



Interreg Europe  Co-funded by the European Union

HR4ALL

HR4ALL aims to better understand the challenges and possible solutions to tackling the multifactorial dimensions of obesity and implement this in policies.

SOCIAL

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An interregional cooperation project for improving **Social inclusion** policies

Project Partners

Municipality of Haderslev (DK)
Development center Murska Sobota (SI)
Gasol Foundation (ES)
Municipality of Sant Boi de Llobregat (ES)
PON - Partnership Overweight Netherlands (NL)
The Region of Southern Denmark (DK)
University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia (URI-Soča) (SI)

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POLICY BRIEF

The Nederlands

SUMMARY

Overweight has become a significant health challenge in the Nederlands with around 50% of the population affected by overweight and 16% being severely obese. In the partner area the number is 16,4%

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1. Introduction to the Obesity challenge in Europe

Obesity is a major health and social problem. In Europe, 59% of adults are obese. Obesity is recognized as a multifactorial disease which increases the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Furthermore, it is recognized that obesity also impacts mental health (55% higher risk of depression).

The proportion of obese adults in the partner countries is according to WHO (2019).

DK	NL	ES	SLO
50%	50%	54%	58%

Obesity also causes costs for society placing a strain on healthcare & social resources.

- Spending in Europe of €70Bn annually (estimated) for healthcare & productivity loss due to obesity. This stands for approximately 2-4% of the total health expenditure in Europe (European Commission 2023).
- Addressing obesity requires participation of many different sectors. To ensure a holistic approach a variety of practitioners and stakeholders across the partner countries will be involved in the project.

2. The regional challenges of obesity in the West Netherlands

In the West Netherlands (incl. Rotterdam) the deprived areas are characterized by a low socio economic status and a proportion of the migrant population above the average.

The prevalence of obesity in the age groups 18 until 24 years (9%) and 65+ years (21%) are higher than nationally (6% en 19%). Furthermore, the proportion rate among inhabitants in a low socio economic position are higher, in average 22 %.

Obesity and unemployment are complex social and health issues with underlying causes that are interconnected. Indeed, obesity is associated with a higher risk of unemployment and sickness absence compared with individuals with healthy weight.

Evidence suggests that long-term obesity and developing obesity in mid-adulthood increases the risk of poor work ability. According to studies there is a need for participatory and holistic approaches to maximize the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce obesity and unemployment.

Therefore, it is an important strategy to improve the health of unemployed individuals living with obesity to improve the chances of reemployment, work ability, re-skilling and up-skilling.

3. Policy Instrument

Network approach for adults suffering from overweight and obesity of Partnership Overweight Netherlands (PON)/Erasmus MC together with program ERDF 2021-2027 West Netherlands

The Network approach for adults suffering from overweight and obesity is a national model that started his roots in Rotterdam (West Netherlands). This Dutch approach is focussing on optimal treatment of patients with obesity; several instruments have been and are developed. The Dutch Network approach model incl. the renewed multidisciplinary guideline of treating adults with obesity is describing how the social and medical domain should and can work together in which the patient plays a central role. It is a holistic approach.

The ERDF program - *Kansen voor West* addresses, among other, the social imbalance in the 4 largest cities in the Nederland's of which Rotterdam is one of them. The area selection is based on socio-economic key figures such as GNP and unemployment. The areas selected for investments are mostly inhabited by vulnerable groups, adults with mental, social and health challenges above the Dutch average.

One of the scopes of the ERDF program *Kansen voor West* is to promote competitiveness in the West of The Netherlands. The program involves and targets the 4 Randstad provinces (North and South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland) and the 4 largest cities in the region (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht), aiming to establish structures within companies, government and education to empower vulnerable people and develop the skills needed for a modern workforce.

In addition, OP West Netherlands also aims to modernize equipment and infrastructure to re-skill and up-skill people, thereby promoting lifelong learning and adaptability to labor market dynamics. The Network approach for adults suffering from overweight and obesity is a helping instrument in this matter. Therefore, this Network approach is the policy instrument for the Netherlands within HR4All.

The policy instrument strives to address the complex and interrelated needs of individuals, particularly in relation to skill development and employment prospects. The combination of the Network approach with the ERDF program prioritizes the creation of new skill/re-skill approaches and methodologies in teaching that foster innovative learning paths. OP West Netherlands actively involves the residents in the G4 areas, ensuring their participation in the development of competencies that are essential for a prosperous future and the Network approach is helping in this.

3.1 Status policies

The instrument is part of the national implementation of the European Cohesion Policy on Job and Growth. Even though obesity is prevalent amongst the vulnerable groups targeted, it is not addressed specifically in the program.

It is known that people facing obesity have many health, social and work ability challenges. Therefore, there is a need for an innovative project that seeks to combine and improve these challenges/dimensions.

As the strategy on sustainable development and citizen involvement in the selected areas does not specifically consider the multifactorial characteristics of the populations' challenges, this will be the aim of policy improvements.

3.2 In HR4ALL

To be able to improve the existing policy, there is a need for an innovative approach that seeks to combine and improve these challenges/dimensions.

The inspiration of these innovative approaches will come from the successful experiences of the other regions in HR4All.

Within the HR4ALL project we will seek inspiration from the best practices in the other partner countries and see what can be relevant for The Netherlands to improve the policy instrument.

The Danish Health-agreement would also be inspirational in terms of revising the policy instrument, since it contains a specific vision on facing obesity and has a cross-sectoral approach including the labor market, health care and social care. Furthermore, the Slovenian experiences regarding vocational rehabilitation and the Spanish experiences regarding advocacy of people facing obesity would be inspirational for development of projects targeted the inclusion of people with obesity.

3.3 How will we do it

Currently, this policy instrument lacks measures and interventions across sectors addressing health/obesity in relation to unemployment, work ability and job skills, therefore we aim to revise the policy instrument with measures and interventions about this, using the Network approach for adults suffering from overweight and obesity from PON/Erasmus MC.

Cross sectoral collaboration:

The ongoing development of cooperation between the Municipality of Rotterdam, the Partnership Overweight Netherlands (PON), the stakeholders, and the learning community is going to be of crucial importance for the revision of the policy instrument.

The Dutch National Prevention Agreement (2018) creates the foundation for the collaboration between PON and several Dutch municipalities. This requires a holistic approach and envisages categories such as (a) healthier lifestyle (more sports and exercise; stop smoking; stop/reduce alcohol and other drugs; healthier nutrition; reduce stress and improve sleep (relaxation)); (b) healthier environment; (c) appropriate help and care for adults with overweight and obesity following the Network approach.

The municipality of Rotterdam is a part of this local Network approach in The Netherlands. This approach has the goal of creating a closer connection between social and medical domains. Due to the engagement in the local network approach, the municipality of Rotterdam can share the gained knowledge with the other relevant stakeholders from the network such as other municipalities in The Netherlands.

3.4 Conclusion

To improve the existing policy, the Dutch partners will leverage the experiences shared by the other partners in the HR4ALL project.

The insight from the Spanish partners regarding the holistic multicomponent community-based approach will give us insights into possible actions and community engagement. This will be instrumental in our efforts to empower patients and enable them to maintain their work ability through our initiatives.

The Slovenian approach will play a crucial role in helping us to understand the interdisciplinary rehabilitation for vulnerable groups. And finally, the Danish set-up will be an inspiration to understand if we somewhere and somehow can improve the access to the healthcare services, mental health support, as well as the social integration programmes.

With these proactive approaches, we aim to improve our policy instrument, making it better prepared to provide comprehensive support, promote healthier behaviours, improving social inclusion and promoting integration in active life, ultimately leading to better overall health and productivity outcomes for the municipality's residents.

By working together, a comprehensive support system will be established, offering a holistic approach to rehabilitation and promoting sustainable development for the citizens facing obesity and vulnerable citizens. The project will ultimately promote an inclusive and supportive community where vulnerable citizens have equal opportunities for rehabilitation, personal growth, and social integration.

This policy report will be updated again latest in Semester 6 (2027).