

GOOD PRACTICES IN HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR EVIDENCE IN HEALTH POLICY



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BACKGROUND

Evidence confirming the effectiveness of health promotion for older people comes from both scientific population studies and good practices analysis. The significance of good practices in health promotion is to determine the real outcome and health results for a target group, which, in the case of evident benefits (defined during evaluation), renders the programme credible and worthy for dissemination. Practical evidence based on real implemented programmes is becoming valuable as inspiration for health promotion programmes and their management. The main goal of the research was to emphasise the role of the good practices approach in health promotion policies addressed to the elderly and to define the criteria used for considering an intervention/activity as a good practice in this area.

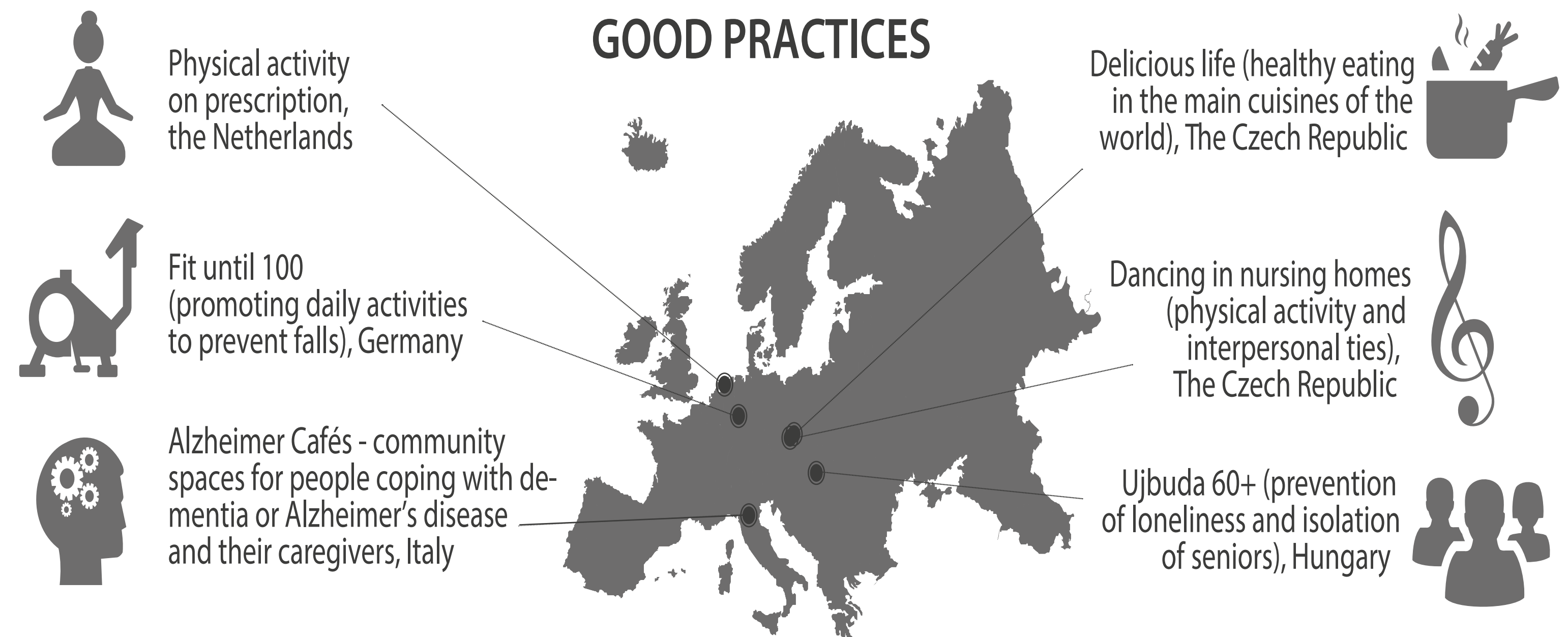
Good practice in health promotion - an intervention which was applied in specific real-life conditions (not under experimental conditions), has been proven to work well and produce good results (e.g. health results for a specific population group) and is likely to also be effective in a different environment. Consequently, this practice, after a prior evaluation according to specific criteria, is advised and recommended as a model for use by others (Golinowska et al, 2017).

METHODS

A literature review on health promotion, including health promotion for older people was performed, aimed at defining good practices and criteria used for their selection. The analysis was based on scientific papers, grey literature and available guidelines. To enrich the analysis a detailed review was performed using international databases dedicated to health promotion programmes for older people, e.g. Compilation of Good Practices developed within the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, the WHO database, Age-friendly World, HealthProElderly, JA-CHRODIS, EuroHealthNet and ProFouND. Authors also used the results of the Pro-Health 65+ project. To confirm a selection of activities and interventions recognised as good practices, national experts from selected countries (Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Greece and Hungary) were contacted in order to collect the overall country-specific information concerning research objective.

RESULTS

Evidence-based public health policy is essentially supported by the results of empirical research, but a good practice approach and evidence derived from public health programmes implemented in real-life settings is likely to be a better source of evidence for inspiring and realising health programmes. Practical evidence based on real implemented programmes is becoming valuable for health promotion programmes and their management. According to the literature review and analysis of health promotion programmes presented in reliable databases, the following criteria are shown to allow a programme to be considered a good practice: (1) relevance, (2) community participation, (3) stakeholders collaboration, (4) ethical soundness, (5) replicability, (6) effectiveness, (7) efficiency and (8) sustainability. Creation of databases on good practices helps in promoting the sustainability of already implemented activities and enhances their applicability by other organisations and in different settings.



Source: Golinowska S. et al. Health Promotion for older people in Europe. Health promoters and their activities. Knowledge for training, Scholar Publishing House Ltd., Warsaw 2017.

Table 1. Good Practice's evaluation criteria

| EFFECTIVENESS | Extent to which the practice achieves the planned outcomes |
|-----------------|---|
| REACH | Extent that the practice affects the target group(s) |
| FEASIBILITY | Extent to which the practice can be implemented |
| SUSTAINABILITY | Extent to which the practice can be maintained and achieve desired outcomes over time |
| TRANSFERABILITY | Extent to which the practice can be applied to or adapted for various contexts |

Source: Definitions for Elements of Public Health Impact and Examples of Questions to Consider Related to the Elements, Spencer et al. 2013.

DISCUSSION & COCNLUSIONS

Evidence confirming the effectiveness of health promotion for older people comes from both scientific population studies and good practice analysis. Good practices, in order to be recognised as equal to evidence of empirical research, must have characteristics that demonstrate the fulfilment of defined criteria. These criteria could be grouped in three categories: context, process and outcomes.

Gathering and sharing information on good practices in a particular place and settings can become an inspiration, reference or model for other institutions and authorities, a basis for recommendation and a reason to broaden their implementation. Collecting and analysing different programmes, interventions/actions, then indicating and selecting good practices leads to the creation of databases. Such databases have been initiated and developed on both national (e.g. the Pro.Sa Italian database) and international levels, e.g. HealthProElderly, JA-CHRODIS and EuroHealthNet. They are a reliable source of knowledge for inspiring bottom-up initiatives focused on healthy lifestyle for older people. Access to professional databases on such practices addressed to older people is provided by emerging networks of institutions, experts and practitioners.

To facilitate access to information on good practices, with the support of the European Committee, a dedicated platform was created - European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, which is already a significant source of knowledge and inspiration about innovative and effective programmes. Further efforts to develop this initiative, collect new information and disseminate the highly evaluated programmes are needed.