



## **Science for Prevention Academic Network (SPAN)**

*Strengthening Prevention Science in Europe*

Progress

Public Part

## Project information

Project acronym:	SPAN
Project title:	Science for Prevention Academic Network
Project number:	EUPRHA/518362-LLP-1-2011-1-ES-ERASMUS-ENW
Sub-programme or KA:	Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)
Project website:	<a href="http://www.span-europe.eu">http://www.span-europe.eu</a>
Reporting period:	From 30/10/2012 To 31/03/2014
Report version:	1
Date of preparation:	15 March 2014
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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## Executive Summary

The Science for Prevention Academic Network (SPAN) brings together partners from 25 countries to strengthen the Prevention Science field in Europe. SPAN works through nine discrete but connected work packages, each led by a SPAN partner in a different country.

Over the three year project, SPAN will map the prevention science sector, improve education and training, build networks and run workshops with researchers from a range of academic disciplines, with a particular focus upon young researchers.

In addition the project will develop a quality plan to improve the integration of prevention science in Higher Education across Europe and will provide recommendations on how best to align prevention science with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

A strong theme, with its own work package but also embedded in other work packages, is dissemination and exploitation. SPAN has developed its own logo, brand identity, website, newsletters, “press” releases, postcards, social networking (twitter, LinkedIn) profiles, and a slogan: “**Strengthening Prevention Science in Europe**”.

At this interim report stage, we can report a successful “kick-off” meeting, several Project Management and External Advisory Board meetings, launch of the website and dissemination of two newsletters and multiple press releases. SPAN organised two very well attended Prevention Science workshops alongside the European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR) meeting in Paris, France, 2013, and is planning three workshops for the 2014 meeting in Palma, Spain. SPAN also sponsored a young researcher poster prize at the EUSPR meeting.

Three prevention science mapping exercises have been undertaken simultaneously, involving a large questionnaire survey of academic institutions and the prevention science workforce across Europe. Results from this survey will inform the quality plan and the alignment of prevention science education and training with the European Credit Transfer Scheme. This will be accomplished in the final part of the project.

Looking beyond the end of the project, SPAN seeks to ensure the sustainability of the Network by:

- Supporting workshops for dissemination in each country involved: material for the workshop will be developed and shared within the partnership;
- Setting up agreements for exploitation with other European organisations to continue the work begun by SPAN, notably the European Society for Prevention Research.
- Agreement for the sustainability of the project and results, after the lifetime of the project, involving at least all members of the consortium.

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# 1. Project Objectives

Prevention Science is a new and growing multidisciplinary scientific field which is concerned with new developments in the theory, research and practice of prevention. A common characteristic of Prevention Science is the importance of human behaviour as a determinant of the problems faced by society, particularly amongst at-risk and vulnerable groups.

To strengthen the Prevention Science sector in Europe the Science for Prevention Academic Network (SPAN) brings together experts from 32 European institutions across 25 countries to map the prevention science sector, improve education and training, build networks and run workshops with researchers from a range of academic disciplines, with a particular focus upon young researchers. In addition the project will develop a quality plan to improve the integration of prevention science in Higher Education across Europe and will provide recommendations on how best to align prevention science with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

## Objectives

SPAN will support and strengthen development of the field of prevention science within Europe through the following innovations:

- Profiling prevention science education and training provision and development needs via a mapping exercise of higher education programmes and the prevention science workforce
- Profiling Prevention Science RTD through a mapping exercise to identify strengths and weaknesses in RTD capacity and capability across Europe
- Networking and meetings to agree core and additional competencies for prevention science in higher education
- Sharing of ideas and expertise for academics (including doctoral students and early career scientists) through annual SPAN meetings, workshops and regular communications
- Development of the SPAN website as a resource and forum for dialogue and exchange on prevention science knowledge, methods and issues in different European countries
- Networking and meetings to develop integrated quality assurance standards for prevention science across Europe
- Development of European and International dissemination channels for prevention science, including education and training opportunities and also latest research evidence

## 2. Project Approach

SPAN will achieve the above aims and objectives through the delivery of a number of Work Packages (WPs).

### *Management and Co-ordination*

The Management and Co-ordination work package ensures a smooth flow of the project activities in order to schedule and complete them efficiently, within the agreed time and allocated budget. This WP ensures the overall legal, contractual, financial and administrative management of the project consortium.

### *Promoting the project*

This work package ensures that the project objectives, activities and methodologies developed within the project are widely promoted to the target groups defined by the dissemination and communication plan on a European level and beyond.

### *Mapping Prevention Science in Higher Education*

This work package maps the scope and focus of existing Prevention Science learning programmes, curricula, qualifications, pedagogies, learning outcomes and competencies currently being delivered across the tertiary education sector in Europe.

### *Mapping the Prevention Science workforce*

This work package is conducting research to develop a robust understanding of the workforce skills needs of current employers of prevention workers across Europe (including researchers, academic teachers, and practitioners).

### *Mapping prevention science research*

Completing the picture of the current landscape of prevention science in Europe, this work package is conducting research to develop a detailed understanding of what current and previous funded Research Training and Development (RTD) projects have been delivered in the past, which have sought to address Prevention Science issues.

### *Planning improvement to European Prevention Science*

Utilising the information gathered by the mapping work packages, SPAN will develop a quality plan setting out what needs to be done to improve the integration of Prevention Science degree/quality assurance standards, methods and approaches in the field of Prevention Science Higher Education across Europe.

### *Connecting the prevention science community and young researchers*

In furthering our efforts to strengthen European prevention science we connect all elements of the prevention science sector by organising an Annual SPAN meeting. As part of this activity, SPAN organises workshops for young researchers (Doctoral and Postdoctoral students).

### *Building online resources for the prevention community*

This work package establishes a public facing website through which the various activities and outputs from the project can be shared throughout the prevention

science community to present a 'picture' of the European prevention landscape and to offer information and resources.

#### *Working to embed prevention science in Higher Education*

To ensure that the recommendations contained in the Quality Plan are implemented, this work package focuses on engaging institutions to develop their internal quality assurance procedures and to confirm ECTS credit allocations for their educational programmes.

### **Project Dissemination and promotion**

Our Dissemination and Exploitation Plan for the project is built around the specific actions designed to ensure the widest possible promotion and dissemination of the project, its results and subsequent outcomes. As part of this we have developed a SPAN logo and brand identity that is used by all partners in activities related to the project, and integrated into all promotional material.

"E-newsletters" designed to inform the prevention science community and the public about the project, our partners, our progress and outcomes are regularly distributed, and are publicly available through our website, (<http://www.span-europe.eu>) which also offers an email subscription option). Newsletters are also printed for physical distribution at conferences, events and meetings. At the 2013 European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR) conference, SPAN Newsletters were placed within the conference packs thereby reaching a very broad range of professionals across the sector. SPAN also sponsored a young researcher poster prize at the EUSPR conference creating further visibility for the project.

In addition to E-Newsletters, SPAN has developed other promotional material to communicate the project and expected results to the target-groups of the results. This includes two-sided "post cards" to provide very brief information about the project, contact details for more information and also includes a "slogan" to summarise the project: "**Strengthening Prevention Science in Europe**".

SPAN "Press" releases are translated by partners into a variety of languages and disseminated across Partner countries. These "press" releases provide brief but informative summaries of SPAN activities at regular intervals.

Looking beyond the end of the project, SPAN seeks to ensure the sustainability of the Network by:

- Supporting workshops for dissemination in each country involved: material for the workshop will be developed and shared within the partnership;
- Setting up agreements for exploitation with other European organisations to continue the work begun by SPAN.
- Agreement for the sustainability of the project and results, after the lifetime of the project, involving at least all members of the consortium;

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

Partners from across Europe come together in Oxford for the official “Kick-Off” of the project in March 2013. This two day meeting provided an excellent networking opportunity with hard work by all delegates ensuring that at the close of the meeting the SPAN project had a clear and structured path to progression within the first year.

Work Packages 3, 4 and 5 (Higher Education, Research and Workplace) developed a comprehensive combined questionnaire survey to map existing prevention science throughout Europe. Comprehensive databases in each country were assembled, allowing us to draw from a wide pool for our sampling strategy. Phase I survey data collection is now complete and analysis near completion.

Work package 8 (Web development) completed the first phase of the SPAN website, providing an excellent platform for information, including partner listings, work package outlines and goals for the future. Importantly, the website also acts as a medium within which to ensure dissemination of our project and its related products. The website is public and can be viewed here: <http://www.span-europe.eu/>

#### Links to SPAN:

**Web:** [www.span-europe.eu/](http://www.span-europe.eu/)  
**Twitter:** [@SPAN\\_eu](https://twitter.com/SPAN_eu)  
**LinkedIn:** [SPAN EU](https://www.linkedin.com/company/span-eu)  
**Email:** [k.mulligan@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:k.mulligan@brookes.ac.uk)

Work package 2 (Dissemination) developed clear branding for the project including a logo. We also produced and disseminated our first press releases and two E-newsletters, developed a Twitter and LinkedIn account and worked in collaboration with WP8 to place SPAN products on the Website. In addition to creating a strong cyber-space presence, we have developed visual products such as a banner/stand to be presented at conferences as well as postcards designed to be handed out in conference packs and disseminated among gatherings of prevention professionals.

WP 7 (Physical networking) worked in conjunction with EUSPR to embed the SPAN project within the EUSPR 2013 Annual conference. This conference had dedicated sessions for PhD students and Early Career Researchers to present their work, ensuring that the SPAN objective to engage young researchers / prevention professionals is achieved. In addition, SPAN offered two “pre-conference” workshops dedicated to prevention science: *mediation analysis* and *evaluation of complex interventions*.

As part of the SPAN initiative to link young researchers with industry professionals, SPAN awarded 14 young researchers from across Europe travel and subsistence bursaries to assist with attending the SPAN workshops. Recipients come from the UK; Romania; Italy; Hungary; Croatia and Austria.



*Dr Elias Allara, young researcher presenting his poster, Paris, France.*

## 4. Partnerships

The structure of the SPAN partnership has been specifically established to ensure it includes a balanced mix of Prevention Science academics, researchers, professionals, practitioners and policy makers from across a mix of 'old' and 'new' member states. In formulating this project, we have sought to ensure that the mix of the partnership comprises sufficient geographical reach into the European Prevention Science academic community to ensure we were able to achieve a high degree of coherence in qualification and quality assurance standards across as many of the EU27 members states as possible (thereby supporting the development of a single European Higher Education Area).

Specifically:

- SPAN includes a range of European Prevention Science academics to ensure that the educational pathways we support, develop and create are sufficiently broad, to cover the breadth of the discipline.
- An integral aspect of SPAN is the inclusion of 'industry' professionals, practitioners and policy makers from across Europe. This ensures that the work we undertake on developing coherent student pathways gives due credence to the workforce development needs of a range of prevention occupations and organisations (including researchers/prevention scientists, practitioners, policy makers, economists, etc.).
- We have incorporated strong representation from varied European research and development (RTD) and teaching (pedagogy) experts, to ensure we can maximise the potential linkages between these different disciplines in an effort to further strengthen the prevention science sector in Europe.

In addition – and in taking a European wide perspective, SPAN has taken the initiative to involve a number of associations, networks and groups to ensure that the project outcomes and results are capable of achieving widespread reach. The most prominent example of this is SPAN's strong links with EUSPR.



*SPAN partners at the Kick Off Meeting, Oxford, England*

## 5. Plans for the Future

### Management

This work package will continue to coordinate project activities to achieve objectives, deliver objectives on time, control the work progress and budget allocation. Two more annual reports will be produced. In addition the interim and final evaluation reports on the project will be completed. Quality management of the project will continue to be ensured through the SPAN Project Management Board (PMB) and the Expert Advisory Committee (EAC), who will meet at two time points each year to monitor, coordinate and assess the progress of activities, agree upon changes and re-arrangements of the work plan (if any) and take decisions.

### Dissemination

E-Newsletters and press releases will continue to be distributed both electronically and in print form throughout our partners and distributed widely to promote the annual conferences and pre-conference workshops, SPAN poster prizes and bursaries, report on project/study outcomes and findings and profile members of the SPAN network.

The final dissemination conference will be held to promote the key activities, results, learning and impact from the SPAN project. It is expected that it will showcase the mapping studies of prevention science in Europe (WP's 3, 4 and 5), demonstrate the strong links that have been created among the European prevention science field as a result (i.e. through WP7, conferences, workshops and young researcher networking), profile Prevention Science ECTS accredited case studies, and discuss the future of prevention science in Europe.

### Mapping Education

Analysis of the SPAN questionnaire will be finalised and a report will be produced outlining prevention science courses identified in Europe, listing those that are already using ECTS and identifying opportunities to align standards, and identify potential gaps in provision/progression routes.

Databases from the mapping exercise will enable SPAN to further extend prevention science network links and generate wider attendance at SPAN meetings and young researcher meetings/workshops/conferences.

### Mapping Workforce

Phase I of the SPAN questionnaire has identified further prevention practitioners to be recruited for the mapping exercise. The development of the prevention practitioner database will therefore continue and be extended. Following the finalised collation of data from all sources, gaps and synergies between employer responses will be identified in addition to any potential gaps in provision, with this information incorporated into the final report.

It is expected that this report will be strongly embedded in the final dissemination event in conjunction with the 2015 EUSPR conference, which will be hosted by the SPAN WP Lead for Mapping the Prevention Workforce.

## **Mapping Research**

Analysis of the data gathered from the SPAN questionnaire will show up strengths and weaknesses in different European countries for Prevention Science RTD. A database of regular prevention science events and conferences will be incorporated into the SPAN website for public access, in addition to being disseminated through the SPAN network in order to foster stronger network links within the prevention science community.

## **Quality plan**

This quality plan will set out the tasks required to improve the integration of prevention science degree/quality assurance standards, methods and approaches in the field of higher education across Europe. It will seek to make recommendations about what individual institutions need to do to implement a consistent quality framework underpinned by the ECTS.

## **Physical Networking**

WP7 and WP1 are working in conjunction with EUSPR to develop the 2014 conference for Prevention Science in Europe. It will be held in Palma, Majorca, October 16-18. SPAN will support early career scientists to attend pre-conference workshops with the following themes:

1. Prevention economics - cost effectiveness, using economic data in decision making, methodologies;
2. Implementing evidence based policy and practice - implementing systems, resources, researcher/practitioner dialogues;
3. Optimising behavioural interventions, the MOST model

SPAN has also worked to ensure that the theme of the EUSPR 2015 conference will have Science for Prevention Education, Training and links between Research and Practice as a key theme. This ensures an excellent platform to disseminate the findings of the SPAN project which will be in its final stages of completion. In addition, the conference will be hosted by one of the SPAN partners in Slovenia responsible for WP4: the prevention workforce. SPAN will work towards offering another series of pre-conference workshops, bursaries for young researchers to attend, and providing a SPAN poster prize for early career researchers.

## **Website**

The first phase of the website has been created and launched publicly. Next, SPAN plans to populate the website with material, results and outcomes related directly to the project, throughout the life of the project. It is intended that the following sections will be developed and populated: Research study outcomes/reports; Accessible database of existing EU prevention science in higher education; Database of EU prevention science conferences and events

## **ECTS recognition and reward**

Following the production of the Quality Plan, an ECTS action plan template will be provided. This will support partners and prevention science tertiary education providers to review the outcomes of the quality plan, review their own curriculum design, review their learning outcomes, calculate their credit allocation, estimate workloads, and review course documentation. In completing this task partners may also take advantage of ECTS Helplines and the ECTS Counsellors programme.

## **Ensuring sustainability of our project**

SPAN continues to work towards implementing initiatives designed to ensure the sustainability of the project. We have built the project website which can be maintained after the lifetime of the project at a relatively low cost and is designed to be populated with research data and outcomes as they are produced, including providing an E-newsletter subscription service. The website will also serve as a base for prevention science professionals to interact with the data, by allowing access to databases on prevention science education and research and providing links to participating universities and institutions thereby continuing to connect the community.

SPAN will seek to promote the transnational Quality Assurance of European Prevention Science Education and Training in the partner institutions during the lifetime of the project (using the ECTS framework), thereby ensuring these standards are maintained beyond the lifetime of the project.

The research studies/mapping conducted by SPAN (WP 3, 4 & 5) in combination with our preconference workshops and integration with the EUSPR conferences, allow SPAN to develop closer links with a large range of education and training professionals, academics, employers, prevention science associations and policy makers. Developing these links ensures that we can work with them to achieve shared goals in the field. This is further enhanced by our work in disseminating our research results and findings throughout the lifetime of the project through our own mediums (E-Newsletters, press releases, website, postcards) but also by maintaining a strong presence at wider events such as the EUSPR annual conference. By doing this, we are ensuring that the results of the project have the opportunity to be maintained and multiplied in the sector.

Having established a strong academic network during the duration of the project, and developed robust databases of employers, academics and stakeholders (and cost effective systems for communicating with them), we will sustain the activities of the project beyond the lifetime of the Erasmus funding by establishing a robust membership model for the project, which is built on a clear reason for organisations to maintain a commitment to the network.

This aim will be facilitated by the integration of SPAN into the EUSPR, where they already have a membership model. Importantly, the SPAN project lead (Professor David Foxcroft) will become the EUSPR President from October 2014 to September 2017, so the leadership capability for the integration of SPAN into EUSPR and the sustainability of the SPAN project will be in place at the highest level. SPAN partners are also seeking H2020 funding to actively further develop capacity and capability for prevention research in lower performing EC countries.

The communication tools we have developed in the project (e.g. the website) have been designed and developed in such a way that these can be used beyond the lifetime of the project to communicate with potential interested parties in as low cost a way as possible. Where possible, we will use permission based marketing tools (such as email opt in) to encourage potential beneficiaries to allow us to communicate with them beyond the lifetime of the project. This is in line with the EUSPR membership model, mentioned above.

In addition, we will develop our links with key prevention science associations, fora and groups, to ensure we have as cost effective a methodology for communicating

with potential new members as possible, in line with the EUSPR membership model, as outlined above.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

This project aligns with two European policies: *Education and Training 2020* (ET2020); and the *Seventh Framework Programme (research and development)* (RTD-FP) and, more recently, the Horizon 2020 programme, H2020.

The ET2020 strategic framework focuses upon building a “knowledge based Europe and making lifelong learning a reality for all”. The framework has four main objectives:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

RTD-FP focuses on a variety of areas, but best aligns with SPAN in relation to the focus on building training, mobility across Europe and in improving careers of researchers in addition to attracting high-quality young researchers.

H2020 highlights a number of areas that are relevant to Prevention Science in its work programme, including screening and prevention and supporting the development of RTD in countries where there is a lower RTD profile and culture. This also includes working with structural organisations and funds.

SPAN have sought to increase capacity within Prevention Science to meet the objectives from these policies through the implementation of our work plan, essentially taking a two pronged approach:

- The creation of our transnational network of Prevention Academics allows experts in relevant areas to come together to compare 'best practice' in the field of prevention science education and RTD to develop innovative methods and teaching material and pedagogies (our mapping research studies).
- Strengthening the sector by enhancing the quality and cohesiveness of education research and training across Europe by implementing Prevention Science standards, mapping the current methods and approaches used in the European Tertiary Prevention Education Sector, and developing a standard QA methodology across current provision (using the ECTS framework).

