

Regional health policy – Promoting equity in spite of cross-currents Bochum, 13-14 September 2010

Welcome address by Dr. Eleftheria Lehmann, Director General of LIGA.NRW

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Bochum, and welcome to the NRW Institute of Health and Work. I am very glad that this group of public health professionals from Germany and from abroad has found time to join this workshop and to share expertise and experience about “Regional health policy”. A short introduction to our institute may help you to understand why we have put this topic on our agenda.

LIGA.NRW was founded in 2008 as a merger of the State Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Landesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz) and the Institute of Public Health (Landesinstitut für den Öffentlichen Gesundheitsdienst Nordrhein-Westfalen, lögD) with local offices in Düsseldorf, Bielefeld and Münster.

We are engaged in advising and supportive tasks for the state government, the authorities and bodies as well as the municipalities of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia on issues of health, health policy, and health and safety at work.

The institute’s main areas of activity range from health policy to prevention and health promotion, innovation in health, health management and the healthy design of working conditions as well as drug safety & surveillance, hygiene, and protection against infectious diseases.

The mission of the institute is to **promote health for all** by reducing burden of disease, focussing especially on 3 settings: community (physical and social environment), workplace and health care system.

The institute is part of the new “**Health Campus**” North Rhine-Westphalia, which is currently developed here in Bochum. The Campus aims to concentrate expertise in health, to endorse innovations in the health economy and to offer a venue for meetings and networking of research, health economy and education.

Obviously, this workshop is closely related to our function as a **WHO Collaborating Centre on Regional Health Policy and Public Health**. In 2008, the institute was endowed with this status. **The mission** of the Centre is to contribute to the national and international exchange of concepts, data and professional expertise, and also to improve regional and local health policy throughout the policy cycle. **The objectives** are to promote exchange on regional and local health policy including assessments, evaluations and reviews. Local and regional health policy is planned to be connected to European and global developments. **Main topics** are research, policy and development, health promotion and education, health systems research and development.

The workshop is also related to our role as a member in the **WHO “Regions for Health” network**. NRW is one of the founding members of this network, and LIGA.NRW with its predecessor institutions has always been responsible for the practical work which is related to this membership. We have always tried to support the network to the extent possible, and we have always felt that the membership in this network was very rewarding.

This workshop is organised by the group supporting our function as WHO Collaborating Centre. The workshop intends to promote the debate on regional health policy, illustrating the broad scope of the topic but also trying to “sew” seemingly separate issues together. Here is the golden thread running through the programme:

- The **context** is population health in European regions, and European health policy. This includes interregional comparisons; results from a recent analysis of regional health policy; and an update on current EU policies incl. EU structural funds.
- The **core topic** is the pursuit of health equity, utilizing a “life course” model with three groups: children and youth; workers and unemployed persons; and senior citizens.
- **In order to support health governance and health equity**, various practical methods and tools are available, including health systems performance assessment; health innovations monitoring; and health impact modelling.

Last but not least, the workshop is a contribution to the emerging mid-range work program of the “Regions for Health” Network.

I am sure this workshop will mean two days of intensive exchange, informative discussions, and fruitful networking.

Let me close by saying thanks to my colleagues, who shouldered the burden of organizing this workshop!

Thanks for your attention!