

# Meisaari-Polsa, Tuija

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## Public Health in Regional Development Planning in the Stockholm Region

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# PUBLIC HEALTH IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN THE STOCKHOLM REGION

Tuija Meisaari-Polsa

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## ABSTRACT

A growing interest in public health and development planning is well visible in Sweden, and therefore, also reflected in both regional and municipal plans. There are, however, only few concrete examples of such integration up to now in Sweden and other countries. The aim of this article is to describe how public health issues are addressed in planning in the Stockholm region. What kind of methods has been used and what experiences have been gained from integration of health related issues in the planning of the region.

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A growing interest in public health and development planning is noticeable in Sweden and, therefore, also reflected in both regional and municipal plans. There are, however, only few concrete examples of such integration up to now in Sweden and other countries.

The aim of this article is to describe how public health issues are addressed in planning in the Stockholm region. What kind of methods has been used and what experiences have been gained from integration of healthy issues in planning of the region.

### **Stockholm County Council and public health**

The mandate of the Stockholm County Council is to ensure that its residents have access to health care and public transportation. Another important element of the County Council's responsibilities is regional planning, which is carried out of the Office of Regional Planning.

During the latest years, public health is increasingly a matter for the whole County Council and not only for public health care. This horizontal and all-including approach is demonstrated by the Stockholm County Council's public health policy for 2008–2010 as well as by its plan of action for public health.

The County Council policy is based on eleven national goals for public health but adjusted to the responsibilities of the Stockholm County Council. According to the County Council policy, every department should have its own plan of action, integrate public health perspective in development processes, follow up, and claim for a health perspective on cooperation with partners and subcontractors.

The County Council plan of action includes 25 different actions to be carried out before the end of 2010. One of them is the responsibility of the Office of Regional Planning (formerly

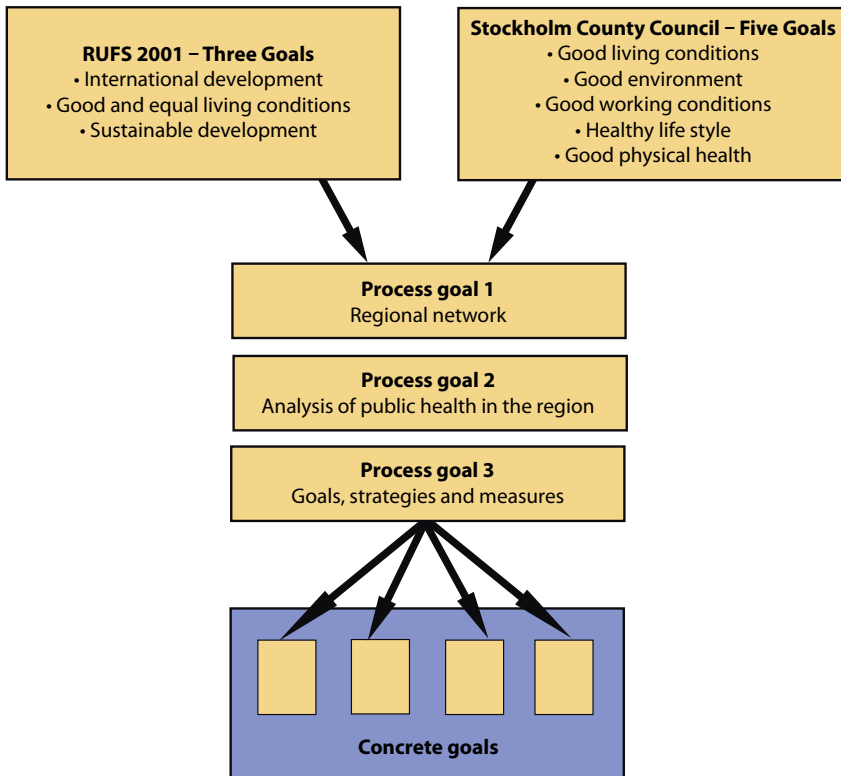
Office of Regional Planning and Urban Transportation), namely development of methods for health impact assessment (HIA) for the whole County Council.

**Plan of action of the Office of Regional Planning**

With a view to solving different health problems, there have always been some aspects of public health included in earlier sex regional plans for the Stockholm Region, but to a varying degree and not systematically. However, according to the actuality review of the latest regional development plan for the Stockholm region, RUF5 2001, more public health and determinants of health should be included in the future regional planning.

The most important starting points for the integration of public health in the latest regional development plan for the Stockholm region, RUF5 2010, are not only the national goals for public health, Stockholm County Council’s public health policy and plan of action for public health mentioned above, but also the office’s own plan of action for public health.

**Fig. 1 The Action Plan of the Office of Regional Planning and Urban Transportation 2006**



Source: *Folkhälsa i regional utvecklingsplanering* (Public health in regional development planning), RTK, Report 2:2008.

## Regional network

For the purpose of systematic integration of public health issues in regional planning, the regional network has been established and is administered by Karolinska Institutet School of Public Health (formerly the Centre for Public Health, Stockholm County Council). Cooperation between the Office of Regional Planning and public health professionals in other parts of the County Council, such as the Centre, has been carried out more or less during several years. Even other regional players take part in this cooperation.

## Analysis of public health in planning

As a basis for the work of the Office of Regional Planning in the field of public health, different analyses have been carried out and several reports have been published. For instance, analyses in "Folkhälsa i regional utvecklingsplanering" (Public health in Regional Development Planning, RTK Report 2:2008) was conducted using interviews, document studies, relevance analyses and workshops.

The aim of this report was to describe methods for and experiences gained from integration between public health work and regional development planning. The assignment included reviewing how public health issues are currently addressed in planning in Sweden and in some other European metropolitan areas. Part of the task was a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of different methods, such as Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Health analysis within the framework of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA),<sup>1</sup> Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), Best Practice Guide, and indicators.

One of the conclusions of the study was that there is no accepted methodology for integration of public health issues with regional development planning. In many cases, the players are still looking for suitable forms of cooperation and methods. Health impact assessment is currently the soundest method, but only few assessments have been conducted in Sweden so far.

According to the report, success factors for good interaction between public health and planning include:

1. Politically validated goals.
2. Considerable commitment from management level, both among planners and health professionals.
3. Meeting places for both professions.
4. People who can act as bridge-builders between the two spheres.
5. A strong citizens' perspective.

Finally, based on the results of the report, a number of recommendations were given for the future work of the Office of Regional Planning and for the further work of other players on public health issues in regional development planning. The most important recommendations were to establish goals, clarify the cooperation between players

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<sup>1</sup> Note that, 75 per cent of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) do not address human health or deal with it effectively.

in the public health and planning issues, decide how to assess the health impact of the plans, and produce a best practice guide for the Stockholm Region. These recommendations have been taken into account during discussions of goals and concrete methods for integration of public health in regional planning.

### **Goals, strategies and measures**

#### *Goals*

The main goal of the integration of public health in regional planning is dual and consists of providing opportunities for good public health by regional development planning and of assessing the impact of planning on health of the population in the region. The County Council action plan for public health stipulates that concrete goals for public health in regional planning must be drawn up in conjunction with the compiled RUFSS 2010. The three concrete goals for integration of public health in the regional planning in the Stockholm region are:

- Organized and systematic cooperation with the Karolinska Institutet School of Public Health.
- Development of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for the whole County Council.
- Systematic integration of public health issues in regional planning.

### **Cooperation with the Karolinska Institutet School of Public Health**

Like in many other countries, there is a division between town planners and the health profession in Sweden. However, representatives of health and planning issues need to meet and work on an ongoing basis.

Cooperation between the Office of Regional Planning and public health professionals, especially with the former Centre for Public Health (to-day *the Karolinska Institutet School of Public Health*), is manifold and has already been carried out during several years. Some examples of their participation in regional planning in the Stockholm region are their participation in different planning teams, developing of a method for health impact assessment, and drawing up and testing health impact assessment of RUFSS 2010.

### **Development of health impact assessment**

According to the County Council plan of action, development of health impact assessment (HIA)<sup>2</sup> for the whole County Council is the responsibility of the Office of Regional Planning and should be developed while drawing up the new regional plan, RUFSS 2010. Therefore, one concrete goal in the office's plan of action is to develop the HIA method, which should be applicable not only in regional planning but also for other strategic decisions in the Stockholm County Council.

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<sup>2</sup> WHO definition: HIA is „a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population“.

An adjusted method for the purposes of the County Council and the Office of Regional Planning is in progress and is based on cooperation between planning and health professionals in a regional network, a working group and some workshops. This cooperation and development of the method are described in two process reports and has also resulted in a HIA checklist. These reports may be seen as an embryo of a best practice guide, which was one of the recommendations in "Folkhälsa i regional utvecklingsplanering". In addition, health profession has been involved in testing of the method. See below.

### **Systematic integration of public health in regional planning**

Finally, the office has decided how to assess the health impact of the plans. The action plan of the Office of Regional Planning includes proposals for a pilot project concerning a health impact assessment (HIA) of some parts of the RUFs 2010 process. The purposes of this pilot study were to develop HIA method and to test it, and also, to integrate public health in RUFs 2010.

Health impact assessment of "the test version" of RUFs 2010 was heavily based on bringing together the health and planning professionals, that is, between the Office of Regional Planning and the Centre for Public Health and participants from other relevant authorities. For a pilot study only the three most relevant of the national goals were included in the HIA, and only three RUFs 2010 strategies.<sup>3</sup> The special focus of the study was children and youth, older people, socially vulnerable people, disabled people, and gender perspective. Besides the two process reports and the checklist, the pilot study resulted in better understanding of the method, and more public health issues in RUFs 2010,

### **What happens now?**

Experience gained from this work is of utmost importance for regional planning in the future. Importance of organized cooperation and integration of public health issues in the whole process of regional planning are stressed as well as a necessity to adjust the method for the purposes of the County Council.

Consequently, cooperation with Karolinska Institutet School of Public Health and other authorities in the Stockholm region continues. The HIA method will be developed further more and adjusted to the needs of the office and the County Council. Finally, the adjusted HIA method will be disseminated to other parts of County Council.

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<sup>3</sup> Three of national goals included in the HIA are participation and influence in the society, economic and social security, and more physical activities. Selected three RUFs 2010 strategies are increase strategic sustainable capacity and quality, strengthen cohesion, and open opportunities for all.

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**STRESZCZENIE**

W Szwecji istnieje duże zainteresowanie zdrowiem publicznym i powszechną praktyką jest włączanie tej tematyki do planowania rozwoju. Kwestie zdrowia publicznego obecne są więc w planach regionalnych i lokalnych. Problemem jest jednak zintegrowane podejście, w którym sprawy zdrowotne wpisywane są w różne polityki, wynikające z przyjętych strategii rozwoju. Celem tego artykułu jest przedstawienie, w jaki sposób kwestie związane ze zdrowiem publicznym traktowane są w podejściach i procedurach planistycznych w regionie Sztokholmu. Jakie metody stosowane były do tej pory i jakie są doświadczenia regionu z integrowaniem problemów zdrowia z innymi zagadnieniami tematycznymi, które są przedmiotem planowania.

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