

# HEALTH INFORMATION LITERACY AT SCHOOL TO CREATE AWARENESS ON PLANETARY HEALTH

## The Pilot Project of School-Work Alternating System in Italy

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### BACKGROUND

#### What is planetary health?

A new science including individual, community and environmental health (Rockefeller Foundation, 2015). It depends on the interrelation of different factors (from physical to biological, chemical, sociological, cultural, and economic) and determines the state of health and well-being of the population and the environment in which we live.

#### How is planetary health connected with health information?

The safeguard of planetary health requires a multidisciplinary approach where knowledge management and information literacy play a very important role (Horton, 2015; Sørensen et al., 2012).

**Schools are a privileged place** to start life-long learning health information literacy programs (WHO, 2012). The researchers of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS, the National Institute of Health in Italy) are approaching this issue (De Castro et al., 2013).

### OBJECTIVE

To show how researchers can work together with schools to increase awareness of the responsibilities associated with planetary health and contribute achieving better health for the population and the environment worldwide.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Involving researchers and students through school-work alternating system.

In 2015 a new law introduced in Italy the concept of school-work alternating system which makes it compulsory for high school students to spend a period of time in a workplace (Italy, 2015).

The ISS researchers considered it as an opportunity to make students aware of planetary health issues through practical activities: a pilot project was developed to define an appealing offer of training modules for students to become aware of the main challenges and responsibilities associated with planetary health and how research can contribute to tackle them.

### OUTCOMES

24 training modules were designed within four research areas: Environment and health; Biology and clinics; Prevention and life styles; Communication and science. The ISS training offer was presented at school receiving enthusiastic response from both students and teachers. Four high schools in Rome were selected to test the program within a pilot project run at ISS from April to July 2016. Results of the pilot project were evaluated through different tools (questionnaires, presentations, reports, interviews) with the objective to develop a nationwide program for the coming school year 2016-2017. The pilot project produced very positive results in terms of students, teachers, and researchers satisfaction and behavioral change.

### DISCUSSION

The analysis of the major difficulties encountered in the pilot project design, implementation and evaluation were analyzed in order to improve the organizational model and further stress the links between planetary health, school education health literacy and health promotion in a life-long learning perspective.

The pilot project was presented in July 2016 to the Italian Educational authorities (Ministry of Education and Research) and is going to become a best practice for research institutes in Italy to comply with the school-work alternating system requirements.

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