

Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe

Capacity-building workshop: preparing evidence briefs for policy with a focus on using systematic reviews, Chişinău, the Republic of Moldova, 10–13 March 2015



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Introduction

EVIPNet Europe is an initiative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe. It aims to increase country capacity in developing health policies informed by the best available research evidence – in line with and support of "Health 2020" (1). EVIPNet Europe institutionalizes knowledge translation (KT) – the process of fostering research use in policy-making – through the establishment of national country teams (so-called knowledge translation platforms). These groups plan and implement KT activities at country level. The following summarizes the EVIPNet Europe capacity-building workshop on preparing evidence brief for policy (EBP) with a focus on using systematic reviews in the Republic of Moldova.

EBPs

EVIPNet Europe was launched in 2012 and initiated a pilot phase in three countries (the Republic of Moldova, Slovenia and Tajikistan) to test the feasibility of the EVIPNet methodology. One of the key pilot activities was the development of EBPs, which synthesize the best available research evidence to answer a specific policy problem in a concise way, are written in non-expert language and are adapted to various stakeholders. EBPs are based on a systematic search and appraisal of the global, regional and local evidence to understand what is known about that policy issue and which policy options effectively address the issue. EBPs are the key inputs to a deliberative dialogue (policy dialogue) to effectively blend explicit (scientific) and tacit (experience-based) knowledge to guide policy development.

Capacity-building workshop on EBPs

Promoting an environment favourable to the systematic and transparent use of evidence in policy-making requires continuity and human resources in health able to find and use research evidence to inform work related to prioritizing problems, and for developing and implementing policies and programmes. As one step forward, EVIPNet Europe organized a skill-building workshop on the development of EBPs for two of its pilot countries, the Republic of Moldova and Slovenia. The meeting objectives were to:

- enhance participants' skills in acquiring, assessing, adapting and applying research evidence;

- allow participants to learn the fundamentals of how to prepare EBPs;
- raise participants' awareness about tools and resources available to EVIPNet teams for finding, assessing and applying the findings of systematic reviews about health systems; and
- improve participants' own skills in finding, assessing and applying the findings of systematic reviews about health systems.

Outputs of the workshop on EBPs

There were 18 participants from the Republic of Moldova and 7 from Slovenia, made up of national policy-makers, researchers and representatives from civil societies. Each country team identified a priority policy issue for development of their EBP: the Slovenian team focused on the payment models for primary health care services and the Moldovan team focused on the reduction of alcohol consumption.

The workshop objectives were fully achieved and resulted in the identification of preliminary EBP working team members, workplans and timelines for the development and finalization of EBPs. The participants also brainstormed EBP dissemination and stakeholder engagement strategies that could be employed to promote and optimize the uptake of the EBPs in Slovenia and the Republic of Moldova.

In addition, this workshop served as the first hands-on opportunity to apply the expertise on evidence-informed policy-making and facilitation skills acquired during the EVIPNet Europe's Train-the-Trainer workshop in Bled. Three of the EVIPNet Europe national champions from the Republic of Moldova and Slovenia had the opportunity to facilitate selected workshop sessions.

Reflections from the participants

- *"We previously only used statistical data but now the horizon is widened and we will use more data."*
- *"We thought we already knew how to develop policy briefs but this workshop convinced me and my colleagues that the EBP methodology proposed by EVIPNet Europe is systematic and increases the chances for the policies to be developed and adopted."*

Lessons learnt

- Inviting two country teams to the same workshop was found to be valuable as they became each other's sounding board to reflect and brainstorm through challenging situations, inspired one another and introduced a healthy competition between the countries.
- For the Slovenian team, being away from daily duties back home enabled uninterrupted working hours to dedicate to the EBP development. *"What we accomplished in these three days would have taken a whole month back home."*

Reference

1. WHO Regional Office for Europe. Health 2020: a European policy framework and strategy for the 21st century. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2013 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-2020-a-european-policy-framework-and-strategy-for-the-21st-century>, accessed 6 May 2015).