



PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIES: A TOOL FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Handbook for Teachers, Researchers, Health Professionals and Decision Makers

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Bibliographische Information Der Deutschen Bibliothek
Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de>
abrufbar.

This publication has been supported by the German Academic Exchange Service
(DAAD) with funds from the Stability Pact, „Academic Programmes for Training
and Research in Public Health in South Eastern Europe" (PH-SEE).

Publisher: Hans Jacobs Publishing Company
Graphic design: Valentin Gheorghe
Cover design: Alma Šimunec-Jović
Printed by: Marca Invest, Bucharest
Number of copies: 400

Copyright 2005 by Hans Jacobs Publishing Company
Hellweg 72, 32791 Lage, Germany

ISBN 3-89918-145-X

Preface

The development of health strategies gained momentum only during the last decade, parallel with the technological advances in indicator-based health monitoring. The build-up of the WHO Health For All Database in Copenhagen and of the EU ECHI System over the last years is serving now as a basis for the analysis of time trends and cross-sectional comparison. This new infrastructure enabled the political decision makers to define meaningfully health targets and to follow-up on progress towards these goals. Public Health Strategies should cover the broad mission, health targets, an action plan and the evaluation. Whereas the action plan and the evaluation rely heavily on the availability of suitable indicators, most of the discussion usually circles around the mission and the targets. It should be well understood that such a debate is crucial: As important as the final formula will be, even more important is the consensus process leading to it. It allows the new ideas and concepts to sink in and to become adopted by all relevant stakeholders. It makes the public aware of some basic common principles and it obliges the executive to perform accordingly.

Especially with regard to South Eastern Europe (SEE) there is an additional aspect to be noted, namely to harmonize the transition of the national health systems from the old state-based structure to an open more cost-effective organization. It is against this background that the book contains as a central part the framework for a public

health strategy for the South Eastern European Region. This approach may complement and support the strife of the countries in South Eastern Europe for accession to the European Union. Furthermore the book contains very relevant contributions on strategy development and implementation as well as a unique collection of case studies from the countries in South Eastern Europe.

This book is not only the first synopsis of its kind in South Eastern Europe, consciously it is written in the format of a teaching book for the new public health curricula introduced in almost all countries in the Region, predominantly in the context of recently established Schools of Public Health e.g. in Belgrade, Sofia or Tirana. The book has been produced by the Public Health Collaboration in South Eastern Europe (PH-SEE), a project of the Stability Pact, funded by Germany since 2000. The authors come from almost all academic and state institutions of Public Health in South Eastern Europe. This constitutes a major step forward towards collaboration and coordination in the Region, however, the implicit heterogeneity also caused considerable problems of mutual understanding and different use of English as a lingua franca for communication.

Finally, as the principle investigators of the PH-SEE project, we have to express our sincerest thanks to the editors and authors for their dedication and patience and an enormous amount of unpaid work, which gave this endeavour a special flavour and unique value. May this cooperative work also serve as an example for a brighter future in a war-torn region and of the re-establishment of cooperation

and peace-building, collegiality and togetherness in the service to the people.

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