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for local policy and practice



Summary evaluation of Phase V of the
WHO European Healthy Cities Network



Healthy cities

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**Summary evaluation of Phase V of the
WHO European Healthy Cities Network**

Edited by: Evelyne de Leeuw, Agis D. Tsouros, Mariana Dyakova and Geoff Green

Abstract

This publication summarizes the evaluation of Phase V (2009–2013) of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. The evaluation process was designed in collaboration with city representatives, academic institutions and public health experts. It adopted a realist synthesis approach, being responsive to the unique social, cultural, political, health and epidemiological circumstances in the 99 cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and 20 accredited national networks. The evaluation findings are rooted in the enduring healthy city values such as equity, governance, partnership, participation and sustainability. Considering also the core Phase V themes, this publication focuses on policy and governance, healthy urban environments and design, caring and supportive environments, healthy and active living, national network performance and effects on health and equity. The evaluation finds good progress among cities and networks but differing in scale and quality. The healthy cities movement adds value and allows local governments to invest in health and well-being and address inequities through novel approaches to developing health.

Keywords

CITIES
HEALTH POLICY
PUBLIC HEALTH
URBAN HEALTH
URBAN HEALTH SERVICES

ISBN 978 92 890 5069 2

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Marmorvej 51

DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

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Text editing: David Breuer

Design: Christophe Lanoux

Cover photo ©Sheffield Hallam University

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and national network coordinators for their continuing commitment and active role – from shaping and testing the data collection tools to providing impressive quantities of material and questionnaire response rates. In particular, we acknowledge the members of our advisory groups who joined us in Brussels, Belfast, Izmir and Copenhagen and contributed significantly to the evaluation process.

Special thanks to our thematic research teams and their leads for producing more than 600 pages of evaluation reports on which this summary is based. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the support from Connie Petersen, Leah Janss Lafond, Per-Olof Östergren and Terese Olsson-Kumlin. We have also been continually encouraged and challenged by our critical friends June Crown and Niels Rasmussen – your guidance has been key to the successful completion of this project.

All the hard work of the evaluation, including extensive data collection, coding, quality check, analysis, interpretation and presentation, would not have been possible without the substantive and relentless support of the Australian interns Lucy Spanswick, Nicola Palmer and Marian Biddle. Lucy and Nicola, your hard and timely work, selflessness and enthusiasm are highly appreciated!

Evelyne de Leeuw, Agis D. Tsouros, Mariana Dyakova & Geoff Green

Foreword

This publication is a very brief summary of the recent evaluation endeavours of 99 cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and of the Network of European National Healthy Cities Networks. It covers Phase V (2009–2013). Although the commitment to the values of equity and sustainability endures, the socioeconomic and environmental landscape of Europe has changed fundamentally since I assumed responsibility for the programme 23 years ago.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe has responded with a strategy for Health 2020, supported by our 53 Member States. I was asked by the Regional Director to take responsibility for its development and drew on my WHO Healthy Cities experience to emphasize both the wider socioeconomic determinants of health and the role of local governments and their partners in controlling, regulating or influencing these determinants. In turn, Health 2020 provides a framework and incentive for Phase VI of our networks, spanning the period 2014–2019.

This next phase will draw on results of the ambitious evaluation of Phase V, led by Evelyn de Leeuw, supported by a team of 15 academic experts and advised by our healthy city coordinators and critical friends. They have used an innovative realist synthesis method to marshal the evidence revealed by six research instruments, centred around 159 case studies provided by 79 cities. The second and final chapters of this publication summarize some of the opportunities but also the contested limitations of this method.

This publication is launched at the Annual Business Meeting and International Healthy Cities Conference, which concludes Phase V and heralds Phase VI. I hope it will assist this gathering of policy-makers, decision-makers and academics to critically debate, confront and find common ground in assessing the value and impact of our networks and the work of member cities. It is only the first in a series of robust but accessible publications arising from the evaluation, including a review of 25 years of Healthy Cities in Europe and a special supplement of Health Promotion International. I welcome your experience, insights and priorities, in Athens and beyond.

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