

Nordiska högskolan för folkhälsovetenskap, NHV Göteborg

The Nordic School of Public Health NHV, Gothenburg

19th May, 2011/AF

Gard Titlestad
Head of Department
The Nordic Council of Ministers
Ved Stranden 18
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Re: The development of a Nordic consortium for research and education in public health science

By your invitation and referring to my note of 5th May 2011 to the Nordic Council of Ministers, about the Nordic School of Public Health NHV, Gothenburg, I hereby forward a draft of a future Nordic consortium for public health research, education and practice.

The consortium idea includes networking, with a centre integrated in the network, and it thus opens for the coordinated use and future development of the scientific resources already existing at Nordic public health research institutions, as far as these institutions would like to participate. The consortium will denote a genuine cross-Nordic activity, altogether only to some extent rooted nationally or locally, creating the possibility of Nordic surplus value not attainable without cross-country concerted effort.

The consortium being based on equally shared influence on decision making, the participating Nordic research institutions will have a special incentive to take part in this volume-increasing initiative. That, in turn, opens for the possibility of developing an institution at a quality level equalling and interacting with the best academic institutions internationally. This way, the potential will increase for research and development as well as for the creation of especially high quality of the education and training of the future top leaders of the Nordic health and social systems.

It is a central prerequisite – for the realization of the ideas presented here – that strong and continuous links are established to, on one side, public health strategy making in the Nordic countries and thus to decision makers at decisive levels, and, on the other side, to not only the Nordic but to international academic public health scientific environments, in the broadest understanding of the concept. The consortium should become an active player in the development and evaluation of shared Nordic public health strategies.

I would like to add that the development of the consortium should be seen as independent of the future development of the Nordic School of Public Health, Gothenburg. NHV is not based on a network model but on a model centralized in one of the Nordic Countries, in a local environment with a strong, biomedical university culture. Thus, NHV has got its own long, respected history, with considerable and increasing national and local Swedish rooting and also an increasing movement away from public health in its staffing and production, towards biomedicine, nursing and care. Concurrently, NHV however hosts a series of exceptional Nordic initiatives like, e.g., networking and important Nordic research programmes. Again, I would like to refer to my note of 5th May 2011, about NHV's current development. Moreover, the Nordic experience from NHV will have the potential to be included as part of the basis for a possible future planning process concerning a Nordic consortium. – In my view, the present discussion of the future of the Nordic School of Public Health NHV should take place independently of the consortium model presented here.

I hope that my thoughts and suggestions will lead to fruitful discussions and thus will contribute to the urgent professionalization of Nordic public health practice.

Sincerely yours,

Anders Foldspang
Professor, PhD, DMSc
Director & Dean, NHV

- Annex 1* Suggested Centre of Excellence – Nordic Public Health Consortium (Nordisk Konsortium for Folkesundhed, NKF)
- Annex 2* Components of the Suggested Centre of Excellence – Nordic Public Health Consortium

**Suggested Centre of Excellence – Nordic Public Health Consortium
(Nordisk Konsortium for Folkesundhed, NKF)**

The population base of the five Nordic countries amounting to 25 mio., the present draft is based on the assumption that there will be considerable Nordic surplus value in integrating the resources of the Nordic public health research institutions into a combined scientific research, implementation, consultancy and communication function.

By establishing a work tradition consisting of, on one side, the collaborating research institutions of the consortium, including a certain degree of centralization – and, on the other hand, a continuous dialogue with public health decision makers at various levels – the choice of research themes can be especially relevant for public health practice, and the translation and implementation of research results in practice can be extraordinarily effective.

Some Nordic research environments will be front-runners within specific themes – e.g., population epidemiology, statistical methods, health economics – whereas others are strong in sub-disciplines like, e.g., organizational theory, management, health promotion, ethics. By combining national efforts, the Nordic Countries can become internationally competitive within the full comprehensiveness of the public health discipline, in the globalized world, in support of both theory and practice.

By establishing orchestrated collaboration framed by a consortium, the aim will also be, over a span of some years, to develop a network as well as a physically based work environment comparable to the best international research and research education milieus.

The overall objective is to create a culture attractive for internationally reputed scientists and for the best students, so that the quality and concrete applicability of research is increased, and so that the top scientists and the top leaders of the financially heavy public sectors of the health services and the social services are educated and trained on an especially strong, comprehensive and forward oriented basis.

The aim will also be knowledge brokering in its various aspects, e.g., through intensive courses for top decision makers, in support of the effective implementation of new, scientifically developed tools for decision-making.

The physical environment will, on one hand, be dispersed over the participating research institutions, on the other hand there should be a concentration in an attractive, central campus/college, with a focus on penetrating academic discussion and production. Visiting professorships, master classes and guest supervision will constitute some of the tools. There shall not be large numbers of students, and admission requirements must be high. Conditions of appointment for the scientific staff as well as PhD curricula will have to be coordinated on a cross-country basis.

Economically, the consortium may be based on a combination of public and external funding, comparable with other research and scientific education environments – but preferably with a major weight on time-limited employment, e.g., visiting professorships lasting 3, 6 or 12 months, offered to internationally well-known public health scientists through head hunting.

The consortium may be initiated once and for all by political decision. Another model can include a decision about, e.g., a five-year programme with clear process and outcome indicators, including annual assessment of attainment and decision about programme continuation and target adjustment. An initial process target will be the recruitment of consortium members, as membership of the consortium is voluntary by definition.

Annex 2 describes a series of components of the drafted vision.

Anders Foldspang
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Director & Dean, NHV

Components of the Suggested Centre of Excellence – Nordic Public Health Consortium (Nordisk Konsortium for Folkesundhed, NKF)

Main idea

Through the coordinated use of resources at Nordic public health research institutions, the main idea of the Consortium is to establish a Nordic Centre of Excellence at a high international level, comparable to that of the best international universities, aiming:

- To conduct front methodological and empirical public health scientific research;
- To educate the future top leaders of the Nordic Countries' health and social services;
- To contribute to the development of evidence based population health strategies in the Nordic Countries.
- To contribute to the effective, cost-effective and ethically responsible implementation of public health strategies and programmes locally, nationally, regionally, and in all Nordic Countries as well.

Mission

- **General**
 - Coordinate, organize, take initiatives to the continuing development of public health theory and practice in the Nordic Countries;
 - Conduct public health scientific research;
 - Conduct education in public health science;
 - Communicate public health scientific evidence;
 - Give advice on the implementation of public health programmes on health protection, health education, disease prevention –

– all of the highest international quality and coordinated with Nordic public health strategy and policy making.
- **Public health strategy**
 - Support the governments of the Nordic Countries in the theoretical and concrete development of public health systems, aiming at effective, cost-effective and ethically responsible health protection, health education/health promotion and disease prevention;
 - Especially, to give advice to the governments of the Nordic Countries concerning the development of concrete targets and methods to meet population health targets.

Structure

- For health promotion – health protection, disease prevention and health education – in the populations of the Nordic countries:
 - Development of coordinated Nordic population health databases for decision support in planning and in scientific research;
 - Structures for knowledge brokering and communication about health;
- Human resources: recruitment of:
 - Nordic and international scientists of top quality, to sustain the development of Nordic public health;
 - The best students for public health education and training;
- Principal structure:
Network consisting of Nordic public health university departments and sections;
- Physical structure:
 - A central campus with a stimulating scientific environment including visiting scientists, master classes and high level academic discussions;
 - Central campuses at participating university departments;
- Staffing
 - Scientists
 - Professors and associate professors on a common Nordic contract;
 - Visiting professor – 3-6-12 months;
 - Post docs;
 - Students: PhD students qualified by:
 - A bachelor and/or a master degree in public health;
 - Other relevant bachelor and/or master degree;
- Governance:
 - Scientific: Dean, vice dean;
 - Administrative:
 - Director/head of administration;
 - Other.

Governance

The Nordic Council and three 'levels' of the ministries of science and education:

- The Nordic Council;
- The permanent secretaries of the ministries of science and education;
- The head of the consortium –
– and additionally:
- The owners as represented by the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers;
- The heads of the individual member institutions of the consortium.

Partners

- Nordic
 - Ministries of health, consulted on a regular basis;
 - Regions/counties/’fylker’ and municipalities, with collaboration on, e.g., implementation of interventions;
 - Public health institutes, with collaboration on, e.g., routine documentation;
 - Public health associations, with collaboration on, e.g., the identification of population health and health systems challenges;
- International
 - WHO Europe: dialogue on, e.g., public health strategies and research results;
 - EU DG SANCO: dialogue on, e.g., public health strategies and research results;
 - European and international public health associations (EUPHA, ASPHER, EHMA, other).

Public health themes¹

- *Main themes*
 - Population health;
 - Intervention: Health protection; disease prevention; health promotion;
 - Health systems;
- *Specific themes:*
 - Methods
 - Epidemiology and biostatistics;
 - Qualitative methods;
 - Strategy development;
 - Other methods;
 - Population health: social and economic environment;
 - Population health: physical chemical and biological environment;
 - The organization, governance and economy of the public health services, the health services and the social services;
 - Interventions and strategies: health protection, disease prevention, health education;
 - Public health ethics.

Economy

- Public appropriation;
 - Wages (Nordic standard contracts);
 - Purchases;
- Private sponsoring:

¹ In agreement with the classification of public health main themes by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER).

- Initiation and operating parts of institutions;
- Purchases,
- Research programmes;
- Visiting professorships;
- Students.

Development

Decision to implement as a programme project, with a few years of trial including definition of annual targets and annual evaluation with decision about continuation of the project and adjustment of targets and means to reach the targets.

Success parameters

- Process parameters (output), e.g.:
 - The participation of Nordic university departments;
 - Recruitment of staff and students;
 - Establishment of PhD curriculum;
 - Achievement of external funding;
- Effect parameters (outcome), e.g.:
 - Concrete contribution to decisions at various levels;
 - PhD degrees;
 - Scientific publications in international high-level journals in public health science.

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