

Network EuroLifestyle - an independent scientific network

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Abstract

The Network EuroLifestyle aims to contribute to the improvement of the population health status in the European Union. The network will do so by adequately informing stakeholders and the inhabitants of the European Union about health effects and consequences of different lifestyles. For that purpose the network will identify and help to reduce lifestyle-related health inequalities. EuroLifestyle will prepare high impact communication to provide sound information of lifestyle issues so that stakeholders and the European population can make informed lifestyle choices.

Introduction

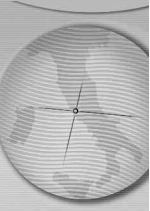
Health is the most valuable asset a person can have. A person's health and wellbeing are influenced by various exogenous and endogenous factors. It is not only the social, economic and physical environment but also personal characteristics and behaviour that determine health (1). Already minor changes in health behaviour can significantly promote health and can help to reduce health risk factors of non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure and blood cholesterol (2). The promotion of a healthy lifestyle can contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases and improve the population health status.

Health behaviour is influenced by a broad variety of determinants such as age, gender or social status. Persons of low socioeconomic status and deprived population groups are most affected by ill health and decreased

quality of life. Intervention and prevention efforts therefore need to be tailored to the needs of identified target groups. In order to tackle the burden of non-communicable disease efficiently the variety of health determinants and the needs of specific population groups need to be considered.

Network EuroLifestyle

The Network EuroLifestyle was established as an independent scientific network to represent important and relevant lifestyle subject matters. EuroLifestyle aims to identify and reduce health inequalities in Europe leading to improvements in disability adjusted life years (DALYs) and quality adjusted life years (QALYs) and thus the general health status of the European population. The Network will identify gaps and priorities requiring focus and attention important to the realization of this goal. Currently, network



activities focus on ten subject areas that impact both individual and public health.

- Nutrition/ Physical Activity
- Tobacco Use
- Alcohol Consumption
- Illegal Drug Use
- Age and Health
- Gender-specific Health
- Migrant Health
- Health of Deprived Population Groups
- Environmental Health and
- Workers' Health

It is well recognised that the combination of different potentially negative lifestyle elements and risk behaviours can lead adverse health outcomes. EuroLifestyle therefore pays particular attention to cross-cutting issues and is open to the inclusion of new subject areas which may require attention in the future. The Network aims to have geographical coverage of all current European member states. To meet the complexity of the above mentioned issues and to ensure a solid basis for future activities, a strategic framework has been developed and a common vision has been agreed upon:

To provide sound information on lifestyle issues and specific subpopulations, so that stakeholders and European citizens can make informed decisions on enhancing health.

Including citizens of various age groups and gender; the disabled, migrants, and persons of low socioeconomic position.

EuroLifestyle will target areas where there is urgent need for action and will create focused and high impact communications for identified target groups, designed to support policy making at the European level.

First Achievements of the Network EuroLifestyle

After the official launch of the Network in June 2008, initial steps have already been taken to implement the vision of the Network. A first milestone was achieved in December 2008, when chosen contributions on a broad variety of focus areas, such as health inequalities and lifestyle health determinants, were compiled and published in the first book "Network EuroLifestyle" (3). This book publication marks the official launch of EuroLifestyle as a fellowship of shared goals and interests. To provide identified

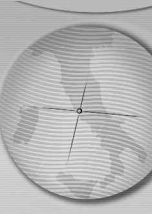
stakeholders, such as the European Parliament, with up-to-date information on lifestyle issues and specific subpopulations, publication of a regular Network newsletter was begun in January 2009. The newsletter will be one element of the network communication strategy and further elements will be developed to meet the needs of specific target groups.

The Network aims to ensure sustainability and continued value of its activities, which will be achieved by a shared common vision and strategy, close cooperation among all Network members, and effective management. Network members will agree on priorities on an annual basis and meetings will be held twice a year to provide a platform for exchange on the implementation of priorities.

Next Steps to Take

In order to advance the implementation of the Network vision and priorities for 2009, concrete steps have already been agreed upon. In 2009, Network activities will particularly focus on health inequalities in health care access among migrants, tackling underreporting of child maltreatment, and smoking prevention among medical students. These priorities have been selected in accordance with the current work plan and focus areas of the European Commission for 2009. The purpose of the next Network meeting will be to reflect on the progress achieved in 2009 and to decide on priorities that need to be focused on in 2010.

All information concerning network activities, strategic documents and the newsletter will be made available online. The Network will develop a state of the art knowledge warehouse to make available peer reviewed information and internet links on lifestyle determinants and the health of specific and deprived population groups. With the help of the knowledge warehouse EuroLifestyle will make a substantial contribution to the dissemination of peer-reviewed information and thus avoid duplication of efforts in the area of lifestyle and specific subpopulations. The knowledge warehouse will be easily accessible to European Union stakeholders interested or involved in the subject. This approach will provide for effective knowledge sharing.



References

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- 3) Neumann G, Kirch W, editors. Network EuroLifestyle. Stuttgart:Thieme, 2008