

Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Ageing



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EUROPE IS RAPIDLY AGEING

Europe faces a serious demographic challenge. Each year the life expectancy in the old continent increases by three months and the number of people aged 65+ will double over the next 50 years, putting an enormous pressure on our health care and social security systems.



At the same time, it is now known that inactivity is the fourth biggest killer in the world. The detriments caused by the lack of physical activity are well recorded, as are the significant economic costs associated with sedentary lifestyles.

Disease prevention and health promotion through physical activity can help Europe's older generations to remain independent and maintain a good quality of life for as long as possible. In other words, physical activity is a cost effective measure in reducing the risk of Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes, while fostering social interaction, community participation, and improved levels of social cohesion.

Despite strong evidence showing that such investment can result in higher quality of life and better health, EU Member States spend on average less than 3% of their annual health budgets on prevention and health promotion. Because they can be modified, lifestyle factors should be at the centre of strategies and public interventions aimed at combating NCDs. We simply need to get more people, more active, more often.

The PAHA Project

The Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Ageing (PAHA) project is a tailored intervention for older adults with different functional capacities. Through a supervised and structured exercise programme for senior citizens (55-65 years olds), PAHA intends to convert currently inactive people into regular exercisers at a level that is beneficial to their health, supporting the EU Guidelines on Physical Activity and the European Week of Sport.

In each one of the 8 project partner countries – Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom – 3 fitness centres will run 3 trial sessions of supervised exercise of 6 weeks duration, for 15 participants at each session. For that purpose, the fitness coaches, instructors and other community workers involved in the project will receive specific training on both motivational skills and in active ageing promotion.

The participation in the trial periods will be free and the older adults who take part in the project will be offered preferential arrangements for them to continue exercising for a minimum of a further 6 months period as well as some non-monetary incentives.

Last but not least, proper measurement and assessment will be crucial. Through a comprehensive evaluation system, the PAHA Project will develop transversal standards that will be made available for education structures of sports organisations across Europe. The aim is to create a methodology that can easily be adapted and replicated in different settings, allowing more citizens to take up regular exercise and health-enhancing physical activities.

The PAHA project Delivery Partners:

EuropeActive – EU/BE

Fundación General de la Universidad Europea de Madrid (UEM) – ES

Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität - DE

SkillsActive - UK

Portuguese Health and Fitness Association (AGAP) - PT

The Hungarian Health and Fitness Association (HFHA) - HU

Sport-Ionad Reiginach Chorcai Teo (Leisureworld) (IrelandActive) - IE

Finnish Health and Fitness Center's Association (SKY) - FI

Attic Union of Gym Owners (AUGO) - EL

And, as part of the delivery of the trial programmes Fit & Sund - DK

The project runs for 18 months and started on January 1st 2015



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