

Newsletter

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Dear reader,

We are delighted to share with you the second UcanACT newsletter which delivers insights, news and results about the UcanACT project.

Since the start of the EU-funded project in July 2022 – whose aim is to engage adults and senior citizens to practice physical activity as a tool for cancer prevention within public urban green spaces - the UcanACT consortium has been working to design and deliver its first deliverables. Work focused first on research activities that are now allowing project partners to develop two of the key project deliverables: the Practical Intervention Methodology and the Citizens Engagement Strategy. We are eager to share with you the next stages of the UcanACT project!

We hope you enjoy learning more about the outcomes that have been produced by the project consortium over these last months, and about what the next chapter holds for us!

UcanACT first deliverables

In order to engage adults and senior citizens to practice physical activity as a tool for cancer prevention within public urban green spaces, the UcanACT consortium has been first focusing on the preparation phase of the project. This phase involves a set of research activities on good practices and positive benefits of physical activity for cancer-prevention, and the design of pilot programme methodology and tools. Three deliverables were developed and recently submitted. The knowledge produced within these activities are going to lead to the development of the key project deliverables that will be elaborated within the design of pilot programme methodology and tools.

Before expanding further on these key deliverables, we invite you to read below the summary of the outputs designed by the project partners.



Desk Study on recent scientific evidence of physical activity for cancer prevention for adults and senior citizens used for CPPA

The Desk Study on recent scientific evidence of physical activity (PA) for cancer prevention for adults and senior citizens used for cancer-preventive physical activity (CPPA) aims at discovering key characteristics of the CPPA. Studies show that physical activity, across the full age spectrum, provides a variety of benefits. Some benefits happen immediately; a single episode of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity can improve sleep, reduce symptoms of anxiety, reduce blood pressure, and improve insulin sensitivity on the day the activity is performed. The Desk Study makes reference to: cancer types that have scientifically approved classifications of reduced risk by practicing PA, specificity of PA exercises for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, and safety and possible risk factors during the practice of CPPA.



Desk Study on good practices in organizing physical activity sessions for cancer prevention for adult and senior citizens within urban environments

In recent years there has been increasing attention in a variety of research fields in relation to the benefits that public urban green spaces (PUGS) provide for the health and wellbeing of citizens. Research on larger green areas - considered as urban spaces covered by vegetation of any kind - has shown that PUGS are beneficial to people's health, physically, socially, and mentally. In this regard, the Desk Study on good practices in organizing physical activity sessions for cancer prevention for adult and senior citizens within urban environments intends to:

- Identify efficient ways to engage the target population to CPPA (motivators and barriers);
- Provide indicators for safe conditions for CPPA in PUGS;
- Identify the best ways to use PUGS for CPPA.



Report on NEEDs analysis

To explore any existing issues, barriers, motivators and opportunities that can influence participation in physical activity in green spaces for adults and senior citizens, a Needs Analysis was drafted by the UcanACT consortium. This Analysis was conducted in the pilot territories of the project and involved two stages: a questionnaire and focus groups.

The questionnaire was open to complete for several weeks to adults and senior citizens over 50 years who never have suffered from cancer or never had a cancer diagnosis, who were diagnosed with cancer or are in recovery from cancer, or adults and senior citizens over 50 years of age living with cancer – namely the project target group. It captured information about health status,

medical history, physical activity behaviours, and environmental factors which influence or prohibit participation in physical activity. Participants that completed the questionnaire were then invited to attend focus groups in Bologna (Italy) and Kilkenny (Ireland). Throughout this facilitated workshop, the UcanACT partners explored in person the factors highlighted above in more detail.



Picture of the focus group organised in Bologna (Italy)

The focus groups benefited both the project partners to better identify existing barriers and needs faced by adults and senior citizens on a way of their participation in cancer-prevention physical activity practice, and the participants as Kate explained:



As a cancer survivor I think it's wonderful to see this pilot project happening and to be a part of something that can help me and other cancer survivors. Taking part in the focus group and meeting other survivors who have the same issues was lovely and knowing that I am not alone is very important. I am very much looking forward to being involved in the exercise element of the project; I hope to learn from it and participate at my own pace with expert help. I think the people of Kilkenny are lucky to have been picked to be part of something so wonderful.

Kate, age 51, cancer survivor, Kilkenny



Citizens Engagement Strategy

In addition to these three deliverables, the UcanACT partners concentrated their efforts on the finalisation and the publication of the Citizens Engagement Strategy, one of the core deliverables of the project.

This Strategy was built upon the knowledge produced within the deliverables listed above. It has been conceived as a participative approach to empower citizens to take an active attitude towards their health.

The Citizens Engagement Strategy provides community managers with tools and methods to support them in maintaining senior citizens and adults' interest in taking part in project Pilot actions. Community managers, who are the different stakeholders identified within each of the project pilot territories (administrators of municipalities, local administrations...), will gauge public interest, feedback, concerns and aspirations of citizens. Their role is to support services to adults and senior citizens willing to participate to the project Pilot actions, and monitor the progress of the programme's activities thanks to the support of the Strategy.

To read the Citizens Engagement Strategy and learn more about this guidance tool, we invite you to [click here](#).

Meet our new partner: the University School of Physiotherapy ONCE

In January 2023, the UcanACT project was delighted to welcome a new academic partner to its consortium: the University school of Physiotherapy ONCE. Based in Spain, the ONCE University School of Physiotherapy is a university training centre founded and supported by the Spanish National Organisation for the Blind and academically dependent on the Autonomous University of Madrid. The University has more than 50 years of history in the teaching of Physiotherapy to people with visual impairment.

The UcanACT consortium is now composed of 8 partners from 5 European Member States. ONCE will bring its expertise and knowledge through the development of the project's evaluation methodology and the implementation of the Pilot cancer-preventive physical activity actions. The ONCE University School of Physiotherapy will also be in charge of evaluating the project throughout its lifetime.

Come and read ONCE University School of Physiotherapy's interview to learn more about them by [clicking here](#).



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Future project stages

In the following months, the partners will focus on finalising four other deliverables of the UcanACT project: the Practical Intervention Methodology, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for physiotherapists and other health professionals, the UcanACT App and the Evaluation Methodology.

- **Practical Intervention Methodology:** the methodology intends to provide conceptual and methodological bases for implementation of the Pilot CPPA actions. The document is going to combine a series of descriptions and illustrations of cancer-preventive physical activity exercises for adults and senior citizens, of recommendations for physiotherapists and other health professionals on delivering CPPA exercises (methodological bases, practical instructions, etc.) and of good practices.
- **UcanACT MOOC:** the MOOC is being developed at the same time as the Methodology, as it aims to capacitate physiotherapists and other health professionals on delivering the Practical Intervention Methodology and ensure the quality of its implementation. It will be a short-term content-based course which will mainly provide guidelines on providing safety conditions for practicing cancer-preventive physical activity exercises within public urban green spaces.
- **The UcanACT App:** the UcanACT App will be developed in order to support adults and senior citizens willing to practice cancer-preventive physical activity exercises within PUGS. This core project deliverable will provide a series of CPPA exercises based on users' physical conditions, of video guidelines of CPPA exercises that can be practiced within PUGS in order to guide and support users' practice, and will present several public urban green spaces suitable for practicing physical exercises.

- **Evaluation Methodology:** the evaluation methodology will develop several evaluation tools and procedures in order to obtain consistent and sustained knowledge of the impact of the cancer-preventive physical activity actions and validate key project deliverables.

The UcanACT consortium is also looking forward to launching the implementation phase of the project, which will start at the beginning of 2024. Two main activities will be implemented: training sessions for community managers from the pilot territories and for physiotherapists and other health professionals, and two rounds of physical activity sessions aimed at providing cancer-preventive physical activity exercises for the project target group. These cancer specific physical activity exercises will be supported by physiotherapists and health professionals, and implemented within the three pilot territories of the project – namely Bologna (Italy), Kilkenny (Ireland) and Munich (Germany).

We are eager to share with you the next project stages. Stay tuned to find out more about the project progress!

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