

HEPROGRESS' full project name: Reducing health related social and gender inequalities and barriers to social and economic participation. Evidence based local policies, interventions and empowerment planning.

Background:

Europe is faced with changes in its population structure with an increasing proportion of elderly people. In addition, many countries, including Latvia, are hard hit by the financial crisis. This forces municipalities and regions in Europe to think of their health policies along different lines. To solve Europe's health problems, it is important that the focus on treating sick people is supplemented with preventive work and health promotion to keep people out of the treatment systems as long as possible. To achieve effective public health work, it is important to have regular and good health surveys visualising where efforts should be made and how the development of the public health over time can be followed.

The Heprogress project is a follow-up of the international HEPRO (2005 – 2008) project, where Østfold County Council was project manager. Among other things, the project developed a concept which made it possible to carry out public health surveys across borders. At the time, about 34,000 Europeans in 6 different countries participated.

Heprogress will repeat – and further develop – the survey. It will probably take place in the autumn of 2011 and about 20,000 people in Østfold will participate. In parallel, the survey will include inhabitants in 7 Latvian municipalities. Whereas the survey in Norway is distributed through the postal system, the collection of data in Latvia will be performed by interviewing people face to face.

The goals of the project:

1. Analysing the existing, and collecting new, documentation about barriers which reduce community participation and contribute to social health differences and health differences between the sexes.
2. Carrying out a population survey which makes it possible to target public health initiatives where they are most needed.
3. Exchanging experiences between the partners to find out what political initiatives are most effective to reduce social health differences.
4. Supporting a cross sectorial public health policy and public health initiatives aiming at improving environments with an effect on work and everyday life, including living habits and protective factors in the local environments.
5. Mobilising the population among some of the partners to follow up the results of the survey with the purpose of improving conditions that should be bettered and taking care of

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existing qualities.

6. Building competence to level social health differences and health differences between the sexes and partners.

7. Building competence relating to public health, community planning and social health differences at Østfold University College and the University of Latvia, which can later be implemented in their study programme

Time frame: December 2010 – December 2012.

Budget: The project has a cost framework of NOK5.2 million. The EU Progress programme contributes with about NOK4 million of this amount.

Participants: Østfold County Council (project manager), Østfoldhelse, Moss municipality, Hobøl municipality, Østfold University College, Volda University College, University of Latvia, Amata municipality, Vidzeme Planning Region in Latvia and The WHO Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association in Turku.

The project addresses the following issues:

- Social gap in poor health,
- Social exclusion and lack of participation and political influence
- Lack of occupational and economic sustainability
- Healthy aging process
- Social and gender inequalities in a life course perspective

The project has 4 main components

1. Documentation

a. A questionnaire survey to collect data on health related social inequality in health, health related participation and social exclusion, determinants of healthy aging and health inequalities

b. Inventory and analyses of existing governmental policies, structures, interventions and measures for tackling inequalities in health, primarily on regional and local levels

2. Interventions

a. Development of a catalogue of and consensus building around interventions and policies to

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tackle inequalities in health in the areas of focus

b. Development of capacities and training of empowerment planning and communicative planning

3.00 0 Dissemination of information and results from the project

4.00 0 Coordination, evaluation and reporting.

Østfold County Council has received a grant from The European Union's Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013)*. The overall aim of the programme is to support national and regional authorities to strengthen policies addressing health inequalities. Specific aims of the programme are:

- To improve knowledge of health inequalities, including its extent and determinants
- To develop and plan strategies to tackle or reduce health inequalities including building capacity, such as developing structures for stakeholders involvement at EU level
- To monitor the implementation of such strategies
- To assess and evaluate such strategies

The call for proposal has highlighted the following themes as priority subjects:

- Raising public awareness, stimulate debate, promote information, best practice exchange and policy coordination
- Improving data availability and mechanisms to measure, monitor and report on inequalities in health across EU. Improving knowledge base of health inequalities and relevant actions
- Developing policies/strategies address health inequalities and/or evaluating/assessing policies
- Added EU value

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- Gender issues should be addressed and special needs of Disabled people

Download brochure about the project here ([English](#) / [Latvian](#))