

# Healthy Children Project Newsletter

Issue 02 - September 2011



## Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of the Newsletter for "Healthy Children" project, which is a project funded by the European Public Health Programme.

We use the newsletter to provide a quick summary of what has happened in the project and the results we have produced. If you want to know about the project in details, we kindly invite you to visit the project website on [www.healthy-children.eu](http://www.healthy-children.eu)

The Healthy Children project is a co-operation between partners from 6 European countries, being Denmark, UK, Norway, Spain, Italy and Croatia.

## Introducing the Healthy Children Project

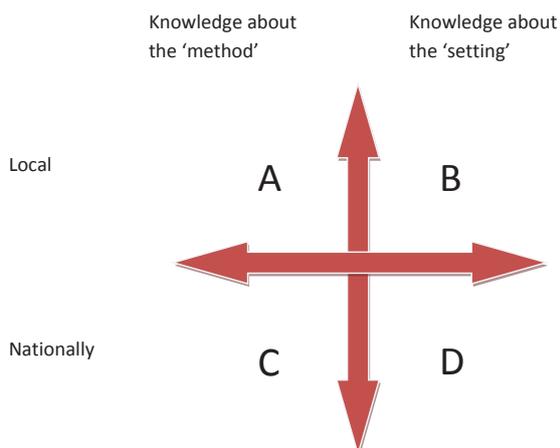
Inequality in health is an acknowledged challenge for our society and to reach the groups in our society who really need to know and understand how they can improve their health has proved difficult.

The Healthy Children project wants to show how local authorities, through a closer and more strategic collaboration with civil society organizations such as schools, sport clubs, youth clubs and religious associations, can create a better health dialogue with people who really need it, in settings that are safe and familiar to them.

## The evidence base

The first workpackage in the project was devoted to the gathering of existing academic and practical knowledge, with relevance for the partnership in an evidence base. Focus has been on knowledge on how and where the local authorities can recruit health ambassadors, ideas on how to train voluntary health ambassadors, how the project can ensure continuous commitment and ideas on how the local authorities can involve civil society organizations in a more strategic collaboration.

As described in the first Healthy Children newsletter, a common template and model was developed to create the evidence base, which looks as follows:



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### Project facts

Total budget: 1.286.439 EUR  
EU funding: 740.000 EUR  
Project period: August 2010 to July 2013

The Healthy Children project works to decrease the number of unhealthy citizens in Europe. The project presents processes and capacity building activities, which assist local authorities to create a better co-operation with civil society organizations in socially difficult areas. The objective is to obtain a better health dialogue with people who really need it, in settings that are safe and familiar to them.

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### Partners

- University College Lillebælt (lead partner)
- South Denmark European Office (Co-ordinator)
- Odense Municipality
- Vejle Municipality
- Oslo Municipality
- Oslo University College
- Coventry University
- Coventry City Council
- Regione Veneto / Regional Centre for Health Promotion
- Verona University
- The County of Karlovac
- Medical School of Karlovac
- The Municipal Institute of Social Affairs, Cáceres

All partners have worked with the template, which has helped us to outline ideas, experiences and recommendations of relevance for the further work. These have been listed in three categories, being:

### 1) Recruitment of civil society actors

*Overall the collaboration with local civic organizations has three major potentials: 1) It may be the best place for recruitment of persons for the training programme. That is, persons already working in the area and having an advantage in their daily work if they educate themselves to health ambassadors. This, though, may involve an economic problem. 2) The civil society organizations may be a place for recruiting local citizens for the programme or 3) the organizations may be a place for carrying out the health ambassadors' activities both during and after the educational programme.*

### 2) The training program and training needs analysis, and

*Volunteers need to be trained to do something else than to inform, because as all partners agree; "The exclusive dissemination of information is not effective". This also emphasizes that the training programme needs to contain more than information on good and bad health. In general it is suggested to avoid a lot of talk and little action. How to plan and implement with practical projects seems to be of great importance during the training. Focusing on the practical health work and pedagogical methods should be up front in the training program. It is recommended that practical training is part of each theme that we want to include in the training programme*

### 3) Motivation and commitment of the health ambassadors

*In general the reports from the partners state that motivation must happen through emphasizing that the ambassadors are a valuable resource; they have something extra in them that fellow citizens can gain from. Moreover it is important to emphasize that the health ambassadors will gain educational benefit and it is extremely important to maintain commitment beyond the training period through close collaboration and regular visits. Through the training and close collaboration we should create a "win win situation"; the local authorities get extra resources through a close collaboration with civic resources and the health ambassadors obtain new skills that they can use in their daily life – professional as well as private.*

## The training needs analysis

The objective of the training needs analysis is to create a "picture" of the competences that we ideally want the health ambassadors to obtain after the end of the training period. The common training material should create the "European frame", and within that frame the partners can use the material and adapt it to their local needs in the best way, adding specific material for the local needs. For the European frame, the partners in the Healthy Children project have agreed to focus on the following:

#### **"Unskilled assistance":**

What is really needed in the local communities is "unskilled assistance", meaning that we should not train people to become additional health professionals to those that already exist within the official public structures. We need the health ambassadors to be "good people" who likes to do something with and for fellow citizens. Hence, human skills are probably even more important than specific health skills. The health ambassadors need to know how to cope with children, young people and families, being able to ask questions and be curious and last but not least, being able to create trustful relations with children and young people.

#### **The following common issues were identified in relation to more theoretical competences and skills:**

- Basic health knowledge and knowledge about health "philosophies". The health ambassadors should know that there are different ways to understand health. They should learn to ask; "What is health to you?" and then create the relation from there.
- Communication and organizational skills. The local health ambassadors should be able to create local activities and engage children and young people to participate.

- Listening, motivation and empowerment skills. These are human skills, as one of the most important issues is the creation of trustful relations with children and young people in order to motivate fellow citizens - in a human way - to create changes in their lifestyles

### **Ethical issues:**

As the local authorities will deal with unskilled assistance it is extremely important to create a “code of conduct” for the health ambassadors, covering and stressing that the health ambassadors should know:

- that their objective and mission is to learn “normal” things, so that they can talk about “normal” health related challenges for children and young people.
- how to respect all people’s values and level of knowledge, which is the ideal foundation to be able to change behavior.
- their responsibility and limits as “unskilled assistance”, knowing when to say “stop”, referring the children and young people to real health professionals if needed. This is also the reason that knowledge about local health services, systems and possibilities are very important.
- how to treat sensitive information.
- Moreover, they should be able to show attention to the importance of inclusion of vulnerable children and young people.

Based on these considerations, a list of training needs has been developed, covering the following themes:

### **Basic health knowledge, which covers**

- Definitions of health and various understandings of health
- General guidelines for healthy lifestyle e.g. diet, physical activity, alcohol, etc
- Local health system and offers, so that the health ambassador can

### **Communication skills, which covers**

- Listening
- Asking curious questions
- Verbal & non-verbal communication
- Building rapport

### **Organisational skills**

- Planning and execution of local activities
- Engaging in network with other HAs

### **Empowerment**

- Increase fellow citizens’s self-confidence and self understanding in order to increase their ability to change

### **Motivation**

- Helping fellow citizens to identify what and how they want to change
- Maintaining motivation in the long term

### **Understanding of ethics**

- The HCHF code of conduct

### **Evaluation skills**

- The HCHF self evaluation criteria

The schematic and detailed TNA can be downloaded from the Healthy Children website.

## **Organisational development and sustainability**

The Healthy Children project is not only about training but also about organizational development within local authorities in order to ensure organizational structures and internal and external collaboration procedures, which will ensure the sustainability of the healthy children project.



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For the moment, the partners are therefore engaged in describing how the HCHF concept can be implemented and mainstreamed in the local authorities, involving colleagues on administrative level, directors and policy makers.

It is important for the sustainability of the project to involve colleagues, directors and policy makers already at this early stage in the project!

## **What is coming next?**

The partners will meet in Verona in October 2011, where the first draft for the training material will be discussed and where all partners will present their implementation and sustainability strategy.

Training activities will begin in each local area sometime in October or November and we will inform more in details about these activities in our next newsletter, which is planned for in February or March 2012.

*This publication arises from the project "Healthy Children" which has received funding from the European Union in the framework of the Health Programme.*

