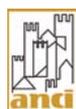




# *MANIFESTO* **HEALTH IN THE CITY: THE COMMON GOOD**

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# HEALTH IN THE CITY: THE COMMON GOOD

In 1948 the World Health Organization (WHO) defined Health as “... a **state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing**, not merely the absence of disease and infirmity” and urged governments to strive responsibly through a health educational program in order to promote a healthy lifestyle and to provide citizens with a high level of wellbeing.

This **new concept of health**, therefore, doesn't merely refer to the physical survival or to the absence of disease but there is more, including the psychological, natural, environmental, climate, housing, work, economic, social and cultural conditions. In view of the above it is no longer possible to ignore the role of cities as promoters of health.

For this purpose WHO has coined the term “**healthy city**”, which does not describe a city that has reached a particular level of public health, rather than a city that is aware of the importance of health as a public good and, therefore, puts in place clear policies to protect it and to improve it.

Health is not just an “individual good” anymore, but a “**common good**” that encourages all citizens **to ethics and to follow the rules** of civil society, with virtuous behaviour based on mutual respect.

Therefore the common good is a goal to be pursued by citizens, mayors and local administrators who act as guarantors of a fair health, ensuring that community health is considered as an investment and not just a cost.

**The organization of the city** and, more generally, the ones of the social and environmental contexts, **are able to influence and change the emerging needs, lifestyles** and individual expectations, elements that should be considered in the definition and in the orientation of public policies.

It is estimated that in the coming decades the **urban population will** constitute the **70% of the global population**. The 37% of the Italian population lives in 14 metropolitan cities and the health issue is becoming a priority for administrative action by mayors.

Urbanization and the current configuration of the city offer to public and individual health as many risks as many opportunities as well. If cities are planned, well-organized and if they're managed consciously, opportunities may outweigh the risks.

The **1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Health Promotion**, held in **Ottawa** on November 21<sup>st</sup> 1986, already asked, to several levels of government (over-national, national and regional), to give support on health promotion strategies and programs in different countries, knowing that health promotion requires coordinated action by all those involved, not just health systems.

Currently the most critical problems can be understood and solved only by making **an analysis of social, economic and environmental variables**, plus risk factors that could impact on health. The relationship between health, quality of life and environment is now a topic of central interest in the social sciences, environmental and medical aspects. The rise in global incidence level of non-hereditary diseases such as diabetes is attributable to higher levels of urbanization, population aging and more sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles.

The sustainable development goals related to health are a priority for the World Health Organization which include them in the 2014-2019 Agenda.

Nowadays we have to wonder: how the Planet Earth will look like in the coming decades? Will it be able to support an increase of more than two billion inhabitants? How our cities are going to change? Will the Governments be able to meet the growing demand for health? Assuming that margins of action exist and that the future is not established yet, an integrated approach is necessary to address public health problems.

**The city can offer great opportunities** for integration between health, social, cultural and recreational services. The future sustainability of health systems worldwide cannot ignore the study of the determinants of health in large cities.

## WHAT IS THE "URBAN HEALTH"

The exponential urban development, which the world had witnessed, had deeply changed the lifestyle of the population and it quickly continues to influence the environmental and social context in which we live. Urbanization creates new problems: it reduces equity, it generates social tensions and it introduces threats to people's health. The current configuration of the city, and more generally, urbanization, offers to public and individual health both risks and opportunities. If cities are planned, well organized and they're managed consciously, it is possible to have a synergy between institutions, citizens and professionals in order to improve the living conditions and the health of the population as well.

## HEALTH CITY THINK TANK

Health City Think Tank is a space of study, analysis and comparison, promoted by the Health City Institute, with the aim to face issues related to healthy variables in the city, in order to anticipate and lead Italy involvement both in international and national initiatives at parliamentary level.

The goal is to give to Institutions and to the Local Government a place and some thoughts to reflect on for debate, that can be turned into concrete policy proposals, thus allowing cities to encourage people to adopt lifestyles that make them less vulnerable to diabetes.

The Think Tank has set up a Board of Expert which involve experts from different backgrounds across various disciplines and that will discuss the first Manifesto for Urban Health in Italy. The insights of Health City Think Tank are: health globalization, health variables in metropolitan cities and in big cities, the aging of the population, chronicity, relationship between urbanization and health. The prospective study of the City Health Think Tank concerns the analysis of the economic and health context, the sociological, the clinical-epidemiological and the political-health aspects.

## WHY A "MANIFESTO"

The Manifesto is a document that defines the key points that can drive cities to study and to improve health determinants in their own urban environments, in order to set up strategies to improve the citizens health and their lifestyles.

Each point of the Manifesto contains the priority actions to achieve this objective, promoting "international experiences" and public/private partnership determinants in urban environments.

# 1

## Every citizen has **the right** to a healthy and integrated life in his own urban context. We have to make the citizens health a priority in all the urban policies

Improve the quality of the urban environment is one of the main objectives of the international institutions (such as the European Union) that set out cooperation measures and guidelines addressed to Member States and to local authorities in order to make the cities (as places to live, work and invest) more attractive and healthier. In several Italian urban areas some regulatory standards to protect human health are not respected yet.

- The improvement of the urban environment should be the priority of local governments and citizens should be actively involved in policy-making;
- The local governments must be committed to promote citizens' health by studying and monitoring the health determinants of the specific urban context, relying on the strengths of the city and drastically reducing health risks;
- Predict a mode of public/private partnership for the implementation of policies

# 2

## Ensure a high level of **literacy** and accessibility to health information for all citizens, increasing the self-awareness

The *Health Literacy* is "the ability to obtain, process and understand basic health information and to access to services needed to make informed choices." But not all citizens have the same level of health literacy and this creates inequalities.

- Promote training programs at regional or local level addressed to HCPs and patients' associations, in order to let them evaluate the level of awareness of the citizens and let them use an appropriate and effective language;
- Enable citizens, patients and their associations to communicate easily and quickly with the health system, being able to find, understand and evaluate the appropriate information to meet their care needs and exploiting potentials offered by digital technologies.

# 3

## Insert the **health education** in all school programs, with particular focus on health risks in the urban context

Health education is a fundamental tool in promoting health and it is crucial for the improvement of the population's health status. However, it still doesn't receive proper attention. Numerous studies show that health education carried out in schools is effective in reducing the prevalence of risky health behaviours in young people. The school, more than any other institution, can help people to live healthily by helping them acquiring the knowledge and the skills necessary to avoid risky behaviours (unhealthy diet, inadequate physical activity, etc.).

- Promote and strengthen the collaboration between the worlds of health, education and the one of the local community;
- Create an ASL and an AO network of health workers and school teachers in order to define guidelines for proper health information.

## 4

**Encouraging healthy lifestyles in the workplace, in large communities and families.**

Nowadays health promotion in the workplace represents a border strategy that takes into account the synergistic effects on human health of the risks related to the lifestyle and to the type of occupation. It is strongly recommended with attention to the various issues of the individual and the collective spheres, such as smoking, physical activity and proper nutrition.

- Spread good practice for health promotion in the workplace and strengthen the system of incentives addressed to socially responsible companies investing in safety and prevention;
- Introduce tools that help monitoring compliance of safety standards inside of the workplace, especially related to environment characteristics: ergonomic seats, lighting, ventilation.

## 5

**Promote an appropriate food culture through tailored diet programs, in order to prevent obesity**

A healthy diet, together with physical activity, has a key role in preventing obesity. According to WHO, obesity affects almost half a billion people in the world and it represents one of the main risk factors for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, certain type of cancer, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis.

- To set up guidelines that take into account the different contexts and the different target population (eg. School meals and / or appropriate business);
- Organize awareness events and food education projects at local level.

## 6

**Expand and improve access to sports and physical activities for all citizens, promoting physical and psychological development of young people and active aging**

The World Health Organization has indicated a sedentary lifestyle as a major cause of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. In addition, the EU and, more generally, the advanced countries, are facing a rapid change in the demographic structure and must face, as well, the consequences of aging populations on public finances and on social protection policies. The extension of working life in advanced age must contribute to address these challenges.

- Ensuring that all citizens have free access to infrastructures and green spaces, with particular attention to people with socio-economic difficulties, according to the principle of "Citizenship of Sport";
- Assume a new way of employment and improve working conditions for older workers in order to build a solidarity between generations, by improving the involvement of older people and promoting active aging as foreseen already in 2012 (European Year of active aging);
- Promote sports and physical activities for children and young people through the active involvement of the families.

# 7

## Develop local policies of **urban transport** oriented to environmental sustainability and the creation of a healthy life

Underinvestment in urban public transport and infrastructures, which enable active transport modes (allowing to move safely by bicycle or on foot) are one of the main barriers to effectively promote a healthy and active lifestyle. Active transport involves the reduction of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and, increasing physical activity, it reduces the risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart attack.

- Encouraging the use of active transportation by building roads, safe cycle tracks and good transport links, as well as an efficient public transport system;
- Provide activities of public awareness towards more efficient choices of urban mobility (from an economic point of view, respecting the environment and considering the impact on one's health).

# 8

## Create local initiatives to **promote citizen adherence to primary prevention programs**, with a particular focus on chronic diseases, hereditary and non-hereditary diseases.

Non-hereditary diseases, especially cardiovascular ones, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disorders, represents now the main risk for health and for human development. The WHO action plan highlights that, for the social and economic development of all countries, it is very important to invest in the prevention of these diseases, as a responsibility of all governments. In addition, the urban context must make an important contribution to reduce the impact of hereditary diseases, by promoting and encouraging programs of vaccinations, prophylaxis and healthy lifestyles

- Municipal administrations, in collaboration with the local health authorities, can promote information programs on prevention and integration of diagnostic and treatment care pathways for hereditary and non-hereditary chronic diseases;
- Municipal administrations can study the urban environment suitable to approach citizen in carrying out its daily activities (nursing homes, workplaces, recreational places, sports facilities, virtual places such as the websites of the authorities themselves) in which convey - through printed material or virtual - key messages for prevention).

# 9

## Consider the **health of more vulnerable people as a priority for the social inclusion in the urban context**

The rights to 'education and health' are fundamental RIGHTS of the individual, constitutionally guaranteed and, therefore, they must be secured regardless of personal, social, economic or any other nature of conditions.

The persistence of worst conditions of the health status in disadvantaged areas of the city, or social marginalization of the weaker population, on one hand is the manifestation of the effect of poverty and social problems, on the other it undermines the social cohesion of the entire population.

- Adopt policies to improve social, economic and environmental conditions of disadvantaged districts, with interventions "mean-tested" and by improving the urban context.
- Each city must be aligned to highest standards of accessibility and usability of urban services for people with disabilities, upgrading health infrastructures, road networks and access to public services

- Promote economic and social measures aimed at improving social inclusion of all categories of disadvantaged population for economic, social or health conditions (such as illness and disability), promoting their participation even in sport and recreational activities;
- Promote prevention policies and social/health care inclusion for migrant population, also by using figures of cultural mediators.

## 10 | Studying and monitoring at urban level the determinants of public health, through a strong alliance of Municipalities, Universities, Health Agencies, Research Centers, Industry and professionals.

The determinants of health are elements of risk, which interact to set, maintain and change conditions of the health of the citizens throughout their lives. These determinants may include the environment, lifestyles, socio-economic conditions, genetics or the ability to access to services.

- Create a director for study and monitor the impact of the determinants of health in the urban context, providing the joint involvement of municipal administration, Health Authority, University and Research Centers;
- Promoting *multi-stakeholder partnerships* to create urban policies that, on the basis of the studies on the impact of the determinants of health in a city, can produce “smart” interventions to reduce the health risks and to promote a healthy urban environment.

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2

Ensure a high level of **literacy** and accessibility to health information for all citizens, increasing the self-awareness



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Insert the **health education** in all **school programs**, with particular focus on health risks in the urban context

4

Encouraging healthy lifestyles **in the workplace**, in large communities and families



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Promote an appropriate **food culture** through tailored diet programs, in order to prevent obesity

6

Expand and improve **access to sports and physical activities** for all citizens, promoting physical and psychological development of young people and active aging



7

Develop local policies of **urban transport** oriented to environmental sustainability and the creation of a healthy life



8

Create local initiatives to **promote citizen adherence to primary prevention programs**, with a particular focus on chronic diseases, hereditary and non-hereditary diseases.



9

Consider the **health of more vulnerable people as a priority for the social inclusion** in the urban context



10

**Studying and monitoring** at urban level the determinants of public health, through a strong alliance of Municipalities, Universities, Health Agencies, Research Centers, Industry and professionals.



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