

### **Following three years of planning, HEPRO is now set for its kick-off in Turku.**

- This is by all means a milestone for those who have been part of the preparations. The planning began already in 2002, as representatives from the Scandinavian countries met in the Norwegian city of Moss. It is a paradox that the planning process has taken more than time than the project is actually expected to last (2005-2008), says project leader Arvid Wangberg.

HEPRO (Health and quality of life in the Baltic Sea Region) is a development project, aimed at developing a tool kit. This kit will assist in establishing health profiles, as well as contribute to increase the awareness of public health in the planning of society. 36 partners are involved, from 11 nations. EU has allocated two million Euro in order to carry out the INTERREG III B-program.

Wangberg hopes that the kick-off in Turku will create enthusiasm and a feeling of ownership about the project amongst its participants.

- We will use the opportunity to inform about the role HEPRO can play for its members. In addition we intend to discuss important issues that we must solve together. We will also put emphasis on how we can use health impact assessments as a tool in planning society, and examine how we can organise health profiles throughout the Baltic region, says Wangberg.

He points out that even though the project involves different countries and partners, they face similar challenges.



- As in the rest of Europe, the Baltic Sea Region is facing great challenges in terms of an ageing population, young people leaving rural areas to live in large cities, unemployment, an increase in the use of drugs and alcohol, and people suffering from mental illnesses. In addition, an increasing number of lifestyle illnesses and injuries from accidents will challenge the treatment capacity of the health services in the near future, says Wangberg.

In Turku, political leaders from partners, as well as different experts and administrative

## Kick-off in Turku

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representatives will be present. The kick-off is arranged in cooperation with the WHO Baltic Centre in Turku.

*Mr. Arvid Wangberg.*