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Operational Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013



IN THIS SIXTH ISSUE

In this 6th issue of our newsletter we'll deal with **Health**, i.e. social and health risk prevention (**RESPIRA** and **IMAGENX** projects) and **social innovation** (**EURO SOUTH HUB** project). Topics of primary importance that will be fully developed within the forthcoming programming cycle of the 2014-2020 cross border Italy-Malta Cooperation Agreement.

The **RESPIRA** project has analysed respiratory pathology in the population of the Maltese and Gela territories tied to the exposition of pollutants, where as **IMAGENX**, apart from promoting an integrated prevention and supervisory programme for breast cancer, also actively involves the community in greater awareness and responsibility in health matters. The community, and in particular social enterprise, is also a central player in the **EURO SOUTH HUB** project that mixes virtual and physical interaction thus contributing to the creation of a cross border social network able to produce innovative ideas and sustainable development.

Therefore, community involvement, which not only promotes prevention but also fosters innovation, is the trait d'union of the three projects.

>> AIR QUALITY AND HEALTH BETWEEN MALTA AND GELA

A joint investigation into air pollution and breathing pathologies, recognition and prevention: **RESPIRA** project.

>> SICILIANS AND MALTESE JOIN TOGETHER IN PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

– Sicilian and Maltese health workers, administrators and research workers start up a cross border network to develop actions for the prevention and supervision of breast cancer: **IMAGENX** project.

>> SOCIAL INNOVATION AT THE CENTRE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

– A co-working space creates virtual and physical interaction among professionals, businesses and social innovators: **EURO SOUTH HUB** project.





THE ANALYSIS of respiratory diseases in the population of the Maltese and Gela territories tied to the exposure to polluting agents.

It has been calculated that individuals spend about 90% of their time indoors (e.g. classrooms, homes, offices and the working environment). Therefore, it is clear how bad indoor air quality produces a significant impact on human health and constitutes an important risk factor in developing respiratory ill-

nesses, such as asthma, no less than outdoor air pollution.

The **RESPIRA** project has taken into consideration a sample group – for respiratory diseases – in the school populations of Malta and within the health district of Gela using standardised scientific questionnaires and carrying out, within a sub-sample group of the population, measurements on the condition of the respiratory apparatus and the levels and types of allergies. Thus, the project was able to thoroughly study the conditions that might influence relationship between exposition to pollutants and health through the analysis of the main environmental risk factors. Furthermore, guide-lines have been put in place for the prevention of the effects on health in subjects who live in a risk environment caused by pollutants.

The **project** obtained the following **results**: the evaluation of the prevalence of asthma and other allergic respiratory problems in the areas involved and an evaluation of the relationship between polluting agents and respiratory diseases.

THE AREAS INVOLVED: Malta and the Gela Health District (CL).

THE PARTNERS: Ministry for Energy and Health (lead partner); Azienda Sanitaria Provinciale di Caltanissetta – Distretto Sanitario di Gela; Università degli Studi di Palermo – Dipartimento di Energia, Ingegneria dell'informazione e Modelli Matematici (DEIM); Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – Istituto di Biomedicina e di Immunologia Molecolare, Palermo.



RESPIRA IN NUMBERS

1326 Sicilian children examined

1075 Maltese children assessed through a questionnaire

300 children with a complete clinical assessment

17 schools and **108** homes involved in indoor and outdoor environmental monitoring

1 measurement of the prevalence of asthma and other allergic respiratory pathologies



RESPIRA - Indoor and outdoor Air quality and Respiratory Health in Malta and Sicily



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO ANALYSE THE DISEASES AND ASSESS IMPACT.

Allergic respiratory illnesses are very common in Europe and over the years have shown an increase in their occurrence.

Such diseases, while associated with a low incidence of mortality, produce a significant impact on the quality of life of those who suffer from them. In industrialised countries children spend most of their time indoors, or playing, or studying. Unfortunately, also indoor environments are exposed to pollutants, sometimes coming from outside, other times from within. Therefore, it seemed interesting to study the impact of school and home indoor environment on human health, with particular reference to the interaction with the external environment in dif-

ferent contexts (town / industrial / rural). Malta has a very high population density and lots of traffic on the roads, together with other sources of outdoor pollutants, whereas, in Gela a large petrochemical industry has been in activity since 1965, while some areas further out result to be relatively free from pollution impact.

The multidisciplinary approach of **RESPIRA** has allowed not only the assessment of the frequency of allergic respiratory diseases (asthma, rhinoconjunctivitis) amongst youngsters, but also to assess the possible impact on these illnesses from chemical substances (gas and particulate) and organic substances (allergens and endotoxins) in classrooms and homes.

Web site:
www.respira-project.com
Lead partner: Dr Martin Balzan
Ministry for Energy and Health
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A joint investigation into air pollution and respiratory diseases so as to know the enemy and prevent risks.



IMaGenX

THE PROMOTION of joint actions for the prevention of risks caused both by natural effects and by human activity.

Starting from genetics and involving several areas of study the **IMAGENX** project investigates the causes of breast cancer using the most advanced technologies and rationalizing the available resources present in the Sicilian and Maltese research institutes of excellence with the aim of developing and harmonising their scientific potential.

IMAGENX consists, in fact, of a cross-

border network made up of Sicilian and Maltese patients, health workers, administrators and research workers joining together to promote preventative and surveillance actions for this disease. In this activity of research, the integration of interdisciplinary expertise tied to epidemiology and molecular genetics aims to strengthen the assistance and surveillance of women at risk of breast cancer.

The struggle against breast cancer is fought with wide ranging actions, because of the diversity of the factors that might be the cause: genetics, life style, the environment. That

is why the project aims at evaluating the multiple risks with the intent of creating a stratification of the same and put in place an appropriate surveillance programme thus creating the necessary conditions to control possible environmental and genetic factors involved in the spread of malignant tumours in the central Mediterranean.

To reach these objectives the project operates through health initiatives, prevention campaigns, **biochemical and diagnostic IT screening**, surgery, and the creation of a **bio-bank** to collect blood samples and post-operation biopsic tissue.

Furthermore, the project encourages the interested parties to take on more responsibility in the health field by consolidating the joint Sicilian and Maltese networks and work platforms.



WHERE AND WHO ?

Where: Malta, Trapani, Palermo, Siracusa.

Who: Ministry for Energy and Health (lead partner); University of Malta; Università degli Studi di Palermo - Polo Territoriale Universitario della Provincia di Trapani; Malta Council for Science and Technology; Azienda Ospedaliera Universitaria di Palermo "Paolo Giaccone"; Azienda Sanitaria Provinciale di Siracusa.



IMAGENX - Italia Malta Genome Breast Cancer Border Risk Surveillance

Web site:
www.imagenx.eu
Lead partner: Joseph Psaila
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Cross-border integration of expertise and technology to keep an eye on breast cancer



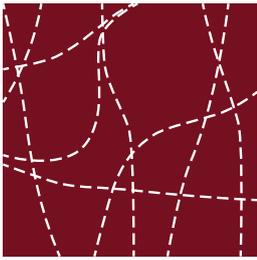
WHEN AN APP IS REALLY HELPFUL.

Guided by the Screening Unit of the Ministry for Energy and Health of Malta, the project's partners dealt with monitoring the life style and the environmental and genetic profile of Sicilian and Maltese women of any age to identify possible genetic mutations and thus outline common elements in the women examined so as to trace a mathematical model that reliably evaluates the main risk factors of breast cancer.

After the formulation of the model, the partnership set about devising an app for smartphones. Through the use of this app Sicilian and Maltese women will be the first to really become aware of the risks and consequences of developing breast cancer and will thus be able to take into consid-

eration a change in their habits to steer clear of, or minimise the risk factors. Such a decision, thanks to raising awareness and information received through the app, could help young women (especially where there is a family history) avoid far graver consequences.

The creation of this valuable instrument of information and control and its widespread use among an increasing proportion of women in the cross-border area is real progress, both in the health and social fields, and it is enabling the fight against this terrible disease.



Euro South HUB

SOCIAL INNOVATION AT THE CENTRE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, that is, a physical and virtual co-working space made up of a community of entrepreneurs and social innovators, sustainable businesses, professionals and associations that bank on the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of their enterprise.

EURO SOUTH HUB has set up a centre for research, aggregation, services, and an incubator for projects and social enterprises – active among Malta, Siracusa, and Lampedusa –

through the creation of physical and virtual hub spaces, following a model already experimented in about 40 cities around the world.

Within the spaces of Ortigia (Siracusa) and Lampedusa, the “hubbers” manage workshops regarding enterprise, social innovation, and the green economy, and organise initiatives designed mainly for entrepreneurs, women, and young men and women venturing into the world of work.

The 2.0 technological component has facilitated networking and

sharing the projects main results with the virtual community of hubbers thanks to the support of a specifically designed platform.

By mixing physical and virtual interaction, the **EURO SOUTH HUB** project has contributed to the growth of its own social network and attracted new members and users.

By putting the project’s network onto the international network has brought joint organizational activities with **The HUB** centres of London, Barcelona, Madrid, Brussels, and Stockholm.

WHERE: Ortigia (Siracusa); Lampedusa (AG); Malta.

THE PARTNERS: Università di Catania (lead partner); University of Malta; Comune di Siracusa; Istituto Omnicomprensivo “Luigi Pirandello” di Lampedusa (AG).



2.0 TECHNOLOGY

This technology permitted the project to share its results in the network with the virtual community of “hubbers” thanks to the support of a specifically designed platform that enabled users to pass into the more involving three dimensional world (similar to that of Second Life) able to reproduce the dynamics of a physical hub. In this phase, some experiments of “heightened reality” were pre-designed with the aim of using the ITC to strengthen the connectivity between the hubs and the users.



EURO SOUTH HUB - Social innovation at the centre of the Mediterranean in a physical and virtual co-working space.



WITH “IMPACT HUB” THE WEB WIDENS.

The international network www.hub-net.com – already active in 40 cities worldwide – has recently expanded thanks to a new community joining the net: Impact Hub – Mediterranean Change Makers, thus developing the fundamental theme of social innovation even more.

In Sicily, the network takes part in managing three different funding sources:

- 1) a line of action of the Jeremie-FSE fund managed by Banca Etica in partnership with Microfinanza, Solco, Ape, and Impact Hub, exactly, designed to supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises with a strong social vocation;
- 2) the Guarantee Fund for Microcredito Siciliano, managed in collaboration with Banca Etica

and the Fondazione di Comunità di Messina, is designed for companies and enterprises that cannot obtain traditional credit because lacking in collateral or insufficient credit history:

- 3) PerMicro, the most important micro credit company in Italy that operates nationally with a clear social mission and, since 2013, is also active in Sicily.

The Impact Hub – Mediterranean Change Makers’ experience has opened the way in Sicily to a series of similar initiatives aiming to create new networking communities to generate, in turn, programmes dedicated to the growth of skills and professionalism and in innovating large and small organizations. All this is in line with the 2014/2020 programming objectives.



Web site:

<http://siracusa.impacthub.net/>

Lead partner: Francesca Castagneto
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Virtual and physical interaction among professionals, enterprises and social innovators