Belfast – healthy city
Healthy cities: the idea

Ilona Kickbusch
The Healthy Cities Movement or as it was initially called The Healthy Cities Project, was started roughly in the mid nineteen-eighties. I think we actually had the very first meetings around nineteen eighty-three, nineteen eighty-four and the idea was a very simple one. It related to development within the World Health Organisation which had embarked on developing a European Public Health Policy, and that was very focussed on national action but some of us said that if you were to look at where public health really happens it is at the local level and that the WHO should embark on an initiative together with cities and to say, you know, can we get a group of cities together, a group of European cities to be more committed to health.

We couldn't just work with the public health departments in cities. We needed to work at a broader, political and policy level and so the idea was to say, let's get a process started where cities apply to a project of the WHO but that the application has to be approved at the political level, has to be backed by the top, the mayors or, you know, whoever is the most powerful person, and we suggested that the city then establish a so-called Healthy Cities Office which also we indicated should perhaps be in the mayor's office or in the health commissioner's office not, buried somewhere in the public health department.