

Health promotion through physical activity



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Healthy diet and regular physical activity have many health benefits, including a reduced risk of overweight /obesity and major non-communicable diseases (coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancers). Physical activity helps to maintain good mental health by reducing stress reactions, anxiety and depression, and could possibly delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Despite the known benefits of physical activity and healthy nutrition, estimatesⁱ indicate that, in Europe, more than one

quarter of adults are insufficiently active – and this represents an enormous personal, social and economic burden for EU citizens, national health care systems, and the EU economy.

Health promotion research

DG Research and Innovation continues to support research on health promotion in order to expand our knowledge of the barriers to adopting healthy lifestyles, and to use this understanding to develop innovative interventions. Nearly 80 million EUR have been invested through **FP7** (2007-2013) and **Horizon 2020** (2014-2020) framework research programmes.

This represents a broad range of research in the design, development and implementation of health promoting interventions and health programmes, aiming at the adoption of a healthy lifestyle through

- new social partnerships between researchers and other sectors, for the implementation of an innovative and sustainable health programme
- development and validation of ICT tools for better adherence to a healthy lifestyle
- intervention in the behaviour and environment of individuals, leading to the adoption of an active and healthy way of life.

Project examples

CREDITS4HEALTH uses credits-based, people-centric approach for the adoption of healthy lifestyles and balanced Mediterranean diet in the frame of social participation and innovation for health promotion.

EuroFIT attracts middle-aged men to a health-promoting lifestyle with their loyalty and attachment to football and their fan club.

PAPA used physical activity coaching as an effective health-promoting lifestyle tool for young people.

PASTA integrates the health and other sectors by promoting active mobility and physical activity through sustainable transport approaches.

SITLESS assesses the long-term effectiveness of a complex intervention on sedentary behaviour and physical activity in a community-dwelling older population based on existing exercise referral schemes enhanced by self-management strategies.

SPOTLIGHT supported the development and implementation of effective obesity prevention approaches by local authorities, public health and other practitioners. The project team has produced several systematic reviews, developed and validated a virtual tool to assess obesogenic environments, and used it to collect data in five urban zones in Europe.

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ⁱ WHO estimates. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs385/en/>