



## THE EGMOND AGENDA

*A new tool to help establish and develop health promotion in schools and related sectors across Europe*



**EUROPEAN  
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“The Health Promoting School improves young people’s abilities to take action and generate change. It provides a setting, within which they can gain a sense of achievement, working together with teachers and others. Young people’s empowerment, linked to their visions and ideas, enables them to influence their lives and living conditions.” (WHO, 1997)

## PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

The first European Conference on Health Promoting Schools was held in Greece in 1997. It proclaimed that health promoting schools (**HPS**) are an investment in health, education and in democracy.

The outcome of that Conference was a set of principles. They defined the values and purposes of **HPS**, and set out methods that could be used to establish those principles in practice.

## THE CORE PRINCIPLES

- Partnership
- Equity and access
- Empowerment and action competence
- Health knowledge and understanding
- Safe and supportive environments
- Health promoting teaching and learning methodologies
- Curriculum based health promotion
- Democratic practices and participation
- Involvement of stakeholders, communities and parents
- Evaluation for building on success

## EVIDENCE

Many partners in European countries have worked to introduce, strengthen and sustain distinctive **HPS** approaches. Evidence is now available to show:

- how successful and sustainable **HPS** approaches are built

- how they might be supported by policies that establish the process within health and education sectors

## **THE EGMOND AGENDA**

A Conference was held in 2002 to consider progress made and to take the **HPS** process forward. It took place at Egmond-an-Zee in the Netherlands. It included participants from 43 European countries – and representatives from many of their national ministries. As one result, this tool embodies the best evidence and practical steps understood as essential in building successful **HPS** programmes.

It is clear that the most successful outcomes arise from programmes developed through collaboration between health and education sectors.

There are three main components to this Agenda:

- **CONDITIONS**
- **PROGRAMMING**
- **EVALUATION**

Each component is essential to develop and sustain health promoting schools. There is no priority order for their implementation, but some may be seen as important early steps.

## **CONDITIONS**

### **ONE: SITUATION ANALYSIS**

It is important to carry out a national analysis of the situation concerning the status of **HPS** development. This analysis should look at needs and available resources, current practices and methods for data collection. Such information can be collected through assessments of:

- knowledge, attitudes, skills, competencies, behaviour and health status of young people
- the contributions of health and education sectors to health promotion
- involvement of other agencies and related sectors
- financial resources needed
- available experience of other countries

- the “functional health” status of schools as organizations

## **TWO: PARTNERSHIP**

For an **HPS** initiative to achieve lasting success, partnership must operate in a fair and transparent way at several levels.

The experience in Europe has shown that HPS initiatives are most effective when true partnership is practiced within and between all players in the process. This should include ministries, their institutions, pupils, teachers, NGOs, stakeholders and interested parties in relevant communities.

At national level the two most influential partners are generally the Ministries of Health and Education. For example, effective partnership has been demonstrated when partners agree which agency should lead a programme depending on national circumstances. Alternatively, a consensus based collaborative model may prove more appropriate.

It is important to achieve clarity about mutual objectives and ensure that resources are dispersed fairly. Partners need to agree on the advantages that they bring to a programme, and recognize where additional expertise is needed, so some flexibility is helpful in setting agendas. This will help to instil an authentic sense of ownership, which will add to sustainability.

## **THREE: ADVOCACY**

Introducing and adopting the **HPS** approach is best understood as a process. The framework of a **Health Promoting School** enables effective, comprehensive programmes of health promotion and education to be established. Moreover, there is evidence that programmes on specific health topics offered by other agencies can be more effectively introduced in an **HPS** framework.

But that evidence alone may not be enough. Policy-makers need a range of good reasons to support **HPS** approaches. Decision-makers need to be convinced that investing in **HPS** programmes is worthwhile – and contributes to policy objectives in related sectors. Furthermore, the process should be sustainable so as to withstand

political, economic and social change. Broad based advocacy is necessary to achieve this.

Stakeholders from health, education and other sectors involved or in supporting or delivering **HPS** programmes need to be involved in the advocacy process, being instrumental in advocating for investment in **HPS** programmes.

#### **FOUR: THEORETICAL BASE**

A sound theoretical base is essential for implementation of a national **HPS** approach. Effective programmes are based upon a theory of building comprehensive health promotion approaches. Such approaches address factors that provide protection from risk as well as those that cause risks to health.

The approach is implemented through health and education programmes that

- **Create** safe and supportive environments
- **Establish** a health education curriculum
- **Foster** relationships with families and communities
- **Prepare** young people to cope with demands of everyday life

This implies an understanding that change and development are integral tools of the process. There are political implications related to the process such as conflicting policy areas and priorities, resource allocation, theoretical and philosophical direction.

## **PROGRAMMING**

#### **FIVE: PROGRAMME CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES**

Policy development should result in long-term national objective setting and action programming for school health. Key elements of a national action programme for school health are:

- **information exchange** on activities and initiatives;
- **linking** with current national policy development in education and health (life skills, competence development, effective schools, safe schools, child friendly schools, health targets

and priority setting, participation, action-oriented teaching and learning)

- **advocacy**
- **networking**
- **initiatives** to improve the quality of **HPS** programmes, to foster health and support quality education, and to create positive school cultures and environments.

## **SIX: LONG TERM PLANNING**

Evidence shows that the development period of a national **HPS** programme can be from three to eight years. This, therefore, requires long term planning and sustainable political commitment. It is recommended to develop a national action programme within a planning cycle of three to five years, when objectives and outcomes can be assessed and, if necessary, redefined.

A national structure combined with a regional / local structure for health promoting schools has been found to be most effective. This provides support to schools, creates synergies, enables management and coordination, and helps innovation and implementation of programmes.

Effective collaboration between Ministries of Health and Education is critical to success. This process enables integrated use of resources, shared financial and political support, and the engagement of agencies and institutes from both sectors in joint initiatives.

## **SEVEN: TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

An **HPS** programme introduces concepts and methodologies that may be unfamiliar to officials in health and education ministries and other actors such as teachers. Successful **HPS** initiatives have developed extensive education programmes for teachers, trainers and health workers.

Building the capacity of personnel and providing opportunities for professional development has been shown to be an effective strategy in **HPS** policy. It has shown tangible benefits for learning, skills development and social capital.

This should apply to all involved, but particularly to teacher training before and during service, and should include accredited courses that include the broader public health themes underpinning health promoting schools.

This vital component requires investment and strengthened links between relevant institutes to ensure effective course design, evaluation and development of the evidence base.

## EVALUATION

### EIGHT: EVALUATE

Monitoring and evaluation are essential parts of a national action programme for health promoting schools. Evaluation that accompanies theoretically based programmes and provides evidence of effectiveness has been seen to influence success in developing sustainable school health policy. Good evaluation, which includes both process and outcome evaluation, has been seen to aid the progress of action plans in becoming nationally implemented programmes.

Embedding the values of ethical, evidence-based research is consistent with overall **HPS** approaches and offers learning and related benefits within school communities.

A school is, of course, fundamentally a place of learning. But it is also a unique social and cultural meeting place for people from many backgrounds. A **Health Promoting School** embodies practical and conceptual links between education, health and participatory values. It relies on input, experiences and decisions at local levels, yet learns from and contributes to wider goals, objectives and developments.

There will always be new challenges to be faced. An **HPS** programme can never be complete, or stop learning from others. The policy cycle: - “*design – implement – monitor – evaluate*” is crucial to sustainable success.

Therefore it is planned that the Action Points related to the **Egmond Agenda** will be developed, offering a practical tool,

guide, encouragement – and perhaps even inspiration - for existing or potential participants and policy makers, wherever they feature in that cycle.

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