

sunfrail

the project in a nutshell



## THE CHALLENGE

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Population ageing is accelerating rapidly worldwide, from 461 million people older than 65 years in 2004 to an estimated 2 billion people by 2050, which has profound implications for the planning and delivery of health and social care. Two of the most problematic expressions of population ageing are the conditions of frailty and multimorbidity.

Frailty is generally a condition characterized by increased vulnerability and sensitivity to physical, psychological and social stressors. The current operationalized definitions are mostly based on physical and clinical or multidomain (physical, cognitive and social) models. However, all these approaches have not generally translated in easy-to-use instruments nor in subsequent proactive care pathways and interventions.

## WHAT IS SUNFRAIL?

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Sunfrail (Reference Sites Network for Prevention and Care of Frailty and Chronic Conditions in community dwelling persons of EU Countries) is a European project with a duration of 30 months, which started in May 2015. The project is funded by the EU Health Programme 2014-2020 and brings together 11 partners from 6 EU Member States.

The project aimed at improving the identification, prevention and management of frailty and care of multimorbidity in community dwelling persons (over 65) in subnational settings of EU countries, through the following steps:

- Designing an innovative, integrated model for the prevention and management of frailty and care of multimorbidity;
- Validating the model on the basis of existing systems and services;
- Assessing the potential for the adoption/replication of the model in different European organisational contexts;
- Promoting the dissemination of the results with a focus on strategic decision-makers at regional, national and EU level to support the adoption of effective policies for the prevention and management of frailty and care of multimorbidity.

# SUNFRAIL EU SYNERGIES

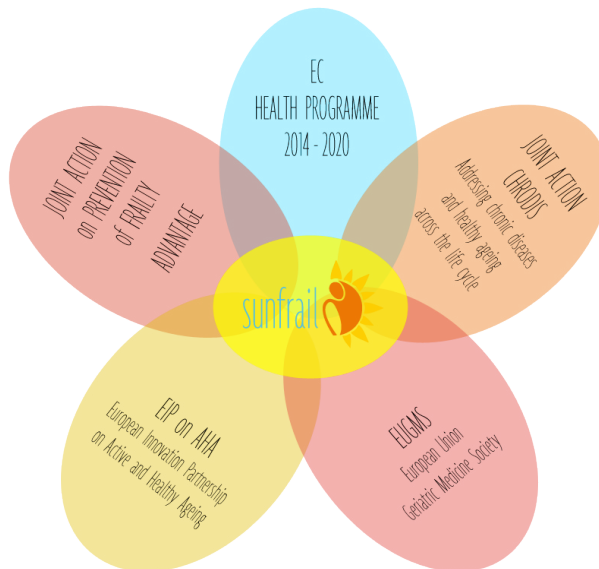
Sunfrail has constantly involved the **EIP-AHA network** (A3 and B3 action groups), and the **European Union Geriatric Medicine Society (EUGMS)** working group on “Frailty in older persons” in each step of the project, thus ensuring full synergy with ongoing EC initiatives and full support from the Scientific Community.

Part of the Sunfrail project partners are also Affiliated Entities of the **Joint Action on Prevention of Frailty (ADVANTAGE)**. The two initiatives show a great potential for synergies, due to the similarity of

objectives and expected results. Sunfrail works also in close contact with the **Joint Action on Chronic Diseases (Chrodís)**.

At **national level**, the Italian Reference Sites participating in Sunfrail are also involved in **PRO.M.I.S.** - Programma Mattone Internazionale Salute, a program co-funded by the Italian Government that gathers all Italian Regions. PRO.M.I.S represents a good synergy practice with a great potential in terms of dissemination and adoption of the results at national level.

FIGURE 1. SUNFRAIL EU SYNERGIES



# PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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During the 22 months of Sunfrail project implementation, main results were reached:

- Sunfrail definition of frailty;
- Design of Sunfrail Pre-Model of Care;
- Development of the Sunfrail tool for the early identification of frailty and multimorbidity.

**Frailty** has been defined according to the bio-psycho social paradigm in coherence with its different dimensions (physical, psychological, social and economic). This definition was developed through a process of literature review and in-depth discussions with major stakeholders from the scientific community, policy makers and services providers.

An assessment was conducted on Reference Sites' Health Systems and Health and Social Services (including good practices), on beneficiaries' perceptions and barriers to care, and on human programs and needs on frailty and multimorbidity. It allowed to obtain an overall view on the available models of care, leading to the design of the Sunfrail Pre-Model of Care and of related tools.

The **Sunfrail Pre-Model of Care** (Figure 2) implies that the early identification of frailty and its risk factors can be done through a "multiple entry door system", in which professionals and carers may activate an initial

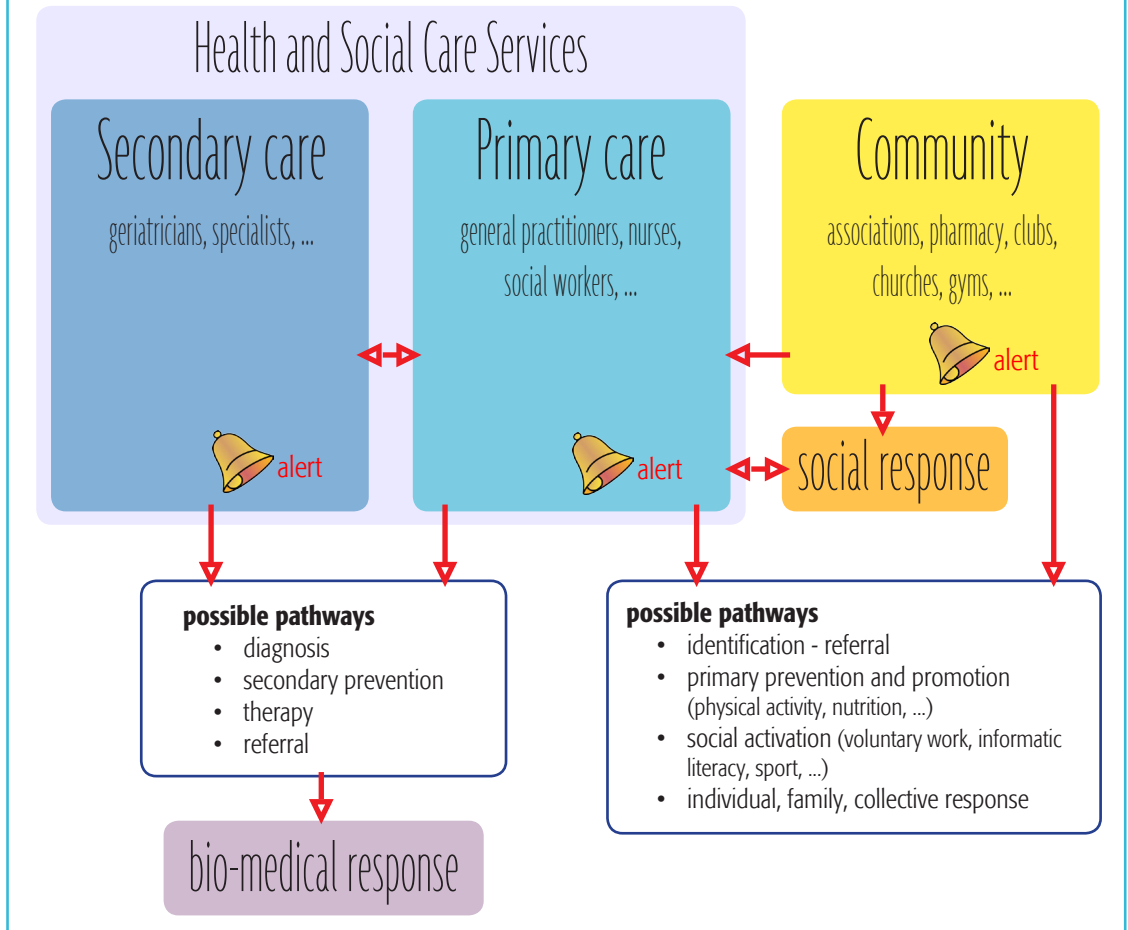
"alert" for further professional/specialist and diagnostic investigation, or for activation of care pathways within the health, social and community-informal systems.

In particular, the assessment showed that there is a need to work on beneficiaries' perception of frailty (including awareness of risk factors) and access to care, in order to bridge the gaps between services provision and utilization (Figure 3).

At the same time, a systematic assessment of frailty risk factors is missing, as well as the availability of specific tools for its early identification, especially in Primary Health and Social Care settings.

To respond to the identified needs, **Sunfrail tool for early identification of frailty and multimorbidity** (Figure 4) has been designed by a multidisciplinary team of experts and needs to be validated. The tool includes nine questions selected from evidence based tools already adopted in health services in the European Union and in the US, to identify frailty according to the bio-(physical), psycho (cognitive and psychological) and social domains.

FIGURE 2. SUNFRAIL PRE-MODEL OF CARE ON FRAILTY AND MULTIMORBIDITY

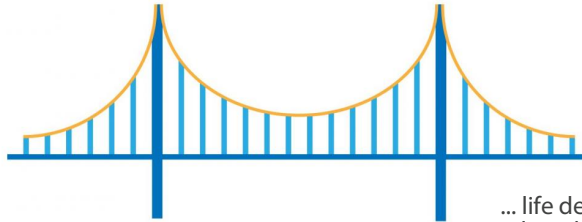


## FIGURE 3. PERCEPTION OF FRAILTY AND BARRIERS TO CARE: BRIDGING THE GAP

Need for independence ———— **FRAILITY?** ———— State of...



\* playing with grandsons  
\* driving \* dancing \* walking



... life decline and extreme vulnerability characterized by weakness and decreased physiologic reserve contributing to increased risk for falls, institutionalization, disability, death.

## FIGURE 4. SUNFRAIL TOOL FOR EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF FRAILITY AND MULTIMORBIDITY

BIOLOGICAL	Do you regularly take 5 or more medications per day?
	Have you recently lost weight such that your clothing has become looser?
	Your physical state made you walk less during last year?
	Have you been evaluated by your general practitioner during last year?
	Have you fallen one or more times during last year?
PSYCHOLOGICAL	Have you experienced memory decline during last year?
SOCIAL	Do you feel lonely most of the time?
	In case of need, can you count on someone close to you?
	Have you had any financial difficulties in facing dental care and health care costs during last year?

## FUTURE STEPS

The project is developing a tool for human resources development: a **short training programme** for frailty detection, prevention and management, and care of multimorbidity with a multidisciplinary approach.

The experimental phase of the Sunfrail Pre-Model of Care, the validation of the Sunfrail tool and of other tools/good practices, and the dissemination across different European Countries will be completed during the next six months.

Key results of the Project will be shared during the Project Final Conference which will be held in October 2017 in Bologna.

## PROJECT PARTNERS



REGIONE LIGURIA



Deusto



## WEBSITE

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More information on the project, the partners and the concept and dimensions of frailty is available at:

[www.sunfrail.eu](http://www.sunfrail.eu)



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