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Taking action on ageing and physical activity for older persons: The EUNAAPA network

Introduction

European nations face increasing numbers of older people. Promotion of physical activity (PA) in this group will contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of life and to reducing the (economic) burden of disease and disability.

Currently, there is no integration of health policies related to PA and ageing across Europe. From 2005, 20 European countries worked together to improve health, wellbeing and independence of older people throughout Europe by the promotion of evidence based PA. This was achieved by the foundation of a European Network for Action on Ageing and Physical Activity (EUNAAPA).

Methods

The EUNAAPA network is a thematic, collaborative action network which incorporates scientists, providers of PA, policy makers and elderly representatives. The objectives are: 1) to establish a self sustaining network, 2) to foster an intersectoral approach to the promotion of PA among older people by engaging in a dialogue with different policy sectors, 3) to identify evidence-based, cost-effective and acceptable ways to promote PA and 4) to facilitate the contribution of European scientists to the development and implementation of evidence based PA promotion policies. During its first project (funded by EU DG Sanco) inventories were carried out in all participating countries on PA promotion.

Results

Inventories and best practice reports have been published on assessment instruments on PA and physical functioning, successful PA programmes and PA promotion strategies and implementation and dissemination strategies. People can approach all the reports and join the network through the website: www.eunaapa.org. A second project called PASEO (Building policy capacities for health promotion through Physical Activity among Sedentary Older people) has been awarded by EU DG Sanco.

Conclusion

EUNAAPA aims to bring science, practice and policy making together by fostering a sustained dialogue between all EU member states on the implementation of evidence based recommendations on ageing and physical activity.