

Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe Country launch in Warsaw, Poland, 19–20 March 2015

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 country in Poland.

The country launch of EVIPNet Europe in Poland

The main aim of the country launch was to raise participants' awareness of the tools and resources available to support health policy-makers and stakeholders in the use of research evidence. The country launch consisted of two events.

On 19 March 2015, policy-makers from the Ministry of Health, mainly directors of departments involved in formulating health policies, were familiarized with the concept of EVIPNet Europe, its mission, tools and methods. Commitment and support for this initiative was expressed by the Deputy Minister of Health, who emphasized that "subjective decisions need to be based on objective evidence".

The workshop on 20 March 2015, organized by WHO (regional and country representatives), was attended by participants from major academic institutions in Poland, national public health agencies and the Ministry of Health. The workshop was dedicated to:

- informing key stakeholders about EVIPNet Europe and its activities in Poland;
- performing a quick force-field analysis and institutional scan of the evidence-informed policy-making (EIP) landscape in Poland; and
- presenting the key health policy problem that the EVIPNet action cycle (2) will address.

Outputs of the EVIPNet Europe country launch

The launch of the EVIPNet Europe pilot phase resulted in an initial assessment of the EIP context in Poland, including (i) a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis detailing core EIP driving forces and barriers and (ii) a mapping of health system institutions and their importance for EVIPNet Europe.

The SWOT analysis indicated that one of the most important features of the Polish health care system, in the context of EIP, is a wide base of highly qualified health scientists interested in strengthening EIP and willing to cooperate (proved by the presence of representatives of academic institutions from all over Poland at the workshop); in addition, there is an institutional infrastructure providing health information for policy-makers to support sound decision-making (e.g. Centre for Healthcare Information Systems, Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Tariff System). However, one of the main identified challenges is that policy-makers demonstrate low commitment and trust in the opinion of experts and rarely make use of the institutions providing health information in a policy-making process. During the workshop, a list was compiled of institutions that the future

country team could be directly or indirectly engaged and collaborating with. The vast majority of the institutions listed were present at the EVIPNet Europe country launch meeting.

The Ministry of Health as a host for Poland's country team

EVIPNet Europe and the national country team are regarded as an essential foundation for building a sustainable national KT infrastructure and capacity for the systematic and transparent use of evidence. Country teams are the fundamental unit of EVIPNet, driving national agendas for fostering EIP. At the regional level, EVIPNet brings members of these platforms together to share common problems and exchange experiences and lessons learnt.

Based on an internal assessment, it was decided by the Ministry of Health that the country team would best be located within its own institution for two reasons: (i) because such a location would guarantee sustainable development of the country team (its services would be demanded and used; priority health policy problems would be addressed), and (ii) because this would comply with data protection laws (health care data in Poland are owned by the Ministry of Health).

Steps towards implementing the EVIPNet Europe pilot phase in Poland

- Poland will take measures to institutionalize the country team (the so-called KT platform) within the Ministry of Health, implement and test the feasibility of the action cycle of EVIPNet in Poland and perform other actions to improve the use of research evidence in policy-making.
- The Ministry of Health will develop operational and legal documents related to the establishment and operationalization of the country team.
- The workshop participants will facilitate the appointment of EVIPNet Europe focal points at their home institutions, who will closely engage and collaborate with the future country team.
- The EVIPNet action cycle will be implemented to address the problem of primary health care quality – a key issue to be addressed in the current health sector reform processes for which policy-makers have requested reliable evidence.



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References

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).
2. WHO Regional Office for Europe. Evidence-Informed Policy Network: EVIPNet Europe – for better decision making in health Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2014 (http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/258554/EVIPNet-brochure-For-better-decision-making-in-health-Eng.pdf, accessed 9 May 2015).