



Success story

Step Towards Health (Krok ke zdraví): Primary Care Lifestyle Programme



Initiative type: Health-system intervention

Sector: Health

Target group: Adults aged 19–65 at increased health risk, including socially disadvantaged groups

Implementation stage: Early implementation

Transferability: Yes

▶ About the initiative

Step Towards Health (Krok ke zdraví) is a pilot programme supporting the prevention of noncommunicable diseases through healthier lifestyles in primary care.

The initiative is part of the European Joint Action JAPreventNCD and strengthens the role of general practitioners, nurses and trained health mediators in systematically supporting patients to improve their health behaviours.

The programme addresses several interconnected lifestyle factors, including:

- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Stress
- Addictive behaviours

It combines health education with follow-up support, with a particular focus on improving health literacy and reaching groups experiencing inequalities in access to prevention and health-promotion services.

The pilot is testing a model that could subsequently be scaled up and integrated into routine primary care across the Czech Republic.

▶ Who is it for?

The programme targets adults aged 19–65 who are registered in primary care, do not have severe diagnoses and show increased health risks or unhealthy behaviours in one or more lifestyle areas and socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups who may experience greater barriers to preventive health services.

▶ What is making it successful?

The initiative benefits from strong conceptual and methodological preparation within the European Joint Action framework and builds on existing Czech primary care structures.

Its multidisciplinary model brings together:

- General practitioners
- Nurses
- Health mediators
- Public health expertise

The involvement of the Masaryk Memorial Cancer Institute further strengthens the partnership.

A key strength is the programme's comprehensive approach: it addresses several lifestyle factors together while explicitly considering health inequalities.

▶ What could other countries learn?

The practice is considered transferable to other countries, where primary care systems can provide a platform for prevention and health promotion.

Successful transfer would require:

- Strong integration with existing primary care structures
- Sustained support from health-system leaders and policymakers
- Clear and standardised procedures
- Comprehensive methodological guidance
- Stable funding for implementation and scale-up
- Adaptation to local healthcare systems and contexts





Key challenges to promote HEPA

➤ Czechia's wider challenge for physical activity promotion

Modern lifestyles increasingly favour convenience and sedentary behaviour. Car use, digital technologies and desk-based work can make regular movement less likely to become part of everyday routines.

Although awareness of the benefits of physical activity is generally good and opportunities to be active are available, physical activity is not always easily integrated into daily life.

A further challenge is shifting the focus of health systems and society from treatment towards prevention and healthier everyday living.

Changing social norms and making active choices easier in daily life are therefore important priorities.

➤ Country-level barriers to advancing HEPA

The following barriers are most persistent to advancing HEPA policy in the country.



BARRIER	IMPACT
Limited funding/resources	EXTREME
Political prioritisation	MAJOR
Insufficient monitoring/data	MAJOR
Regional/local implementation gaps	MAJOR
Inequities in participation/access	MAJOR
Public engagement challenges	MAJOR
Weak intersectoral coordination	MODERATE
Lack of workforce capacity	MODERATE
Limited research translation into policy	MODERATE
Other	NO IMPACT

➤ What is needed?

Czechia identified the need to:

- Shift social norms towards more active everyday lifestyles
- Strengthen a prevention-focused approach to health
- Improve infrastructure for walking and cycling
- Integrate movement into schools and workplaces
- Make active transport safer and more convenient
- Use public-health campaigns to encourage small, sustainable changes in daily routines



➤ How can the HEPA Europe Network help?

HEPA Europe can support Czechia by sharing evidence-based approaches and successful interventions from other countries.

The Network can also help translate research into practical and scalable action, particularly in areas such as schools, workplaces and urban planning, while facilitating knowledge exchange between policymakers, researchers and practitioners.