

Presentation of project – RENASCENCE: The Role of European National Health Services in the Enhancement of Sustainable Food Systems

Introduction: The European food systems are unsustainable, within a Europe confronting increased environmental degradation, diet related diseases and inequality. Evidence points to health-care systems as main drivers for societal changes towards sustainable food systems, as they are involved in food procurement and have a strong educative role. European hospitals have more than 2.5 million beds, 6.5% of them being for long stays.

Scarce scientific literature exists on food policies of health services. While several public reports and guides have been written on sustainable public procurement, there has been negligible focus on hospitals public procurement. Alongside sustainable procurement strategies, the need to switch from a classical nutrient adequate diet into a sustainable healthy diet is essential, but policies are still undeveloped in that area within the health services.

If sustainable food policies (concerning food procurement and education) were embedded in hospital functioning, several of the UN 2030 agenda's sustainable development goals would be achieved (specifically goals 2 and 12, with direct impact on goals 3, 8 and 11). However, the guidelines, strategies and public policies on sustainable food systems are scarce, underdeveloped and are not executed adequately nor uniformly across European hospitals.

In this communication we present RENASCENCE, a project that recently began its path, which objective is to identify and analyse from a sustainable dimension the food system processes related with the commercialisation channels (procurement) and educative channels (health/diet promotion) of the European health services and from this knowledge, propose a System of Indicators (SOI) that will permit development of strategies for the food systems in place.

Methods: The methodology is based on qualitative research, within a process of co-generation of the first SOI on food systems specific to health services, as well as evaluate its empirical value. A transdisciplinary approach with a core on Participatory Action Research (PAR) will be used, through deductive and inductive processes, making the methodology of this proposal a unique process for the co-generation of the SOI.

Firstly, a systematic review will map the European Health Services educative and procurement policies leading to a primary diagnosis of the situation. It will continue with the (co-)generation process of the System of Indicators, through focus groups with experts, to delve further in that primary diagnosis, in order to obtain the objectives that will be used for the development of the first draft of the SOI using the *Principles, Criteria & Indicators theory* as a base. Afterwards, a DELPHI analysis and panel of experts, will lead to the theoretical validation of the System of Indicators. A practical phase will finalise the validation of the System of Indicators against real cases to assess its empirical value.

Results: The project is on its first steps; future results are on their way. At present the systematic review process is ongoing. However, the expected results of this project include a knowledge in food processes related to food procurement and diet advice in European Health services. That information will lead us to the development of a tool in the form of a system of indicators that will aid in the decision making of the European health services within the food procurement and diet advice processes towards sustainable means.

Discussion: Many European countries are failing to fulfil their national targets for climate change, obesity rates, equality targets and the list keeps piling up. New policies, targets and strategies are developed

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 836353

with poor success. In this moment of Climate Urgency, and with barely 10 more years to fulfil the UN targets, instruments need to be found that will aid to implement the policies efficiently and effectively. Tools that will help in the development of strategies, with realistic and tangible steps, in order to start making changes from the foundations and not the roof. The project RENASCENCE aims to develop such a tool, a System of Indicators exclusive for health services that will aid them into the obtention of different policy targets from the foundations.

RENASCENCE is in its initial phase, and yet we are gathering results. However, in a matter of utmost importance such as Sustainable Food Systems and Sustainable Diets; and bearing in mind the PAR nature of this projects, the research team acknowledges the importance to present this short communication in order to make visible the project, and invite to those interested to participate in it.

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Contact information:

Goiuri Alberdi, PhD (@goiuriialberdi)

goiuri.alberdi@ehu.eus

Marie-Sklodowska Cuire Post-Doctoral Fellow in the University of the Basque Country

M. Begiristain Zubillaga, PhD (@mirenebegi)

mirene.begiristain@ehu.eus

Senior researcher in the University of the Basque Country