

Emilia-Romagna Region: Reference Site of the Month (March 2014)

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By Tania Salandin, Antonio Addis, Mirca Barbolini - Regional Agency for Health and Social Care of Emilia-Romagna



Since the inception of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA) the Emilia-Romagna Region took the opportunity to further enhance regional synergies and linkages on issues related to the ageing population.

The Region, which ranks among the Italian regions with the greatest longevity, decided to face the challenge of ageing acting on two fronts simultaneously: *coordination* and *communication*.

Complexity

Population ageing is one of the most serious challenges that Europe will have to face in the near future. Parallel to population ageing, European Countries will have to deal with an overwhelmingly increasing public expenditure related to healthcare costs, including long-term assistance, and retirement funds .

According to recent projections, by 2030 the average life expectancy at birth in Emilia-Romagna will increase of 1-4 years and 2-5 years for women and men, respectively.

Within the EIP on AHA context, on top of being Reference Site, and therefore networking and coordinating players and initiatives and facilitating good practices exchange, the Region is specifically committed on Actions A1, A2, A3, B3 and C2. This specific strategy is facilitated by the

presence of both national and international networks such as [Mattone Internazionale](#), [EUREGHA](#) and [EUnetHTA](#).

Governing Complexity

It is of utmost importance to rely on a governance structure, that can effectively deal with such a complex and wide-ranging issue/actors. For this purpose the Region established a *governance model* carefully tailored to bring together different actions and stakeholders, in order to ease debate and exchange as well as to coordinate EIP on AHA Actions and Best Practices.

According to the determinations of the regional government (no. [1109/2012](#) and [1656/2013](#)) the EIP on AHA is managed by the *Regional Coordination Team*. The coordination team consists of: Department of Health Policies; Department of Productive Activities; Regional Agency for Health and Social Care of Emilia-Romagna (ASSR); ASTER (consortium for innovation and technology transfer).

Going into details, the figure clearly shows the **three layers structure of the governance model**.

- the **Regional Coordination Team** having the overall responsibility of the EIP on AHA activity in the Region;
- the **Working group coordinator** representing the connection between the coordination team and the relevant groups of researchers contributing to each Working group;
- the **Working group members** (local health trusts, research centres, academia, foundations, industry representatives), participating in the research work activities.

EIP on AHA & Regional Interventions

Governance complexity is therefore challenging. Thanks to the participation in EIP on AHA the Region set up a two-faced strategy capable of simultaneously dealing with coordination and communication.

Coordination is aimed at managing existing experience with new practices and experimentation inside and outside regional borders to avoid wasting resources, skills and priorities.

As for *communication*, information about research activities, initiatives, workshops and events arising from regional commitment in EIP on AHA, as well as existing long-standing regional initiatives are channelled across regional territory to foster the exchange of experiences and the updating of resources.

Coordination: a Concrete example

R&D activities are a core duty of the RHS (see [Regional law 29, 2004](#)). The Region dedicates special efforts in promoting better research for better healthcare, through regional research capacity enhancement, by means of specific research programs.

Among these programs the **Region-University Research Program** stands out as a key funding scheme aimed at promoting priority research for the timely transfer of clinical/organisational innovation in the RHS structures. In the **2007-2013** period the Program **funded 144 projects** (out of 569 submitted proposals) for an overall amount of almost **60 million Euros**.

The potential impact of such a Program on RHS is definitely high; not just in terms of scientific innovation and development, but also in terms of bringing together different stakeholders/actors from a variety of backgrounds, contexts and expertise.

Therefore, fine tuning existing ongoing regional initiatives/actions in health sector explicitly targeted to address innovative solutions, is essential to successfully fulfilling both regional and European challenges.

To that end, regional authorities have been deeply committed in deploying its integrative function by bringing together programs and stakeholders irrespective of their geographical range (regional, national, European), but having the same mission: innovation in health and social care.

Concretely speaking, the Region-University Program has been connected to the EIP on AHA. In this context the latest Call launched by the Region in 2013 in the framework of the clinical governance area, devoted an important percentage of the available research questions and funds to geriatrics.

More precisely, the Call (2,5 million Euros) dedicated 6 (out of 25) research questions to the ageing issue, as a result 4 out 11 project proposals focused on geriatrics have been rewarded. This is the result of balancing Program priority setting mechanism and EIP on AHA priorities.

Communicating EIP on AHA

A comprehensive communication strategy is pivotal to fulfil regional integrative purposes. The latter should be active, continuous and far-reaching.

The EIP on AHA regional communication plan is based on different tools ([web site](#) and web pages specifically designed for EIP-AHA; [digital](#) and hardcopy publications; targeted internal mailing lists; regional press releases, save the date announcements; live streaming of EIP on AHA events) and is targeted to different stakeholders, ranging from the general public to healthcare professionals and scholars, from regional administrators to policy and decision makers.

Networking and exchange of information with others RS is one of the opportunity we are now exploring in the context of Horizon 2020 Calls.

Communication concrete examples

[Living healthy and active in an ageing Europe](#) is the subject of the international workshop that took place in Bologna June 3rd, 2013. This event has been organized by the Regional Agency for Health and Social Care of Emilia-Romagna in collaboration with Aster and supported by the *Mattone internazionale* Project. An opportunity to debate on what is going on inside and outside the national boundaries and to find concrete answers to the ageing challenge.

The meeting while not providing CME credits was attended by nearly 190 people, including professionals of the RHS, academia, regional administrators, decision and policy makers.

The regional EIP-AHA information process, however, started in April 2013 with the so-called *Anteprima 60'* aimed at presenting the regional EIP on AHA strategy to professionals working at the Regional Agency for Health and Social Care and at the Regional Department of Health Policies.

For further details please contact:

Tania Salandin

tsalandin@regione.emilia-romagna.it

+ 39 051 527 7119

Tags:

reference sites

Related action groups:

A1 Adherence to prescription, A2 Falls prevention, A3 Functional decline and frailty, C2 Independent living solutions, D4 Age friendly environments

Relevance to partnership:

Prevention, screening and early diagnosis, Care and cure, Active ageing and independent living, Horizontal issues and framework conditions