



**BETTER SCHOOLS THROUGH HEALTH:  
the Third European Conference on Health  
Promoting Schools**

15-17 June 2009, Vilnius, Lithuania

VILNIUS RESOLUTION

# **Vilnius resolution: better schools through health**

## **17 June 2009**

### **Introduction**

Education and health have shared interests. Unifying these interests allows schools to become better places to enjoy learning, teaching and working. A 'health promoting school' is a school that implements a structured and systematic plan for the health, well-being and the development of social capital of all pupils and of teaching and non-teaching staff. Health promoting schools have shown evidence of improving the health and well-being of the whole school community. Schools, being part of the surrounding community, are designated as one of the settings to help reduce inequalities in health. Collaboration with other relevant policy areas, for example youth, social and environmental policies and sustainable development is essential.

### **Statement by young people**

We, the young people at the conference, have concluded that there are some problems that we can deal with and others for which we need adult's help.

We emphasize that true health is holistic health, meaning mental and physical balance, clean environment, cooperation with people, good rest and a balanced diet.

We want school leaders, teachers and students to try to create a healthier and better society which should think about the present and the future. We want to have greener school surroundings. We want to cooperate with students from other countries to have more discussions with scientists and politicians about our problems. We want more practical and learning activities on health promotion and consultations by experts in stressful situations.

We think that if we follow the holistic approach, we will be able to deal with our health, including eating disorders, a lack of rest, and make our society or even the country stronger.

We believe that if we lead an active life, help the poor, believe in what we do, cooperate with teachers to make our learning environment better and warmer, that we will then be able to have a healthier and happier life.

We can and must lead a healthy lifestyle ourselves, showing how wonderful it is to be healthy, active and positive. We also must persuade parents to be active and take part in health promoting activities.

### **International, national and regional level**

As a result of the discussion of the conference we, the conference participants, call on governmental, non-governmental and other organisations at international, national and regional level:

1. To adopt and extend the health promoting school approach as part of school development.
2. To guarantee long-term support through international, national and regional policies and strategies, combined with sufficient resources and capacity.
3. To acknowledge that planning, monitoring and evaluating and the involvement of children and young people are all necessary, when implementing a comprehensive health promoting school programme with realistic objectives.
4. To foster continuous professional development for education, health and other staff.
5. To develop and maintain an infrastructure for international, national and regional coordination and communication on and support for health promoting schools.
6. To celebrate and share milestones and successes.

### **School level**

*We urge those within the school community (including pupils, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, management, school boards) to use the support available:*

- 1. To introduce, maintain and further develop the health promoting school approach building this into sustainable school development.*
- 2. To involve the whole school community and partner organisations.*
- 3. To secure sufficient commitment, resources and capacity.*
- 4. To foster continuous professional development for staff.*
- 5. To ensure that children and young people are actively involved in decision making and all stages of programming.*
- 6. To celebrate and share milestones and successes.*

### **Conference background**

*At the first European conference on health promoting schools the main principles for health promotion in schools were outlined (Greece, 1997). Every child and young person has the right to education, health and security. And every child and young person has the right to be educated in a health promoting school.*

*At the second European conference on health promoting schools in Egmond aan Zee, the Netherlands (2002), the importance of partnerships of education with health sectors was emphasised. The Egmond Agenda is a tool to help establish and develop school health promotion across Europe.*

*The third European Conference on health promoting schools: Better schools through health, Vilnius, Lithuania, 15-17 June 2009, aims to make a next step in school health promotion in Europe by common actions across sectors and across borders. During the conference young people play an active role in sharing their ideas and working together on making their school a better place to learn and to work.*

### **School health promotion in Europe**

*The Schools for Health in Europe network - SHE network- has a strong foundation in its precursor- the European Network of Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS)-, founded in 1991 by WHO Euro, the Council of Europe and the European Union, with its experience of developing and sustaining health promoting schools. There are 43 SHE member countries in the European region.*

*The SHE network uses a positive concept of health and well-being and acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe's European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights.*

*The SHE approach to school health promotion is based on five core values and pillars.*

## **SHE core values**

### **Equity**

Health promoting schools ensure equal access for all to the full range of educational and health opportunities. This in the long term makes a significant impact in reducing inequalities in health and in improving the quality and availability of life-long learning.

### **Sustainability**

Health promoting schools acknowledge that health, education and development are closely linked. Schools act as centres of academic learning. They support and develop a responsible and positive view of pupils future role in society.

Health promoting schools develop best when efforts and achievements are implemented in a systematic way for a prolonged period, for at least 5-7 years. Outcomes (both in health and education) mostly occur in the medium or long term.

### **Inclusion**

Health promoting schools celebrate diversity and ensure that schools are communities of learning, where all feel trusted and respected. Good relationships among pupils, between pupils and school staff and between school, parents and the school community are important.

### **Empowerment and action competence**

Health promoting schools enable children and young people, school staff and all members of the school community to be actively involved in setting health-related goals and in taking actions at school and community level, to reach these goals.

### **Democracy**

Health promoting schools are based on democratic values and practise the exercising of rights and taking responsibility.



## **SHE pillars**

### **Whole school approach to health**

There is a coherence between the school's policies and practices in the following areas which is acknowledged and understood by the whole school community. This approach involves:

- a participatory and action-oriented approach to health education in the curriculum;
- taking into account student's own concept of health and well-being;
- developing healthy school policies;
- developing the physical and social environment of the school;
- developing life competencies;
- making effective links with home and the community;
- making efficient use of health services.

### **Participation**

A sense of ownership is fostered by students, staff and parents through participation and meaningful engagement, which is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of health promoting activities in schools.

### **School quality**

Health promoting schools support better teaching and learning processes. Healthy students learn better, healthy staff works better and have a greater job satisfaction. The school's main task is to maximize school outcomes. Health promoting schools support schools in achieving their educational and social goals.

### **Evidence**

School health promotion in Europe is informed by existing and emerging research and evidence focused on effective approaches and practice in school health promotion, both on health topics (e.g. mental health, eating, substance use), and on the whole school approach.

### **Schools and communities**

Health promoting schools engage with the wider community. They endorse collaboration between the school and the community and are active agents in strengthening social capital and health literacy.



Contact: SHE secretariat, [she@nigz.nl](mailto:she@nigz.nl)