



Better Schools Through Health: the Third European Conference on Health Promoting Schools

Conference newsletter

15-17 June 2009, Vilnius, Lithuania



Welcome speeches for the 2009 conference were given by the leading officials from the Lithuanian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education as well as welcoming addresses of representatives from the World Health Organization, Regional Bureau for Europe, Vivian Barnekow, Council of Europe, Susie Morgan, and Goof Buijs, Manager of the SHE network.

Some conference statistics:

Participants

- The conference hosts approximately 300 participants
- 11 young people from abroad
- 16 young people from Lithuania
- 5 student volunteers

Presentations

Day 1

- 1 plenary session
- 2 symposiums
- 10 oral sessions
- 40 papers

Day 2

- 2 plenary sessions
- 1 symposium
- 5 oral sessions
- 24 papers

Conference Resolution

We received 25 written comments on the draft resolution

Conference issues

The papers presented on the first day of the conference elicited discussions centered on the following points among others:

- The role of the curriculum
- Challenges to the topic based approach
- Necessity for adding new dimensions to the main pillars and core values
- Ways of improving health services
- The relationship between socio-economic factors and potentialities of health promoting school
- The meaning of equality and equity within different socio-economic contexts
- The relationship between financial social, and cultural capital
- Cognitive way of learning vs. action based approach

The points raised serve as a good starting point for a multilevel analysis of the meanings attached to these concepts and the ways they constellate in local contexts as well as within crosscultural comparative framework.



Sharing perspectives

Participants of the conference were asked to share their views on certain topics and general objectives as well as expected outcomes of the conference

Question: One of the key objectives of the conference is to strengthen knowledge and encourage discussion among politicians, practitioners, researchers, non-governmental organizations, and youth organizations across Europe to facilitate actions for the development of sustainable health investments among children and school people in the school setting.

"The conference is achieving that objective. People are telling stories, hearing controversial issues. There are some debates."

Question: Will the conference contribute to creating effecting strategies and policies on school health promotion in Europe?

"It will definitely enhance developments in this direction."

Question: How can SHE co-ordinators use and disseminate the conference deliverables?

"Releasing a case study book and conference report is just one of the possibilities. Throughout the conference we have a great support in doing this. Hopefully the coordinators will disseminate a good practice book."

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Cyber Café

E-box

You can express all ideas, suggestions, impressions and comments about conference. All information to the E-box should be send by email to cyber.conference2009@gmail.com

The weather today



Thursday morning there will be some showers. The sun should come throught in the afternoon with temperatures around 18 degrees C.

Better Schools Through Health



Courtesy of the Spanish group

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Question: Since mental health is ranked among the most important focal points of the conference, one of the expected outcomes of the conference will be focusing on the promotion of mental health in the school setting. This is related to clarifying links between school health promotion and sustainable development, drawing specific attention to mental health. Do you think this the conference is reaching this objective?

"I think, yes. Mental health has been among the priority foci in most presentations. This topic does not always come to the surface, but most often it is the underlying theme."

Personal impressions

"A lot of richness, informal discussions on the bus, over meal. Socially the conference is well-organized and there is a lot of opportunity for informal discussion. This serves as an illustration of the importance of setting. Conference setting is as important as school setting."

"There is a lot of awareness and new knowledge. I liked the presentation stressing the commonality of mental health not only for students but also for the staff."

"You get an impression that the whole school approach is still developing. A lot of people show their positive experiences how it works. And this is stimulating. When you get back home, you have a feeling, it is worth working on it, and this gives you power and energy. The conference helps to build and strengthen a network of people working on it and to form a kind of community geared towards building sustainability."

"Health is above wealth"
Kazakh saying

Students representing their countries and Quotes from students' poster sessions



In both poster sessions and young people's seminar, students demonstrated their ability to carry out impressive projects that serve the aims of school health promotion. They also showed their potential to work towards a shared goal which, in its broadest sense, is healthier/better school for a better/healthier world.



Portugal: "While exercising you improve your relations with others."

Lithuania: "Central in our poster is a wind mill because we build our ideas of school health promotion on the cultural heritage of our ancestors."



Spain: "The following are the main characteristics of a health promoting school: emotional and mental health, mediation and conflict resolution, new students' tutelage and protection."



The Netherlands: "A school is health promoting when students can go to their teachers to seek help for their problems."



The lost and found poster of the Netherlands group

Courtesy of the Netherlands group