

Healthy Children Project Newsletter

Issue 05 - June 2013



Welcome

Welcome to the fifth 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

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 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.

Practical experiences from our Italian Partners

Europe, health, and volunteerism were the main topics at the Regional Conference held at the University of Verona. The conference was organized by the Italian staff of the European project under the scientific supervision of Federico Schena, instructor of training techniques and methodology at the University of Verona, and Luigi Bertinato from the Office of International Relations, Health and Social Services Area 20, Verona.



Prof Federico Schena and Luigi Bertinato present the Healthy Children project

The meeting provided the opportunity to present the project's aims and methods together with the objectives that the Italian team has reached, the positive results of the study and their impact on the local community. The conference was also an apt setting for presenting the new concept of "health ambassador" established by the project.



Healthy Children

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
- Local Health Authority ULSS 20 of Verona
- Verona University
- The County of Karlovac
- Medical School of Karlovac
- Arroyo de la Luz, Extremadura, Spain

Launched in 2010, the 3-year Healthy Children project derived from the idea to improve, promote, and raise health awareness through the creation and consolidation of collaborative networks between communities and volunteer organizations. In this context, health ambassadors play a vital role: by working with children and their families, the ambassadors spread positive health messages in their communities, encouraging the adoption of healthy diet and regular physical activity. On these two points the Italian team focused their work which they presented during the conference entitled "The New Concept of Health Ambassador in Verona. Health Promotion in the Community" and in a roundtable discussion entitled "The Role of Volunteerism in Health Promotion. Reflections and Perspectives".

The volunteers who had completed two training courses received their diplomas and showed the videos they had recorded during the training courses, including an educational video clip entitled "More Fruit, More Fun" which they used to promote positive health behaviors. You can see the video by following this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr-Oxj1EQ-E>.

The discussion on the various aspects of the project was followed by a lively debate with Federico Schena and Luigi Bertinato, the project's local scientific coordinators, Alberto Benetti, city commissioner for youth policies, Marco Gorio, city commissioner for sports, Chiara Tommasini, president of the Verona Volunteer Services Center, and Pier Giorgio Schena, president of the Italian Sports Center. The discussion revolved around the role and methods that the health ambassadors use in their efforts to reach children and young people and an essential question was raised by Professor Schena; "Will health ambassador be able to be a spokesperson for better health?" This is where the challenge lies for the sustainability of the project. And it is in this direction that collaboration between stakeholders (institutions, community volunteer organizations, and public agencies) needs to be strengthened so that health ambassadors can act effectively as a liaison. Whatever the scenarios ahead, health ambassadors must be integrated into the social fabric and perceived as a mediator who "can act," as Pier Giorgio Schena pointed out, "directly, reaching persons who are highly reluctant to change their lifestyle." "There is now an efficient communication channel with the families," Chiara Tommasini said, "and this is a useful starting point for following the lines laid down in the project."



A voluntary health ambassador receives her diploma from the training

Practical experiences from our Spanish partners

In cooperation with the Health and Sustainable Municipalities Programme and the Town Council's Social Worker, the first activity organized by 3 Health Ambassadors has been the 'Healthy Recipes of the World' in order to promote a healthy nutrition and social inclusion.

Fifteen health ambassadors organised the activity together and food was cooked from five different cultures: Germany, Morocco, Nigeria, Dominican Republic and, of course, Spain. Throughout the week around 50 people could taste the delicious dishes that the participants have cooked.

In addition to sharing recipes, the workshop helped the participants to forget their problems and concerns for a while and the coexistence during this week has also been useful to strengthen links and friendships and to inform participants about all the town resources. The experience had been so good that other nationalities and even residents of the municipality had shown their interest for future workshops. This has been a very satisfactory activity and everybody agreed that it is very important to continue working for the health of the citizenship.



Frikadellen (Germany)



Seffa Medfouna (Morocco)



Migas (Extremadura, Spain)



Ákárá + Fried Ríce (Nigeria)



Avocado Salad (Dominican Rep.)



Avocado Salad (Dominican Rep.)

The health ambassadors have also organised "The Nutrition Day", where Health Ambassadors provided nutritional information and played with the children, teaching them at the same time how a healthy breakfast should be and the importance about eating vegetables and fish.



During "The Grandparents Day", the Health Ambassadors played games that our grandparents used to play: ball-games, the frog game, skipping, bowling (with water bottles and stones), sack races...

The N.A.P. (Alternative Spring Night) was an activity focusing on alternative leisure to avoid alcohol consumption, begun with a short video about alcohol and drugs, followed by a discussion. Free alcohol drinks were served and then we had a countryside night ride with the bikes where the local police also cooperated.



There are two activities that are not new in the municipality, but are going to be changed a bit thanks to the concept of the Health Ambassadors. The first, about hiking incorporates proposals of our Health Ambassadors' projects and is being carried out with the local tourism office. The second is 'Healthy Breakfasts', performed at the local schools. This year thanks to the Health Ambassadors 205 children have enjoyed this activity.



The healthy children project has also fostered a new cooperation with the local physiotherapist, who are now teaching children at the local schools about postural health.



The Healthy Children Final Conference

The final conference in the Healthy Children project took place on the 14th of May in Brussels and gathered around 50 participants.

The first part of the conference was devoted to setting the European Scene for the subject;

- The importance of volunteering for our social functioning of our society ,
- The importance of equity in health and
- The importance of engaging local communities in the health promoting work towards children and young people.

Caroline Costongs from EuroHealthNet, Gabriella Civico from European Volunteer Center and Philippe Roux from the European Commission were invited to present European initiatives and strategies in this area and managed in this way, to set the Healthy children project into a European context.

Equity in health is a continuous challenge for Europe and especially these years with the economic crisis and a growing European Union, where the social differences are significant between the countries. Caroline Costongs showed how different health promoting initiatives can be seen as a long term investment, how social determinants are important to consider when planning health promoting activities and that interventions in an early stage are important as the return on investment is much higher than interventions focusing on a later life stage.



Caroline Costongs presents at the final conference

Gabriella Civico showed the participants how voluntarism both has a huge economic and social value in our society. She also pointed out how important it is for the society to be proactive towards voluntarism because the most important reason for citizens not to volunteer is that they were never asked. A lively discussion emerged from Gabriella's presentation focusing on the importance of NOT replacing paid work by voluntary work, but to keep voluntarism on a level where it does not create unemployment for others.

Philippe Roux presented the European Commission's initiatives within the child friendly investment package and pointed out the importance of early interventions and a close collaboration with local communities to reach the objectives of health equalities and social inclusion. A strong political commitment and broad stakeholder collaboration on local level were highlighted as very important factors for success in this area.

After having set the European scene, participants went into 6 different workshops, covering the following themes:

1. Volunteering as a concept. How can we encourage it and how can it be used to promote health?
2. Volunteering as a strategic tool for local authorities. How to prepare for it and ensure broad engagement
3. Is it possible to minimize health inequalities through the engagement of volunteers?

4. Implementation of training – the importance of mixing theoretical and practical training
5. The benefits of the collaboration between academia and practice in development projects
6. How to use cultural differences as a strength in health promotion

In the workshops, the participants had the opportunity to see the results that the partners from the Healthy Children have obtained through the projection of digital stories, discussions with voluntary health ambassadors and exchange of experiences of project partners and conference participants.

The workshops were designed to be practical oriented and the participants found it interesting. Rasmus Mørk from the Region of Central Denmark expressed his interest in the conference like this;

“I found the Healthy Children conference very inspiring. I used to be a volunteer in a local project on sexual education, and I could really relate to the themes in the project. The discussions with the other participants showed great dedication and there were some really good examples of new ways of working with volunteers in the health area, which I think could work well in my region as well.”

It was the objective with the conference that participants should be inspired by the practical examples from the partners and it seems like the conference reached it's goals as Birgitt Uhlen-Blucha from Sleswig Holstein explains;

“ It was very interesting and the work that impressed me the most was the way that partners have created good relationship with the volunteers, how it was ensured that the health promoting activities were implemented in practice and the appreciation for the work done by the volunteers. The methods the partners had used seems very integrative to intergenerational commitment - traditional games for children, multicultural learning (cooking around the world) and to discover the surrounding (bicycle tour by night). It was very inspiring and I would like to use the ideas in my region”

The website is still under construction but will be finalised by the end of August, where we will also issue the last newsletter. You can already find the presentations from the conference on the website.



Workshops activities at the final conference



Many participants at the final conference

www.healthy-children.eu

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