The Norwegian Public Health Act
And a new initiative on well-being and drug prevention

Tallinn, 24 May 2017
Outline

1. The Norwegian Public Health Act - background and main content
2. Regional and local level obligations
3. Status of implementation and benefits of the Act
4. A new initiative from the Norwegian government on well-being and drug prevention
The Norwegian Public Health Act - background and main content
The Norwegian health management

Ministry of Health and Care Services

Institute of Public Health

Directorate of Health

Board of Health Supervision

County governor

Counties (19)

Municipalities (429)
Why a new Public Health Act in 2011?

• Window of opportunity: The *health reform of 2012*

• The existing legislation had not worked out as intended, i.e.
  – From 1984 the municipalities public health work was rooted in the Municipal Health Care Act
  – Responsibility only given to the health sector, not to other sectors
  – Central health authorities had no obligations to support the municipalities

• New challenges in public health

• New methods of public health operations developed in municipalities and counties
Documents introduced in 2011 - drafts
- new Public Health Act
- revised Municipal Health Care Act
- National Health and Care Services Plan (2011-2015)
Ensuring population approach

Public health perspective

Public health work: Effort towards factors that affect incidence in population

Health care/service perspective

Health services and care reform: Strengthen early intervention towards risk groups, prevention and people centered care

Public health act

Health and social care act
The purpose of the act

- to contribute to societal development that promotes public health and reduces social inequalities in health. Public health work shall promote the population's health, well-being and good social and environmental conditions, and contribute to the prevention of mental and somatic illnesses, disorders or injuries.

- ensure that municipalities, county authorities and central government health authorities implement measures and coordinate their activities in the area of public health in a proper and sufficient manner. The Act shall facilitate long-term, systematic public health work.
The PHA - characteristics

- Responsibilities at the local (municipality), regional (county) and national (state) levels are specified.

- The local and regional levels are key stakeholders, but with a clear responsibility for the national level to support them.

- The responsibility for public health work has been moved from the Health Service sector to the Municipality itself.
Principles of public health

1. **Health equity**: Health inequities arise from the societal conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – the social determinants of health. Social inequities in health form a pattern of a gradient throughout society. Levelling up the gradient by action on the social determinants of health is a core public health objective. A fair distribution of societal resources is good public health policy.

2. **Health in all policies**: Equitable health systems are important to public health, but health inequities arise from societal factors beyond health care. Impact on health must be considered when policies and action are developed and implemented in all sectors. Joined up governance and intersectoral action is key to reduce health inequities.
Principles of public health cont.

3. **Sustainable development**: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Public health work need to be based on a long term perspective.

4. **Precautionary principle**: If an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is harmful, cannot justify postponed action to prevent such harm.

5. **Participation**: Public health work is about transparent, inclusive processes with participation by multiple stakeholders. Promotion of participation of civil society is key to good public health policy development.
Definitions

Public health:
The state and distribution of health in a population

Public health work:
Society's efforts to influence factors that directly or indirectly promote the health and well-being of the population; prevent mental and somatic illnesses, disorders or injuries; or that protect against health threats; as well as efforts seeking a more equal distribution of factors that directly or indirectly affect health.
The Public Health Act: Empowering communities

**Objective:** Societal development in order to promote public health and reduce health inequalities
The content of the PHA

- Chapter 1: Introductory provisions
- Chapter 2: Municipality’s responsibility
- Chapter 3: Environmental health
- Chapter 4: County authority’s responsibility
- Chapter 5: Central government authoritis´ responsibility
- Chapter 6: Cooperation, emergency preparedness, internal control, supervision etc.
Regional and local level obligations
Municipality's responsibility

• Promote the population's health and well-being, and good social and environmental conditions
• Promote health within the duties and means that are assigned to the municipality, including local development and planning, administration and the provision of services
• Contribute to ensuring that health considerations are safeguarded by other authorities and entities
Systematic public health work

• Municipalities/counties are to have an **overview** of the health status of their population and the determinants of health
• Municipalities/counties shall **define their public health challenges**
• The defined public health challenges shall be **included in the planning strategy** (according to the Planning and Building Act) and the municipality shall **define overall goals and strategies** for public health to meet the challenges
• The municipality shall **implement measures** to meet the public health challenges
Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991
Implementation support

Monitor implementation:
- Baseline
- Indicators in reporting system (Kostra)

Capacity and competence:
- Seminars/courses
- Networking
- Collaboration with universities/colleges

Guidance: «health in planning»

Overview of public health and health determinants

Evaluation

Implementation of measures

Strategic societal planning: overall goals and strategies

Policy and action plans

Monitor implementation:
- Baseline
- Indicators in reporting system (Kostra)

Data support and guidance:
Status of implementation (a few examples) and benefits of the new Act
**Overview of the population’s health and determinants of health (municipalities)**

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<th>2014</th>
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<td>18 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>71 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In process</td>
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<tr>
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## Public health coordinator (municipalities)

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<tbody>
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<td>74 %</td>
<td>85 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have</td>
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<td>24 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
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<tr>
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# Resources on public health work

Increase over the past five years

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<th>Less</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>A good deal more</th>
<th>Substantially more</th>
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</thead>
</table>

![Graph showing increase over the past five years](image-url)
Benefits – key messages

• Responsibility given to whole of the municipality

• The municipalities make decisions about the public health work - the central health authorities are responsible for supporting

• Stronger link between public health work and municipality planning (The Public Health Act and the Planning and Building Act)
A new initiative on well-being and drug prevention
Attention to well-being and drug prevention (I)

• Mental health illness is one of the major health- and social challenges in Norway
• Promoting the populations well-being is part of the municipalities responsibility for public health, cf. The public health act
• From the political platform for the government: «The Government will incorporate mental health into public health activities on an equal footing with other components of public health»
• Public health white papers (2013 and 2015): Chapters about mental health
• What are effective measures?
Attention to well-being and drug prevention (II)

• There has been a significant increase in alcohol sales in Norway over the past years
• The greatest increase is among adults
• Young people drink less, but still many young people drink alcohol
• If alcohol consumption in a population increases, we assume that the amount of risky drinking occasions and the number of high-risk drinkers also increases, and consequently that the amount of alcohol-related harms also increases
• What are effective measures?
Measures do not always meet the greatest challenges
Program for public health work in the municipalities (I)

• A ten-year commitment (2017-2027)
• Objectives:
  – Develop the municipalities efforts to promote health and well-being of the population
  – Strengthen the municipalities' long-term and systematic public health work
  – Integrate mental health as part of local public health work and promote local drug prevention work
  – Knowledge-based development and dissemination of measures that strengthen children's and young people's coping and use of their own resources
Program for public health work in the municipalities (II)

Program elements:
1. Knowledge-based development of measures
   (Grants from the Norwegian Directorate of Health to municipalities, via counties)
2. Expert support and dissemination of experience across municipalities and counties
3. Develop and implement data (overview of public health and health determinants)
4. Strengthened cooperation between actors
5. Coordination of government policies and instruments aimed at municipalities
Thank you!

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