

FINLAND

HEALTHY CITIES PROGRAMME IN TURKU

The Healthy Cities initiative involves various activities and projects, dealing with administration and the active participation of both city inhabitants and voluntary organisations. People are encouraged to exert their influence and act on issues they feel are important.

The Healthy Cities project was an international programme launched by WHO to promote healthy life in cities. The central principles were presented in the Health 21 and Local Agenda 21. Turku City, with a population of 173,000 is located in southwest Finland, by the Baltic Sea. It joined the Healthy Cities initiative in 1987. Since 1998, the project was placed in the Central Bureau, under the Deputy Mayor to gain in status and ensure the involvement of all administrative sectors of the city.

In Turku, the Healthy Cities initiative was a holistic approach to health and well-being as an integral part of the city's overall strategy. The organisation of the project included an intersectoral steering committee, a project co-ordinator and the maintenance of a Healthy City project office in the Health Care Administration, offering expertise in nutrition, physical activity and dealing with drugs, alcohol and tobacco. The Office's Information centre served professionals and citizens.

The primary goal of Healthy Cities in Turku, between 1998 and 2002 is to emphasise the administrative sectors' genuine commitment to health and well-being. Turku is a member of the Healthy Cities project networks, including those of Europe, the Finnish national communities, Active Living (promoting physical activity), and the Baltic Sea.



In a project under the title District Partnerships, a proactive culture has been formed between the residents, the authorities and the elected officials. On a local level, district partnerships gathered together various bodies and formed district workgroups. Membership is voluntary and the groups continuously develop activities that promote both district and citywide co-operation. The district workgroups meet regularly, about once a month. District workers are at the heart of a regional web, with their work place situated centrally during regular reception hours. They discuss residents' issues in the workgroups and provide assistance in many ways because they know their region very well.

The work of Healthy Cities is undertaken in various ways. The MOTION 2000 project (also known by the slogan 'Turku on the Move') has been realised over the period 1994-2000 to inspire people of various ages to engage in suitable physical and leisure activities, leading to improved health. Similarly, sustainable development is one of the most important targets in the city's well-being plan. In addition, a multi-sectoral management group produced a report in 2000 on the living conditions of children and young people, the services offered to them and the method used for producing and allocating resources. Another example was the introduction of a city-specific drug-strategy, to increase co-operation between various authorities and improve the flow of information.

GIS-based maps were used to present the well-being of the inhabitants in various parts of the city, including high unemployment figures and an alarming incidence of cardiovascular disease deaths among men. There are now 13 cities and municipalities that belong to the Finnish Healthy Cities network coordinated by Stakes, a research institute in the Ministry of Social and Welfare.



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