

Networking for Physical Activity (PHAN)

A project to promote
networking and action for healthy
and equitable environments for
physical activity



THE CHALLENGE

Scientific evidence shows that physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for ill health. Physical activity's effects go well beyond preventing weight gain and also benefits both physical and mental well-being:

- cutting by about 50% the risk of disorders, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes;
- substantially reducing the risk of hypertension and some forms of cancer; and
- decreasing stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness.

The most recent WHO Global Burden of Disease study estimated that in the WHO European Region alone, almost one million deaths per year are attributable to insufficient levels of physical activity and that physical inactivity has become the fourth most important cause of death in high-income countries.

Over the past few years physical activity promotion has increasingly been recognized in Europe as a priority of public health and many countries have responded through the development of policies and interventions. One approach is the promotion of supportive environments that allow all parts of the population to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Socio-economic factors influence the amount of physical activity and those belonging to low socio-economic groups are at a higher risk of inadequate levels of physical activity.



THE PROJECT

The European Commission and the WHO Regional Office for Europe started this joint project on the promotion of networking and action on healthy and equitable environments for physical activity, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups.

This project aims at providing Member States with intelligence, guidance, tools, examples of good practices and exchange platforms on physical activity promotion. In addition the project will support Member States in creating stronger collaboration with other sectors (such as urban planning, transport, education, tourism, sport and leisure) and will promote the use of new tools and approaches to physical activity promotion in different urban environments.

THE GOALS

The project aims at contributing towards these goals:

Sustainable network of experts and practitioners on healthy environments supporting physical activity and health

Improved tools for the planning of physical activity promotion and economic assessment and increased use of tools

Increased quality and adequacy of physical activity promotion programmes

Networking is key: the project establishes several cross-sectoral networks of experts, stakeholders and practitioners for the promotion of healthy and equitable environments for physical activity in Europe, in particular for youth. These networks will provide Member States with improved intelligence, guidance, tools and examples of good practices for physical activity promotion at local level.

THE PROJECT MODULES

Networking on inequalities in physical activity: guidance on physical activity promotion in socially disadvantaged groups, with a focus on healthy environments

To tackle the inequalities in physical activity levels, the projects develops good practice elements and policy guidance to promote physical activity in socially disadvantaged groups, with a focus on healthy environments. Experts in the field of physical activity promotion summarize and review the evidence on determinants of physical activity in socially disadvantaged groups and the potential underlying mechanisms as well as existing strategies, initiatives and programmes (case studies) to promote physical activity among them.

Youth involvement for physical activity in supportive urban environments

Physical activity levels in early life have long-term impact on adulthood health. In order to engage youth in integrating physical activity in their everyday lives this work package develops a blueprint for involving youth in the development and the implementation of physical activity promotion. It has a special focus on supportive urban environments and settings where children and young people live, study and play. A network of experts in physical activity promotion among youths and youth representatives is established to



provide input to the blueprint. Successful case studies illustrate the various youth friendly approaches for promoting physical activity in everyday youth life.

Networking on tools for physical activity planning and economic assessment: sharing experience and improving the tools

A network of experts and practitioners is established to strengthen exchange on experiences with tools for integrating physical activity into planning and economic assessments of transport infrastructure and to foster exchange with non-health sectors. Four cities in Europe apply one or more of selected tools and share their experience for further improvements. The available tools are:

- A Healthy City is an Active City: Physical Activity Planning Guide
- Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) for cycling and walking
- Guidance for economic valuation of transport-related health effects

Strengthen networking and exchange on physical activity promotion

This work package provides a supportive framework for the promotion of networking and action on healthy and equitable environments for physical activity by providing an arena to evaluate and exchange on the activities of this project and to launch project results and publications. This arena will be facilitated through the annual meetings of the European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA Europe). The annual meetings bring together the European and international expert community on physical activity promotion.

The main partners of WHO in this project include the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), HEPA Europe, the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe Youth Network and the WHO Healthy Cities Network.

The PHAN project runs from February 2010 to October 2012.

For more information please contact:

Transport and health programme
World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe
transport@ecr.euro.who.int
<http://www.euro.who.int/physicalactivity>

© World Health Organization 2011

All rights reserved. The Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization welcomes requests for permission to reproduce or translate its publications, in part or in full.

Photos: Courtesy of Mikhail Tyo and Lideke Middelbeek



This project is co-funded by the European Union in the framework of the Health Programme 2008-2013 (Grant Agreement 2009 52 02).

The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.