

COMMISSION ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2007 – SEPTEMBER 2009

After having an important meeting with Gdynia, Poland in June 2008, we decided to initiate further work in the commission, through activities in a core group. Gdynia has had the position of co-chair in the commission.

The core group has consisted of Kristiansand, Gdynia, Karlskrona and Tartu. In addition, efforts have been made to involve former active members of the commission. The decision to work intensively in a core group, was taken on the basis of past experiences. It has been very difficult to commit members to activities in the commission.

The core group had a strategy meeting in Växjö in October 2008. Two representatives from Karlskrona, the representatives from Gdynia, Tartu and Kristiansand were present. The chairman of the Commission on Youth Issues was also invited to promote collaboration across commissions. At this meeting, the parties committed themselves to take responsibility for different topics relevant to one of our four work shops during the General Conference in Kristiansand in September 2009.

The participants agreed that the commission should focus its activities around the preparation for this. All agreed that there would not be capacity left for anything beyond this. This is why there has been no systematic work with other aspects of the Action Plan 2008-2009 after this agreement.

Responsibility for planning and implementation of the workshop IV: "To make the Baltic Sea Region a safe and more secure place" was formally conferred on the Commission only after the board meeting held in Växjö. The task has been solved in interaction with the Commission on Education and the Commission on Gender Equality. The Commission on Youth Issues has also been a key partner in the planning of the General Conference.

The commission has, in the autumn of 2008 and spring of 2009, been represented at commission meetings of both the Commission on Gender Equality and the Commission on Youth Issues. This has been related to the planning of the conference and the development of common themes and issues. The cooperation with the other commissions has been fruitful. Areas for future collaboration have also been discussed, as it is believed that networking across the commissions is very important for developing the position of the health and social field in the UBC.

As agreed in Växjö, a meeting was called in Kristiansand in early March 2009. A preliminary program for workshop 4 was to be completed. Just before this meeting, Karlskrona informed that they chose to withdraw their involvement in the commission, due to many other major challenges in the community. At the same time the commission's co-chair Gdynia, announced that they were forced to resign from the position because of heavy workloads and the difficult economic situation. It was not possible to conduct the meeting as planned.

From the critical point in March/April, when it became clear that also the core group was not able to function as a working unit of the commission, it was necessary to seek a stronger cooperation with other commissions to ensure completion of the workshop IV.

This has been the main priority leading up to the General Conference in September. It follows from this that the commission in this situation has not been able to make a decision regarding the revision of the Action Plan 2008-2009.

It is therefore the unrevised version that is present before the meeting in Kristiansand in September. At this meeting it is necessary to discuss how the Commission on Health and Social Affairs can be operated in the future.

The work in the commission has been very challenging. We have learned that it has been difficult to create an interest and binding commitment to the health and social area. Practice has shown that the financial situation and the amount of urgent issues in health and social administration in the member cities, affect their ability to participate and be involved in the commission's work.

Developing relations through direct meetings between people and the systematic development of experience and knowledge is a precondition for the development of fruitful international cooperation in this field.

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