



Evidence-based Guidance to Scale-up  
Integrated Care in Europe



Co-funded by the Health  
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## **VIGOUR partners have come together during these novel times showing how collaboration is key to an integrated system of care**

The VIGOUR project is now exactly half way through and we are so happy to share with you the fantastic work of our partners. While the last few months have been difficult, hard to navigate and uncertain in the face of Covid19 the collaborative and adaptive nature of VIGOUR is a testament to how partnerships can be resilient.

Here Lutz Kubitschke from empirica, the VIGOUR project co-ordinators, tells us all about it.

Covid19 continues to cause widespread disruptions in Europe and beyond and of course, the current pandemic leaves its mark on the VIGOUR partnership as well. Prior to the outbreak, the VIGOUR partners systematically reviewed current practices in the health and care sector to see how existing services could be better integrated. Taking current service delivery processes as a point of departure, on a case-by-case basis the participating health care authorities have systematically analysed how current processes can be improved to deliver better joined-up care. On this basis, good progress has also been made in practically planning the piloting of better integrated service delivery under day-to-day conditions.

However, the pandemic has gradually reached all VIGOUR countries since the beginning of this year and tied up considerable resources on the part of the health care providers involved. Moreover, lock down regulations have made face-to-face meetings at local level difficult and at national/international level impossible for the time being. Nevertheless, the VIGOUR partners reiterated at the exceptional occasion of a virtual consortium meeting held on 11th and 12th May this year that they are fully determined to continue the path they have chosen. Since the beginning of the year, regular virtual meetings had been held to replace planned on-site meetings. Moreover, a series of internal online webinars and workshops have now been scheduled until the end of this year to enable mutual learning and exchange among the VIGOUR partners even if face-to-face events continue to be impossible.

The lessons learnt from the pandemic so far are encouraging the VIGOUR partners to continue pursuing the further integration of service delivery within the health care sector and across health and social care, ultimately shifting the focus from disease specific service delivery to joined accountability towards defined populations. The discussion about the benefits of digital technologies in the health and social care domains has also gained new momentum due to Covid19. Premature conclusions that digitally support integrated care concepts will emerge virtually by themselves in the course of pandemic should, however, be treated with caution. The Gordian knot of system complexity and system inertia that healthcare innovators have long faced is unlikely to unravel on its own in the aftermath after the pandemic. Results gathered throughout the VIGOUR project will thus continue to be important to better understand the core elements required for a sustainable and cost-effective implementation of different models of integrated care in divergent system environments across Europe.

To keep up to date with the work of VIGOUR subscribe to the newsletter.

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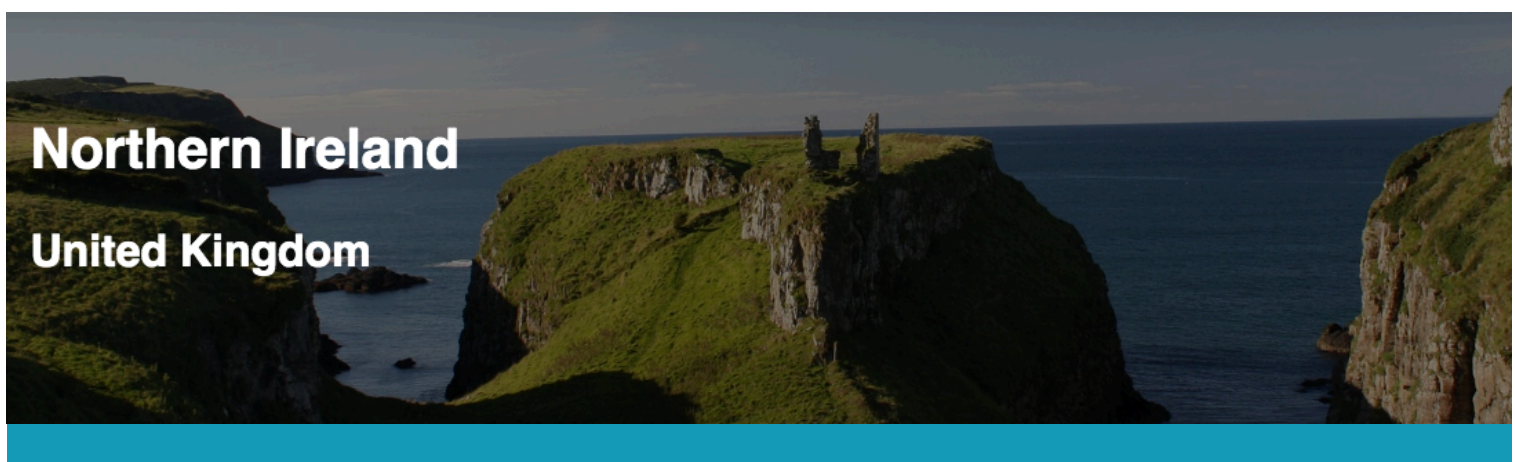




# VIGOUR podcast

## Listen to the first VIGOUR Podcast!

We were delighted to hear all about the great work going on in Northern Ireland as part of VIGOUR. Orla Snook O'Carroll from The International Foundation for Integrated Care (IFIC) interviews Martin Hayes from the Health and Social Care Board Northern Ireland as he gives us the low down on the Scale-up and Spread of Social Prescribing in Northern Ireland.

[Listen](#)

## VIGOUR partners in Northern Ireland discuss Social Prescribing and their empowering mission

Our ambition in being part of VIGOUR is to get guidance and support for the development of Social Prescribing in an integrated and evidence-based way.

“Social Prescribing is a means of enabling GPs and other frontline healthcare professionals to refer people to a link worker - to provide them with a face to face conversation during which they can learn about the possibilities and design their own personalised solutions, i.e. ‘co-produce’ their ‘social prescription’- so that people with social, emotional or practical needs are empowered to find solutions which will improve their health and wellbeing, often using services provided by the voluntary and community sector.” (UK Social Prescribing Network).

Our key mission is to drive forward the scale-up and spread of social prescribing across Northern Ireland.

Read more about this crucial work

[Read more](#)



## **VIGOUR pilot regions write about their capability to support effective pandemic management in response to Covid19. Sonja Lindner from the University of Graz explains the process**

One of the major impacts of the VIGOUR project is its real life capacity exchange among partners. During regular monthly online meeting among all partners, the effects of the current Covid19 pandemic in participating countries as well as the impact of maturity of integrated care were discussed. The group decided to create a statement combining evidence collected during the project with a rapid online consultation of partners of the VIGOUR project and to share results with the broader community. The idea to write a paper about Covid19 and the potential of the EU-funded VIGOUR project to provide important lessons learned for pandemic management came up in this regard.

The paper presents preliminary integrated care approaches and concepts of the pilot regions and their capability to support effective pandemic management. The utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT) is especially highlighted. The whole VIGOUR consortium is represented in the paper with the core group writing the

first draft and the pilot regions contributed key insights and information about their specific integrated care schemes. This initial draft was shared with the whole consortium, refined and complemented by all the co-authors.

We are still at the very beginning of trying to understand how Covid19 will affect us in the long-term, therefore any information supporting pandemic management is currently relevant. We, the VIGOUR consortium, are convinced that integrated care represents an approach that really helps to effectively respond to Covid19 and the first preliminary results from the project prove to be important lessons learned in this regard. Given the heterogeneity of the pilot regions and the differences of their approaches and project designs, a wide array of tools to shape health and social care systems appropriately is presented.

The paper has been submitted to the [International Journal of Integrated Care](#) recently and is now being reviewed for a possible publication which we will share with you in due course. Further information about the project in general and information on the publication's progress can be found at the VIGOUR [newspage](#).

Special thanks go to everyone who contributed to write this truly worthwhile and timely publication!



**Maddalena Illario**

## **Connecting expertise against COVID19: An example from Campania where Maddalena Illario interviews Guido Iaccarino**

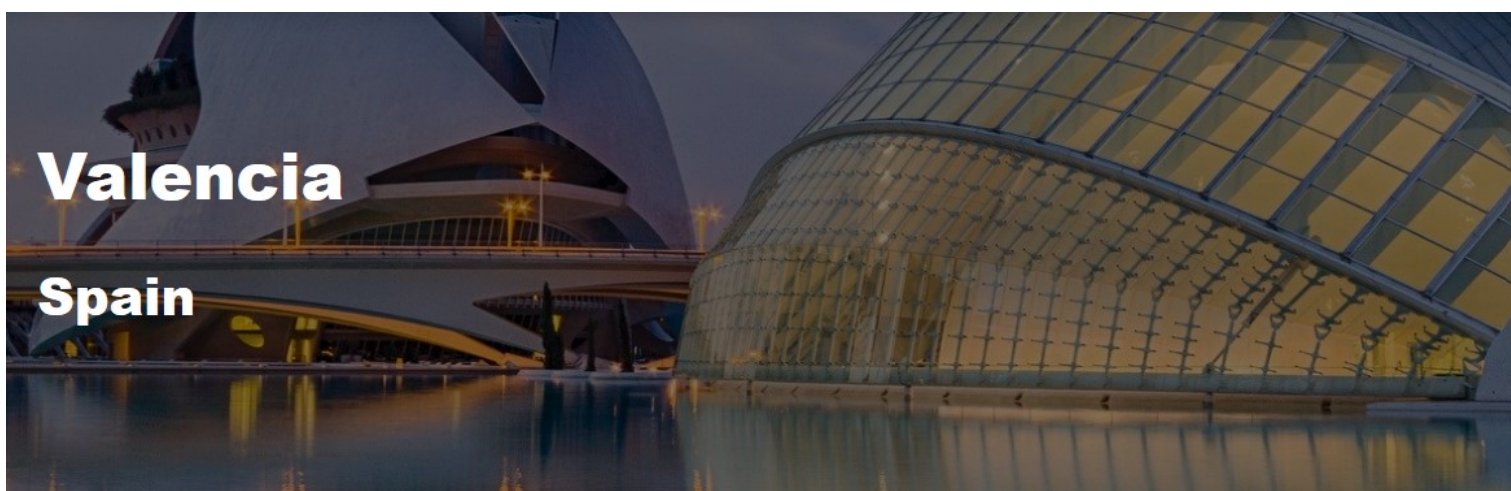
In the midst of the pandemic, the Italian Society of Hypertension launched a study to clarify which mechanism is prevalent and plays a role in the clinical manifestation of Covid19. This fact-finding investigation was aimed at really verifying the impact of therapy with renin-angiotensin system inhibitors on the onset and clinical manifestation of the disease Covid19. Hypertension correlates with death in Covid19 subjects, and there was a doubt that Sartans or ACE inhibitors might accelerate disease progression. The Society asked each Member to fill in an online questionnaire of 18 questions to collect information on the medical history and the evolution of the disease in Covid19 patients who would come to

their attention, and also to spread the use of this questionnaire to their collaborators, students, specialists for an analysis that is as extensive as possible.

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Integrated care is relevant for the management of health emergencies, as demonstrated during the Covid19 pandemic by the need of identifying patients in VIGOUR regions at risk of adverse outcome due to multimorbidity to be carefully protected from the infection.

A link to the Italian questionnaire and more information can be found [here](#).



## Scaling-up good practices for healthy ageing in Valencia

In Valencia there is an ICT platform managing the vertical integration of care services across the layers of health care. This allows for both senses transmission of actions related with care of end-users and has allowed for innovation in the introduction of new figures of care provision, including telemedicine and effective triage of patient referrals from primary care into hospital.

A more ambitious advancement has been proposed within VIGOUR, in which health promotion is being promoted in a more advanced step of integration, the “expert patient”, i.e. motivated end-users that act to induce adherence to healthy lifestyle in population being a key figure. A network of nurses, GPs, physiotherapists and fit centres are involved in the initiative.

To read more about the work going on in Valencia click below.





## VIGOUR's Preparation Phase is underway

The project is moving into the Preparation Phase after the Baseline Phase of the project has looked at the conceptual ambitions of each VIGOUR region and compiled SWOT analyses examining strength and weaknesses of their envisaged care integration approaches. The Preparation Phase currently underway is reviewing good practises and synthesizing a knowledge base from successful care interventions that match the specific ambitions of each pilot site. Based on this the VIGOUR pilot regions are developing context-sensitive implementation plans for their scaling-up missions. Mutual learning is a critical aspect of the VIGOUR approach and so we look forward to sharing these results with you.

For more on this and to keep in touch with VIGOUR activities, remember to subscribe to the newsletter.

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