

Summary report of the kick-off meeting for a capacity development initiative in food and nutrition in Eastern and Central Europe held in Budapest on 19 May 2005

Introduction

The SCN Capacity Development Working Group (WG) is chaired by Dr Cutberto Garza, UNU, and Drs. Hans Schoeneberger and David Sanders are co-chairs. The WG has initiated regional Capacity Building task forces in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Southern Africa. The regional groups are well organised and active, although functioning at different levels of activity. Regional initiatives are ongoing in all major regions of the developing world except for Eastern Europe. The intensive networking of training and research institutions is regarded as a very productive mode of functioning, the regional approach was reaffirmed, and the need to maintain the regionally driven agendas and organization was reasserted.

The aim of present meeting in Budapest reported on here was to initiate a process which finally will lead to the establishment of the Eastern European Task Force. This is part of the Working Group's efforts in catalyzing the formation of a truly global array of regional task forces actively working towards the enhancement of individual, institutional, and organizational capacity in food and nutrition.

Participants

Dr. M. Pavlovic (Public Health Institute, Subotica, Serbia and Montenegro), Prof. S. Petrova (Min. of Health, National Center of Public Health Protection, Sofia, Bulgaria), Dr. A.Gohar (National Nutrition Institute, Cairo, Egypt), Prof. A. Oshaug (Akerhus University College, Norway) and Dr. F. Pepping (Wageningen University, The Netherlands and regional coordinator UNU Food and Nutrition Program). In addition several parts of the meeting were attended by Mr. S. Tanic, Mr. M. Demes and Mr. A. Rozstalny of the FAO, Sub-regional office for Central and Eastern Europe.

The first part of the morning programme on 19th May was also attended by Mrs. M. Piotrowska (Min. of Agriculture and Rural Development, Poland) and Mr. J Muchka (Min. of Agriculture, Czech Republic)

Unfortunately Prof. A. Raic-Kak (Zagreb, Croatia) and Prof. G. Garza (director UNU Food and Nutrition Programme and Cornell University, Ithaca, USA) were unable to attend the meeting. Prof. Garza joined the start of the meeting for 30 minutes during a conference call.

Objectives of the meeting

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- discuss experiences in recent years with capacity development initiatives initiated by UNU and IUNS in various regions;
- identify best practices and make use of such to plan a capacity development initiative in Central (and Eastern) Europe;

- make the necessary arrangements for a follow up meeting later in 2005; and
- agree on preparatory activities to be done.

Summary of discussions

Agenda, see annex I.

Garza outlined (by phone) the objectives of SCN/UNU FNP and its capacity development initiatives.

Pepping presented some details about the capacity development initiative as started in 1999 in Africa (see Annex III) and outlined the funding opportunities and possibilities for collaboration that exists with the Socrates Programme (see an example in annex IV). All new mega-projects of the EC (Networks of Excellence and Integrated Programmes) have partners from Central and Eastern Europe (Poland is in NuGO, Bulgaria in EuroFIR, etc.) and these projects all offer training possibilities.

Gohar presented the start and the first actions as undertaken by the capacity development initiative as initiated in the Middle East, the presentation is given in annex II. 16 countries participate, the conceptual framework proved to be essential to streamline all discussions during the first meeting of the network (MANANA).

Pavlovic presented data on the nutrition situation in Serbia & Montenegro (see annex V). Chronic diseases (including CHD), diabetes and obesity are major health problems. Even children have increased risk of CHD. Lack of progress with National Food & Nutrition Action Plan is worrying.

Petrova presented results of the Bulgarian nutrition surveys and the gaps in capacity development as observed by her (see annex V). Implementation of Nat. Food & Nutrition Action Plan is facing delays. It was approved in the parliament, but not implemented due to inadequate commitment and allocation of government funding. Food safety always pops up as priority because of their accession status towards the European Community while nutrition is losing ground. The lack of political will and priorities, fragmentation of priorities, and an apparent lack of resources are similarities of the situation between Serbia & Montenegro and Bulgaria.

The presentation send in by Kaic-Rak is included in annex VII.

Demes presented the Agroweb of FAO (see www.agrowebcee.net), the Food and Nutrition section on every country page might be of use to promote the forthcoming activities of the network. Pavlovic is the coordinator of these food and nutrition pages. Demes pointed out the importance of committed professionals, with adequate capacity able to influence decisions which would finally affect the diet and nutrition situation of the populations in Eastern and Central Europe.

Participants agreed that a conceptual framework with the four levels as drawn up by Gohar is providing important guidance to the activities of a future network in Central Europe.

Next steps

The participants agreed on the following steps as follow up:

- suggest names of two persons that would be part of the core group that would be central in establishing the Task Force for this region;

- identify approx. 15 potential participants for the follow up meeting, a good spread over government agencies, academia, research institutes, NGO's (including consumer organisations if possible) is required. Advice can be asked from people within for example WHO, FAO and other UN agencies for possible candidates to the group. Personnel commitment is foremost important criterion;
- prepare first outline of a draft *Conceptual Framework* (as provided by Dr Gohar) for Central and Eastern Europe that should give structure to the forthcoming activities;
- prepare an outline for a short CV and country profiles to be sent later to participants.

These two steps should be completed by June 10th:

- after identification, request the potential participants to provide short CV;
- request the participant to start on a short 'country profile' and priorities for capacity development as seen by them for such an initiative;
- set dates for the follow up meeting
 - o (preliminary dates are *30 November (arrival in the afternoon), 1 & 2 December or 7-9 December*. It was agreed that the FAO office in Budapest is a convenient place to meet as Budapest is served by many airlines. The FAO representative (Ms Kadlecicova) will be requested to host this meeting.
- Extend the Task Force Core Group from 2 (Pavlovic and Petrova) to 4 persons. The core group will be responsible for the organisation of the next meeting which will be the formal establishment of the Task Force for Eastern and Central Europe.

The participants wish to express their thanks to the staff of the FAO office for their excellent support to realise this meeting.

Annexes (only annex I is appended, other annexes are available at request)

- I. Agenda
- II. Presentation Dr Azza Gohar, Nutrition capacity development in Middle East & North Africa region
- III. Presentation Dr. F. Pepping, African capacity development initiative
- IV. Socrates Intensive programme Food & health
- V. Presentation Dr. M. Pavlovic, Nutrition and physical activity of the population in Serbia
- VI. Presentation Dr. S. Petrova, Current nutrition problems in Bulgaria capacity gaps
- VII. Presentation Dr. A. Kaic-Rak , Nutrition and health in the CEEC

Annex I

Agenda Tuesday 19 May: Chaired by Dr. A. Oshaug

- 09:00 Opening and agenda, review of background material
- 09:10 Dr C. Garza: Objectives of the meeting (by phone from Geneva)
- 09:20 Update on and lessons learned from the capacity development initiatives in:
- Dr Pepping: Africa,
 - Dr Garza (included in his presentation by phone from Geneva): Asia and Latin America
 - Dr. Gohar Middle East,
- 10:00 Current situation in Central Europe/Eastern Europe
- Dr Pavlovic: The nutrition situation in Serbia
 - Dr Petrova: The nutrition situation in Bulgaria
 - FAO delegates
- 11:30 Dr Pepping: Possibilities offered by new EC-initiatives as EuroFIR and NuGO, FP6 funded Networks of Excellence with a strong training mandate. There are now some 15 Networks of Excellence operating under Priority 5. How can we use their commitment to Central Europe?
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 What should the provisional goals of this initiative be and who are likely players in the development of a ten year plan of action?
- 15:00 Follow up actions and next meeting:
- Names of potential members of the core group
 - Venue and date for next meeting

VIII.