



## ► “Global Health and Education” UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network

*@Connecting knowledge, taking on children's future*

Universities, WHO, UNESCO,  
institutions and International Networks in collaboration  
to improve education, health and well-being in schools

The UNESCO chair “Global Health & Education” and UNITWIN network **aim to promote research and training, to contribute to building, interpreting and disseminating the knowledge base in the field of health education and health promotion in schools and communities.** It will contribute to give **visibility and recognition** to the work done by research teams in Asia, Africa, Oceania, Americas and Europe.

Together, **health and education are key components of sustainable development.** Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the chair contributes to building and interpreting the evidence base for SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning).

This academic initiative has unique **connections to UN agencies** (including UNESCO and WHO) and is deeply **rooted in existing international networks.** It is a **strategic resource** for knowledge production, knowledge transfer and capacity building at the global level. The chair will be a “driving force” for the networks, offering “think tank”, “knowledge-hub” and “bridge building” capacities linking academia, international networks, institutions, professional communities, unions, and local communities; operating at macro and micro levels of policy and practice.

The chair will contribute to policy and practice development by international research initiatives, translating the research evidence, strengthening capacity building and offering support to policy-makers and practitioners at the global level.

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School and health:  
a UN intersectoral priority for  
education, health and  
development

Education and health are inalienable rights of every child all over the world. Because education and health are inextricably linked, schools are considered an ideal setting for both health education and health promotion initiatives targeted at children and young people. In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that shows the close relationship between health, physical, mental and cognitive development, school participation and educational achievement. Schools' contribution to health includes reference to citizenship and healthy living with dual purposes: a) to create conditions for pupils' achievement (school environment, school climate, nutrition services, policy and planning,

staff competencies, access to social and health services, school health services, partnerships...) and b) to acquire health competencies for empowerment on healthy decision making.

The pre-school and school environment (local and digital environment) offer pathways to improve health outcomes, including building individuals' capacity to access, understand and use information through improved health and social literacy (a means of empowerment); tackling stereotypes and gender inequalities; ensuring a safe, inclusive and accessible health-promoting school environment; providing access to child-and adolescent-friendly health services; facilitating the transition from education to work; ensuring support and empowerment for teaching and school staff through health promoting programmes and settings; and reaching out to parents and other local stakeholders (sport clubs, community centres, churches, etc) to build healthy and resilient local communities<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>WHO EURO (2016) Schools and pre-schools promoting health and well-being for all children and adolescents

The World Health Organization (WHO) is promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people through intersectoral and interagency working, based on their HEALTH 2020 strategy.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) works to achieve the “Strategy on Education for Health and Well-Being: Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals”. This strategy helps to ensure all young people to have access to comprehensive sexuality education, healthy learning environments, and to the information needed to protect themselves from HIV and develop healthy relationships.

A UNESCO chair and a UNITWIN network<sup>2</sup> aiming at promoting research, training and support to policies and practices change in an intersectoral perspective

In line with the UNESCO and WHO strategy, the UNESCO chair “Global Health & Education” and the UNITWIN network (the UNESCO University Twinning and Networking Programme) aim to contribute to create the conditions for all schools to make a difference for health and well-being of all pupils and of teaching and

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<sup>2</sup> The UNESCO UNITWIN programme serves as a prime means of building the capacities of higher education and research institutions through the exchange of knowledge and sharing, in a spirit of international solidarity. A UNITWIN Network consists of a number of universities in different countries that join forces and collectively sign a joint agreement with UNESCO. Within this network, each participating institution may or may not have an individual Chair.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143918e.pdf>

non-teaching staff. This will be done by strengthening the school’s capacity as a healthy place in which to live, learn and work. In addition, the chair also supports intersectoral and interagency working to promote the health and well-being of children and young people.

The chair supports the development of effective strategies to promote equitable school health policies, safe learning environments, skills-based education, and school-based health and nutrition services at a global level. To achieve these goals, new research strategies are needed focused on programme content and on the implementation process across multisectoral contexts. This is critical for countries where the research potential is still in the early stages of development. In addition, innovative ways of training and supportive policy building are needed. The chair links to the core business and aims of universities:

- **to promote research and training**
- **to contribute to building, interpreting and disseminating the knowledge base**

It also offers, within institutions and networks, support to policy-makers and practitioners at the global level.

The chair will help build the knowledge base and its dissemination in the following areas: health promotion in schools and sustainable development, intersector working at a local level, effective health promotion programmes in schools that promote healthy behaviour of

students and school staff, effectiveness in reducing inequalities, determinants of genuine participation and successful implementation of a whole child, whole school, whole community approach.

The UNESCO chair “Global Health & Education” will act as catalyst of change

The UNESCO chair will be part of an existing international dynamic. Its specific contribution is to be a “driving force” for the existing international networks, “think tank”, “knowledge-hub” and “bridge builder” between academia, institutions, the professional communities, unions, and local communities. The chair will create synergies with existing actors and will be positioned as an “add-in”, not as an “add-on” providing a catalyst of change by improving knowledge transfer and capacity building.

The chair and UNITWIN network will work on six partnerships:

1. A close link to UNESCO, WHO and other UN agencies
2. Formalised collaboration with the main international networks in the field of health promotion and health education: the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), the Schools for Health in Europe network (SHE) including the SHE research group, the Education and Solidarity Network (ESN) and national networks.
3. A core group chair members of universities. These are institutions hosting well recognized research groups and

programmes devoted to the training of education and health professionals

4. A network of universities at a global level
5. National education and public health agencies and school health promotion services
6. Private actors in the field: research centres, NGO’s and companies

The UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network aim at promoting research, training and support to policies and practices

The UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network will create a pool of excellence. Outputs of the UNESCO chair are defined in terms of education and health capacity building. On a long term perspective, the main goals are to:

1. facilitate **collaboration** in building the institutional capacity of both higher education and civil society in the theory and practice of school health promotion; support the development of research centres;
2. develop **intervention research** and identify the most effective practices in school health promotion in various cultural contexts, with special emphasis on vulnerable communities and less wealthy nations;
3. facilitate **knowledge transfer** from research to policy and practice via the international networks; contribute to education/social/health intersectoral policies by sharing case-studies, evidence based data, effective practices; support the development of intervention tools in

different contexts by improving practical knowledge transfer (from research and effective practices);

4. contribute to the **training** of students, leaders and practitioners via common initiatives linked to existing university diplomas, degrees and masters using on-line training and virtual communities; facilitate North-South, East-West and South-South exchange of lecturers, students and researchers;

5. facilitate and support **publications** (scientific papers, Massive open online courses (MOOC), fact sheets for policy makers, literature reviews, guidelines, key indicators...), organize a **summer school**, taking part in international, national and regional initiatives and organize workshops, seminars, national, regional and international meetings/conferences mostly as side meetings with the existing networks.



## Work plan 2018-2022

### Activity 1: Mapping the research groups

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The aim of the activity is to map the teams and research groups (human sciences and health sciences) involved in the field of children and young people’s health in the school setting and the community and to create a community among these research entities.

Deliverables are 1: a map of the groups producing research in this field (list, contacts, structure, projects, publications) and 2: a living community of research groups (public and private) on the professional social networks.

### Activity 2: Defining an epistemological and ethical framework for high quality research in health and education

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Because of the intersectoral perspective and the focus on school setting and community-based approaches, the design of research protocols is complex from both an epistemological as from an ethical point of view. The aim of this activity is to develop a **framework for research** based on a dialogue that takes into account the different contexts and relationships to knowledge and evidence in Asia, Africa, Oceania, Americas and Europe

Deliverables are 1: articles and 2: guidelines for high quality research in health and education.

### Activity 3: Strengthening the evidence base

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This activity corresponds to the development of a local and digital **intervention-research programme** in various cultural contexts. The intervention-research is shaped in reference to

the highest standards. It is focused on the life ecosystem of the children and young people and based on a local-digital sustainable approach.

For the 4 years period, deliverables are a research protocol and first results, published in a peer-reviewed journal and journals .

### Activity 4: Producing and disseminating of multilingual fact sheets

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This activity consists of the publication of multilingual fact sheets on the scientific data available and the most relevant practices in various national, social and cultural contexts (local intersectoral policies focused on children and young people’s health, prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCD), sexuality education and promoting mental health and wellbeing, school and health inequalities reduction, water and sanitary hygiene (WASH)).

Deliverables are 5 fact sheets targeting policy-makers and practitioners and presenting data in a format which emphasizes key points.

### Activity 5: Setting up a multilingual and multicultural free online open course

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This activity consists in the production and uploading of a multilingual free online open course (MOOC) for education, social and health professionals on health promotion of children at local, regional and national level (school and community) linking existing academic programmes of the universities as well as their respective continuous professional development programmes.

Deliverables are the MOOCs in its different versions.

### Governance of the “Global Health and Education” UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network

A board of trustees and dedicated teams are managing the “Global Health and Education” UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network. Four domains of activities are defined: research, education, communication and management.

### Funding

The activities of the “Global Health and Education” UNESCO chair and UNITWIN network are funded in kind through the core budget of the University and via extrabudgetary resources mobilized through a foundation. The support of private companies

comes from multiple competing sources in order to avoid any conflict of interest.

### Being a partner of the UNESCO chair “Global Health & Education” and UNITWIN network

As a partner of the UNESCO chair “Global Health & Education” and UNITWIN network, universities or institutions need to submit a commitment letter. The involvement can vary from a minimal level (being part of the community and exchanging information within the network) to active participation in the seminars, research project, fact sheets, MOOC production and governance of the chair and network.

The added value for the partners is linked, among others, to recognition and visibility of their work, dissemination of their production, collaboration, inspiration, support and funding schemes.

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