

Project description:**Culture and its impact on Health - Conference 2011**

Culture does not only have an intrinsic value in itself, it has also been shown to be important for wellbeing and health. There are in fact many examples of research and studies on how cultural practise and participation makes a contribution to wellbeing and health, on physical, mental, emotional, social and intellectual levels.

An active planning of the physical environment, for instance placing visual art in public spaces or arranging cultural performances and different kinds of participating cultural activities, can all lead to improved wellbeing and health, irrespective of whether they are carried out within the health care system, in the workplace or in cultural institutions. Research results from projects in this field have also proved that culture positively influences attitudes, self esteem, organisational climate and the physical environment.

Acknowledging and making an active use of culture as a way of improving health and wellbeing, both in a preventing or rehabilitating meaning, is in some European regions and countries well integrated in research, policies and practice. The overall aim of the proposed conference is to make this knowledge more widely available to European regions by highlighting examples of good practice.

To demonstrate the relevance that the conference should have for many European regions, the demographic changes that are taking place in Europe can be used as an example. Today there are currently over 6 million people with dementia in the European Union, and it is predicted that this number will double in the next 20 years along with the ageing of the population. But if delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease by 5 years, its prevalence would decrease by 50 %.¹

This example illustrates why using culture as a tool, in this case to preventing or delaying a disease, and making every day life easier for people suffering from it, might be well worth while, in relation to costs and human suffering. The same is of course valid in many other areas the regions recognize as their direct responsibilities, which the conference will show by a broad set of examples.

Project background

The plan to organize a conference on Culture and its impact on Health started in 2008, when a working group was set up during the AER Committee III meeting in Ustron, Poland, (May 14-16), led by the region of Västerbotten (S).

Organization

The AER WG Culture for Health, and the AER Secretariat are jointly responsible for developing the conference programme and planning the conference

Preliminary dates and venue

The conference will be arranged in connection with a combined Committee II and Committee III meeting in 2011, to enable interested members from both Committees to participate.

Target groups

The conference is open for elected representatives and officers of European regional and local authorities, practitioners and researchers working with health issues, healthcare, and/or culture. It is expected that the conference would also be of interest to national governments and relevant EU institutions.

Objectives of the conference

The objective of the conference is to exchange knowledge and experiences and to share best practice on the health and wellbeing benefits of participation in cultural activities and to strengthen awareness

¹ The Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2008

of the impact of Culture on Health in Europe. The aim is to promote wider adoption of policies and actions that promote health and wellbeing through cultural participation.

Deliverables/outcomes

- The conference will enable the exchange of interdisciplinary knowhow, best practice, and research and to promote collaboration in the field Culture and its impact on health between countries and regions in Europe.
- A conference report with information on ongoing practice and research within the area of Culture and its impact on Health in Europe will be published.
- A European network in the area of Culture and its impact on Health will be established