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D4.4 Capacity Building

A program on transferability, sustainability and scalability of
the Joint Action Best Practices

HEALTH4EUKIDS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Childhood obesity is a growing public health concern across Europe, particularly in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Tackling this complex issue requires long-term, intersectoral, and community-based approaches. Within the Joint Action (JA) Health4EUkids, the implementation of two best practices – *Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family* – aim to promote health, physical activity and responsive parenting to prevent obesity and support healthy child development.

Objective: To promote knowledge exchange and enhance capacity building among Member States, a modular capacity building program was developed to support the transferability, sustainability, and scalability of the JA's best practices for health promotion and childhood obesity prevention.

Methods: The capacity building program was designed as an online, modular pathway developed within Work Package 4 (WP4). The program includes expert-led video lectures addressing planning, implementation, evaluation, and communication of best practices. All Member States contributed to the development of the modules, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. A self-assessment tool was also provided to support participant learning. The course was made available in English and Italian, and released progressively across three modules to maintain participant engagement.

Results: Three modules were developed and published, each focusing on different dimensions of best practice implementation. Module 1 introduces key concepts and contextual data; Module 2 focuses on *Grünau Moves* and its implementation across different countries; Module 3 covers *Smart Family* and its transferability. The course targets professionals in health, education, and social sectors, as well as policymakers and students, and is freely accessible online. It emphasizes intersectoral collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and adaptation to local contexts.

Conclusion: The capacity building program contributes to strengthening the capacity of professionals and institutions to implement effective, adaptable, and sustainable health promotion interventions. The program's structure and content reflect the core objectives of the JA and provide practical tools for improving public health strategies across Europe.

Relevance to the Project: This deliverable directly supports the objectives of WP4 by fostering the exchange of methodologies, tools, and experiences, and by equipping Member States with knowledge and resources needed for the successful transfer and long-term integration of the JA Health4EUkids best practices.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, childhood overweight and obesity have increased dramatically worldwide, currently affecting approximately 170 million children. Childhood obesity is associated with a range of serious health consequences – including a significantly higher risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in adulthood – as well as reduced quality of life, social isolation, and increased exposure to bullying. Due to its rapid rise and major impact on public health, childhood obesity is now widely recognized as one of the most urgent health challenges of the 21st century.

Preventing childhood obesity requires sustained, coordinated, and multisectoral interventions that address the complexity of its causes. These determinants are diverse and interlinked, requiring action across health, education, agriculture, food systems, transport, and urban planning. No single intervention alone is sufficient; instead, integrated strategies – at individual, community, and policy levels – are needed to achieve lasting impact. Critically, prevention must begin early: during pregnancy and in the first years of life, with health promotion integrated into broader public health policies targeting the main modifiable NCD risk factors, including poor diet, sedentary behaviour, tobacco, and alcohol use.

In this context, the Joint Action Health4EUkids (JA) was launched to promote health and prevent childhood obesity by implementing two selected Best Practices (BPs): *Grünau Moves*, which promotes physical activity, and *Smart Family*, which fosters responsive parenting during the first 1,000 days of life.

The intervention particularly targets children and families in socially and economically disadvantaged areas, aligning with the European priority of reducing health inequalities.

The project also addresses capacity building for professionals and institutions interested in adopting, implementing and scaling up these BPs. Within this framework, capacity building plays a key role in ensuring that BPs are not only transferred effectively but also sustained and adapted to local contexts across Member States (MSs). One of the project's deliverables involves the development of a capacity building program – an online learning pathway aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of professionals and decision-makers involved in health promotion, education, and social services, including those working with migrant families.

Developed within Work Package 4 (WP4), this program represents a core tool to operationalize WP4 objectives, by supporting the practical implementation, transferability, scalability, and sustainability of the selected BPs. In particular, it provides structured guidance and resources to facilitate the adaptation and integration of BPs into different national and local contexts, illustrating how this was achieved within the JA.

The program contributes to the overarching objective of the JA: to strengthen the prevention of childhood obesity through a holistic, equity-based approach and to promote healthy weight development throughout childhood. It supports the long-term integration of BPs into national and local policies and systems and is made available in English and at least one additional EU language to foster broad accessibility and transferability across MSs.

OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the capacity building initiative developed within WP4 of the JA is to foster a collaborative approach among EU MSs in addressing childhood obesity, by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and strategies. More specifically, the program is designed to support the implementation, transferability, scalability, and sustainability of the selected best practices (*Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family*), by strengthening the capacities of professionals and institutions involved in health promotion and prevention. It aims to enhance MSs' capacities by supporting the development, adaptation, and long-term implementation of effective health promotion actions through the analysis of facilitators and barriers, and through structured learning and networking opportunities.

The objective of this deliverable is to provide a practical capacity building tool that supports stakeholders to implement the selected BPs within their own national or local contexts.

Learning Objectives and Capacity Mapping

By the end of the course, and in accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy, participants are expected to achieve the following competencies:

Knowledge-level competencies (Bloom's I–II)

1. Define the concepts of transferability, sustainability, and scalability within the context of public health and childhood obesity prevention.
2. Describe the key features of the two BPs (*Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family*), including their aims and essential implementation conditions.
3. Identify the main barriers and enabling factors associated with the implementation of both BPs.

Application-level competencies (Bloom's III)

4. Use the transferability framework presented in the course to map the conditions required to adapt one of the BPs to a specific local context.
5. Apply the implementation recommendations to a concrete scenario, identifying the most appropriate actions according to available resources and stakeholder configurations.

Analysis-level competencies (Bloom's IV)

6. Compare the contextual conditions of *Grünau Moves* or *Smart Family* with those of the participant's own setting, distinguishing facilitating from constraining factors for potential

transfer.

7. Differentiate the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at national, sub-national, and local levels in relation to the governance requirements of each BP.
8. Select the most relevant recommendations for their organisational or community context and provide a rationale based on contextual fit.
9. Examine the key components of transferability, sustainability, and scalability of one or both BPs, assessing their applicability to a given local context.

METHODS

The capacity building program was developed as a modular, flexible pathway, with the goal of disseminating experiences, findings, strategies, and recommendations to support the implementation of the two BPs – *Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family* – in diverse European contexts, in line with a comprehensive public health approach.

The program consists of a series of video presentations (and related transcription), reports, slides and resources featuring experts and key stakeholders directly involved in the local implementation of the BPs. Each module addresses a specific thematic area related to health promotion and BP implementation.

The content emphasizes:

- The importance of intersectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement.
- The need to adapt interventions to local cultural, environmental, and political contexts.
- The role of contextual analysis in enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of public health initiatives aimed at children and families.

The program is designed for a broad and multidisciplinary audience, including:

- Professionals working in healthcare, social services, and education, particularly those involved in child health promotion and responsive parenting.
- Policy and decision makers, civil servants, and institutional representatives at national, regional, and local levels, engaged in planning or supporting public health programs.
- Students and trainees in fields related to public health, education, and social work.

To encourage engagement and sustained participation, the course was structured in a modular format:

- Module 1 was released first and introduces the core concepts, the objectives of the Joint Action.
- Module 2 and Module 3 followed sequentially, offering in-depth content and practical tools to guide the implementation, adaptation, and evaluation of the two BPs in real-world settings.

This progressive release approach was designed to promote participant retention, maintain interest over time, and provide a clear, phased learning path consistent with the objectives of the Joint Action.

All lessons were developed with the active contribution of all Member State working groups participating in the Joint Action. Each country team was responsible for preparing at least one training session, ensuring that the content reflects the diversity of local experiences and implementation contexts. This participatory design approach strengthened ownership, relevance, and knowledge exchange across countries.

ACCESSIBILITY

All learning materials developed are freely accessible through a dedicated webpage on “EpiCentro”, the institutional website of the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), which coordinated WP4. The materials can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.epicentro.iss.it/en/obesity/joint-action-health4EUkids-wp4-programme-capacity-building>

“EpiCentro” is an online platform aimed at public health professionals, local authorities and policy makers,

designed to facilitate access to epidemiological information from the Italian National Health Service. It is developed and maintained by ISS in collaboration with Regional Health Authorities, Local Health Authorities, research institutes, epidemiological associations, and public health professionals.

Choosing an open-access approach offered several important advantages: it provides users with unrestricted access and the freedom to explore the content according to their own interests, while ensuring continued availability of the materials. A structured and closed pathway would indeed have allowed for more precise monitoring; however, its use would have been limited to the duration of the project and therefore would no longer have been accessible afterward. For this reason, the decision to adopt an open-access format was driven by the principle of long-term sustainability, ensuring that future Joint Actions can also benefit from the implementation experience and knowledge gained through Health4EUKids. More information is available in the following “UPTAKE AND MONITORING” section.

DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

The course was disseminated primarily through JA communication channels, including the Health4EUKids official website and partners' institutional websites, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Additional visibility was provided through the ISS institutional website.

Further dissemination occurred during international scientific events presenting JA outputs, such as the 18th European Public Health Association Conference, within the scientific session titled “Health4EUKids: Best Practices implemented in European countries to combat childhood obesity.” Dedicated WP4 meetings also contributed to dissemination among project partners.

All participating Member States were encouraged to promote the course through their national and institutional channels, including professional networks and stakeholder platforms, and to translate it in local languages. Due to the open-access nature of the platform, dissemination relied primarily on visibility through institutional and professional networks rather than controlled enrolment mechanisms.

Overall, dissemination activities included mailing lists, newsletters, conferences and events, social media, and institutional networks. The primary target groups included members of institutional networks, public health professionals, policymakers, and students.

Finally, the progressive release strategy adopted for the course supported repeated dissemination over time, sustaining interest by gradually making new modules available.

UPTAKE AND MONITORING

As anticipated in the previous section, the choice of an open-access format has implications not only for accessibility but also for how the program can be monitored.

Within our Institution, structured e-learning platforms are designed with defined start and end dates corresponding to the project duration they refer to. These systems support advanced monitoring functionalities, including detailed tracking of enrolments and user progression, assessment of learning outcomes, and systematic course evaluation. However, this format would have limited long-term accessibility, reuse, and sustainability of training materials

For these reasons, the capacity building program was intentionally developed as an open-access resource, hosted on an institutional platform without time restrictions. This approach was selected to ensure long-term availability of the materials beyond the duration of the JA, supporting continuous access, reuse in professional settings, and potential future updates or expansion of the training content.

Due to this open-access model, monitoring focuses on general usage indicators, including the number of accesses, active users, pages viewed, and materials downloaded. Conversely, it is not possible to track individual user progression, course completion rates, or formal learning outcomes, as no user registration

or structured learning path is required.

This limitation is also linked to the design of the program, which is conceived as a flexible learning resource rather than a traditional structured course: users are free to navigate the content according to their interests and professional needs, without the obligation to follow a predefined learning path or sequence of modules.

Looking forward, continuous monitoring of platform usage and ongoing dissemination activities are planned to maintain visibility and promote the uptake of the program over time. Future developments may include the addition of new modules, updates to existing materials, or integration of complementary resources, ensuring continued relevance and adaptability to evolving public health needs across Member States.

Performance Indicators

In line with the monitoring and evaluation framework developed under WP3, a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) has been identified to assess the reach and use of the capacity-building program over time.

Given the open-access nature of the platform, the selected indicators focus on usage and engagement metrics rather than individual learning outcomes. These include:

- number of page views and unique visitors
- number of returning users (as a proxy of continued engagement)
- number of downloads of training materials
- average time spent on the platform and on specific modules

These indicators provide a proxy measure of the program's reach, visibility, and practical use.

Where feasible, these data may be complemented in the future by qualitative feedback collected through voluntary tools (e.g., short questionnaires or self-assessment instruments), in order to better understand user experience and perceived usefulness of the materials.

Overall, the combination of usage metrics and potential qualitative inputs will contribute to assessing the program's contribution to the scalability, transferability, and sustainability of best practices within the Health4EUkids framework.

At the time of reporting, preliminary data are summarized in the table below.

Modules	Web Views	Active Users	Video Views
Introduction	723	359	116
Module 1 - Transferability and Sustainability	311	166	195
Module 2 - Grunau Moves	130	89	181
Module 3 - Smart Family	131	109	124

The indicators reported refer to three complementary metrics used to describe platform usage. Web views represent the number of webpage views within the capacity-building section of the "EpiCentro"

website. Active users correspond to users who navigated across multiple pages of the program, rather than accessing a single page through external sources such as search engines or direct links. Video views indicate the number of times the module-specific video lectures were played. Taken together, these indicators provide an initial overview of user engagement with the course materials.

PILOTING AND EVALUATION

The program was tested prior to publication to ensure proper technical functionality, accessibility, and usability of the hosting platform. This preliminary verification confirmed that all materials were correctly accessible and that navigation across modules was clear, consistent, and user-friendly.

However, no formal pilot phase was conducted to assess learning outcomes, nor were structured data collection mechanisms implemented to measure user satisfaction, completion rates, or knowledge acquisition. This is consistent with the open-access nature of the program, which does not require user registration and does not follow a linear course structure. As previously described, the program was designed as a flexible, non-linear learning resource, allowing users to freely select modules according to their professional needs and specific interests. Consequently, traditional indicators used for structured e-learning systems – such as course completion rates or progress tracking – are not applicable in this context.

To support individual learning and promote self-reflection, the program includes downloadable self-assessment tools. These tools allow users to informally test their understanding after engaging with the materials and are aligned with the overall learning objectives of the course, particularly regarding the implementation, transferability, and sustainability of BPs. To support individual learning outcomes, the course includes a downloadable self-assessment tool, allowing participants to test their knowledge after completing the modules. This tool is aligned with the course objectives and supports reflective learning, encouraging professionals to assess their understanding of key concepts related to the implementation, transferability, and sustainability of BPs.

Looking forward, a light evaluation approach is envisaged to strengthen future monitoring of the program. This may involve integrating voluntary feedback mechanisms (e.g., short satisfaction questionnaires) and periodically reviewing usage metrics to inform updates, refinements, and potential expansion of the training content.

SUSTAINABILITY, GOVERNANCE AND FUTURE UPDATES

The long-term sustainability of the capacity building program is ensured through its integration into the institutional activities of the ISS, which hosts and maintains the EpiCentro platform. ISS will continue to oversee the platform's technical functioning and ensure uninterrupted access to the training materials, guaranteeing their availability beyond the duration of the JA.

ISS remains responsible for the maintenance and accessibility of the platform over time, including routine technical updates, content hosting, and sustained visibility through institutional communication channels. This institutional commitment contributes to ensuring the program's durability and continued relevance for public health professionals across Member States.

Monitoring activities will be carried out through available web analytics tools, allowing the assessment of usage trends over time – including access rates, user engagement patterns, and material downloads. These indicators will support periodic reflections on how the program is used and inform decisions regarding its future development.

While no formal update schedule has been established, the platform's flexible architecture allows for the integration of new materials and revision of existing content. Future updates may be developed in response to emerging needs, newly available evidence, or further developments related to the implementation, transferability, and sustainability of best practices.

In addition, continued dissemination through institutional and professional networks will help maintain the program's visibility and support ongoing uptake. Reinforcing communication efforts over time – supported by Member States and project partners – will further contribute to the long-term sustainability and impact of the training program.

RESULTS

The modular capacity building program was developed and made publicly available in English and Italian on the institutional website of the Italian National Institute of Health. It aims to support capacity building on the transferability, sustainability, and scalability of two BPs: *Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family*. The content reflects lessons learned, tools developed, and field experiences gathered through the implementation of the BPs across multiple Member States (MSs).

The learning pathway is structured into three sequential modules, released over time to maintain engagement and provide a clear and gradual content delivery. Each module includes video lessons by experts, stakeholders and professionals directly involved in the Joint Action, focusing on both theoretical concepts and practical implementation experiences.

Module 1 – Transferability and Sustainability of Best Practices in health promotion and childhood obesity prevention

This module introduces the core concepts of transferability, sustainability, and scalability, with insights drawn from WP4 context analysis and evaluation activities. It includes examples from other EU Joint Actions (JACARDI, CHRODIS+, JA Prevent NCD) and explores social determinants of health and inequalities. Other sessions present results from the survey on EU policies and programmes on childhood obesity and responsive parenting, the SWOT analysis, the Delphi process, the EUPHA pre-conference session discussion and the Stakeholders' Consultation conducted within the JA context, offering a comprehensive picture of the enabling factors and challenges related to the dissemination and integration of the BPs in diverse contexts.

Module 2 – *Grünau Moves*: A Best Practice to promote health and prevent childhood obesity in children

This module presents the BP *Grünau Moves* and its implementation experiences in various EU regions. It covers:

- Planning and selection of intervention areas
- Formation of working groups, including both cases with pre-existing and newly created networks
- Participatory needs assessment methodologies, such as Group Model Building, Photovoice, and the Living Healthy Tool
- Co-design of Local Action Programs and examples of both programmatic and structural interventions implemented in countries such as Hungary, Greece, Malta, and Spain
- A focus on stakeholder engagement and strategies for ensuring the sustainability of the intervention, illustrated by the experience from the Basque Country

Module 3 – *Smart Family*: A Best Practice to support and empower families in promoting well-being and healthy lifestyle

The third module explores the BP *Smart Family* and its use in supporting responsive parenting and family-based health promotion strategies. It includes:

- An overview of the original practice developed in Finland and its adaptation within Health4EUkids
- Pre-implementation phase, featuring SWOT and scope analyses and pilot planning (e.g., in the Balearic Islands)
- Implementation experiences from Croatia and Poland
- Post-implementation reflections, such as stakeholder policy dialogues in Slovenia and lessons learned in Kaunas, Lithuania

Each phase (pre-, during, and post-implementation) is illustrated with real-world examples, challenges

encountered, and strategies to address them. The module also emphasizes the transferability and sustainability potential of *Smart Family* across different European settings.

CONCLUSION

The development and launch of the modular capacity building program represents a step forward in supporting the transferability, sustainability, and scalability of the BPs *Grünau Moves* and *Smart Family* within the JA Health4EUkids framework. Built through a collaborative and participatory approach involving all Member States, the training course provides a structured, accessible tool for professionals and institutions engaged in child health promotion and obesity prevention.

By combining theoretical insights with practical implementation experiences from across the EU, the program strengthens knowledge exchange, highlights effective intersectoral strategies, and promotes contextual adaptation of interventions. Its modular design, progressive publication format, and multilingual accessibility (English and Italian, but open to other translations) ensure flexibility and inclusivity.

The capacity building program serves not only as an educational tool but also as a means to build long-term capacity and foster a shared vision among countries and stakeholders for addressing childhood obesity through public health approaches. Its integration within WP4 reinforces the Joint Action's overall objective of supporting Member States in effectively scaling and sustaining evidence-based health promotion strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the partners of the Joint Action Health4EUkids who contributed to the development and delivery of the capacity building program. Their commitment in sharing local implementation experiences, participating in the video lessons, and supporting the design of training content was essential to the success of this initiative.

Special thanks also go to the experts who participated in the training modules, offering valuable insights and perspectives that enriched the learning experience and helped translate the project's goals into practical guidance for public health professionals across Europe.