



DEVELOPING A QUALITY PLAN FOR PREVENTION SCIENCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

Background

The Science for Prevention Academic Network (SPAN) is funded by the European Commission and involves 32 institutions across 25 European Countries. SPAN aims to improve the integration of prevention science in the higher education sector and to improve skill mobility across Europe.

One of the objectives of the consortium is to **outline a Quality Plan (QP) for consistent development of prevention science** in higher education in Europe.

Prior to development of a QP an on-line survey was conducted, focusing on three aspects:

1) Mapping of prevention science in higher education across Europe showed that “only a few dedicated prevention science courses exist, although prevention science modules and topics were incorporated into many other higher education courses, with a high level of ECTS integration” (Kreeft et al., 2014).

2) Mapping the education and training needs of the prevention science workforce across Europe showed that education and training in prevention science should be more practically orientated (e.g., development and implementation of prevention programs and funding) (Košir et al., 2014).

3) Mapping prevention science research activity and identifying junior researchers showed that “capability in prevention science research across Europe could be improved by enhancing education and training provision in several areas, including intervention development, implementation and evaluation, policy research, qualitative and quantitative methods, and epidemiology” (Galanti et al., 2014).

Aims

In a draft QP we:

- Introduce a plan on how higher level knowledge, skills, and competencies should be implemented in prevention science in Europe;
- Recommend that higher education institutions in Europe review existing provisions against this new quality framework, and

Aims cont'd

- Recommend what should be done on Pan-European level in order to harmonize and further support consistent development of prevention science.

Methods

Results from the SPAN European survey of prevention science education and training provision, needs, and research were summarised, and considered alongside existing quality frameworks, in the development of a draft quality plan for higher level skills and competencies for prevention science in Europe.

Quality Plan

The QP sets out the tasks that are required in order to improve the integration of Prevention Science education / degree across Europe. This can be done through quality assurance standards, employment of standard methods and clearly defined approaches in Tertiary Education.

QP introduces specific recommendations to higher education institutions and prevention scientists and teachers in Europe, an outlines what actions should be taken in order to become a reliable partner within a consistent quality education framework in Prevention Science, which is underpinned by the ECTS.

QP gives guidance to institutions while setting up their own action plan for implementing prevention science courses or study programs, in concordance with ECTS requirements.

Learning Outcomes

For future development of prevention science and for continuous measurement of quality of educational efforts it is crucial to dutifully specify the learning outcomes on the level of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Knowledge, skills and competencies should be defined for a single course / set of courses (leading to specialization) and/or for the whole study program (undergraduate, doctoral, or post doctoral).

Implementation strategies

QP introduces implementation strategies at the institutional and European level. Implementation strategies on the institutional level may be guided by and supported from the European level (e.g., developing a model curriculum of prevention science courses leading to specialization or a whole study program).

However, the success of implementation lays primarily on activities executed at the institutional level (e.g., choosing a person within the institution that will be responsible not only for implementing prevention science education according to the QP but also will be capable of persuading the institution management that prevention science should be included amongst educational priorities of the institution).

Maintaining and Enhancing Quality

The QP indicates that a strong emphasis should be put on obtaining periodic feedback. “Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programs and awards” (ENQA, 2009, pp 7). However, the level of quality of education on the European level should be a regular item on the agenda at the SPAN meetings.

Availability of QP

A draft QP is already available to the SPAN partners. The final version of the QP is expected to be published on-line on the SPAN website (see below) by March 2015.

Conclusions

Looking forward, a final part of the SPAN project will support selected institutions to develop an action plan to implement the quality plan, and set within the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS) to facilitate student mobility in Europe.

References

- Matej Košir et al. (2014). Mapping Prevention Science Workforce Education and Training Needs In Europe. 5th EUSPR Conference, 16-18 October 2014, Palma de Mallorca, Majorca
- Peer van der Kreeft / Julie Schamp et al. (2014). Mapping Prevention Science Education in Europe. 5th EUSPR Conference, 16-18 October 2014, Palma de Mallorca, Majorca
- Maria Rosaria Galanti et al. (2014). Mapping Prevention Science Research Activity and Capability in Europe. 5th EUSPR Conference, 16-18 October 2014, Palma de Mallorca, Majorca