



VITALity for the Future

This report brings together the findings from the literature & field research undertaken by the five partners in the VITALity for the Future ERASMUS+ project.

Its purpose is to identify the main trends & developments in positive health & well-being in order to inform the content & design of initial & continuing vocational education & training.

Developed by CPIP

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Introduction and Background

Project Background

Keywords: Health challenges, Vitality and positive health, well-being and healthy life-style.

The new crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, together with people increasingly living longer, urges us to find better solutions in health care and shift more quickly from a curative approach to one of prevention.

In the midst of present & future health challenges, amongst which people are assaulted by a torrent of information & misinformation, there is a notable tendency of people taking supplements and various medications to protect themselves.

Such aspects raise the question of how people can live longer, have a healthy life style, manage new challenges and at the same time maintain their vitality.

The **VITALity for the Future** project seeks to bring to the public's attention the concepts of vitality and positive health and also other complementary aspects as: mental and physical exercise, continuing social engagement, stress reduction, and proper nutrition.

This report is the result of research carried out for the accomplishment of the first intellectual output of the project. This exercise examined vitality trends & developments in the partner countries and the wider EU and how these might have significance for Vocational Education & Training. The research was undertaken by a diverse mix of VET providers, health experts and providers, community organisations and local authorities from Romania, Finland, Portugal, Austria, & The Netherlands. The research findings were very important for the further development of the project because they were to form the foundation of the work on the other project products. The research explored the concepts of health care from a narrow medical viewpoint to the broader concept of vitality and positive health.

Additionally, the research examined how far these concepts have become embedded in policies, in practical care and in vocational education through a mapping exercise held in each partner country.

Furthermore, this report describes and analyses the state of play in the health care and vitality sector and assesses the extent to which vocational education should take account of positive health and prevention initiatives in their curriculum profiles.

The analysis presented here is based on qualitative research as well as field research in which relevant actors in VET and health care sectors were invited to share their views and opinions regarding the vitality sector and how best these concepts can be embedded into education and training.

In summary, this paper explores the way in which different countries look at the concept of vitality and positive health; brings together what we have in common & where we are different. Our aim was to find a common definition of 'vitality' that was acceptable by all partners.

The research undertaken enabled the partners to identify the competences that someone working in the field of vitality should possess and to design a competence framework that describes the desired competences & behaviour of individuals & those who are employed within the vitality sector.

Understanding Vitality

Vitality is an essential element to the quality of life and survival in the old age. According to the Institute for Cancer, vitality is defined as “a term used to describe a person’s ability to live, grow, and develop. Vitality also refers to having energy and being vigorous and active”. Looking at the Oxford English Dictionary, vitality is defined as “the state of being strong and active; energy”.

Analysing the two definitions, we notice that both have in common two elements: energy and the capacity of being active. However difficult vitality may be to define, it is easy for any person to notice its absence.

Within the scientific research “The concept of vitality: review of the vitality-related research domain” it is mentioned that despite the numerous benefits of vitality, including somatic health, mental well-being, and improved performance “the concept has not been accurately conceptualized to ensure its uniform, comprehensive understanding and application” (Lavrusheva, O. (2020)

In order to come up with an operational and objective definition, we should point out that Vitality is one of the five intrinsic capacity domains defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and that strongly contributes to a healthy aging and to a recognition of attributes as physical and mental health to the improvements of quality of life.

Furthermore, the WHO recognizes the importance of vitality not only for the people in older age, but for all people across their lives.

Focusing on the intrinsic capacity “*composite of all the physical and mental attributes on which an individual can draw, not only in older age, but across their lives* (E Masciocchi, M Maltais, & all, 2019) we can notice a reorientation of the public health and practical care from a diseased approach orientation to a more effective person centred approach.

The review research made by Olga Lavrusheva in “The concept of vitality. Review of the vitality-related research domain suggests that vitality is an ample and multifaceted concept applied as an umbrella term involving several main facets: energy, physical and psychological healthiness, and wellbeing” (Lavrusheva, O. (2020).

Furthermore, the current review research generalized the **key factors** affecting vitality as they relate **to physical** (somatic factors and responses to physical concerns)

psychological dispositions (moods, character, and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs), as well as **external circumstances** originating from a source beyond the subject experiencing vitality (specific environmental settings, timing and activities)

Methodology

The findings of the trends & developments research in the partner countries and the wider EU and its consequences for VET research is based on

- a vitality building exercise accomplished by all partners through desk based research
- data collected through interviews by partners with 10 workplace practitioners relevant to the VET and Vitality sectors
- data collected through focus group events with up to 5 participants relevant to the VET and vitality sectors and held in each partners' country

In the following pages each step undertaken by the partners is described along with the results that arose from the research.

The report is set out in three phases:

- 1) The Vitality building exercise
- 2) Research interviews with stakeholders
- 3) Focus group research events

The Vitality Building Exercise

In order to accomplish the goals of the project and to embark on a learning and understanding-building process of what Vitality for the Future means, the partnership undertook a Vitality building concepts exercise.

One of the aims of this activity was to broadly map the key realms underpinning the phenomenon of vitality and at the same time try to respond to the following questions:

How do different concepts relating to Vitality apply in partnership countries?

What institutions are charged with the regulation of these concepts?

Are these concepts reflected in labour market and educational activities?

Who would be the stakeholders?

Even if the "existing literature on vitality does not provide one concise definition of what vitality really is, claiming it to be" at the partnership level, partners proposed to define "what Vitality is" through several concepts that could evaluate Vitality.

In an attempt to find an operational definition of Vitality, close to our idea of the project, each partner looked at various terms to explain what Vitality is. The mapping exercise demonstrated how in the many descriptions of Vitality there are some key concepts: well-being, positive health, mental health, nutrition, healthy ageing and eating.

Analysing the research done by each partner, we can say that Vitality is a complex concept that includes:

- a) physical energy and wellbeing defined by concepts like: getting a good sleep, maintaining fitness, no smoking, reducing alcohol, appropriate vaccination and healthy eating
- b) good psychological health defined by concepts like positive health, a good mental health capacity, overcoming depression / mental illness
- c) managing difficult situations defined by concepts like stress management, emotional intelligence

Understanding Vitality within our project

Our mapping exercise identified several themes and sectors relating to Vitality. First, although the definition of Vitality was not consistent across studies, key components such as physical energy and well-being were commonly included in most definitions. Other common components included were self-motivation, healthy eating and the capacity of people to cope with difficulties and manage stress.

According to this research Vitality is associated with physical and psychological well-being, and positive health.

Even if Vitality is a broader concept and might be difficult to analyse because its complexity, it is important to notice that this “phenomenon implies an infusion of positive energy”(Ryan & Frederick, 1997)

Our partnership proposed a definition of vitality as follows:

"Vitality describes a state of aliveness and energy. Vitality can be defined as the capacity of people to live independently in good health, staying engaged in social relationships within families and communities, and upholding social roles important to well-being.

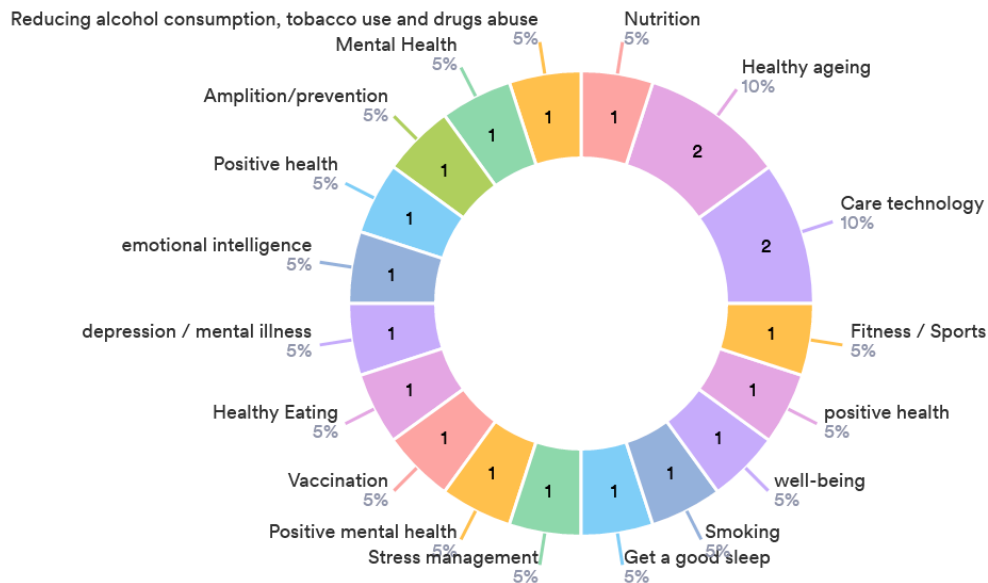
It also means the people have the ability to adapt and to self-manage, to cope with challenges and difficulties.

For a vital life of happiness, health and proactive aging, physical, mental and emotional aspects of people need to be nurtured and cared for"

This definition emphasizes the understanding of vitality as the ability of individuals to take care of themselves, to be concerned with good physical and mental health, and to engage in social relationships and show interest for life.

Taking this definition as a basis, our mapping exercise identifies several sectors in which Vitality plays an important role like: health care systems, sport, the welfare sector, education, well-being and even IT sector.

As we can see in the graphic below, 15 sectors were mapped by partners that have a direct relation with Vitality.



According to the project partners' research, Vitality addresses three Health Focus Areas like Healthy ageing, healthy eating and Healthy life style, but also goes beyond medical care and addresses challenging issues as:

- stress management and getting a good sleep
- reduction of alcohol consumption, tobacco use and drug abuse
- promotion of fitness and sport
- care technology
- emotional intelligence and positive mental health

Based on that, the partners tried to establish a mutual understanding of the Vitality construct, by addressing and exploring its key elements: positive mental health, well-being, nutrition, getting a good sleep, fitness etc

Key points arising from the mapping exercise

In the following sections several concepts are presented that were identified by partners as being part of the Vitality sector and which were analysed not from a perspective of medical care, but in relation to Vitality.

As part of this exercise, each partner, was asked also to look at the ways in which these concepts are reflected in educational activities or in the labour market.

Even if the concept of Vitality is difficult to define, we can identify some key components / areas in which Vitality is valuable.

Below, there is an analysis of several concepts that arose from the mapping exercise through different dimensions and meaning in:

- connection of the concepts to different sectors
- the brief definition of the concepts and its components

Underlying concepts	Sectors connected to the underlying concepts	Short definitions and components
Physical health and energy	1.Fitness and Sport Wellness sectors Nutrition, Education and Health care section	1.physical activity, good sleep and mood, healthy eating and nutrition, reduce of alcohol, drugs, Somatic health and well-being
Proactive ageing	Wellness and beauty sectors Elderly sector, Nutrition, Social work, HRM sector, Education and Health care section	Mental health, stress management, good interaction with other, community support, build and maintain relationships; contribute to society, psychological attitudes and disposition Active ageing encompasses a socially and individually designed mix of different domains that range from personal and familial, to social and professional (Constança P, Laetitia T, Ribeiro. O , 2017)
Attention of individuals for healthy lifestyle and positive health	Nutrition and Beauty sectors Wellness, sport, architecture, healthcare, well-being, social work, beauty, HRM and education	Good mental health, bodily functions, mental well-being, psychological purpose and meaning, quality of life, social functioning and daily functioning 3.The concept is based on a holistic approach of well-being that is more than physical health. Well-being means that someone feels well: physically, mentally and socially. If one of these aspects is out of balance it will influence the other aspects and well as the overall feeling of well-being of a person
Well-being and positive interaction between mind and body	Nutrition and Beauty sectors Wellness, sport, healthcare sector, HRM and education	Healthy lifestyle habits: good sleep, decreased smoking, autonomy, meaningful work, free time activities, physical

		<p>energy, social support and relationships, resilience</p> <p>4.New Economics Foundation describes wellbeing as the following: 'Wellbeing can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole"</p>
<p>Care technology</p>	<p>IT sectors, health care and education sectors</p>	<p>digital healthcare technologies, artificial intelligence, VR/AR, 3D printing, robotics or nanotechnology</p> <p>The future of healthcare lies in working hand-in-hand with technology and healthcare workers have to embrace emerging healthcare technologies in order to stay relevant in the coming years https://medicalfuturist.com/</p> <p>Care technology is about applying technology in healthcare to make care better, cheaper, more effective or more efficient.</p>

Tendencies in Vitality Sectors

In this section we are going to look at the ways in which the concepts related to Vitality are applied in different countries, underlying the similarities and differences between countries, as well as the tendencies in the Vitality sector.

For instance, in Finland the concepts of Vitality and positive health are treated very seriously, are part of the public agenda and regulated by several laws. **Positive health** is one of the main things that starts at the maternity clinic. Positive health is supported in school health care and it continues in student health care and later also in occupational health care. Public social and health care supports also the maintenance of positive health regardless of age and social status. Positive health is taught at all levels, starting in primary school and is connected everywhere on the labour market.

Other two key components related to Vitality and described by the Finnish partners are **well-being and nutrition**.

Both concepts are part of the public agenda and regulated in several laws. For example, attention is paid to nutrition in day care and at all school levels. In Finland, day care includes nutrition, breakfast, lunch and a snack in the afternoon. Primary and vocational school lunches are free for all students. Since 2020, school meals have also been free for adult students. At the university, the student lunches are supported by society with tax money (about 50%).

As for the well-being, in Finland it is one of the constitutional rights regardless of age. This concept can be found for example under Social and Health Ministry and Ministry of Education. Student well-being is taught at all levels, starting in primary school. In Finland well-being is connected everywhere on the labour market. Well-being at work belongs to all workers. Employers' duty is to take care of the safety and health of employees at work. Jobs that are connected with this concept can be found in beauty, sports and social and health care.

Besides the above described concepts, in Finland a particular attention is given to **care technology**. Care technology is discussed at every level of social and health care and takes into account equipment safety, human privacy, and use guidance and counselling for the elderly.

Care technology is part of the practical nurses curriculum. In addition, the student may choose an optional degree in part of care technology. In relation to the labour market nurses are trained in technology in the social and health sector in order to guide customers, relatives and staff in the use of technology.

In the Netherlands the following key components related to Vitality were described and analysed.

Healthy ageing

In the Netherlands, healthy aging generally means the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age. It is a process in which the chances of physical, social and mental health are optimized. Being a hot topic in the Netherlands it is also part of the educational agenda. For instance, **Alfa-college** offers workshops about Healthy Ageing on topics like: Quit smoking, Mindfulness, Sustainable Employability and Mind-sit (Mind-sit is an awareness programme about learning a different habitual behavior and wanting to sit less). Also people can be trained to become professionals in Healthy Aging, but it already exists jobs in areas such as personal trainers and health coaches that play a role in this field.

Moreover, healthy ageing is recognized as an important subject for the labour market as an investment in this area benefits all employees. Fit employees are more productive and have lower healthcare costs.

Care technology

Like in Finland, in the Netherlands **care technology** is an important part in the integration of Vitality in the everyday life of its citizens. This concept is a subject on the public agenda and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport tries to make agreements with care providers to provide care closer to home if possible and focus on prevention, which results in people going to a hospital or an institution less often. In addition, the ministry is working hard to recruit more people for care and to organize health care in a better way; for example, through a different division of tasks and smart use of new care technology. Care technology can be used in different sectors, for example in Sports and Health Care, but is also related to the technology and IT sector.

This concept is also reflected in educational activities and the labour market. There are many vocational schools that work with the concept of care technology, and one of them is **ROC Midden Nederland** that has developed a **future care lab** where students can practice with different care technologies.

Amplition/prevention

Amplition/prevention is an important topic in the Netherlands since they are related to Vitality. Vitality for staff members is a national priority in the field of health and HRM.

Amplition relates to prevention and stands for the promotion of positive aspects among employees such as happiness at work, enthusiasm, well-being and vitality. Amplition is part of positive psychology and is often related to work aspects. Amplition in organizations means focusing on a positive work experience and positive work-related interventions through resilience. Resilience can positively contribute to one's energy and is about the ability to deal with life- and work challenges.

The concept can be related to healthcare, sports, well-being and HRM. In relation to educational activities, **Alfa-college** offers workshops about prevention through amplition for all staff members.

This training seeks to provide:

- General knowledge about resilience;
- Gaining inspiration and know how to deal with challenges in life and at work;
- Knowledge on how to increase your resilience.

The amplition concept also relates to labour market needs since to perform well at a job vital employees and employers are required. Burnout is a regional, national and international disease. To avoid burnout, working on amplition is seen as being very important.

In Romania three concepts recognized as an important part of teaching Vitality and positive health were analysed and evaluated.

Mental health

The concept on mental health studies began to be of more interest in Romania since the introduction of the new Sanitary Law 95/2006. Before that such studies were not available in Romania nor were any nationally representative population based studies about the age of onset of mental disorders, life time prevalence and the services used relating to these diseases.

Since 2006, this concept is on the public agenda of the Ministry of Health, developing different national strategies for that issue.

This concept connects to all sectors and regarding the mental health of children and adolescents (including in school environments, as well as in families); to ill people having access to all community services, to psychiatric care, as well as occupational mental health. In relation to educational

activities, mental health is part of the curricula only for some of the universities like: psychology, social work or medicine. Otherwise mental health is a subject within various short or long time programmes founded by the government or private institutions.

In relation to the labour market, in Romania mental health education would be found within the following jobs: psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, coach, for adults and for children. But there are specialist jobs regarding formal education in this area.

Reducing alcohol consumption, tobacco use and drugs abuse

The concept above is part of the public agenda, being part of the National Health Strategy and is a hot topic in Romania since around half of all deaths in Romania are attributable to behavioural risk factors. One in five Romanian adults are daily smokers, with a much higher rate among men (32 %) than women (8 %). Alcohol consumption is a major public health threat, with the binge drinking rate (35 %) far exceeding the EU average of 20 %. In men, this rate is over 50 %.

In 2015, the government established a National Council to coordinate policies and actions to tackle excessive alcohol consumption. However, no concrete measures have been adopted to date to address this major public health challenge.

The aim of reducing tobacco use, alcohol and drug abuse is related in some way to all sectors: the health sector in dealing with people with substance abuse, pregnant mothers with substance abuse; and the school sector by dealing with children with alcohol and drug abuse etc.

The concepts are reflected in educational activities as part of some formal education programmes in schools related to substance abuse. But the programmes are done in the most part by teachers, not by trained professionals. The concepts are not reflected in the labour market and there are not any specific jobs in this area. Most of the programmes are carried out by NGOs.

Healthy Ageing

Romania has entered a period of rapid and dramatic population ageing. Older Romanians are expected to make up more than 30% of the total population by 2050. Like other countries, Romania's older population is itself getting older, a process referred to as the "ageing of the aged". In Romania, gerontological research is sparse. There are only a few studies of older persons and those that exist are not well used by policy makers. In addition, much of the research on the older population is descriptive and much of it is focused on needs assessments.

This concept is also regulated from the Ministry of Health and by the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly.

In Romania, the old age social insurance system represents a first level of protection, providing an economic benefit to those who have lost their work capacity due to old age, disability, or death. Due to the decrease in the number of contributors to the budget of social insurance and the growing number of social insurance recipients in Romania, the retirement age is being increased for both women (from 57 to 60 years of age by 2015) and men (from 62 to 65 years), thereby increasing not only the number of contributors but also the pension level. In addition to old-age insurance, retirees benefit from health insurance.

The concept of healthy ageing is not reflected in any educational activities or labour market.

In Portugal the following concepts were chosen as relevant for Vitality sectors:

Healthy Eating

In relation to healthy eating, **the Portuguese National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating** aims to improve the nutritional status of the population by encouraging the physical and economic availability of food constituting a healthy dietary pattern and to create conditions for the population to value, appreciate and consume it, integrating it into their daily routines.

Several measures have been taking into account in order to reach this goal. For example, in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, etc. the menus are defined by nutritionists and offer a variety of diets.

The National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating includes the distribution of snacks consisting of healthy food in schools, the definition of menus by nutritionists in all Portuguese schools (public and private), hospitals and nursing homes. The programme is implemented at national level.

Healthy eating is part of the educational curriculum from kindergarten onwards and there are jobs such as: Nutritionists, teachers, and health professionals.

Depression/Mental Illness

Although there has been legislation for mental health since 1998 in Portugal, for example, burnout was only considered an occupational disease in 2018.

This concept connects to non-profit associations that work with mental illness patients, institutions of social solidarity, health, clinics, hospital, Public department of Health, Health Ministry, psychiatrist clinics, psychologists clinics, and occupational therapist clinics.

In relation to educational activities this concept is part of the formal education in health courses and is optional in middle school. The concept is reflected in the labour market within jobs like: doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, health support personnel.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is an important part of positive mental health and wellbeing at school and work. Although more people are aware of the concept and how it affects their wellbeing it is not in the public agenda, and the concept is not regulated.

The concept connects to schools, health services, mental clinics and is not reflected in any educational activities. However, there are jobs in this area like coaches, psychiatrists, and psychologists.

Fitness/Sport

Physical education is a compulsory subject during compulsory education (for 12 years, including secondary level). There is legislation and also another Concept Schoolar Sports - an option subject ton which all students can enrol (usually to promote competitions among different educational institutions; team sports, etc).

The concept is reflected in the labour market through jobs such as: physical education teacher; Personal Trainer. There has been an increase demand for such occupations at the moment, or at least, it was before Covid-19.

Smoking

According to a recent publication by the Directorate General for Health, Tobacco, consumption of young Portuguese people has increased by more than 30% in the last nine years. As a result, smoking prevention has focused almost exclusively upon youth and schools have an important role in this. It is a subject discussed at National level and it is regulated in the way that it is not allowed to smoke inside buildings (from public to private enterprises, schools, restaurants, bars, etc, except in those which have specific conditions and permission).

Regarding the reflection of the concepts in educational activities, there are campaigns in all schools and other educational institutions in order to inform students of the harmfulness of smoking, etc. These campaigns are evident in posters, flyers, etc and also in face-to-face groups, debates with the students and the participation of an external stakeholder, such as a doctor, a nurse, or fitness trainer. Some subjects, such as citizenship, biology or other sciences, also address the issue.

The concept is reflected in the labour market, especially within the health sector, mainly, helping people to stop smoking (from prescription medicine to specific therapy which may include hypnosis or acupuncture).

Getting a Good Sleep

This is a hot issue in Portugal, specially at uncertain times when people feel more stressed and have problems in sleeping or falling asleep. Despite this the concept is not regulated and neither part of the educational activities. In relation to the labour market the concept is reflected in the health care sector and sleeping therapy provision (also very common among babies).

Alcohol

In Portugal alcohol is the most used psychoactive substance among adolescents; is an important public health problem and a major risk factor for the health of this group. It is part of the public agenda, mostly for the discussions relating to youth lifestyles.

The consumption of alcohol is forbidden in schools. Apart from this, only for 'driving and drinking is there a specific regulation: Fines and misdemeanours for those driving under the influence of alcohol are not light.

Like smoking, the consumption of alcohol, is reflected in educational labour market activities through several campaigns in schools and other educational institutions.

Stress Management

Although in Portugal stress is not included in the List of Occupational Diseases, in 2010 the ILO included mental and behavioural disorders in its List of Occupational Diseases, differentiating them in two points:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Other mental and behavioural disorders, for which a direct relationship is scientifically established, or determined by methods appropriate to national conditions and practices, between exposure to risk factors arising from work activities and the mental and behavioural disorder identified in the worker.

The levels of stress in Portuguese workers are considered high. Portugal is the seventh country with the most stress at work in Europe, in a study of 31 European countries, according to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

More and more, stress is becoming an unwanted presence in the labour market, due to: the hours/volume of work; the reorganization of work or job insecurity; the lack of support from colleagues and bosses; intimidation or harassment; lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities; lack of opportunity to manage their way of working.

The jobs that deal with stress management are psychologist, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst. The concept is not reflected in any educational activities

Positive Mental Health

Mental illness and disorders have become in recent years the main tail of disability and one of the main causes of morbidity in societies. In Portugal, mental and behavioural disorders account for 11.8% of the overall burden of disease, more than oncologic diseases (10.4%) and only surpassed by brain cardiovascular diseases (13.7%). These figures are really worrying and it is very important to care for the 89.2% of Portuguese who do not suffer from mental illness in order to improve their strength, endurance and mental well-being.

Since the concept became a hot topic in Portugal, there have been more and more short training courses on the subject of literacy and positive mental health, held in universities or other higher education institutions. Also, this topic is being included at compulsory education level, namely within the subject "Citizenship & Development".

Jobs connected with this concept: therapists, healthcare professionals

Vaccination

The National Immunisation Programme in Portugal was created in 1965 and since then it is under constant review and improvement, aiming at vaccinating as many people as possible with the most appropriate vaccines, as early as possible, in a lasting way, promoting individual protection and with an added value for Public Health. It is part of the national agenda and is a topic at compulsory education level: Citizenship & Development.

In relation to different Vitality and positive health sectors, partners who would be stakeholders that might engage when talking about Vitality are listed below:

Sector: Fitness

Actors: Physical education teachers; doctors; personal trainers; people doing sports regularly

Sector: Health and Well-being

Doctors, nurses, any stakeholder related to health and wellbeing / healthy lifestyles, rehabilitation centres representatives, psychologists, coaches

Sectors: Positive Mental Health

Actors: Therapists, healthcare professionals, government representatives, psychologists, doctors, psychiatrists, ocupacional therapist, nurses, health support personnel, representatives of schools and media

Sector: Healthy eating and nutrition

Actors: Nutritionists, teachers, health professionals

Sector: Healthy Ageing

Actors: employees, employers, educational institutions like the Hanze Hogeschool, professionals (for example in HRM); Students and teachers

Sector: Care Technology

Actors: representatives of organizations from the technology and health care/sports/social sector; representatives of educational institutions; citizens/patients/potential users

In term, of institutions involved the partners mentioned the following:

- Ministry of Health
- Hospitals
- Schools
- NGOs
- Television and other media for advertising against substance abuse
- Local public health organisms
- Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly
- National Pension House
- Institute for Positive Health and other co-partners

How Vitality Concepts Interconnect at all Levels

The complexity of the health care system, as well the requirement to respond rapidly to the needs of individuals, if possible, in a more holistic manner, show us the limitation of the of WHO definition regarding health seen as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (*BMJ*, 2011). That's why Machteld Huber and colleagues propose changing the emphasis of the health definition "towards the ability to adapt and self manage in the face of social, physical, and emotional challenges"

In these conditions, it is essential that medical staff, teachers and students rethink the health curricula in order to adapt to the new challenges and requirements we now face. Therefore, a process of teaching new physicians the knowledge, skills, and attitudes is necessary to deliver quality health care to the public alongside teachers who should integrate elements about Vitality or positive health within education provision at at all levels

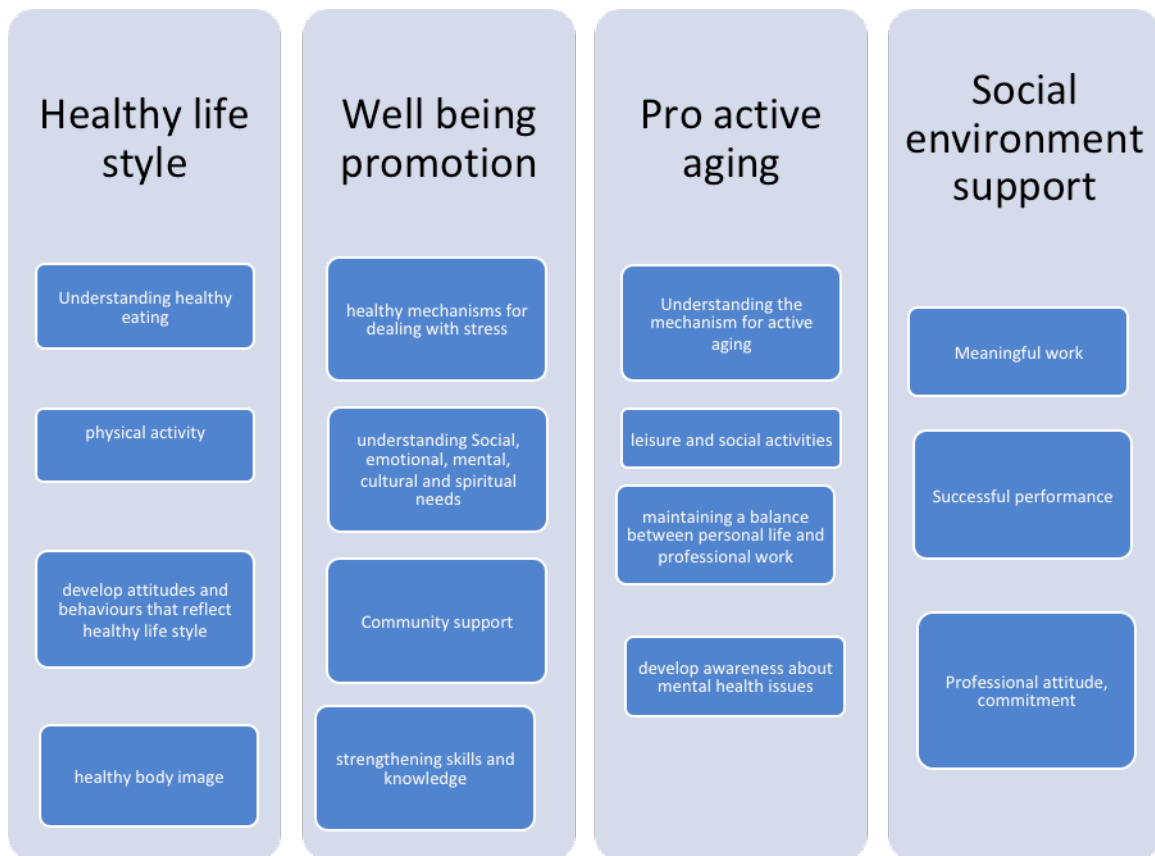
That will help teachers to respond to the various dimensions of health care aspects and also to prepare future students with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate Vitality and positive health in their interventions.

The following diagram illustates how concepts linked to Vitality interconnect and how teaching about Vitality has implications at all levels: psychological, physical, and societal.

Additionally, the diagram underlines the possible learning themes for future Vitality specialists (persons working in Vitality sectors).

This framework for teaching proposes a model aimed to help teachers in delivering a Vitality and positive health curricula by summarising key areas for learning.

Additionally, this represents the first step of initiation of discussions about future vitality developments in the VET health and social care sector



Interviews with Relevant Stakeholders

The second phase in the project process consisted of several questionnaires addressed to different actors active in Vitality sectors, namely teachers, psychologists, social workers, Vitality and nutritionists, coaches etc.

The aim of the questionnaire was to collect the views of participants regarding the role of Vitality in the workplace, the sectors in which Vitality is essential and competencies that are important when working in the vitality field.

Analyzing the participants' feedback, we can say that Vitality plays an important role in many participants' personal life and at the workplace. For a good professional performance and well-being, Vitality is an essential factor that must be considered. Moreover, Vitality has to be present in the school context because the challenges posed by young people and education in general require from the educational players a proactive attitude, ready for problem-solving and meeting existing challenges.

Vitality is recognised as essential in all areas:

- Work:
 - Vitality is seen as important in people's work:
 - Feeling vital as an employee (extra important due to the corona crisis)
 - Helping/coaching others in vitality/resilience
 - Vitality ensures alertness and physical and mental fitness of children and professionals.
- Organisation:
 - Paying attention to the vitality of employees/students/stakeholders
 - Availability of tools/coaching for employees to become more vital
 - Motivating and informing others about vitality
- Personal development:
 - Vitality is seen as very important in personal life and is an important factor in our mental health. The following qualities were mentioned as important:
 - Feeling vital
 - Resilience
 - Awareness and balance of different facets of life
 - Good sleep, healthy food

Regarding the areas/domains in which Vitality is considered important, firstly we should mention that Vitality plays an essential role in the healthcare sector. For example, in the vitality of healthcare employees and in prevention of chronic diseases and obesity. Second, Vitality is needed in the educational sector, for example in student counselling and in VET training and citizenship education. Third, in the social sector, for example in social projects and in the liveability in neighbourhoods. Fourth, in HRM, for example in HRM policies. Fifth, vitality is an important theme within the government whereby attention is paid to the vitality of employees and the role of the employer and the employee. In general, vitality plays an essential role in daily life (e.g. being able to cope with difficulties and self-management) and working (e.g. vitality of employees and job satisfaction)

In addition, Vitality is considered essential and can increase its purpose in interpersonal relationships, in the way we communicate, in the emotional management of challenging situations and problem solving.

- In promoting healthy lifestyles as well as preparing strategies to manage adversity
- In all areas of intervention of the school psychologist
- In the constant need to manage and deal with challenges and difficulties
- In prevention of chronic diseases/obesity/physical, mental and emotional problems
- In coaching others to be more healthy/vital/resilient.
- In student counselling and educational training.
- In teaching online (no physical movement)
- In connecting with others in the healthcare sector. Students acknowledge the added value of vitality.
- In citizenship education

Key Aspects Important to Describe Vitality

According to participants, Vitality should exist in all things of daily life. Vitality interconnects with the physical, mental and emotional aspects of people that need to be nurtured and cared for.

Moreover, Vitality can be described as the capacity of people to take good care of oneself, being able to take responsibility for oneself, and being able to deal constructively with conflict.

Vitality relates to optimism, humour, empathy skills, & is aimed at increasing autonomy, working towards a meaningful existence.

Vitality also means:

- Having enough energy to make healthy choices, to meet people, to undertake activities.
- Ability of people to live independently and in good - physical and mental - health and in - orderly - social relationships.
- The possibility of participation, regardless of income, social status and age
- mindfulness and resilience

Taking into consideration all these aspects, the **Vitality for the Future** partnership produced the following definition in line with the project objectives.

Definition

“Our approach in this project supports the self-empowerment of people to lead a vital and successful life. Our approach guides people to find the right path to a self-determined and self-caring life. This includes recognising what one really wants to achieve in life and how to get there. In order for a self-determined and vital life to succeed, society, and thus also the state, must contribute to it”

Vitality Competences

The most popular competences selected by participants in all questionnaires were:

- Communication
- Understanding mental health
- Empathy and willingness to work with various customers/patients
- Competence in the needs analysis of the end-users
- Capacity building and interventions

Focus Groups

The third stage in the implementation process was to arrange several focus-groups organised in each partner country with up to 5 participants. The aim of this activity was to encourage discussions among relevant actors in Vitality sectors and involve them in the process in order to formulate some conclusions and follow up steps for the other project intellectual outputs.

The focus group discussions focused on the Vitality definition, competencies previously identified in the questionnaire phase, as well on discussions to see how these competencies could be introduced into education and training.

Furthermore, the scope of the focus groups was to allow the partnership to strengthen & deepen its relationship with local & national partners by looking at vitality & health in a broader & more comprehensive manner.

Following the discussions from all the countries we can conclude that Vitality aspects should be seriously considered in education and training.

As key points that arose during the focus groups we should mention that aspects related to teaching mental health in education and training are absolutely necessary. Moreover, when teaching Vitality the authenticity of teachers and training is essential, psychological education is necessary and knowledge about self-efficacy is a primary objective.

In an educational system that is constantly changing, participation and interaction of various stakeholders should be encouraged through attractive training and experience-oriented training. This means that the training and learning materials should provide good and mutual connection with working life and make careers more predictable and adaptable to working life and its changes.

Regarding obstacles that might come up when implementing Vitality in education or work place these can be:

- during education
 - keep self-imposed in order to learn, develop, keep healthy
 - losing the common thread in one's work
 - be aware the service environment is changing and evolving rapidly - transformation and adaptation
 - poor medical culture and prevention
 - the reluctance and lack of concern of the educational system to come up with concrete proposals regarding the implementation of preventive campaigns in school like: healthy lifestyle or first aid lessons
- in the workplace
 - inflexibility
 - falling into routines
 - lack of resources
 - bureaucracy
 - losing the customer interest

In terms of opportunities the Vitality Project, with the support of local authorities, can envisage how best to develop a new line of professionals in the field of Vitality and medical care.

Since the aim of the **Vitality for the Future** project is to produce learning materials to prepare new and present staff in the vitality sector, this research provided the opportunity for participants to put together a coherent list of key competencies in promoting Vitality within VET, the labour market & community organisations.

These key competencies are organised in a **Competence Framework** that highlights & describes those that are required within the Vitality sectors and in the field of the expected future competences & behaviour of care professionals.

This Competence Framework is designed to give a quick overview of the five competences that a student/Vitality specialist will develop by completing the Vitality Training Programme

The key competences most highly valued are placed in a matrix structure and described in terms of learning outcomes. This helps a learning provider to design a training programme based on the Framework as well as an Individual Profile for each learner.

The competence profile is presented in ANNEX 1.

Conclusions

As the Vitality Institute Commission on Health Promotion and the Prevention of Chronic Disease in Working-Age Americans mentioned in the report from 2014, “A healthy workforce has the power to improve economic growth, national security, and global competitiveness” (Vitality Institute, 2014). An investment in Vitality implies a long-term commitment and translates into promoting health and preventing diseases.

The burden of a rising health care costs in Europe, and its negative economic impact in the short and long term, plus the challenge of an ageing population structure, has urged the change from intervention to prevention. For these important reasons, Vitality plays a significant role, due to its associations with the positive outcomes that Vitality produces: happiness, prosperity, and personal well-being.

“residents with very high vitality had a decreased risk of hospitalization, compared to individuals with very low vitality” ([E Masciocchi](#), [M Maltais](#), & all, 2019).

As we have seen Vitality plays an important role in people’s life, as well in education and training and the workplace, and it easy to notice their absence.

Key Points Arising from this Research

1 Establish Vitality and Positive Health a national priority

Develop coherent and unified messages for relevant actors to drive changes and support a culture of health. Treat Vitality and positive health as a national priority and a core value for our European society.

2 Strengthen Skills and Understanding of how Vitality works

Individuals need to retake the responsibility of their personal health and well-being. Vitality and positive health learning should be integrated into citizenship education for all students so that they can benefit from this approach throughout their lives. Vitality initiatives & solutions that are tailored to the needs of communities should be promoted & implemented.

3 Integrate Vitality into Education Systems

Relevant stakeholders need to include in health education curricula, opportunities to learn about Vitality. Moreover, talking about the benefits of Vitality and positive health serve as a model to create awareness about health issues like obesity, mental health and to find solutions to these issues. Education systems should incorporate Vitality and positive health at all levels, from kindergartens to university.

4 Community Engagement

Non-health sectors like IT technology, beauty, sport, law or agriculture should collaborate and engage in the promotion of health and Vitality. They should understand its priorities and cooperate to change policies and make better progress.

Keywords: Positive health, well-being, healthy aging, nutrition, strengthen healthcare system, better health for citizens

ANNEX 1

How to Use the Vitality Competence Framework

The vertical axis of the table contains the competence areas, based on the various skills required of students or employees active within the field of positive health. These core skills have been identified in the professional context and the educational systems of the VITALity partnership countries.

The horizontal axis shows the steps of competence development described in learning outcomes, which indicate the progress of competence development.

When interpreting a Competence Framework one should consider that the description of a higher step of competence development always includes the previous step(s) of competence development.