

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH SYSTEMS IN THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE USE OF EVIDENCE, INFORMATION AND RESEARCH FOR POLICY- MAKING IN UKRAINE



A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL MEETING ON RESEARCH FOR HEALTH
17–19 OCTOBER 2018, KIEV, UKRAINE



Background

Information, research and evidence are the foundations of, and indispensable instruments for ensuring, quality health policies. In 2016, the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region adopted the Regional Action plan to strengthen the use of evidence, information and research for policy-making (resolution EUR/RC66/R12), which affirms the commitment to "consolidate, strengthen and promote the generation and use of multidisciplinary and intersectoral sources of evidence for health policy-making with the health related United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Health 2020 policy framework".

In implementing this Action plan, the first multicountry meeting on research for health was held in 2017, bringing together Armenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan to explore country-driven approaches to align research agendas with public health priorities; facilitate multisectoral, interdisciplinary health research practice; and strengthen knowledge translation, which is the process of fostering the systematic and transparent use of research in policy-making. This meeting was as a milestone event at which participants adopted the Sofia Declaration, re-affirming Member States' commitment to the Action plan, and established the European Health Research Network (EHRN) under the auspice of the WHO European Health Information Initiative (EHII).

EHRN aims to provide strategic direction and leadership to its network members in national health research system (NHRS) strengthening by coordinating technical expertise, regional experiences and a platform for communication, exchange and advocacy.

Ukraine embarks on strengthening its NHRS for evidence-informed policy-making

The Ministry of Health of Ukraine is prioritizing implementation of the Action plan and requested the WHO Regional Office for Europe to organize the first national meeting on NHRS strengthening on 17–19 October 2018. This landmark occasion brought together, for the first time, national health research stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, the National Academy of Medical Science and the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The wide representation of national stakeholders in health research presented an opportunity for shared learning and exploration of new partnerships and collaborations with regards to management, resources and initiatives for health research.

Participants learned about and discussed:

- the Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe and its role in fostering Member States' capacity in systematically and transparently using research in health decision-making, including showcasing the successful knowledge translation work of Hungary, one of the network members;
- internal and external enablers and barriers in establishing and strengthening the NHRS in Ukraine based on rapid reviews;
- practical steps for conducting a comprehensive assessment of the NHRS using tools developed by the Council on Health Research and Development;

- ways in which Ukraine will benefit from and contribute to EHRN, complemented by testimonials from Georgia; and
- action plans outlining short- and long-term actions to advance health research and evidence-informed policy-making in Ukraine.

Discovery of Ukraine's enablers and barriers in establishing the NHRS

Participants conducted rapid reviews on national health research and presented the findings, based on which facilitating factors and challenges related to advancing each of the four functions of an NHRS (stewardship, financing, human and physical resources, and producing and using health research) were identified.

Key opportunities included (i) a recent reform process around research, including the establishment of a National Research Council and National Research Fund tasked to centrally oversee research in various sectors; (ii) the presence of established research institutions with qualified researchers, which can contribute to training a reliable health research workforce; and (iii) existing partnerships and ongoing projects with international organizations and donors. Challenges included (i) fragmentation and lack of national coordination in the management of health research; (ii) poor access to and quality of health information; (iii) absence of a national strategy for health research; and (iv) lack of processes and mechanisms ensuring the systematic and transparent use of evidence in policy and practice.

Critical outcomes: joining the EHRN as its sixth member country and action plans

Rapid review results and a subsequent SWOT (strength–weakness–opportunity–threat) analysis during the meeting produced a robust baseline for Ukraine to formulate concrete action plans to take steps towards establishing a coherent, coordinated and efficient system for health research. The meeting culminated with Ukraine officially launching its membership of the EHRN and the WHO EHII as the sixth member country to strengthen its NHRS in the WHO European Region.

Next steps in Ukraine

Participants expressed their commitment to spearhead national efforts in conducting an in-depth, comprehensive assessment of the NHRS and subsequently develop a national strategy for health research. In addition, Ukraine will strengthen its efforts in building national knowledge translation capacity through its active involvement in and contributions to EVIPNet Europe. Ukraine's political and technical commitment in taking a systems approach to health research as part of the EHRN was firmly cemented at this meeting, and this is expected to create a ripple effect within the country as well as the Region.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

Member States

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tajikistan
The former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Uzbekistan

World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

UN City, Marmorvej 51, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

Tel: +45 45 33 70 00 Fax: +45 45 33 70 01

Email: eurocontact@who.int

Website: www.euro.who.int