

**Annual Business and Technical Conference of the WHO
European Healthy Cities Network and Network of European
National Healthy Cities Networks**

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Health and well-being: from an early start in life to healthy ageing

Sharing action, tools and solutions that work for a life-course approach

**Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation
14–16 June 2012**

Original: English

Provisional scope and purpose

This is the fourth Annual Business and Technical Conference of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the Network of European National Healthy Cities Networks in Phase V. The WHO European Network will have about 100 member cities by June 2012. In addition, 30 national healthy cities networks in Europe have more than 1400 cities and towns as members.

The conferences of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the Network of European National Healthy Cities Networks are mainly political and strategic and always include a strong political presence from the participating cities and networks. This year the programme of the St Petersburg Conference will be developed around five thematic strands relating to the Phase V goals and the international context of this work. It will provide technical guidance on how to operationalize the work on the life-course approach from early life to healthy ageing and will explore and share solutions and approaches that work. There will be a special emphasis on making progress on the Phase V core themes from the experiences of cities around the WHO European Region. The themes of the Conference resonate the principles, goals and approaches of the Health 2020 policy framework, which will be submitted for adoption at the WHO Regional Committee for Europe to be held in Malta in September 2012.

- 1. Early life to healthy ageing:** this is the central topic of this year's Conference. Good health throughout the life course contributes to the economic and social development of a society in a variety of ways: healthy children learn better; healthy adults are more productive; and healthy older people continue to contribute actively to society. Investing in early childhood as well as longevity is an important priority for many sectors as well as for health development. Optimizing health and well being in later life requires this investment. Further, active ageing – good health adds life to years is the theme for World Health Day 2012. The European Union has also declared 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.
- 2. Creating resilient and sustainable communities:** giving people and communities control over their lives builds resilience. Resilient communities are capable of responding proactively to new or adverse situations: they prepare for economic, social and environmental change and respond better to crises and hardship, which is essential. Building healthy communities involves engaging citizens; building community assets is central to promoting and protecting health and

well-being and is especially important during this period of austerity. Developing policies and practices that create protective, supportive and health-promoting physical, economic and social environments is vital to creating resilient and sustainable communities. The Conference will learn from experiences across cities and from practical teach-in sessions.

3. Working together across sectors and levels of government and with civil society: groups of actors are increasingly coming together to address key health challenges at the global, national and local levels. Civil society is a vitally important force in advocating for health and equity. However, achieving intersectoral action across sectors and levels of government is challenging and emphasizes the need for achieving a joint contribution with other sectors to overarching societal goals such as prosperity, well-being, equity and sustainability. Healthy cities have significant experience in whole-of-government approaches at the local level. The Conference will present good practice case studies and explore the capacity-building issues for adopting and adapting this approach.

4. Tackling the social determinants and the health divide: are we making progress? This is an overarching area of healthy city action, and in many ways this is where healthy cities should demonstrate the capacity to make a difference and bring added value. It is therefore imperative to closely monitor and document progress and widely share knowledge on what works and how to overcome barriers to change. Accelerating action in this area is a priority for the remaining two years of Phase V. The wealth of experience in promoting joint action to address inequalities and the social determinants of health is a vital constituent in creating opportunities for improving well-being during this period of economic crises.

5. Healthy urban environment and design: the Conference will explore and discuss the latest evidence and practices on creating healthy urban environments that are child and age friendly. Network cities have already demonstrated great enthusiasm and being successful in engaging planners, architects and housing and regeneration professionals in integrating health considerations into their work. This is one of the most popular themes being delivered in Phase V.

The process of moving towards Phase VI (2014–2019) will be initiated in St Petersburg. The International Healthy Cities Conference at the end of Phase V will be held in 2014. This will celebrate 25 years of WHO Healthy Cities in Europe. Health 2020 provides a strong framework for the context of Phase VI. Healthy cities and national networks are key vehicles for delivering Health 2020 and to provide collaborative leadership across levels of government to gain improved health equity and health and well-being outcomes. Within this context, consideration is being given to a smooth transition from Phase V to Phase VI. The Conference will further discuss Phase VI with politicians, coordinators and Conference participants.

Making progress on all Phase V core themes is a permanent feature of the annual conferences. In addition to the special themes of this year's Conference, participants are therefore encouraged to submit case studies on Phase V work, developed knowledge and outcomes.

There will be two business sessions at the start and the end of the Conference. The business agenda will include making progress on Phase V core themes: Phase V evaluation delivering action throughout people's lives on the social determinants of health and inequalities in health. Subnetwork meetings will be held.

Two sessions for politicians are planned, one in plenary and one for politicians only. The programme includes coordinators' meetings, individual meetings with cities and site visits in the second part of the afternoon on the second day of the Conference.

Please remember that this will be the White Nights period in St Petersburg: there is daylight nearly round the clock, offering you great opportunities to see and enjoy this majestic city.

Expected participants

The expected participants will be:

- delegations from the cities participating in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, which will include the mayor or lead politician, the city coordinator and selected focal points identified to work on the conference and Phase V core themes;
- delegations from national healthy cities networks, which will include the political chair of the network, the coordinator, a representative of the health ministry and the regions and one or two observers from member cities;
- invited dignitaries, keynote speakers, resource experts and advisers;
- representatives of the WHO Regions for Health Network;
- representatives from European Region countries currently not involved in the Healthy Cities movement, and
- representatives of the European Commission, UN HABITAT and other international agencies.

About 350–400 people are expected to attend the St Petersburg Conference.