

SURVEY
and
ACTION PLAN

**CHILDREN
AND
YOUNG ADULTS
in
THE ADJACENT AREAS¹**

NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

¹ In this context the term *adjacent areas* is taken to mean Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad and Northwest Russia.

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Introduction

In November 1997, the Nordic Council adopted two recommendations focusing on the conditions for children and young adults in the adjacent areas. Recommendation 7/97 is addressed to the governments of the Nordic countries. It deals with the issue of support for the work carried out by UNICEF in the region, in particular the work focusing on the health of children and mothers, information campaigns on immunisation (vaccination programmes) and the breast-feeding of infants.

In Recommendation 8/97 the Nordic Council of Ministers is enjoined with the task of compiling a *survey and an action plan* covering the situation of children and young adults in the adjacent areas. The survey is to include data from the Nordic countries indicating the extent to which bilateral and multilateral aid promotes a pattern of social development with a specific emphasis on children and young adults in the adjacent areas. The survey of state-financed projects is not exhaustive, but it contains a broad selection of various types of projects. The aims are a) to compile a survey of measures already commenced, b) to make it easier to co-ordinate measures and c) to provide a basis for an evaluation and prioritisation of (existing) measures rather than design and implement new measures.

The action plan is to be trans-sectional (involving several policy areas). It is to focus on social- and health measures, exploiting child/youth culture as a tool to prevent social exclusion. The action plan is to include measures adopted with the aim of promoting social development for children and young adults (under 18 years), addressing the following issues:

- ▶ measures to combat poverty;
- ▶ the development of family patterns (avoiding broken families);
- ▶ state of health and availability of treatment facilities;
- ▶ schools and the changing pattern of leisure, and
- ▶ conditions for children and young adults who are especially vulnerable (the disabled, children in prison, stateless children, school dropouts).

The Nordic Information Offices in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and St. Petersburg² have been requested to submit their assessments of the needs for measures in these areas. Prior to submitting the plan to the Nordic Council, its contents are to be submitted to representatives of the governments in the adjacent areas. The present document must first of all be seen as a working paper in an ongoing process.

The survey presented in this document is based on excerpts from and summaries of a number of documents, reports and assessments compiled by the Nordic Information Offices. The list of references at the end of this survey identifies the source material. The references have been omitted from the body of the survey, with a view to improving "readability".

² In the Northwest Russia (e.g. Leningrad-region, St. Petersburg, republic of Karelia, Murmansk Oblast and Kaliningrad) only St.Petersburg has a Nordic Information Office .

I. Situation analysis:

Changes in social conditions and public health in the adjacent areas

It is frequently pointed out that when attempting to reach an understanding of developments in the adjacent areas - in this context taken to mean the Baltic States, Kaliningrad and Northwest Russia - it is important to consider the variations in the region with regard to culture, ethnic factors, the current political situation and the historical background.

Despite these variations, the areas have revealed certain common development features throughout the 1990s - common features that have a major impact on the conditions offered to children and young adults.

The necessary reforms of the economy - i.e. the introduction of a market economy - have led to sweeping changes, accompanied by a steep decline in production. The harsh economic transition has thus created a rate of unemployment hitherto unknown³, creating a problem with which these societies cannot cope. The possibilities of implementing the necessary social reforms are reduced by the financial constraints experienced in these regions.

Many families suffer from the economic insecurity prevailing in these societies during the period of transition. As high unemployment has hitherto been an unknown phenomenon in these countries, people's reactions differ from the reactions seen in Western countries. The unemployed workers feel that their human rights have been breached. But their psychological reactions - worries about job security and financial security - closely resemble those reported in Western studies of the psychological damage caused by unemployment.

The evaluations conducted reach different conclusions as to which groups suffer most as a result of the overwhelming economic changes. There is evidence that poverty has increased the income gaps between different social groups. The ones who are especially vulnerable are children in families whose chances of earning an income from work - and thus their economic capacity - have been vastly reduced, without the emergence of new occupational opportunities that can provide a stable income for the family.

Observers report that one of the results of this process is the emergence of a number of vulnerable groups: children who fail to complete the compulsory schooling, street children, disabled children, children with infectious diseases and children who live in large institutions. Poverty has increased the risk of growing criminal exploitation of children: for economic gain - and sexual abuse.

Declining birth-rate

The lack of security with regard to employment and the high rate of unemployment have an especially adverse impact on youth groups, who respond by postponing marriage/parenthood, etc. The results of studies show that unemployment and economic insecurity - in addition to imposing burdens on existing families - force young people to postpone parenthood.

³ The traditional methods of measuring the rate of unemployment are often useless when applied to assessments of the job-loss trends in the adjacent areas, because the conditions for registration in the "unemployed" category have been tightened, and because a growing number of workers have been unemployed for a long time and have lost their unemployment entitlements.

This situation has led to a sharp decline in the birth-rate and in the age-determined fertility rate. This will probably mean that many of the young men and women will never have children; but will be compelled to remain childless for the rest of their lives.

Life expectancy trends in the adjacent areas

In all of the adjacent areas covered by this survey (and in the former Communist states in Eastern and Central Europe) there is an alarming decline in average life expectancy, especially among the male population. In the Russian Federation, for example, during the transition period the average life expectancy for men fell from 64.9 years to 57.6 years, whereas for women the decline was far less - from 74.3 years to 71.0 years.

There are no increases in infant mortality, child mortality or in mortality among the elderly that can be adduced to explain the relatively large change in men's life expectancy. An analysis of the reasons shows that the decline is primarily attributable to an increase in mortality among men in the 40-50 age group. Thus most of the excess mortality affects the age groups that traditionally have small children and school-going children. The pattern of development is in sharp contrast to the pattern reported in the rest of Europe and in the Nordic region.

The studies attribute the decline to changes in the pattern of alcohol consumption, with bad eating habits (fatty foods, lack of vegetables) and smoking as contributory factors. Several factors can be cited to support this assumption, e.g. the fact that in 1987 accidents involving alcohol-poisoning accounted for 80 per cent of all deaths among men under the age of 45 years (Russia).⁴

But the relatively high mortality reported among younger men in the adjacent areas has a major impact on many families - those that lose a father. If, as suggested, a large part of the excess mortality can be attributed to alcohol abuse, accidents (traffic accidents, industrial accidents) and suicide, this indicates that some of these men were already divorced or had abandoned their families. It is thus a reasonable assumption that part of the increased mortality is attributable to self-destructive tendencies among young relatively men who have lost their job opportunities, in cases where alcohol plays an important role. But it must also be assumed that among these relatively young men there are some who - on account of long-term unemployment - have not yet managed to start a family. The problem of childlessness will be unevenly distributed among the population, affecting some social groups more than others. In particular, it will affect the men who have not acquired any job-market qualifications (education/training) and whose employment situation is insecure.

Children without a family and street children

The straitened economic situation means that the most vulnerable families are confronted with additional major difficulties, and lack the surplus resources to cope with their own children. The dwindling job/income-security creates a larger breeding ground for crime, drug abuse, etc. Children who live on the streets often have parents who - on account of death, alcohol abuse, mental illness or exposure to violence - are prevented from living in homes of their own.

⁴ The assumption is further supported by the fact that - during the period 1972-1992 - Finland has succeeded in reducing mortality by improving dietary habits and by reducing the use of tobacco (smoking).

The decline in the birth-rate has partially concealed the fact that during the transitional period there is a general trend in the Eastern and Central European countries towards a situation in which a growing number of families have been unable to take care of their own children. This trend has also been evident in the adjacent areas. In Estonia, Latvia and Russia there has been an increase in the percentage of children aged 0-3 years who are placed in children's homes. In Estonia, for example, there has been an increase of 75 per cent in the first half of the 1990s. In Latvia the increase during the same period has been 40 per cent, whereas it has not proved possible to show any increase in Lithuania. An increase of 50 per cent for Russia as a whole is reported for this age group during the same period.

It can be difficult to reach a reliable overview of the scope of the problem, partly because of the lack of an applicable definition of the term *street children*. This factor is referred to in all the reports as constituting a major and striking problem, but there remains a lack of reliable information on the scope of the problem.

School dropouts

Subsidies for a number of state functions related to education/training for children and young adults, leisure activities, health-care and social security have been withdrawn - or the services have been privatised, thereby imposing a huge burden on the single family.

The socio-economic changes have inevitably required changes in the content and methods of education/training programmes, so that these are perceived as relevant to children and young adults. The trend is towards a situation in which more young boys and girls drop out from school. This is perceived as posing a serious problem. It might be seen as one of the immediate consequences of a control system where authorities have loosened their grip. Other contributory factors include a general deterioration in the quality of schools - on account of lack of resources - and the shattered expectations of acquiring a vocational training which would offer them job-security or at least the possibility of getting a paid job.

The dropout problem can also probably be linked to the existence of a large number of broken families, one of the results of the relatively high unemployment and bleak economic and job prospects. The increased incidence of fatherless families - resulting partly from divorce and the high rate of mortality among fertile men - must be expected to reduce the levels of support and care required to provide children with the necessary "surplus" to complete a school education and/or vocational training.

High level in youth crime

The slacker control of the population exercised by the state - along with the ongoing economic crisis - has resulted in a growth in crime, thus creating a problem with which society cannot cope. For many families the economic pressure has meant a weakening of the support they have previously provided for their children.

The glaringly obvious problem of street children is thus related to the deterioration in the economic situation and to the curbs on the authority previously exercised by the police. Police no longer have the

authority to intervene with regard to street children, as possible action would constitute a breach of the rights of these children in relation to the convention on the rights of the child.

Poverty, combined with a growth in alcoholism, has produced several examples where the parents encourage their children to beg, with a view to contributing to the support of the family.

Statistical reports indicate that by far the majority of young criminals had no form of fixed income. Unemployment has thus turned many young men and women into criminals. A high percentage of crime consists of minor theft of food items and basic necessities. It is thus hardly surprising that the risk of crime, drug abuse and suicide among street children has increased steeply compared with others in the same age groups.

Child criminals are normally held in detention until the court hearing, but some of the young criminals are homeless, and are thus imprisoned pending trial. These prison institutions lack the facilities to give children and young adults the necessary intellectual, social or psychological background required to prevent recidivism.

In cases in which the local authorities fail to provide the necessary smaller 24-hour care facilities for children and young adults, these are referred instead to the large boarding schools or 24-hour institutions. To a certain extent, children who have lost their parents or children whose parents have been unable to cope with them are put up for adoption.

Self-destructive behaviour of children and young adults

All the traditional factors required to create a permanent narcotics problem are present: a relatively large group of parents who have been permanently excluded from the labour market; a lack of adequate vocational training for young adults and of further training for the adults; and with a high rate of youth unemployment.

Suicide rates among teenagers (15-19) are relatively low, but there has been a significant increase (from 50-75 per cent) in the suicide rate for young men during the first half of the 1990s in Latvia, Lithuania, and - especially - in Russia. The frequency of suicide among men of all ages is already above the level of women.

Youth crime can also be perceived as an expression - or a result - of the self-destructive behaviour of young adults. Alcohol abuse and drug abuse are reported as increasing - also among children and young adults.

Transition of norms and values?

Some observers refer to "the norms vacuum", i.e. the apparent lack of new norms to replace the norms that were abandoned as the old (Soviet) order disappeared. Implementation of legislation in these areas is far from adequate, and it has not been adapted to meet the exigencies of the new situation. It is emphasised by several sources that there is an increase in youth crime - and in alcohol- and drug abuse and prostitution. There are several examples of child sexual abuse. And yet it remains unclear as to whether the figures are to be explained by increasing poverty or by improved public access to more accurate data. The reporting of such phenomena has now become possible, thanks to the extensive freedom of the press, which exposes these deficiencies and abuses to the public view.

Several sources emphasise that the sweeping economic changes have brought about a concomitant change in fundamental values, norms and rules of the game. These factors, however, cannot be changed via propaganda, and information campaigns. What is required is a series of more tangible changes in general living conditions.

Warnings have also been issued that there is an urgent need for steps in the political, social and economic policy areas. In the absence of effective measures capable of producing tangible results, there is a risk that more than the political survival of the single government will be at stake; the reform process and the establishment of democratic governance will also become more difficult.

Steps to combat poverty

A more direct and more consistent effort to combat poverty in the adjacent areas requires comprehensive (prior) study and reporting, with a view to determining whether poverty has become - or is becoming - a more permanent structural problem or whether it is solely a question of inadequate income-equalisation systems.

The results of these preliminary investigations in each single area will make it possible to assess the extent to which the following initiatives will constitute a better approach to combating poverty:

- ▶ Increased efforts to combat unemployment,
- ▶ Increased income-equalisation, and
- ▶ A reform and development of the vocational training systems.

Would massive economic aid from abroad be sufficient - in itself - to solve the serious infrastructure problems, or is it necessary to effect supplementary finance policy system changes?

Work on compiling the data and writing these reports - which, *inter alia*, would analyse the special conditions in each single country, including labour-market problems - could be carried out via co-operation between international experts, with support from other countries, including the Nordic countries.

However, this decisive work is outside the scope of the present document.

Reporting on compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Following its adoption in 1990, the convention has been ratified by 191 states, including the Nordic countries, Russia and the Baltic States.

Compliance with the terms of the convention is monitored by an expert committee, to which the member states must submit a report on the measures adopted to meet the obligations. Within two years following the date on which the convention comes into force, the countries undertake to compile the first report on the initiatives taken with a view to implementing the provisions of the convention. Subsequently the countries are under an obligation to submit a report every fifth year.

So far the reports of Lithuania and Latvia, and the first Russian report (from 1992) have been submitted. The second Russian report has not yet been delivered, and Estonia's report is still missing.

The rights - i.e. civic and political rights - are to be respected by all member states, irrespective of the stage of development they have reached, whereas economic and social rights depend on the resources of the single country.

Social reforms are required, but are restricted by the draining of the state's finances for socio-economic purposes, which has necessitated a reduction of social expenditure to a minimum. During the transition phase it can thus be very important to offer support in the form of expertise, knowledge-transfer and discussion of the experience gained, education/training programmes, etc.

When developing democratic rights in tomorrow's society, one very important factor is the practical steps taken to ensure children's rights. The longer term development of democratic attitudes, behaviour and socio-economic structures is thus seen as - to some extent - being linked to the development of 's rights of the child.

II Demographic changes in the adjacent areas

Estonia

According to the assessment conducted by UNDP, the Estonian economy is at the beginning of an upturn. Throughout the 1990s, however, unemployment has had a major negative impact. In particular, privatisation of the collective farms has led to a reduction of jobs. Men - especially - have been hit by unemployment.

Unemployment - which amounts to about 15 per cent of the labour force (workers in the relevant age groups) - and the uncertain economic situation have compelled many young men and women to postpone plans to start a family (marriage, parenthood). UNDP's assessment (1997) is that about one third of men and women under the age of 30 years are in the high-risk group for social exclusion. The insecurity felt by many young people in the fertile age group with regard to their social and occupational situation has led to a steep fall in the demographic fertility.

The figure for abortions, which is traditionally high in East European countries, covers more than two-thirds of all pregnancies. For every 100 live births in 1980, 159 abortions were performed, a figure that had increased to 169 in 1993. In Finland the comparable figures is about 20 abortions per 100 live births. One of the explanations is that contraceptives are of poor quality, are inadequate and difficult to obtain. Another is the lack of information on contraception for young people. The consequence is a rapid increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

The previously well-developed public day-care system is undergoing a process of privatisation, which has resulted in closures and in a reduction of the number of places available. During the period 1985-1993, the number of children in day nurseries fell by 30 per cent. The reductions have been particularly felt in the rural areas. Although unemployment is otherwise generally higher among men, there is a relatively high rate of unemployment among women in the 30-34 age group, considerably higher than among men the same age group.

The trends in average life expectancy are alarming. In 1989 average life expectancy was 65.7 years for men, and 74.7 years for women. During the next six years there was a change in the figure for men, reaching 61.7 years in 1995, but only a very slight change in the figure for women (from 74.7 years to 74.3 years). This means that a considerable percentage of men never reach pension age.

Latvia

In Latvia too the rate of unemployment is higher among men (19 per cent) than among women (16 per cent). Here again - in terms of numbers - young workers account for the major part of unemployment.

Average life expectancy has fallen drastically over a very short period. In 1990 the average life expectancy was 70 years for the entire population, but by 1995 the figure had fallen to 66 years. For men the reduction during the period was from 64 to 60 years, while for women average life expectancy fell during the first half of the 1990s from 75 to 73 years.

The arduous working conditions, especially for men, along with a general deterioration in health care, are assumed to be one of the causes for the decline in life expectancy.

As in the other Baltic States, the uncertain economic situation results in a demographic crisis, with a steep decline in the fertility rate. The low birth-rate is attributable a) to the relative decline in the percentage of women in the fertile age groups and especially b) to the fact that these women - on average - have fewer children.⁵

Lithuania

The transition in Lithuania has - as in the other Baltic States - led to widespread unemployment (about 14-16 per cent in last half of the 1990's). Unemployment hits - in particular - young workers under the age of 30 years, i.e. those who are about to start a family. Since 1985 a decline in fertility has been reported among women in the 25-29 age group, and since 1991 in all age groups.

In particular, farm workers from the agricultural collectives find themselves isolated - following privatisation. They are now without tools, have only small holdings, and experience serious difficulties in earning a supplementary income from other sources.

Average life expectancy has remained roughly constant during the period 1992-1996. In 1992 life expectancy was 65 years for men and 75 years for women. Women's average life expectancy has shown a slight rise, to 76 years.

Causes of death such as accidents, suicide, murder and alcohol poisoning account for a large part of the excess mortality among men in the productive age groups.

Northwest Russia

The economic uncertainty - especially that experienced by young men and women - has led, as in the other adjacent areas, to a steep fall in the birth-rate. During the period 1989-94, the number of births in the **St. Petersburg area** fell by nearly 50 per cent, for example.

Here too excess mortality among men has been reported, with a special focus on deaths caused by violence, accidents and poisoning.

Economic development in **Karelia** is reaching stability, but it is still difficult to predict the economic impact of the transition to a market-oriented form of production. The paper industry, which affects a

⁵ The total fertility rate, which reflects the latter factor, was 2.0 in 1990, but had fallen to 1.4 by 1994.

relatively large section of the region's industry/commerce, is thus experiencing difficulties. Further, there is now a net transfer of tax incomes to the federation. Russia's tax legislation is undergoing change.

The changes in industry and employment in **Kaliningrad** do not follow the pattern observed in the rest of the adjacent areas, as the state sector accounts for about 80 per cent of the workplaces.

The demographic changes have thus been delayed, and are weaker than in the surrounding parts of the so-called adjacent areas. But here too there has been an increase in mortality, although less than in other parts of Russia. Excess mortality, however, has hit the 50-69 age group in particular, and - to a lesser extent - the 30-49 age group, although there has been a significant increase in the latter age group during the period of transition.

Accessible information describing social, demographic and health during the transition process in various parts of Northwest Russia is insufficient.

III Survey of state-financed projects in the adjacent areas focusing on children and young adults

The following account deals with only a minor part of the many kinds of measures being implemented to promote the development of children and young adults in the adjacent areas. In addition to state-initiated projects, there is a wide range of decentralised initiatives, which are independently run by municipalities, regions or NGOs (e.g. Non-Governmental Organizations). Further, many international organisations - under the aegis of the UN, EU or the Nordic Council of Ministers - are engaged in work to promote the same goals.

The report covers a) only current or recently completed projects being implemented with the aim of promoting the development of children and young adults, and b) projects which are wholly or partly financed by state funding from the Nordic governments - whether bilateral or multilateral. The account is *not exhaustive*, but it contains a broad selection, the intention being to present *different types* of project.

In the adjacent areas certain inter-related problems play a major role in the social development of children and young adults, e.g. labour-market policy, education/training and employment. Although this interdependency of factors or policy areas affects the development possibilities of our target group, the complex phenomenon lies beyond the scope of this survey.

Finland

Multilateral projects

Finland participates in a number of multilateral projects. Finland also implements some bilateral projects that complement the multilateral projects. The EU is providing aid - via its Tacis programme - for a reform of the social-, pensions- and health-insurance programme, along with measures to achieve higher levels of administrative efficiency. Legislative reforms in a number of areas are also covered by

the programme (social- and health-insurance, monitoring of public health, housing policy and general financing of public welfare).

Action plan

The Tacis project - which provides aid for social- and health-care reforms in the Republic of Karelia - is to be continued, so that the experience gained can be translated into action and further developed. Further aid may be required.

Bilateral projects

These projects focus on the development of the health-care system for mothers and children - and the disabled - in the selected pilot areas, i.e. Petroskoi and Karhumäki. The aim is to develop preventive measures for small children and pregnant women. The strategy is to alter the division of labour between paediatricians, gynaecologists and children's nurses, so that the nurses - working independently - can carry out the advisory and information work among healthy women and children, while physicians can treat actual ailments/diseases.

Finland is also providing funding for a project (intended to run for several years) on measures to combat infectious diseases in the St. Petersburg and Leningrad administrative region, and another longer project on measures to combat tuberculosis in Murmansk. These projects are to be complemented by a training project on combating tuberculosis in the Baltic States and Northwest Russia.

With regard to the treatment/prevention of drug/alcohol abuse, Finland is implementing an action programme for co-operation with Russia, including measures to tackle the drug-related problems affecting children and young adults, and studies of school-children's use of psychotropic substances.

Action plan

These measures are based on a reform covering the entire public health-care system in Russia and Karelia, thus involving, *inter alia*, a change from a system based mainly on costly hospitals and medical centres to a system emphasising preventive work and the primary health-care service. The proposal to implement the project has been tabled in the EU.

Culture

Finland is carrying out cultural co-operation in the adjacent areas actively on bilateral level in the framework of agreements on cultural exchange and in the framework of multilateral cultural networks. Any special co-ordinating cultural policy program for adjacent areas has not been implemented.

A special framework for co-operation between cultural and social-/health sectors has risen in the recent years around the theme "Art in Hospitals", set up by UNESCO during "the World Decade for Cultural Development". A bilateral project on this theme was carried out in summer 1998 between Finland and Latvia.

In the field of children's culture the Ministry for culture & Education has co-financed with Arts Council of Finland a project called TRACHEA - a visual arts workshop for Baltic, Russian and Finish young people in year 1997.

In the field of youth policy a recent co-operative project is construction work of the Finish-Estonian Youth Camp Centre in Keila municipality in Estonia.

Denmark

Social sector

The aim is to initiate preventive measures for the benefit of society's weakest groups, in which children and young adults - especially street children and children from socially exposed families - are specifically included. The main focus is on establishing "outreach" services and on implementing preventive initiatives, including counselling, and support for community projects in co-operation with voluntary organisations and local authorities, with a view to training young adults. This is to be achieved by setting up local family-centres and by co-operating with private firms.

Examples of the project already exist in Estonia, with a day-centre for disabled children (Järve School) and a social centre in the Võru administrative region.

Health-care

The programme for Eastern Europe devised by the Ministry of Health has had the primary aim of helping the host countries to raise the levels of efficiency and to achieve general improvements in the quality of public health-care services. The projects covering programmes for this sector in Estonia and Lithuania have thus focused on structural factors in the health-care system, and have to only a slight extent been directed towards specific population groups.

There are, however, single projects, financed via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' TA-East Pool (an aggregate amount placed at disposal), where children form all or part of the target group. The professional administration of the projects is to be undertaken by the Ministry of Health.

1. A project on the quality of diabetes-treatment of children in Poland. The project consists of an evaluation of - and training programmes in - the treatment of diabetes, with a view to upgrading the treatment.
2. A diabetes training programme in the Baltic States. As part of a more extensive training project, 2 diabetes centres have been established for children, where treatment-providers and patients conduct a training programme on diabetes treatment.
3. Further, the Ministry of Health has supported the delivery of donated equipment to children's hospital in Riga, Latvia. The equipment was donated to Riga by Frederiksborg County and is to be used for children suffering from cancer.

Action plan

A joint project between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs on exposed children (including street children). The project is intended to establish a local emergency service: anonymous counselling of young adults on health matters (contraception, prostitution), consultation for both

parents and children, the setting up of a municipal emergency service for the treatment of children in the risk-group. The project includes the training of social workers.

The project also covers outreach work at street level, and the establishing of shelters that offer meals, a bath, health-checks, etc.

Culture

The aim of the international cultural exchanges is to promote knowledge of Danish art and culture. One of the means of achieving this goal is to support the exchange of Danish art and culture which can add new aspects to the art and culture of other countries. With a view to offering a cultural experience to children, the project also covers the cultural diversity that arises in encounters with children from other cultures.

By drawing on a central "pool" (i.e. an aggregate amount placed at disposal), the ministry has been capable of supporting local initiatives (e.g. private accommodation for school-children and their participation in performances, concerts by Russian musicians and singers for children and adults in Denmark, exchange trips enabling amateur groups to participate in a festival for amateurs in Lithuania).

The Festival of Child Culture in St. Petersburg included a performance by Russian ballet children of Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales, with music by a modern Danish composer (Sebastian) and choreography by a Russia (Safonora). Danish/Russian direction and sets for a stage play performed by Danish and Russian children, Danish children's TV programmes on the region's Channel 5, showing a number of Danish children's serials - translated and post-dubbed.

Action plan

Performances of a ballet, musicals and stage plays, conducted jointly by children and young adults from the Nordic countries and from the adjacent areas, will demand considerable resources. The project is to be organised so as to facilitate a meeting between equals, who learn from each other's methods and approach to teaching, etc.

Good children's films (serials), translated/post-dubbed and shown on the region's TV channels have proved to require fewer resources - but they reach a wide audience.

Sweden

The goal adopted for Swedish aid has been to promote democracy, human rights and social development, the transition to a market economy and environmental protection. The work has been based on the demand for measures in the host countries. The state funding is mainly channelled through Sida (Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency) and the Swedish Institute.

Social affairs

A listing of the aid provided during the period 1992-1996 shows that there have been 12 projects focusing partly or wholly on children and young adults, with an aggregate allocation of some SEK 14

m. The measures have been directed mainly at developing social care-services and training in social work. These measures have been implemented in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and in parts of Russia.

Multilateral project

An office for human rights, which also addresses issues related to children, has been established in Latvia, in co-operation with UNDP.

A considerable share of Swedish funding for projects related to children and young adults is allocated to NGOs working in the adjacent areas.

Health-care

The aim is to create secure conditions for growing children in the adjacent areas. Among the groups of children regarded as being particularly vulnerable are children at institutions, children with functional disorders, refugee children and minority children, especially stateless children. The street children constitute another very exposed group. The institutions take care of orphans, disabled children, children of dysfunctional parents (substance abuse problems, mental illness, crime, etc.)

Projects

A survey of the projects funded by Sida in the adjacent areas in 1996 and 1997 shows, however, relatively few projects devised specifically for children and young adults. Such projects focus on aid for health-care for mothers and children, care of the disabled, measures to combat infectious diseases, dental care and planning to cope with medical disasters. The aid is primarily channelled via the East Europe Committee of the Swedish Health Care Community (ÖEK).

A number of projects support the centre for disabled children in Vilnius, Kaliningrad, including projects implemented with the aim of integrating disabled children in school and society.

The family planning organisation in Estonia - RFSU - also receives support.

Culture

A major part of the cultural co-operation between Sweden and the Baltic countries and Northwest Russia is conducted between municipalities in Sweden and their counterparts in the adjacent areas, or between regions (municipal groupings) in Sweden and the corresponding regions in the adjacent areas (e.g. between Stockholm and St. Petersburg).

The aim is to promote the development of democracy, as it is hard to conceive of democratic development without a cultural life free of restrictions.

The meeting of cultures takes place at numerous locations, e.g. libraries, and via films (e.g. Alfons Åberg, the Swedish cartoon series based on the experiences of an only child brought up by his father), children's drawings, exhibitions, children's theatre, children's books, children's concerts, etc.

The examples of child and youth culture selected are - obviously - those in which the single country takes pride. The funding is applied to conduct seminars and conferences, (also) attended by child culture workers from the adjacent areas. Amounts are spent on translating Swedish works into the other languages, so that the meeting of cultures does not take place exclusively between teachers, kindergarten teachers and civil servants working with issues related to child culture.

Further, there are several single projects in which classes from upper secondary schools, youth organisations, etc. meet - and in which issues related to the environment and democratisation are discussed. Exchange visits are arranged, offering children and young adults an opportunity to meet their counterparts living in different cultural environments (e.g. opportunities for Russian children to meet Estonian children on the islands of Ösel and Dagö, holiday camps that offer opportunities for the integration of children from ethnic minorities).

In this context, mention should also be made of exchange visits for young adults, where a limited number of young men and women are offered job-practice or education/training in the Nordic countries.

Action plan

An evaluation of the results achieved from these exchange programmes could be applied as the background for an extension of the education/training activities.

However, some aspects of the meeting of cultures require no translation services, e.g. exchanges between music classes, and competitions focusing on children's drawings, involving participants from the adjacent areas.

Norway

Social security and health-care

Under the measures devised to combat poverty in the Baltic States, support is provided for a number of education/training programmes (youth training schools, job-practice in the fishing industry). The main aim is to further develop new knowledge in subjects related to fisheries, which can help to develop competencies in coastal fishery - by adding to existing knowledge. The goal is to stress the importance of focusing on sustainable development.

The major part of the total resources is used to support health-care measures and the development of public health services in the adjacent areas. The diminished capacity of state finances in these areas has resulted in a large deficit in the resources required to meet basic needs for elementary material support - a need that is unlikely to be met in the foreseeable future, e.g. maintenance and renovation of shelters for children and young adults, adding sanitary installations, or providing funding for the purchase of basic hospital equipment, i.e. items which would be taken for granted in the Nordic countries.

The Norwegian measures focus a) on establishing specific health-care facilities which have already been developed (e.g. TB control, paediatric centres at hospitals, purchase of medicines, or heart operations for children) and b) on further training for personnel (e.g. training in ultra-sound diagnostics, training programmes in the care of new-born infants or child-friendly hospital service). Finally c) some of the projects focus on preventive measures, involving instruction for young people (e.g. in reproduction, contraception etc., and the abuse of psychotropic substances).

Some of the projects conducted in the adjacent areas focus on especially vulnerable children (e.g. by providing homes for street children, by setting up a working group to deal the problem of sexually abused children, and by providing other child-care facilities). Additionally, there are projects focusing on children with specific disabilities or children exposed to discrimination (the integration of children of immigrants/refugees, anti-racism centres, and a rehabilitation centre for functionally disabled children, and support for a centre for child & youth psychiatry).

Finally, Norway provides support for work focusing on youth organisations (e.g. developing democracy, developing clubs, developing NGOs).

Cultural affairs

Bilateral co-operation between Norway and the Baltic Sea States has increased over the last five to ten years. The development has been most encouraging and represents a challenge for the years to come. Nevertheless, the sector of culture for children and adults has so far not been given priority in this development. In the North, however, within the framework of the Barents- co-operation, relations between Norway and Northwest Russia in the cultural field have comprised also the younger generation.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region

Information-work is being conducted in the primary schools in the Norwegian border regions to counteract the negative reputation of their Russian neighbours, with the aim of teaching young people (in fact, all citizens) in Northern Norway how people in the Barents region live and think - in terms of

culture, economics and politics. The adopted approach is to conduct single projects (e.g. festival arrangements, conferences, TV festivals, exchange programmes for schools).

Other projects are devised with the aim of promoting an understanding of the distinctive character of cultural and religious life in the Nordic region, referring to different contexts and contrasts in the forms of religious expression manifested in the Barents region. This is done, for example, by publishing books and anthologies in several languages, by using films in education/training, and by conducting historical studies and publishing the results. There is a high demand for materials - at least in Russian - for use in education.

Nordic Council of Ministers

Co-operation on cultural affairs should be devised with a view to long-term co-operation which is based not on single items (performances, events) but rather on education and the development of competencies in projects that run for several years, e.g. projects on support for education/training institutions, cultural work in the schools, teaching methods for art subjects, the production and distribution of art for children and young adults. These efforts can promote the development of tolerance and generosity in relation to other cultures.

Kulturens tredje pillar ("Culture's Third Pillar"), the report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers, contains a number of recommendations on Nordic co-operation on culture with the Baltic countries and Northwest Russia. The Council of Ministers' plan - co-ordinated with the adjacent areas - also contains proposals focusing on children and young adults.

The Council of Ministers' budget is relatively limited, i.e. in relation to the opportunities for measures that can be conducted by the single Nordic countries.

Child and Youth Culture

The goal adopted is to promote democratic development in the adjacent areas by developing an ability to understand other languages, to reinforce the sense of the Nordic identity and to provide opportunities for creative activities by young adults in co-operation with professional artists. There are two steering committees that work with children and youth culture i.e. The Nordic Steering Committee for Children's and Youth's Culture (BUK) and The Nordic Youth Committee (NUK). BUK's work is based partly on Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - on children's freedom of speech (expression) and partly on Article 13, which deals with children's innate creativity and curiosity. Against this background a number of Nordic initiatives have been launched concerning child and youth culture⁶:

- ▶ *Valhalla*, a web-side on the Internet and its newsmagazine, plays a role in building a network in the field of child & youth culture (<http://valhalla.norden.org>).

⁶ The projects of school and youth committees under the aegis of the Council of Ministers are reported elsewhere.

- ▶ A youth festival in Trondheim, with exhibitions, cultural workshops and performances. A corresponding project - which also covers the adjacent areas - is to be conducted in Finland in 1999.
- ▶ By implementing, for example, a project called *Children of the Baltic Region*, the Nordic Council of Ministers has provided support for a meeting between 100 children, artists and helpers from the Nordic countries, the adjacent areas and the Åland Islands . BUK's Child Culture Camp (*Children of the Baltic Region*) was held in Latvia June 1998.
- ▶ A festival of video films. Since 1997 projects based on co-operation with youth organisations in the adjacent areas have had the opportunity to get support from NUK. NUK has been involved in some Nordic initiatives in this field:
- ▶ The Baltic Sea Youth Conference in Helsinki 1996. Baltic Sea Youth Minister Conference in Sweden 1998.
- ▶ Nordic School Co-operation (NSS) should also be mentioned, as the school is one of the most important forums for children and youths culture.

Under the Ministers of Health and Social Affairs, the Committee of Senior Officials on Health and Social Affairs is responsible for projects and initiatives in the Nordic countries as well as in the adjacent areas. Recognising the growing importance of the Baltic states and Northwest Russia, a special sub-group has been established to initiate and supervise projects in the adjacent areas. Some of the current projects are mentioned below. In this context, it is important to mention that the committee also works on another recommendation from the Nordic Council regarding actions against sexual exploitation of children. Although not restricted to the adjacent areas only, this problem is certainly well known here.

BRIMHEALTH (Baltic Rim Partnership for Public Health)

The aim of this project - conducted under the aegis of the Council of Ministers - is to "train the trainers" in public health and to train decision-makers in the health-care sector by arranging an academic training programme. The development of health-care training is intended to promote the development of the relevant institutions in the adjacent areas - institutions that can assume responsibility for academic training in public health subjects in their own countries.

A further aim is to establish co-operation on education & research by conducting joint development projects. The co-operation is to be implemented partly by offering study/research grants, along with places at the relevant institutions, and partly by serving as a link with regard to international co-operation on education & research.

NOPUS (Nordic Education Programme for the Development of Social Services)

Like the BRIMHEALTH programme, this education/training institution has implemented training projects for social workers in the Baltic States, and is currently working on a similar project in St. Petersburg.

Barents co-operation

The communiqué of the 5th Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Luleå in January 1998 stated that it is to be put more emphasis on health issues in the Barents co-operation. In accordance with the communiqué, it is proposed to launch a major health programme for the Barents region for the period 1999- 2002. The aim would be to support projects contributing to both short-term and long-term improvements in some main fields of great common interest and which would benefit from the Barents co-operation. Proposed areas of Cupertino are among others combating of new and re-emerging infectious diseases, supporting reproductive health care and child health care, counteracting life style related health problems and improving services for indigenous people. An outline for such a health programme is to be presented to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the next meeting of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Bodø in March 1999.

The Council of Baltic Sea States

The measures also include the arranging of conferences/seminars in the Baltic Sea region (CBSS Working Group on Assistance to Democratic Institutions in Special Session) on the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This move covers, *inter alia*, initiatives related to - and treatment of - children and families in which sexual abuse has taken place.

The Danish Commissioner of the CBSS on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has published a report on sexual exploitation of children in the Baltic Sea Area.

To follow up on the recommendations in this report - with the specific objection to create awareness around the topic - there will initially be a conference for politicians and decision-makers in Tallinn in September '98 (arranged by Norway, Sweden and Estonia) and a seminar for local children protection officers, policemen, judges and social workers in Riga in October '98 (arranged by Denmark, Latvia and Germany).

Later in 1998 a seminar will be co-arranged by Lithuania and Denmark.

The Council of Europe's Programme for Children

The Council of Europe is currently drafting a "Programme for Children", based on the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. The programme covers three main areas: children's environment; child care/day-care; and social support for children who are exposed to certain risks (e.g. victims of abuse violence and exploitation). The programme also mentions several areas which merit special attention, e.g. pilot projects. The compilation of a survey of current projects and the development of strategies for co-ordination, both in relation to state-sponsored activities and NGO activities in this field, are to be incorporated in the Council of Europe's programme.

The evaluation of the pilot projects is to form the background for the drafting of a more detailed action plan in each of the three main areas, containing:

- ▶ Illustrative examples,
- ▶ Training programmes,
- ▶ Technical advice,

- ▶ Know-how transfer,
- ▶ The development of joint policy strategies, and
- ▶ Ideas for the further development of the action programme.

One of the major advantages of the Council of Europe's programme is that all the Nordic countries and the adjacent areas can participate in the designing and implementation, as all these countries are members of the Council of Europe.

In June 1999, the Council of Europe's family ministers' conference is to hold a session in Stockholm on the theme *Towards a Child-friendly Society*. It is expected that the conference will contribute towards the development of the programme for children referred to above.

EU Programmes

A number of EU programmes have been devised with the aim of promoting industrial/commercial/economic development by applying different strategies for the measures implemented. PHARE is the largest EU grants programme. TEMPUS builds networks linking universities in the EU member states with universities in Eastern and Central Europe, focusing on studies and research. TACIS is the EU's technical assistance programme, providing support for the transition to a market economy, with the aim of promoting democratic development.

The earlier programmes, however, had not been focused directly on providing aid for the social development of children and young adults.

IV. Action Plan

Co-ordinated measures:

The Nordic countries could contribute by implementing co-ordinated measures

In the field of child and youth work, there is an absence of a co-ordinating body. Instead of initiating new projects, in certain cases it can be more beneficial to ensure a certain measure of co-ordination of the existing projects, whether state-run or conducted by NGOs.

UNICEF is of the opinion that the greatest challenge with regard to evaluation of the projects and the launching of new projects is the lack of co-ordination. This co-ordination could be effected on the basis of the goals of the single organisation.

The establishing of co-ordination bodies, such as those proposed by UNICEF, i.e. by setting up Youth Co-ordination Councils on which the young people themselves are represented, can help to avoid duplication of efforts by local authorities and regional governance, multilateral state-level organisations and the NGOs. An advisory body of this type can also function as a forum for debate, the exchange of information and strategic planning, so that the resources are applied in the most efficient manner.

Nordic experience gained in operating the Child Ombudsman⁷ institution

There may be an advantage to be gained during the further processing of the material to be submitted in the report to the UN on the initiatives taken to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, if the work is combined with the creation of a Child Ombudsman institution. The institution can help to direct the focus towards the child's world and to generate respect for the child's independent culture, i.e. as viewed in relation to earlier authoritarian systems. It could be based on the experience accumulated in the Nordic countries in applying different models, and adapted to the special conditions obtaining in the single country.

Further, the Nordic countries could assist by a) compiling the report, and b) by devising a system of indicators of children's living conditions, which would make it possible to monitor developments in the area over a longer period of time, with a view to determining the extent to which the initiatives and methods applied have achieved the desired level of efficiency in complying with the adopted goals.

Besides, the Nordic countries could assist by compiling and translating debate material on the organisational structure, etc. of various *Ombudsman* institutions and on their mode of functioning in actual practice.

⁷ As the term *ombudsman* (rather than *ombudsmand*) is generally understood in the Anglo-Saxon world, it will not be translated in this context, e.g. into *Parliamentary Commissioner*. The institution also exists in non-Nordic countries, in different forms.

Education:

Measures to reduce the number of school dropouts

The fact that more and more teenagers leave school without completing their compulsory education constitutes a serious problem. In 1990, for example, some 90 per cent of the pupils completed compulsory (up to the age of 15 years) in Latvia, whereas in 1995 only 75 per cent of 15-year-olds had completed their schooling.

The problem may have different causes, among them the fact that more parents cannot afford to purchase the requisite teaching materials (books, etc.) for their children. Additionally, problems such as conflicts, violence and alcohol in the families can be the decisive obstacle, preventing a child from concentrating and from benefiting from the tuition provided in the school.

Leisure activities, youth clubs, sports and cultural activities are similarly regarded as imposing an economic burden, although such activities would otherwise be suitable for promoting meetings between - and the integration of - different ethnic and cultural minorities, thus fostering friendships, also when the pupils have completed their schooling. These contacts can play a role in combating unconscious ethnic discrimination, which results in long-term youth, unemployment.

The ministry of education and research in Latvia proposes the following initiatives to combat the dropout problem. The proposals can probably be applied as the basis for a discussion of conditions in the other adjacent areas. The proposed measures are:

- ▶ Changes in the content of the syllabus (so that it becomes more relevant, more meaningful),
- ▶ The development of an introductory programme for pre-school children,
- ▶ The designing of an educational system that matches the requirements of the labour market, and
- ▶ Further training for schoolteachers.

To these can be added:

- ▶ Various measures designed to limit child labour to the extent that such labour has an impact on completion of compulsory schooling, and
- ▶ Measures to combat the economic exclusion of children from disadvantaged families.
- ▶ Measures addressed towards the disadvantaged families. Families who have trouble making their children stay in school could receive a substantial back up for a period of time. The support might also have an educational function towards the parents.

The adjacent areas could develop the international co-operation already commenced - on education, culture and research. A comprehensive exchange- and training programme to be run in collaboration with the Nordic countries would appear to be one obvious solution. The Nordic governments could support steps to implement education/training exchange programmes with the Baltic countries. There is an advantage to be gained from acquiring language skills along with other training skills when staying at other educational institutions in the Nordic countries. It is, however, a condition that the students/trainees have the requisite prior qualifications to be capable of deriving a benefit from such a stay abroad.

Further training for today's teachers, social workers and youth workers

The most effective measure seems - on initial appraisal - to be a concentration of most of the resources on teenagers in the senior classes, with a view to making the content of the various courses more relevant. This will help to ensure that the education reaches the standards (in terms of skills) required at the end of a comparable stage in the Nordic schools. A large part of the educational materials used hitherto, e.g. in history and civics, etc., has - virtually overnight - become obsolete.

The proposals can include the following measures:

- ▶ Translation and production of educational materials,
- ▶ Training for teachers/lecturers at teacher training colleges in the use of more modern teaching systems,
- ▶ Further training for school teachers,
- ▶ The use of TV and radio for educational purposes (e.g. by importing adapted Nordic educational programmes), and
- ▶ Grants schemes in the Nordic countries, which can offer teachers/school administrators an insight, into how the school can be run with the minimum of authoritarian systems. There are needs of corresponding training programmes for social workers and youth workers.

Children at risk

Street children

It must be expected that the children who are tempted by life on the street will sooner or later come into conflict with the law. Instead of applying rigid legislation on crime - with lengthy prison sentences for the minor offences committed by these street children - it would be more appropriate to offer them more stable living conditions (work, education, a place to live). Strengthening of the children's network could be achieved by reuniting them with their families or relatives (e.g. uncles, aunts, grandparents or others) who have the resources to be capable of supporting these children and young adults during a difficult phase - the transition to becoming self-supporting, i.e. also during the period *following* their 18th birthday.

But - children do not necessarily live in the street because they have no parents or families. Many street-children make a lot of money begging and stealing and some of them are in fact the breadwinners of their families. Therefore measures to prevent children from ending up in the street must take into consideration support to the disadvantaged families as well.

One of the solutions proposed to tackle these problems is the setting up of crisis centres which - in addition to providing basic overnight accommodation, meals etc. - would provide: 1) health-care (psychological care, and admission to medical and dental care, if needed), counselling and advice/support 2) counselling on education/training and job opportunities, and 3) possibilities of placement in a foster family.

Organising family help, foster families, etc.

In Lithuania a growing percentage of children are placed outside the home, on account of the death of the parents or their inability to take care of their children. About half of these children are placed in foster homes, with relatives or with other families. In certain parts of the adjacent areas, however, there are still large children's institutions, based on the now defunct political system.

It can be difficult - within a short time-span - to establish a system of emergency measures consisting of foster families and alternative places of residence for children and young adults without families. Such a system requires the training of social workers, schoolteachers, police and other professionals who meet children and young people, equipping these workers to enter such an organisational structure. The foster family organisation must inspect children for the foster families, and provide support and supervision of the foster families by maintaining close contact if any problems arise.

A state-funded programme must be designed to establish emergency foster family services which can take the place of the earlier - and unsatisfactory - institutions, using a) more "permanent" foster families and b) foster families which can provide relief in critical situations (e.g. when the father/mother is ill, or teenagers have crime-related problems).

According to the assessments reached by some of the countries' own experts, there is a rapidly growing need for the measures described above. The experience gained by the Nordic countries in establishing such systems could be applied with advantage to form part of the information work to be carried out in this context.

Prevention of youth crime - treatment of young offenders

Offenders under the age of 18 years account for a high percentage of the aggregate number of offences committed. A considerable part of the young offenders had themselves been victims of abuse and neglect. In Latvia, children aged 11 and upwards can be placed - following a ruling by the court - in closed institutions. Court rulings on offences committed by minors have been growing in number throughout the first half of the 1990s, covering both serious offences and the less serious. The increases have been particularly noticeable in robbery and theft committed by minors.

The young offenders are kept in detention under unhygienic conditions (e.g. 10 teenagers in the same room) while awaiting sentencing.

Another factor is the lack of effective forms of treatment for young criminals. One important method to be applied when rehabilitating young criminals is to restore their self-respect and sense of self-worth. The existing closed institutions for young criminals must be expected to have the opposite effect. There is also a need for improved education for prison workers.

Nordic experience indicates that one of the very few methods of reducing the growth in the rate of criminal behaviour is to ensure that young adults can grow up in as normal surroundings as possible, i.e. with

- ▶ possibilities of growing up in a home (if relevant, in a foster family and not in a boarding institution),
- ▶ possibilities of getting an education/vocational training, a job,
- ▶ and a supportive social network.

Major difficulties are usually experienced when re-socialising young adults who have grown up in institutions where several young adults with a criminal record are brought together.

If the projects are to succeed, one of the most important requirements will be to provide the necessary education/training places and to create workplaces for these young adults.

But a general effort to combat unemployment must also be expected to benefit young adults. As long as the rate of unemployment is relatively high, young adults in particular will be the victims. On the other hand, young adults will be the first to benefit from any increase in the number of jobs. Young adults are the first to be excluded from the labour market, but they are also the first to return to work.

Many of the young adults have no access to a legitimate mode of earning an income. It can be recommended that a wide range of different measures be implemented to alter this situation, e.g. summer labour camps, where teenagers - under proper supervision - have an opportunity to improve their living conditions.

Youth workshops

In Iceland and Finland experience has been gained in running so-called youth workshops. In Finland, for example, some 300 workshops have been established with an annual capacity of about 6,000-7,000 young adults, each of whom spends 6 months at a workshop.

The youth workshops can, for example, consist of a number of single workshops, which cover subjects intended to provide the young adults with an insight into, *inter alia*:

- ▶ Starting up an independent business,
- ▶ Apprentice training,
- ▶ Other vocational training,
- ▶ Conversion of a workshop into an activity centre, and
- ▶ Support for excluded young adults.

The youth workshops are run by the municipalities, and arrange training courses, work and other activities (e.g. sports) with a view to motivating the young adults to embark subsequently on a training course and to take active steps to get a job. The isolation experienced by the young adults is broken, and the workshops function as a cultural meeting place.

It is also the aim that the young adults should undergo a democratic maturing process. One of the important goals is thus to delegate to the young adults responsibility for running the workshop, empowering them to govern the range of activities.

Cultural measures

Exploiting the possibilities of cultural activities as a dynamo in social work

Children who have discovered that the network that most directly moulds their identity has actively undermined their self-worth and breached their personal integrity will be regarded as lacking in concentration at school. These vulnerable children will - more frequently than their classmates/peers - be exposed to teasing and bullying from children of their own age.

Experience⁸ has shown that meaningful challenges and the creative involvement of children and young adults can be used as a method of developing and boosting the formation of an identity. By themselves creating an artistic experience, children and young adults achieve a strengthened sense of self-worth that makes them more capable of applying their creative abilities. Perhaps one of the characteristics of good art and culture is that they trigger off a creative, contemplative involvement in the participant?

1. Culture and art often deal with relations between people. In the adjacent areas there are profound ethnic clashes, e.g. between the countries' indigenous citizens and the descendants of the former occupying powers. Art and culture can serve as tools, enabling the viewer/participant to reflect on his/her own actions and on interpersonal relationships. The use of culture as a tool in preventive work with children and young adults can make them more capable of entering a dialogue and of understanding social, cultural and ethnic differences.
2. Some children and young people may find it difficult to express their opinions in words. Participation in artistic and cultural activities such as theatre or drawing/painting can offer them an opportunity to express themselves and to reflect on their own experiences. If this is to succeed it is a prior requirement that the items produced by the children and young adults are treated with respect. Some particularly vulnerable children and young adults can - via these creative experiences - gain an opportunity to reinforce their self-worth and to achieve a better understanding of themselves, while at the same time they become more capable of entering into social relations with other children and young adults.
3. Professional artists who are competent in their selected fields and who at the same time have certain teaching/pedagogical abilities can reveal some hidden resources - even in vulnerable and exposed children and young adults. These children have an opportunity to achieve release from hard and fast roles and from the rigid expectations of their environment. When this succeeds the vulnerable children and young adults can reveal new talents and win greater respect among their peers.
4. The participation of children and young in a project organised in small co-operating groups, where each has a responsibility for solving part-problems, can in itself be an enriching experience for the participants. (The staging of a play, for example, requires a number of

⁸ Nielsen, Jimmie Gade (1996): *Kultur som dynamo i det forebyggende arbejde* ("Culture as a dynamo in preventive work"), Copenhagen: The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children.

activities: a dance group, a PR group, a drama group, a stage-sets group, a booking group, tent group, etc.).

Proposals for the Action Plan:

Support for cultural and artistic work among children and young adults can - to a large extent - be carried out within existing organisational frameworks. This can be achieved, for example, by developing the existing libraries and cultural institutions, or the project can be incorporated in already functioning NGO projects with Nordic support for organisation of the involvement of professional artists or other existing cultural centres.

The participation of the children themselves in the design of the products can play a role as part of the teaching/pedagogical method. When the processing of the problems experienced by the young people is conducted via cultural activities, in a situation in which they themselves make decisions, the process is not experienced as a betrayal of the self - nor as a situation in which one is tricked into making revelations about the inner self. The work can be organised so as involve the children and young adults in the choice of activities.

The teaching/pedagogical process involved in planning and selecting the activities is also a lesson in democracy. In certain cases this is to be done via a multi-step process, depending on the children's resources. The children thus get the necessary time to reflect on what it means to assume joint responsibility.

It is important to strengthen already existing institutions and co-operation between similar institutions in the Nordic countries. One can look at the school as a channel and a meeting-place and for ex. establish networks between teachers.

Libraries to be used for cultural activities for children and young adults

The number of libraries has been reduced in recent years. The closure of libraries - on the scale seen in the adjacent areas - can be a major handicap, especially for children and young adults. Many of them will simply not be in a position to use a library unless it is local.

The libraries in the adjacent areas can serve as a venue where children and young adults can meet their peers under free and relaxed circumstances. Many children and young adults already spend their time off in the libraries, using it as an auxiliary educational source.

Proposals for Action Plan:

It is proposed that support be provided to exploit the potential of the libraries as cultural centres for children and young adults. A number of fixed activities could be scheduled, e.g. a weekly food day, a film day, a weekly playing day (musical instruments). Or an evening with reading aloud - e.g. an adventure story or novel that appeals to the children.

The Nordic governments can allocate additional grants to support the translation and printing of Nordic children's and youth literature, which can be "sold" to the libraries for a token amount. This idea can be realised as a co-operation measure, whereby - at the same time - books for the same target group are translated and printed in the Nordic languages, thus enabling Nordic children and young adults to gain an insight into daily life in the adjacent areas.

As part of the cultural exchange between equal parties, children in the Nordic region could receive information on child culture and daily life in the adjacent areas (e.g. the history of the ethnic minorities, music, the dance, children's games, books, the history of children). This material could be made available on the data network or via CD-ROM, radio, TV short films, etc.

Cultural and Educational Exchanges

In co-operation with the adjacent areas, support could be provided for the compilation of relevant textbooks and other teaching materials to be used in the teaching of subjects focusing on culture, the environment (including traffic safety) and democracy in the adjacent areas and in the Nordic countries. A subsequent evaluation and revision of the educational materials after a trial period can form the basis for an extension of the programme.

Conservation of the culture of the indigenous populations - for the generations to come

The establishing of an ethnic centre - possibly in Nenets or Lovozero: This is the explicit wish of the indigenous population of Lovozero. The aim of the project is to offer development opportunities to a Sami culture in Northwest Russia and to strengthen the society built up by the indigenous population. (The project could include a CD-ROM, featuring language training in the Nenet language and in Russian, along with a presentation of Sami culture.)

Prevention and health care:

Support for disabled children and young adults

A number of disabled children are accommodated at large obsolete institutions - a problem partly inherited from the previous (Soviet) regime. Several sources emphasise the fact that the number of children in institutions has increased in recent years.

But Nordic experience shows that the transition from life at an institution to a normal life in society traditionally involves serious difficulties for these children and young adults.

It is especially difficult for functionally disabled children to get an opportunity to develop within the framework of traditional institutions and - later - to become integrated in society.

A study of mentally handicapped persons in the Segezha district of Russia (the Tacis Bistro project) showed that despite the allegedly high alcohol consumption, very few children were born with a mental disability. But the situation of the disabled in these areas is very different from the situation of disabled children in the Nordic countries, because only limited support is provided for the parents if they choose to keep the children at home. A relatively high number of parents decide to place the child in an institution (usually relatively large institutions). In this connection, it should be mentioned that an increasing part of the problems are based on severe social or psychological abuse or neglect and not grounded in medical problems.

It seems relevant to propose seminars for teachers and therapists who work with mentally handicapped persons in the adjacent areas, to provide a forum for a discussion of the experience gained in the Nordic countries that might be applied with beneficial results in the adjacent areas.

The establishing of one or more rehabilitation centres could lead to an improvement of the service offered to disabled children. At the same time the centres could serve as education and research centres for the adjacent areas, with a view to passing on the experience accumulated to others working in this particular field.

Information on contraception and health-care for children and young adults

The abortion statistics in Russia are alarming (220 abortions per 100 live births, as compared with 30 in Norway). The relatively high number of abortions can endanger women's health. The figures show that access to, the availability of and the quality of contraceptive devices are far from adequate, and that there is a lack of information and counselling for young adults.

Against this background it seems obvious to expand the number of health-care centres, whose main function is to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. This can be achieved by providing information for groups (e.g. school classes) via individual counselling and clinical treatment, and by implementing monitoring systems which ensure the quality of the contraceptive devices, along with methods to make contraceptives easily accessible (e.g. via free distribution). The health-care centres will thus also be capable of providing individual counselling for teenagers.

Prevention of injuries at birth

Certain countries in the adjacent areas report a relatively high incidence of birth traumas. The Nordic countries place experts at the disposal of the relevant authorities, with a view to implementing the most effective information and education programme, using limited resources.

A survey conducted in Latvia shows that the basic methods applied to prevent natal damage to children are:

- ▶ General primary school training in health conditions, especially among young adults (including nutrition, advice on limiting the mother's consumption of alcohol and tobacco, instruction in the use of contraception);
- ▶ Prevention of natal traumas (medical examination during pregnancy, training of midwives and a nation-wide corps of midwives);
- ▶ Steps to promote breast-feeding of infants (breast-feeding for the first 4 months); and
- ▶ Early diagnosis of damage to the child's central nervous system.

Targeted information campaigns against smoking

UNDP's most recent Human Development report showed that 67 per cent of the population of Latvia has a minimum-level existence. This means generally poor nutrition and an inappropriate lifestyle, with alcohol abuse and smoking among very young children.

There is a need for an effective information campaign devised specifically with young adults as the target group. Very few young adults take up smoking *after* the age of 20 years. It thus makes sense to conduct a targeted information campaign devised to limit the number of young adults who begin by smoking the first 200 cigarettes, which makes them addicted to nicotine.

Additionally, steps can be taken to impose limits on the opportunities available to the tobacco companies to persuade these age groups to take up smoking. (Tax on cigarettes, implementation of a code imposing restrictions on cigarette advertising. There has also been mention of a direct ban on ads for tobacco.)

Support for breast-feeding

Steps taken in this area to ensure the health of infants have proved to play a very important role. The aim is to persuade mothers to breast-feed the infant for the first 4 months. In Latvia, for example, only about one third of mothers breast-feed the infant for 3 months. And during the first half of the 1990s the trend is, regrettably, towards less breast-feeding.

Experience shows that impressive results can be achieved in terms of altering cultural norms and habits by providing information for pregnant women and for the general public.

Various measures to limit smoking among young women would - in this context - have a major impact on breast-feeding, and on the general health of the infant.

The draft for UNICEF's programme pertaining to the Russian Federation contains a number of points aimed to promote breast-feeding:

- ▶ Training of hospital personnel and other professionals, information for the general public and other forms of counselling for mothers;
- ▶ Implementation of WHO's code for the marketing of milk substitutes ("formula"). In this connection there is particular reference to regional administrators, politicians and others, who are urged to ensure an effective control of marketing, and
- ▶ The use of the mass media and other relevant channels to attract attention in society as a whole and among mothers in particular. In certain areas major information campaigns are already being conducted.

In addition to implementing the information measures outlined above, it is important to focus on the material conditions that can impose stress on mothers to such an extent that they stop breast-feeding their infants at too early a stage. The special risk groups will be *mothers who live with an insecure occupational-economic basis for the survival of the family*.

The implementation of legislation, labour-market regulations, workplace culture and other measures capable of protecting pregnant women against dismissal, and of providing them with an opportunity to take leave from work and resume their jobs upon completion of the period of leave, can be included among the measures which reduce the pressure imposed on the mothers. In this connection it should be noted that a more general *effort to promote vocational training for young women* would also give them greater security with regard to jobs/income.

Immunisation programmes for children

With a view to preventing epidemics of certain diseases, it is necessary to conduct virtually full-scale vaccination programmes, covering 90-95 per cent of all children at any given time, against diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles and tetanus. It may be costly, but the alternative is crippling and fatal disease. Diphtheria and TB, in particular, appear to be developing in the adjacent areas, unless a goal-oriented effort is made.

Nordic experts could support UNICEF's work in this field, covering:

- ▶ Support for the design of epidemiological strategies in compliance with intentional standards;
- ▶ Training of hospital personnel (lectures, videos, seminars), and
- ▶ The creation of an emergency service to monitor the epidemic development of diseases.

One of the problems involved in the case of some of these diseases is that the vaccinated person can be a carrier without becoming ill. A vaccination cover of for example, 10 per cent generates a false sense of security and does not limit the epidemic spread of the disease.

Sexually transmitted diseases

One of the more cost-effective methods of improving the state of public health in low-income countries is to prevent and treat the sexually transmitted diseases that respond to treatment.

The incidence of syphilis has fallen in Western Europe to fewer than 5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Gonorrhoea has fallen to fewer than 20 cases per 100,000. But in the recently independent

Baltic States there has been an epidemic development of sexually transmitted diseases throughout the 1990s. The incidence of syphilis has increased 15-60 times from 5-15 per 100,000 in 1990 to 200-500 per 100,000 in 1996. The increase has been relatively high among young adults.

The causes appear to be altered behaviour and changing attitudes, an increase in travel, unemployment, poverty and prostitution. There is no efficient treatment system to replace the earlier system, which focused on treatment and the identification of the patient's previous sexual contacts. People wish to avoid stigmatisation, and prefer the anonymous but inadequate and often unqualified treatment available in the private sector.

The potential for a rapid spread of HIV is thus present in the adjacent areas.

Street children who try to earn a living from begging, crime and prostitution run a high risk of catching sexually transmitted diseases. Various forms of abuse are to be expected among street children. The development of HIV/AIDS among drug addicts who use injections has occurred at epidemic rate. A considerable and alarming increase is reported in the number of young drug-abusers during the period 1993-1996 (Russia).

A lack of information among young adults and a lack of access to practical means of protection make young adults extremely vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases.

WHO/EURO serves as the secretariat for the Task Force for the Urgent Response to the Epidemic of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the newly independent states and the Baltic States.

It is proposed that the Nordic countries participate in this work - and co-ordinate and donate financial and technical assistance to the adjacent areas, covering:

- ▶ The development of a national strategy (research, monitoring of the development of diseases and intervention)⁹,
- ▶ Medicine (availability and the rational use of),
- ▶ Condoms (marketing, production, quality control, distribution), and
- ▶ Education, research, international co-operation.

⁹ In St. Petersburg, for example, it is reported that although statistics suggest that the number of infected persons has fallen, the infected patients who are treated by physicians in private practice are not covered by the statistics.

Summary

The various social- and health problems mentioned in this document are well known in the Nordic Countries. The action plan is based on Nordic experiences which might be adapted to the situation in the adjacent areas.

Some of the project proposals and measures referred to in the action plan seem to be urgently needed in the context of an overarching Nordic action plan for the area, focusing on children and young adults, because such measures must be assumed to constitute a prior requirement for the successful implementation of other measures.

Co-ordinated measures:

The Nordic council of Ministers could contribute by providing co-ordinated measures.

In co-operation with UNICEF, steps could be taken to compensate for the lack of co-ordination by forming Youth Co-ordination Councils, thereby avoiding wasteful duplication of efforts.

Competence-transfer

The experience gained in competence-transfer makes it natural to propose a reinforcement of such transfers and an extension covering several areas in the fields of culture and social policy. Establishing and reinforcing the Nordic grant schemes and the exchange schemes should follow up these steps.

Child Ombudsman Institution

The experience gained from operating the Nordic Child Ombudsman institutions should be capable of serving as the basis for establishing similar arrangements in the adjacent areas. There appears to be an interest in establishing such institutions, and the positive experience accumulated by the Nordic countries will serve as an excellent basis for knowledge-transfer.

Preventive health measures:

In co-operation with other international organisations (WHO/EURO), measures are proposed to meet needs in the following areas:

- ▶ Contraception and health information for young adults, along with measures to combat sexually transmitted diseases,
- ▶ Setting up health-centres,
- ▶ The development of a national strategy for monitoring and intervention,
- ▶ Support measures to promote breast-feeding of infants, via a) information campaigns and b) reduction of stress factors that impose a burden on mothers,
- ▶ Immunisation programmes for children. Co-operation with UNICEF on designing strategies, education of hospital personnel and preparing for emergency dissemination of information.

Street children and children at risk

Steps to make it possible to offer street children stable living conditions (work, an education, a place to live, and - if relevant - reunion with relatives or other family members). Such steps are also needed for other groups of children and young adults, e.g. the handicapped.

Cultural measures:**Extension of Nordic schemes covering cultural affairs**

Nordic aid and development schemes could be extended, or parallel schemes could be established for the adjacent areas, with a view to offering participation in existing networks and organisations, e.g. the *Valhalla* project, museum activities, courses, summer camps, etc.

Establishing libraries as cultural centres

By implementing reinforcement measures to facilitate the re-opening of public libraries or renewing them for the population, with a range of items on offer including newspapers, recently published literature - also Nordic literature in translation - and equipping these libraries to serve as the venue for special cultural arrangements and exhibitions. Access to the Internet, using the library as a contact point between authorities and the population, etc.

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