

Healthy Cities and Healthy Urban Planning in Europe

This short note is a summary of a brief presentation which aimed to draw participants attention to the work of the Centre for Urban Health, at the European Regional Office of WHO, in Copenhagen.

Healthy Cities Evolution

The Healthy Cities and Urban Governance Programme is run from the WHO Centre for Urban Health. It is the WHO's mechanism for implementing it's Health for all policy at the local level.

Health for all is about ensuring the health, well being and quality of life of all humans, and reflects WHO's definition of the word Health as "not only the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well being".

The Healthy Cities Programme in Europe was established in 1986. Since then it has grown from a handful of cities, to a movement including over 1000 cities in 29 European Countries, and even more globally. The experiences gained and shared through international networking over the last 13 years have been invaluable, both to WHO and to the Cities taking part in the project.

Principles and Elements for action

The Core principles of the healthy cities approach to good urban management are about addressing the determinants of health through:

- Commitment to WHO's policy of Health For All and Local Agenda 21 (this includes a strong emphasis on equity)
- Political commitment to the process and political decision making
- Joint action between sectors
- Active community participation
- Innovation
- Public policy that promotes health

There are 4 Elements for action which form the basis of the Healthy Cities approach – they support the process of change to becoming a healthy city:

A Explicit political commitment at the highest level to the principles and strategies of the healthy cities project	C Commitment to developing a shared vision for the city, with a health plan and work on specific theme areas
B Establishing new organisational structures to manage the process of change in the city	D Investment in formal and informal networking and cooperation at regional, national and international levels

Healthy Urban Planning

One of the key messages of health for all is that health is everybody's business, and that responsibility for health lies within many sectors. There is an important role for urban planners and related professions in addressing health and its determinants.

Healthy urban planning is about creating urban planning policy and practice that promotes health. This means planning for people. The concept is closely linked to the principles of good urban governance.

The recently published book, *Healthy Urban Planning – A WHO guide to planning for people*, is co-authored by Hugh Barton, University of the West of England, and Catherine Tsourou, Architect and Urban Planner, Padova, Italy. It examines the links between health and urban planning, provides a comprehensive introduction to the concept of healthy urban planning, gives practical ideas for policy and practice at city wide, neighbourhood and individual project level, and includes case studies from cities in North, South, East and Western Europe.

The book can be obtained from E&FN Spon, at www.sponpress.com

Healthy Urban Planning provides the starting point for a new "City Action Group" which is being launched this year to develop work in this area. The group is led and sponsored by the City of Milan, and members include senior urban planners from 12- 15 cities across Europe, as well as research colleagues from University of the West of England, and Politecnico di Milano.

The first meeting of the group will take place in June 2001. The aim is for cities to act as a testing ground for implementing healthy urban planning policies, and to draw on their experience in taking forward a European agenda for Healthy Urban Planning.

It is also important to stimulate a wider dialogue on this subject, among researchers, national associations of urban planners, and national governments, as well as in cities. If you would like to find out more about this work as it progresses, the Healthy Cities web site contains further information on healthy urban planning and our related work on transport and health: www.who.dk/healthy-cities/

This website also explains in further detail the different Healthy Cities Networks which exist in Europe, and contains a number of documents and publications to download.