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Your letter

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Subject *Physical Activity and Lifestyle Counselor*

A higher educated professional for “combined lifestyle interventions”

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Introduction

There is a pandemic problem going on. I don't mean Mexican flu or Aids but worse.

Over 4 million people in Europe die every year of cardio vascular diseases (CVD). Unhealthy lifestyle is the main cause. Inactivity, unhealthy dietary habits, smoking, alcohol and stress are the main causes of CVD and other chronic diseases and death. To change unhealthy behavior in a durable way is extremely difficult because it means a fundamental change of someone's identity. Custom fit physical activity programmes, nutritional advices and other changes need professional coaching. In the Netherlands we started a evidence based curriculum for higher educated practice oriented professionals in 2003.

Curriculum

The “Physical Activity and Lifestyle Counselor” is a bachelor plus course (4 year) on the School of Sport Studies of the Hanze University (applied sciences) in Groningen, the Netherlands. This employee finds his professional challenge mainly in a work-setting (workplace health promotion) or a care-setting. The curriculum contains the employments as entitles in the AEHESIS program (Advanced Instructor, Health Related Exercise Specialist and Public Health Promotion Specialist). The skills, knowhow and attitudes are extended with the special focus on the implementation and developing of lifestyle counseling interventions for individuals and special groups and the research on effects of these interventions. The operating procedure of the new professional can be specified as “combined intervention” because next to development and execution of physical activity programs (for every healthy or unhealthy target group) and one-on one counseling, they are also trained in policy making, project management and basic research skills. The loop of evidence based practice together with practice based evidence is closed. Because lifestyle is not only the causal factor of chronic diseases but also the maintaining factor we need to pay attention to changes in lifestyle to prevent to get ill as well as a support of the medical treatment (cure)

Sharing ‘best practice’

Because the unhealthy lifestyle is not a national but a global problem, the idea occurred to use the Dutch experiences as a “best practice” to develop a multilateral joint bachelor course. Systematically working on “healthy ageing” is not only good for the personal health perspective, but also in a broader economically and socially way.

Development of knowledge and talent, mobility of staff and students and building and consolidation of networks are also issues in this innovative process.

In January 2009 The Hanze University Groningen (Applied sciences) hosted the 'Kick Off' of a plan to develop a new, European program of study under the umbrella of ENSSEE called "**Physical Activity and Lifestyle Counselor**". Six collaborating partners for this innovative project have been consulted and in general there is a very positive response albeit with a number of issues remaining to be resolved. The main goal is to develop a new multinational/joint course for a new professional on higher level than currently available.

ENSSEE, The European Network of Sport Science, Education & Employment showed invited us to present our ideas in a workshop during the Xth ENSSEE forum in Ragusa Sicily, September 2009. The main features are

- Joint European Bachelor 180 credits.
- To a large extent in English
- 6 semesters / interchangeable "cubes" (= curriculum building elements with content and competences) developed in co operation
- Dissemination of knowledge and building multinational joint curriculum
- Registration in home Institution / central Blackboard
- Mobility of staff and students (2 semesters abroad)
- Quality assurance
- Students will have the opportunity to graduate with their own plus a joint degree

Project

The stages of project management flow out in each other. The initiative/initiation stage, planning and design and even the execution stage (existing example) are interweaved. On the other hand there was only a limited marketing research in the Netherlands (1999) and there is only an out of the pocket funding by the Hanze University at this moment.

Needs

The project needs a structured plan, a European labor market survey about the employability of the new professional and a preparation of content and competency based design to enable cooperation in the development phase. After that a estimate of costs and a call for a grant for further development and execution must be made.

ERASMUS multilateral projects - Curriculum Development

Curriculum development projects are designed to support the process of innovation and upgrading in higher education teaching. They may be proposed in any academic discipline

The initiative at this moment is still in hand of one person that is a too vulnerable situation for such a innovative and sizable project. Other specialized co workers are needed to define quality, organization, learning material, marketing, communication systems and other tasks to build a curriculum for a new professional in a unique cooperative organization.

Foreseeing partners

Germany	Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln
Portugal	Escola Superior de Desporto de Rio Maior
Italy	IUSM Roma, Istituto Universitario di Scienze motorie
Denmark	University of Southern Denmark, Odense
United Kingdom	University of Worcester
Lithuania	Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education Kaunas
Netherlands	Hanze University Groningen (Applied sciences)