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## **XI International Conference on Urban Health**

**Abstract: "The *Health Villages* as a strategy of health promotion and territorial development"**

**Manuela Ricci, Fo.Cu.S - Sapienza Rome University**

**Aims.** The Fo.Cu.S. Research Centre of Sapienza University of Rome and the Equity in Health Institute had worked on a pre-feasibility study to evaluate healthy ageing services, in order to support local development and the regeneration of small towns; the paper describes the main characters of the philosophy and the functionality of the proposed model. Design Health villages is a form of health tourism that:

- \_ educates about new lifestyles that will assist the population to age in a healthier way, thus reducing the costs of medications and hospitalization;
- \_ increases the attractiveness of territories, especially of small rural towns rich in cultural and environmental resources, but socially and economically in decline.

This initiative has two objectives:

- \_ Public spending and medication, reducing, thanks to health promotion strategies, the cost of the pharmacological approach;
- \_ The regeneration/revitalization of small towns, through the establishment of new key functions and the re-use of the architectural heritage.

This idea is particularly feasible in Italy, where small centres, bearing high quality architectural heritage, attractive landscapes, and healthy environment, will be able to accommodate the new educational direction and prevention. The Health Village model embodies an original formula that sees a stay in the village as the highlight of a long process of ageing education. It should not be seen as a hospital, or as care home, and neither is the goal to develop "tourism therapy", nor elitist versions of wellness. The target for this type of trial is very large, covering every self-reliant person over the age of fifty who intends to undertake the process setting. The idea was conceived in Italy and presented in the II meeting of the Longevity Forum organized by the Italian Institute for Quality of Life in Rome in 1988. The model became the candidate for the European Commission's proposal for the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing. Healthy ageing is, in fact, a strategic objective for European policies (2012 was declared the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations), particularly with respect to the growing number of people implicit in the term mass longevity.

**Results and conclusions.** Strong public involvement is necessary to launch the initiative, as the starting initiatives show (in Sardinia and in Molise Regions). The institutional leaders of this approach are the Regions; a structured governance system and private/public sector partnerships are also important. The proposed model clearly identifies the criteria, which must guide to the realization of a Health village as an integrated system of services (accessibility, productive resources, natural and cultural heritage). The main results of the financial feasibility analysis will show the conditions of the investment attractiveness for institutional actors and businesses.