

Social prescribing (SP) as a community health-promoting tool: lessons from a country exchange

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INTRODUCTION Social Prescribing (SP) links non-medical, health-related needs to community-based support, enhancing well-being. Variations in systems and terminology hinder widespread adoption.

OBJECTIVE

Portuguese National Institute of Health in partnership with EuroHealthNet organized a Country Exchange Visit to Lisbon in May 2022 to foster SP policy and practice at European level.



EuroHealthNet

RESULTS

Representatives of 10 European health authorities shared experience in SP and similar approaches; and visited best practice examples of community-based initiatives

Strengthening health-social collaboration was emphasized

SCAN ME



SUMMARY REPORT

KEY MESSAGES

Social Prescribing is an innovative shift towards a biopsychosocial care model, addressing **new societal challenges** more effectively within health systems.

SP integration into health systems has the potential to offer **better services** with a more **effective use of resources** to **attend the needs of patients**.

Co-funding and intersectoral projects are vital for sustainable **SP**. **Quality assurance** and **training** are key for implementation.

Lessons:

Overall, the importance to strengthen the collaboration between health and social sectors was recurrently highlighted. Co-funding between the governmental bodies and development of intersectorial partnership projects were pointed out as key innovative approaches to launch and scale up sustainable SP implementation. It was noted that despite the evidence showing the health benefits of a SP model, quality of individual interventions should be ensured and supported by common evaluation frameworks. The development of new training and competence modules adapted to contextual needs was considered particularly relevant to foster SP implementation.

Key messages:

- Social prescribing represents an innovative tool that enables health systems to meet in a better way the new societal challenges by a complete paradigm shift to a biopsychosocial model of care.
- Implementation of social prescribing and its integration into national health systems is crucial to develop new models of care and health to face 21st century health problems.

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Social prescribing as a community health-promoting tool: lessons from a country exchange visit

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Issue:

Social Prescribing (SP) describes evidence-based interventions designed to improve health and wellbeing by referring individuals with non-medical, health-related social needs to health-promoting community-based support and services. Differences in national health systems, sociopolitical infrastructures and terminology, has however created a heterogeneity on SP practice and limited its implementation.

Description of the problem:

On may 2022 the Portuguese National Institute of Health Dr Ricardo Jorge in partnership with EurohealthNet, organised a Country Exchange Visit to Lisbon. The purpose was to discuss SP and other health promoting primary care strategies in practice at European level and explore the political, financial and practical enablers that connect community and primary health care and social services, in order to build up knowledge-base to foster further SP policy and practice.

Results:

Participants from ten European health authorities visit on site several community-based initiatives and shared information about relevant activities in their countries. In particular, brainstorming sessions between participants and the twelve key SP partners from the voluntary and community sector, were continuously facilitated by organizers. A summary report was published, providing an overview of the knowledge exchange.