IMPACT SUCCESS STORIES

HNN 3.0
HEALTH-NCP-NET

INSPIRE tested whether a short-term, tailored palliative rehabilitation programme can support quality of life, function and independence for people with incurable cancer.

Delivered across 7 European countries, the flexible, goal-based intervention was evaluated for clinical and cost-effectiveness, with dedicated work on equitable recruitment and real-world implementation.



INSPIRE
it's about what matters to me

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1. Describe your project through key words/key phrases that identify it.

Keywords and phrases that describe INSPIRE include:

- Full project title: "Integrated Short-Term Palliative Rehabilitation in Incurable Cancer"
- Rehabilitation in palliative care
- Quality of life
- Functional decline and cancer-related disability
- Independence, autonomy and dignity
- Allied healthcare professionals
- Person-centred, goal-focused care
- Equitable recruitment strategies

Our core aim is to investigate whether a short-term, tailored palliative rehabilitation programme for individuals with incurable cancer can support quality of life, participation in daily life, and the maintenance of function and independence.

2. In terms of impact, what will be the most tangible your project will achieve?

INSPIRE aims to generate robust evidence for a flexible, goal-based, short-term rehabilitation intervention for individuals with advanced cancer that would be widely applicable across European contexts. Results will be available soon. Tangible and exploitable outcomes include:

- Evidence for the clinical and cost-effectiveness of a short-term, flexible palliative rehabilitation intervention for individuals with advanced cancer
- An open-access e-learning programme introducing learners from different healthcare backgrounds to the basic principles of rehabilitation in palliative care (available from August 2026)

A clinical toolkit giving healthcare professionals practical guidance on applying rehabilitation principles in palliative care

- Practical recommendations to support the EU Mission on Cancer and the Quality of Life – Patient-Centred Care (QoL-PCC) Cluster initiatives
- Templates for designing equitable recruitment strategies, so that other clinical trials can adopt inclusive recruitment practices
- Reflections from representatives living with cancer on what our results really mean to them
- Capacity building within the project team, equipping researchers and clinicians with complementary skills to work as rehabilitation practitioners in the project

3. Please describe your project's overall impact, if applicable, at the European level.

Across Europe, many individuals face unmet needs in their cancer care, including reduced function, diminished independence and inconsistent availability of much-needed rehabilitation services. At the European level, INSPIRE has the potential to:

- Contribute to the growing evidence base for rehabilitation in palliative care as an essential component of cancer care
- Enhance the quality of life and experiences of individuals living with cancer by providing healthcare practitioners with a flexible care model for rehabilitation in palliative care
- Inform current European initiatives on cancer care and quality of life about the value of embedding rehabilitation
- Promote equitable trial recruitment practices

4. As an applicant, what advice would you have wanted in the Horizon project design process? What support did you receive from National Contact point (NCP) and your organisation, and what improvement of support would you benefit from?

In designing INSPIRE, we did not engage support from our National Contact Points.
Greater visibility of the support NCPs can provide would have been very beneficial at the application stage. NCPs may also have been a useful avenue for connecting with other projects earlier in the funding phase.

5. Please highlight aspects of your Horizon project's strengths that you consider important and that may constitute good practice for other applicants.

INSPIRE includes several attributes that have strengthened the project:
1. Engagement with European-level organisations representing people living with cancer and palliative care professionals
The engagement of key interest holders has been prioritised from the start of the project. Incorporating their perspectives ensures we can focus on meeting their information needs, centre their priorities and support meaningful collaboration.

2. A flexible rehabilitation model that addresses a major gap in current care
INSPIRE's intervention is flexible, tailored and goal-oriented: participants do not work towards a prescriptive target, but focus on their own wants and wishes with the rehabilitation practitioner. If it proves clinically and cost-effective, we believe a similar approach could be widely implemented across different European contexts.
3. Focus on equitable recruitment and access
To address persistent disparities in access to clinical trials and rehabilitation services, INSPIRE dedicated a work package to access and equity. Within it, sites were guided in devising equitable recruitment strategies to reach individuals who might otherwise be missed. This aligns with broader societal goals to ensure everyone has access to the right care at the right time.
4. Embedding implementation science
The INSPIRE intervention was delivered across 7 European countries, each with different interpretations of rehabilitation in palliative care. INSPIRE therefore considered implementation from the start, ensuring that we accounted for the real-world environments and contexts in which results might be put into action.

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