



World Health  
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# HEALTHY CITIES

Promoting health and equity – evidence  
for local policy and practice



Summary evaluation of Phase V of the  
WHO European Healthy Cities Network







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# **Healthy cities**

## **Promoting health and equity – evidence for local policy and practice**

**Summary evaluation of Phase V of the  
WHO European Healthy Cities Network**

Edited by: Evelyne de Leeuw, Agis D. Tsouros, Mariana Dyakova and Geoff Green

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# Abstract

This publication summarizes the evaluation of Phase V (2009–2013) of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. The evaluation process was designed in collaboration with city representatives, academic institutions and public health experts. It adopted a realist synthesis approach, being responsive to the unique social, cultural, political, health and epidemiological circumstances in the 99 cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and 20 accredited national networks. The evaluation findings are rooted in the enduring healthy city values such as equity, governance, partnership, participation and sustainability. Considering also the core Phase V themes, this publication focuses on policy and governance, healthy urban environments and design, caring and supportive environments, healthy and active living, national network performance and effects on health and equity. The evaluation finds good progress among cities and networks but differing in scale and quality. The healthy cities movement adds value and allows local governments to invest in health and well-being and address inequities through novel approaches to developing health.

## Keywords

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*Evelyne de Leeuw, Agis D. Tsouros, Mariana Dyakova & Geoff Green*

# Foreword

This publication is a very brief summary of the recent evaluation endeavours of 99 cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and of the Network of European National Healthy Cities Networks. It covers Phase V (2009–2013). Although the commitment to the values of equity and sustainability endures, the socioeconomic and environmental landscape of Europe has changed fundamentally since I assumed responsibility for the programme 23 years ago.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe has responded with a strategy for Health 2020, supported by our 53 Member States. I was asked by the Regional Director to take responsibility for its development and drew on my WHO Healthy Cities experience to emphasize both the wider socioeconomic determinants of health and the role of local governments and their partners in controlling, regulating or influencing these determinants. In turn, Health 2020 provides a framework and incentive for Phase VI of our networks, spanning the period 2014–2019.

This next phase will draw on results of the ambitious evaluation of Phase V, led by Evelyne de Leeuw, supported by a team of 15 academic experts and advised by our healthy city coordinators and critical friends. They have used an innovative realist synthesis method to marshal the evidence revealed by six research instruments, centred around 159 case studies provided by 79 cities. The second and final chapters of this publication summarize some of the opportunities but also the contested limitations of this method.

This publication is launched at the Annual Business Meeting and International Healthy Cities Conference, which concludes Phase V and heralds Phase VI. I hope it will assist this gathering of policy-makers, decision-makers and academics to critically debate, confront and find common ground in assessing the value and impact of our networks and the work of member cities. It is only the first in a series of robust but accessible publications arising from the evaluation, including a review of 25 years of Healthy Cities in Europe and a special supplement of Health Promotion International. I welcome your experience, insights and priorities, in Athens and beyond.

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