

# AktivRegion Mittelholstein



## An overview about the region

The AktivRegion Mittelholstein is an area in the middle of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. Which is the northernmost federal state of Germany?

The AktivRegion Mittelholstein belongs to the initiative „Aktiv Region“ and is an important part of the German strategy called „Future programme for rural areas“. This strategy is connected to EAFRD „European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development“

The AktivRegion Mittelholstein itself is one of 21 AktivRegions in Schleswig-Holstein. It includes nearly 100 000 inhabitants with 8 local authorities (Ämter) including 78 smaller communes and 2 big communes. The policy of the AktivRegion Mittelholstein is a process in work, made by an association called **LAG** with members from the local administration (50%) and members from social and economic partners (both also together 50%). An executive board has the responsibility for the whole strategy work. The management and coordination of the projects is the responsibility of the office for regional management **pmd**. The general objective is to strengthen the rural development through implementation of projects developed from inside the region. The projects are financed partly by the EU and partly by the communes of the AktivRegion or private investments. The final financial responsibility for the public investments is a decision of each commune, working together in a local authority.



[www.aktivregion-mh.de](http://www.aktivregion-mh.de)

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## “Healthy regions” - an EU project in the middle of Schleswig-Holstein: Objectives and working fields

The “Healthy regions” project is a partner of the AktivRegion Mittelholstein. Both initiatives started at the same time in November 2007. The chief of the initiative AktivRegion Mittelholstein at that time, was very interested in this cooperation. On the one hand he wanted to raise attention to his AktivRegion with an EU Project as a specific profile on the other hand he was interested in the theme “health” as an instrument for regional development.

The **general objective** of the “Healthy region” concept is to focus on the creation of a new regional concept called; “Healthy Regions”, that should be developed, implemented and disseminated within the participating regions and on an European level. The strategic objective is to make health a political prestige area, being highly placed on the political agenda, and to show, on a political and practical level, how regions, through focus on health and well-being, can create social- and economic sustainable growth. To realise this objectives we have to work on three fields.

The **main working fields** in this projects are to work on the

- **political level** with regional strategic decision makers within regional and local health authorities. The objective is to make the decision makers aware of the possibilities to behave in a proactive way in terms of preventing health problems, hence in a longer perspective create an effective use of resources, a healthy population, health equality and economic growth.
- **practical level**, the target group are health professionals and other stakeholders, such as school teachers, adult teachers, (...) and other regional actors who are in contact with representatives from the target group on the individual level. Through the pilot projects, representatives from this target group will be more aware of how they can participate actively to bring the regional health strategy on a practical level.
- **individual level**, the end users are the general public and citizens, e.g. parents, children, teenagers, workers, socially excluded people, who through the pilot projects that support the regional health strategy, will receive different kinds of health training and information. Through the pilot projects, the individual will be more aware about how he or she can engage themselves and participate actively as to create better health either within their family, workplace and / or school.

(from: Annex I – Description of the action – “Healthy Regions –When Well being Creates Economic Growth, Henriette Hansen 2007)

To **work on the political level** in the AktivRegion Mittelholstein means, to bring together the “right” persons and interested persons. “Right” persons are wellminded opinion leaders from the whole region respectively representatives from each local authority. In the first year most of our work was to propagade the idea of “Healthy regions” and the benefit for the AktivRegion to different groups. Finally we have got the order to develop a health strategy for the region and to consider the possibilities for the implementation.

The regional health strategy **“To configure learning settings – to live healthiness”** is a strategy for the healthy region Mittelholstein,

- to support healthy settings in kindergarten and schools with the implementation of the pilot projects:
  - pleasure of live – pleasure of body
  - back bone – back advise
  - audit “Healthy institution and
- to assist the skills from experts of the region to work forand with the regional institutions through
  - collateral learning opportunity for sustainability in nourishment and health education under the headlines: growing up with taste, eating as part of the individual and social identity, experience of regional diversity, get out and enjoy nature
  - Setting up a network between the experts, kindergarten and schools

The first important steps to considere were, that the regional health strategy is part of the IES and in the project catalogue of the AktivRegion. But for the implementation of the regional health strategy all majors and representative from each commune have to decide about the financial participation.

In the last phase of our project we have to communicate with a lot of potential partners in the local authorities like majors, well-minded politicians from different parties, opinion leaders and directors of kindergarten and schools to find acceptance or to push up pressure from the target groups kindergarten and school to the decision makers in the adminstration and politics.

We are still working.

### Regional cooperations

On the political level we worked together with different partners depending on the process:

At first we worked together with:

The chief manager of the initial phase -Heinrich Lembrecht

The manager of a planing agency, responsible for the IES Intedrated development strategy, Dr. Klaus Hand

As well as interested persons/opinion leader from the region

In the next steps the AktivRegion Mittelholstein was more established as an association **LAG** with an executive board and a regional management office **pmd**. We are working together with the members of these groups .

To realise further steps for a regional health strategy we used the consulting competences in the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas of SH, the ALR (office of the local authority for rural areas) and other specialists from our and also from other regions.

After the regional health strategy was placed in the project catalogue of the AktivRegion we started dissemination to relevant partners in the region and for the network. This was also the preliminary to the regional conference. We visited the meetings of agency committes in the local authorities to present the regional health strategy.

On the **second working field** we implemented the three pilot projects (a fourth project – “Moving family” is not really a pilot project, it belongs to the project “Back bone – back advise”). Some institutions realised two or more projects and are therefore on the way to the audit “Healthy school” or “Healthy kindergarten”. One school took the project “Back bone – back advise” and modified it with experts for the own conditions and objectives.

The **third working field** is the result of the implementation of the pilot project from the second working field. The following pilot projects are implemented in the AktivRegion Mittelholstein during the “Healthy regions” project.

## Results

### On the political level

In these three years many things have changed. In general more and more inhabitants know that they are part of the initiative AktivRegion Mittelholstein. All participating local authorities and all nearly 80 communes are working with in this new development. Some projects have started.

About healthy region we can say, that also a lot of inhabitants have heard about this project. But more important is, that all responsible persons like majors, voluntary politicians know the idea of Healthy regions and a lot of them are involved in the discussion about health prevention as task for regional development. Not all agree completely with this development but the process is an important “eye-opener” for it. More and more we are in a positive process to realise the new health-strategy for Mittelholstein when the EU project “Healthy regions” have finished.

### On the level of the pilot projects

Till now

**8 kindergarten and 2 schools are offering “Rück(g)rat – Backbone / back advice “**

**4 kindergarten and 2 schools are offering “Leibeslust / Lebenslust – pleasure of body / pleasure of live”**

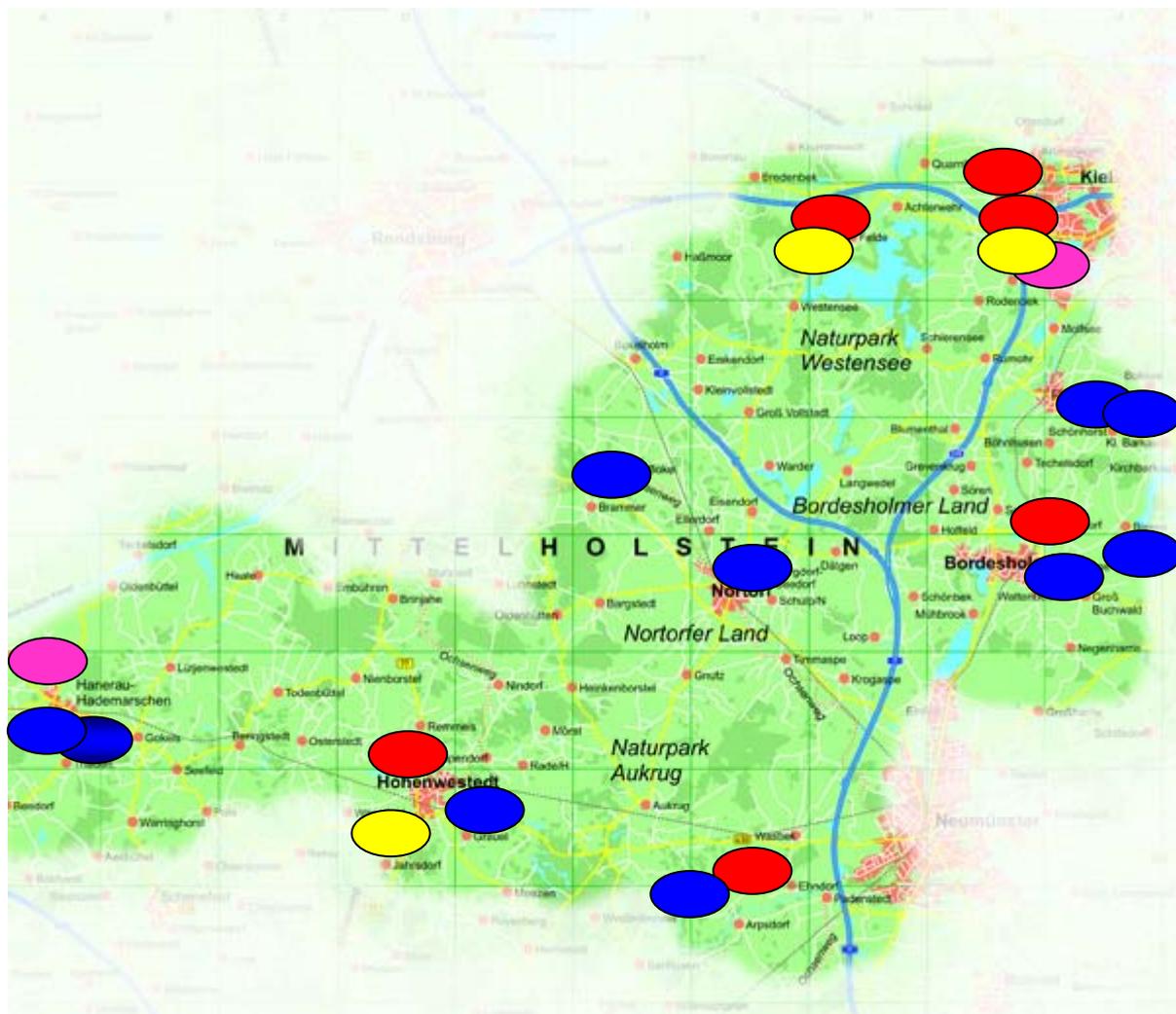
**3 kindergarten are offering “Moving family” and**

**2 schools are certified as “healthy school”**

The pilot projects have reached all together 4336 persons (1665 children, 2498 parents and 173 kindergarten teacher and teacher

### Implemented pilot projects in the AktivRegion Mittelholstein

-  "Pleasure of life – pleasure of body"
-  "Back bone – back advise"
-  Audit „Healthy schools“
-  "Moving family" – a special offer connected to "Back bone – back advise"



## Recommendations

“Communication with and integration of the partners in every phase of the process” could be our main recommendation.

This might sound easy, because we all believe we are doing this. But realising this concept is not always as easy as it seems to be. One important experience for us is, that we ( and our regional partners) didn't know what the “right” or important persons to bring up the process are depending on each phase. Every task has its very own development and especially new ideas and projects coming up during the process.

We as the initiators of the “Healthy regions” project are from the Landesvereinigung für Gesundheitsförderung and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung are working as external partners and in this way we brought new ideas to the region. At the beginning of the project health/ health prevention or health as an instrument for regional development was not a task for local authorities or initiatives like the AktivRegion. From our side we have had knowledge about health structures, health professionals and other stakeholders. But we didn't know the inside structures of decision making in the region. On the other side a lot of partners from administration and politics didn't know what to do with this new project.

**Communication as an informing exploration** with single persons, groups, experts from inside and outside is a good way to get more knowledge and experiences about the working field. At the same time it brings the idea into being, it creates first threads for a network and it gives a first estimation of the attitude towards the new development.

A good communication at the same time is also **Integration!** And it is even more. Integration means also to work with different kind of meanings, different kind of frameworks, different objectives. In addition own health developments in different communes started previously need to be respected to build a broad base of working together. In a different way it is part of the “Healthy regions” concept as a bottom up and top down strategy.

In our situation we have to handle different views on the responsibility for health education in kindergarten, schools and families; different views on the requirements and the quality of health prevention projects, small local health initiatives, very different financial possibilities of the communes to participate.

And we have to handle with the impact of the financial crisis. Sometimes we feel like holding the wolf by the ears (in einem Dilemma stecken). We understood the situation of the communes and at the same time we have to work against an atmosphere of depression with this strategy, enabling individuals from the childhood to make a choice for a healthy life.