

How SUNRISE is bringing cancer prevention into Romanian schools

Cancer prevention through education: IOCN's work in schools



Image copyrights: Enrollment of students in SUNRISE studies at the Báthory István Theoretical High School, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

SUNRISE is a European project funded through Horizon Europe. Its goal is to empower adolescents to make healthier choices and reduce future cancer risk through education, digital tools and school-based activities. Romania is one of 8 pilot countries, represented by the Oncology Institute "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuta" (IOCN) in Cluj-Napoca.

The project develops and tests innovative educational and digital tools that help teenagers understand the risks linked to smoking and other harmful behaviours, recognise the influence of advertising and social media and take a more active role in decisions about their own health.

What the team does in schools

The IOCN research team, Tania Schreiner, Yvette Albert and Nina Nicoara, visits partner high schools on a regular basis. Each visit includes three types of activity:

Research questionnaires

Students complete research surveys in class, with direct support from the team.

Digital tools

The students receive step-by-step guidance on accessing and using the digital applications developed as part of the project.

Educational discussions

Sessions cover healthy lifestyles, the risks of smoking and the influence of social media. The team also works with teachers and school management to integrate activities into the school timetable.



Image copyrights: Presentation of the SUNRISE programme at the ELF Theoretical High School, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Activities have taken place in four schools in Cluj-Napoca: Liceul Teoretic Elf, Liceul Teoretic Báthory István, Colegiul Național Gheorghe Șincai and Colegiul Economic Iulian Pop.

To date, **more than 872 students** have already participated in activities coordinated by IOCN.

Schools become living labs, where students are active partners, not just participants.

What participants say

“I did not expect it to be so open. Students asked questions that even we, as teachers, would not have thought of. That showed me the topic matters to them.”

- Participating teacher

“It felt different from a normal class. We talked about things from our everyday lives and no one judged us for what we answered.”

- Participating student

The coordinator's perspective

Dr. Delia Nicoară coordinates SUNRISE activities at local level and oversees the collaboration with partner schools.

“Every school visit brings new data and perspectives we would not have gained otherwise. Students are honest when they feel genuinely heard. Teachers become real allies once they understand we are there to build something together, not to evaluate.”

- Delia Nicoară, IOCN, Cluj-Napoca

From classrooms to European impact: 8 pilot countries, one shared goal

Interventions are tested simultaneously across multiple European countries. The approach is designed to produce scalable, evidence-based solutions that can work at European level.

Data collected in schools feeds directly into the development of prevention tools. Feedback from students and teachers helps the team adapt and improve those tools continuously.



Image copyrights: Enrollment of students in Study 1 (SmartCoach) at the Iulian Pop College of Economics, Cluj-Napoca, Romania



By working directly with schools, students and teachers, SUNRISE is helping shape a more prevention-oriented generation across Europe.

Want to know more?

Activities continue in partner schools and the IOCN team is expanding collaboration with new schools in the region.

To find out more about how your school can get involved in SUNRISE, contact the team directly at IOCN Cluj-Napoca.

Scientific Responsible: Dr. Delia Nicoară (drdelianicoara@gmail.com), Public Health Specialist, EU Project Manager, The Oncology Institute „Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță” Cluj-Napoca (IOCN).

Researcher(s): Nina Nicoara (nina.nicoara@outlook.com) Communications Manager EU Health Projects, Tania Schreiner (schreiner_tania@yahoo.ro), Research Technician; Yvette Albert (albert.yvette07@gmail.com), Research Technician.

Funding: HORIZON-MISS-2023-CANCER-01 (Research and Innovation actions supporting the implementation of the Mission on Cancer) (GA:101136829)
