Strengthening Health in All Policies at city level: results from the French Healthy Cities Network

KEY MESSAGE 1 : The Health in All Policies approach is an opportunity for municipalities to address legal and financial challenges and enhance their public health actions at the local level.

KEY MESSAGE 2 : Sharing tools, practices and experiences among cities is essential to foster collaboration, maximise co-benefits and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.

CONTEXT

- In France, the lack of a clear legal framework limits the integration of Health in All Policies (HiAP) into policymaking.
- Facing growing financial constraints and increasing awareness of the impact of public policies on health, **French Healthy Cities seek to strengthen HiAP at the local level.**

METHODS

- The French Healthy Cities Network (FHCN) launched **a working group** to identify barriers and enablers to HiAP implementation in municipalities.
- Elected officials and technicians from 44 cities joined the group, sharing experiences and best practices around four themes: **Governance; Coordination; Processes and Tools; Resources and fundings.**
- Nine online meetings are organised, from Sept. 2024 to early 2026. Sessions are recorded and analysed to identify key factors for local HiAP implementation.

RESULTS

Six meetings have been held so far, with an average of 50 participants. Preliminary results highlight several barriers and enablers to HiAP implementation in municipalities in each of the four themes.

BARRIERS	ENABLERS
Governance	
• Lack of clear political commitment to HiAP • Limited recognition of the role of health departments within municipalities • Siloed approaches and difficulties in interdepartmental cooperation • Health is not a mandatory responsibility of municipalities	• Strong political commitment to HiAP • Establishment of intersectoral governance bodies (formal or informal) with elected officials and technical staff from all city departments • A shared institutional culture of health that supports the development of cross-cutting initiatives
Coordination	
• Limited visibility of health-related actions within non-health departments • The large number of existing thematic networks makes it difficult to identify those linked to HiAP • Lack of dedicated staff to coordinate and implement cross-sectoral initiatives	• Establishment of a network of health referent within non-health departments • Clear coordination mechanisms and coordinators roles • Build on existing interdepartmental structures, understand their functioning, and engage with them to integrate health (working groups, committees…)
Processes and tools	
• Lack of shared tools to help other departments understand public health • Lack of tools to evaluate HiAP • Difficulties in collecting data at the municipal level (anonymity issues due to small scale)	• Use data collected/produced by other departments • Establish knowledge sharing mechanisms among departments
Resources and fundings	
• Fragmented and insecure funding • Insufficient human and financial resources • No dedicated funding for HiAP coordinators	• Joint budget planning across several departments • Expertise in HiAP and in coordination of transversal initiatives

LESSONS LEARNED

- Although public health is a state responsibility, cities are key actors due to their close connection to communities.
- HiAP requires strong political will, clear interdepartmental governance, effective coordination mechanisms, appropriate tools and sustainable resources.
- **Sharing experiences and practices among municipalities is essential** to strengthen HiAP locally, despite political shifts and budget constraints.
- The HiAP approach helps enhancing public health action, promoting collaboration, breaking silos, and maximizing co-benefits.

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