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Nordic Arts & Health Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, 10 May 2022: Conference Review

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The second Nordic Arts & Health Conference was held at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Sweden, on 10 May 2022, with focus on Arts and Health Policies. The conference was organized by the Nordic Arts & Health Research Network in collaboration with Kompetenscentrum för kultur och hälsa, Region Stockholm, with support from Nordic Culture Point. In continuation of the conference, the Nordic Arts & Health Research Network organized a network meeting for the Network's researchers, on 11 May 2022. The one-day conference was organized in a hybrid format with many keynotes, presentations, and workshops held by researchers and practitioners within the field of arts and health. The programme consisted of 3 keynotes, and a round table discussion on the Nordic arts and health policies, in addition to 26 presentations and workshops in 9 parallel sessions by almost 50 speakers from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and Argentina. The review concentrates on the sessions attended by the author, and is, therefore, not a thorough reflection of the day's broad programme.

The conference began with three keynote speeches. All the keynote speakers emphasized the importance of interaction between the policymakers and the arts and health practitioners and researchers. The first keynote speaker, Professor Steinar Krokstad, from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, presented the present state and future of public health strategies. Krokstad emphasized *adding value* to practices, research, and education. By adding value to *self, relationships, work, and community*, one will get paid back by feeling valued. Director Taru Koivisto, Finland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, held the second keynote speech about arts and health policies in Finland. Koivisto presented the long-term measures for reducing inequalities in wellbeing, health, and safety by 2030, which aims to guarantee sustainable wellbeing for people at all stages of their lives. The third keynote speaker, Member of the European Parliament Pernille Weiss, raised the question of how we can integrate arts and health at all relevant levels of EU policy. Weiss urged that researchers and practitioners make concrete recommendations, because politicians need research data to make decisions. The message of the keynotes could be summarized: the key to *impact* is to *interact*.

After the keynotes, a master's degree student, percussionist Filip Korosec, provided a magical marimba performance, and that was followed by a Round Table discussion on the Nordic arts and health policies, chaired by Professor Wenche Torrissen. In the Round Table

discussion, Member of Parliament Eeva-Johanna Eloranta stressed that Finland is leading the way in promoting the wellbeing effects of arts and culture, as they are included in the action plan 2030 for wellbeing and safety. Taru Koivisto added that long-term development is starting to show in Finland. Chairs of the Culture Committees Magnus Lunderquist (Region Skåne) and Cecilia Elving (Region Stockholm) argue that in Sweden, knowledge about the arts affecting wellbeing is decent at the regional level, but the national policy is not coherent. Founder and former leader of the Norwegian Resource Centre for Arts and Health, Odd Håpnes, thinks that national politicians need to see that something works first locally in regions and in municipalities. All the panelists see challenges in securing financing, because the field of arts and health is still weak. There is, however, optimism in the panel. Håpnes sees establishing the *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health* as important step for the field: “Ah, they have a journal, then it’s a field.”

The afternoon was divided into three sections, the first including parallel sessions *Dance for PD*, *Arts therapies* and *Building bridges & structures between the sectors*. The latter session offered information about *Kaikukortti*, a Finnish tool to spread cultural wellbeing to people in financially distressed situation, presented by Seppo Mallenius. Anna-Mari Rosenlöf then presented the Finnish Arts and Health coordination Centre Taikusydän, which has created a national collaborative network with 14 regional networks to promote arts and culture as a permanent part of health and wellbeing promotion in Finland. Finally, Anita Jensen and Bibbi Miegel Sandborg presented Region Skåne’s strategy for Arts and Health 2022–2030, which supports people throughout the whole lifespan. Importantly, Jensen’s and Sandborg’s presentation raised the question of how to include people who do not speak Swedish as a mother tongue or people with disabilities.

The second section had the following sessions: *Theatre, drama & mental health*, *Supporting the creative wellbeing of older adults* and *Cross-sectional practices*. The session about wellbeing of older adults offered three perspectives on peer-group methods for senior citizens. Dohee Lee introduced a cross-cultural framework, which includes story-based method to increase late-life creativity, developed with Masood Masoodian. Annika Tammela presented how singing and reminiscing together in a group benefit the elderly, and Mette Marie Kristensen with Anna Paldam Folker introduced a study which demonstrates how Shared Reading promotes mental health for newly retired men. All the interventions emphasized the importance of offering older adults an emotionally safe and intimate space, where they can share and reflect.

The last three sessions were: *The work of artists in cross-disciplinary settings*, *Arts in education and learning*, and *Arts interventions supporting wellbeing of people with long-term conditions*. The first of these included three presentations about artists’ role in the health and wellbeing sector. Louise Eulau and Anna-Karin Kuuse reminded us that stressed healthcare professionals need a calming space which a musician can offer. Karsten Auerbach and Susie Andersen had the same view as the last speaker Niina Oinas, that art can help patients to express emotions when words cannot. In the discussion it was pointed out that art can also affect other people than it is targeted at, like healthcare workers when they are dealing with patients. The session reinforced the idea of how artists working in the healthcare field should be considered as working *in* the field, not as visitors.

The closing words and reflections of the day were chaired by Professor Eva Bojner-Horwitz, from the Royal College of Music. It was agreed that the field of arts and health needs more connection with politics. Also, the more the field can present benefits, the more it will have funding. In order for this to happen, practitioners and researchers must keep doing their great work in, for instance, music, dance, writing, sculpting, and drama, not forgetting education – and make the results accessible, understandable and convincing.