

PRESS RELEASE

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€4.9m project to help Europeans manage their weight

Researchers and businesses are joining forces to develop innovative techniques to help people manage their weight and increase their physical fitness with the use of emerging technology and information systems.

A three-year project, dubbed DAPHNE, comes at a time when more than 70% of adults and a third of children in some EU countries are overweight.* The multi-centre collaboration involves ten universities and technology companies, with a total budget of €4.9m.

The project will use a new generation of sensors to detect personal energy expenditure, including how much time a person has been sitting still, how much they have been walking or standing or doing housework, and can monitor their overall fitness. The data will be analysed using information mining and intelligent heuristics to recognise behaviour patterns and see how successfully an individual is making changes to their lifestyle. With mobile phone apps and other devices, individuals can be given guidance on making further changes, improving their levels of physical fitness and preventing weight-related diseases.

The DAPHNE project is being led by the Spanish health technology company Treelogic SL, in partnership with major IT companies IBM, Atos, Nevet, Evalan and SilverCloud. These businesses will work alongside researchers at the University of Leeds, the University of Madrid and the Children's Hospital in Rome, Italy, along with a professional society, the International Association for the Study of Obesity.

Project coordinator, Dr Alberto Olmo of Treelogic SL, said *'We know that thousands of people across Europe want to get fit and stay fit. There are now a number of sophisticated methods for helping them to achieve their goals using new technology. The DAPHNE research project is a unique opportunity to develop industry standardised approaches to personal data collection on health and fitness, and to make sure we work together to develop the services people need.'*

The project will undertake three major areas of work. The first is the development of the monitoring sensors which can track individual behaviour and their communication of the data they collect using smartphones and other innovative communications technology. The second is the development of information analysis platforms to receive the data using cloud storage, and to process the data and send it back to the individuals and forward to other end-users, including health services and fitness centres. The third area of work is to consider how the data collected across many individuals can be integrated to provide information for health service managers, health insurers and public health agencies, and how this information should be protected and kept secure to ensure personal data is processed ethically.

‘European health services are facing a rising tide of obesity related disease, including diabetes and heart disease,’ said Dr Tim Lobstein, Policy Director at the International Association for the Study of Obesity. ‘It can be a struggle for individuals to make changes to their lifestyles, so technology that can strengthen motivation and show personal progress could provide a useful tool and needs to be explored. We welcome this opportunity to help people to manage their weight and to improve their fitness, reducing the need for drugs or surgery.’

* Obesity prevalence in Europe: see <http://www.iaso.org/resources/obesity-data-portal/resources/tables/>

DAPHNE is an EU-funded study (2013-2016) to develop and test methods for collecting, analysing and exploiting personal activity and fitness information, with a focus on reducing sedentary behaviour. It will develop state-of-the-art data analysis platforms for collecting, analysing and delivering useful information on physical fitness and behaviour. Standardised data platforms will help hardware and software developers to provide personalised health information to individuals and to service providers.

DAPHNE partners: Treelogic SL (Spain), ATOS Spain SA, Evalan BV (Netherlands), SilverCloud Health Ltd (Ireland), Nevet Ltd (Israel), IBM Israel, University of Leeds (UK), Universidad Politecnica de Madrid (Spain), Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesù (Italy), International Association for the Study of Obesity.

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