SANCO) is exploring and developing tools to support this cooperation. This will be carried out in collaboration with stakeholders.

What is DG SANCO's interest in the BHC project?

BHC is a pilot project which shows how European cooperation between cities could support the development of effective health promotion and disease prevention programmes, and the efficient use of regional structural funds to implement sustainable local health action plans through exchange of information and use of best practices. The cooperation between DG SANCO and BHC network has two aspects: firstly, communicating the EU health strategy goals reflected in the local health actions, such as emphasis on health promotion, measures to tackle health inequalities, and secondly identifying and disseminating examples of effective policies and actions, from local to EU level. To this end, DG SANCO assists the BHC network by providing expertise and information, including on how to better use the EU structural funds for health.

Lead expert profile

Interview with Marco Santangelo, lead expert for the Building Healthy Community network

Marco Santangelo is the lead expert of the “Building Healthy Communities” URBACT II Thematic Network.



He is a geographer working in the Politechnic of Torino (Italy) and has developed studies and researches in the last decade in the field of urban regeneration, local development and urban and territorial governance.

He was a thematic expert in the “Urb-health” URBACT I network and has developed the issue of health in cities at the European level and in cooperation with the project 8 partner cities.

“What is the role of the lead expert?”

The lead expert (LE) in an URBACT II thematic network has the main role of assuring a good communication of contents among the partners and a sound coordination during the lifespan of the project. The LE works in collaboration with the lead partner and is responsible to prepare the transnational activities, to keep the partnership updated and to assist the partners in the development of the local action plans, to represent the network at the European level both in activities in the framework of the

URBACT II programme and in related external activities.

“What do you see as the main challenges ahead for BHC?”

The BHC network has an ambitious programme and it will be important over the course of the project not to lose touch with the local actors of each partner cities and to keep them committed to the objectives. Being a Fast Track project we will also need to ensure the continued involvement of the Managing Authorities which under the current financial climate might prove a difficult but important task since BHC is somehow a test for further projects that should link health and quality of life to urban development policies.

This said, I also believe that this is something that will help us to reach our objectives and that will raise more and more interest from present and future partners such as the DGs and other international networks dealing with these topics.

“How does the work of BHC link up to the overall URBACT objectives?”

BHC is a thematic network that is working on a topic – health – that is not often considered as important as many others, especially when dealing with cities facing regeneration processes or a deep economic crisis as the one we are now witnessing. Health is, instead, considered as a specific issue to be left to “experts” and to be handled with care only in case a disease is evident. What we propose in our network is, instead, a more and more widely recognized vision of health as a precondition for vital cities and as part of the capacity building process that can help cities and citizens to be cohesive and competitive in the European scenario.

Health thus become a central issue in the URBACT II programme, because it links the aim for competitiveness with the necessity to promote health and to guarantee to all the citizens good quality of life conditions.

The URBACT Secretariat has developed three Thematic Poles for activities at the programme level and each pole regards a specific theme: “Growth and Job Creation”, “Social inclusion and governance”, “Sustainable urban development”. BHC proposed, along with some other networks, to reshape this structure because the economic, social and environmental sides of urban development cannot be considered separately in dealing with health and quality of life. For this purpose a special section of the thematic poles has been created that mixes social and sustainability issues and BHC is one of the projects in this section.

Belfast faces a number of challenges. Although there are a number of areas of affluence, much of Belfast faces the challenges of poverty and disadvantage. The poorest areas often face multiple problems – unemployment, low educational achievement, welfare dependency, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, high levels of teenage parenthood, etc. One quarter of people in Belfast have a limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability in the most deprived wards, compared to 10% or less in the least deprived wards.

The Investing for health (IfH) strategy was the first major interdepartmental strategy in Northern Ireland which aimed to tackle health inequalities by focusing on the wider determinants of health. The strategy sets a number of targets through which it could be measured. Belfast Healthy Cities led the development of health and wellbeing indicators on behalf of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB). These indicators are designed to monitor progress against the Investing for Health goals and objectives within the EHSSB (Belfast) area. All Government departments and other sectors have a role implementing the IfH strategy due to the diversity of issues covered.

City Profile: Belfast

The Belfast City Council area is 115km². Approximately 260, 000 of the 1.5 million people living in Northern Ireland live in Belfast, this is approximately 15% of the total Northern Ireland population. Belfast has a higher proportion of young people and elderly people than the rest of Northern Ireland with one fifth of the population under 16 years and one fifth aged 60 and above.





HIA is strongly endorsed in the IfH strategy and Belfast Healthy Cities have pioneered several HIA's in Northern Ireland. The current HIA programme at Belfast Healthy Cities aims to integrate health impact assessment into organisations' planning and decision making processes. In particular, the aim is to integrate HIA into non-health policies, to provide a mechanism for considering health within these.

Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities are also working to design a HIA tool that will assist staff to optimise the health gain that it can obtain from Council Strategies, policies, plans, programmes and projects (proposals). The desktop tool can be used during the design and development of any proposal, by single officers or as a team.

Through the healthy urban planning programme we have played a major role in helping develop with planners and health professionals a greater understanding of how urban planning impacts on health. Belfast Healthy Cities have helped to play a strategic role, by ensuring that attention has remained focused on health issues and as a result has supported policy makers in such areas.

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EU NEWS

EU On-line debate on consumers health

To mark the 10th anniversary of its creation the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) is launching an on-line discussion on European health and consumer policy. A dedicated channel on the Debate Europe forum will be open in all EU official languages from 14 September to 9 October 2009. This debate will provide Europeans with a good opportunity to make their voices heard on health and consumer policy and share their views with others. The conclusions of the online debate will be presented at a special anniversary seminar on 23 October 2009. Go to on-line debate

Overview of health strategy: EU health forum

DG SANCO wishes to renew the membership of the EU Health Forum (formerly EU Health Policy Forum) on the basis of the EU Health Strategy: Together for Health – a Strategic Approach for the EU 2008 – 2013.

Forum member organisations are expected to take part actively in the work of the Forum and should be represented by competent and high-level participants in the meetings.

The overarching goal of the EU Health Forum is to contribute to the development and implementation of actions to protect and improve the health of European citizens.
Read more>>

Commission calls for Smoke Free Europe

The Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation calling on all Member States to bring in laws to protect their citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke by 2012. Tobacco remains the largest single cause of premature death and disease in the European Union.

Read more>>

WHO Regional Committee for Europe

WHO is calling for continued commitment to improving citizens' health by building stronger health systems, despite the current economic downturn. Speaking during the opening of the fifty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, Dr

Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe, encouraged the health sector to focus on its contribution to the development of society (including economic output), rather than its cost.

Publications

Health determinants: Socio-economic determinants of health-health inequalities

A consultation took place from 2 February to 15 April 2009 to collect views on how the European Union could contribute to reducing health inequalities both within and between Member States. The Health and Consumers Directorate-General (DG SANCO) and the Employment, Social policy and Equal Opportunities Directorate-General (DG EMPL) invited stakeholders and organizations working with them on issues related to health inequalities to respond to a consultation document which contained a number of questions. Altogether 148 requests for consultation were sent in.

To read the report please click here>>

Upcoming events

European Health Forum Gastein (30 September - 3 October 2009)

This year's conference will draw attention to the impact of the financial crisis and subsequent economic recession on health and health care. Following the traditional Gastein approach, senior decision makers from policy and administration, business and industry, research and civil society will discuss the impacts of the crisis but also its opportunities for health.

To read more go to <http://www.ehfg.org/home.html>

EU-Level Consultation on Migration Health (24-25 September 2009)

The consultation focuses on four main themes: legal and policy framework, research in migration health, capacity-building for health professionals, and maternal, child and senior care. Go to <http://www.migrant-health-europe.org/>

WHO Regional Committee for Europe

The Regional Committee holds its fifty-ninth annual session in Copenhagen, Denmark on 14–17 September. Health ministers and officials from the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region will discuss issues including pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza and the economic crisis. They will also nominate a new WHO Regional Director for Europe.

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