

Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe
Country launch in Chisinau, the Republic of Moldova, 25–27 March 2014

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 country launch of EVIPNet Europe in Chisinau, the Republic of Moldova (MDA).

The country launch of EVIPNet Europe in MDA

EVIPNet Europe is supporting MDA in translating research evidence into policies. The network was launched in the country through individual visits to eight national public health-related key institutions¹ as well as with a half-day workshop in March 2014 with participants from the Ministry of Health, WHO (regional and country office representatives) and representatives from the key institutions mentioned. The event was crucial to:

- raising awareness and obtaining support of national decision-makers and stakeholders for EVIPNet Europe and its future activities in MDA;
- familiarizing local consultants and representatives from the Ministry of Health with the Situation Analysis (SA) Manual, EVIPNet methodologies and developing the country's workplan; and
- assessing national needs for evidence-informed policy-making (EIP) and current capacities.

Outputs of the EVIPNet Europe pilot phase

The launch of the EVIPNet Europe pilot phase resulted in an initial assessment of the EIP context in MDA, including (i) a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis detailing core EIP driving forces and barriers, and (ii) a mapping of relevant institutions involved in health policy-making.

Stakeholders' responses

Stakeholders stressed the need to improve the systematic and transparent use of evidence in the policy-making process. Investing in a sustainable national KT infrastructure and capacities for EIP and as eliminating communication barriers between national stakeholders were regarded as crucial requirements for success for institutionalizing EIP activities. Country teams are the fundamental unit of EVIPNet, with the potential to impact national agendas for fostering EIP. At the regional level, EVIPNet brings members of these platforms together to share common problems and exchange experiences as well as lessons learnt. In MDA, stakeholders identified the following requirements to build a country team:

- strong communication and effective collaboration between national stakeholders (i.e. Ministry of Health, National Centre of Health Management);
- systematizing KT as well as stakeholder contributions (how and at what point?) within the policy-making process;

¹ Ministry of Health, National Centre of Public Health, National Centre of Health Management, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy, National School of Public Health Management, National Health Insurance Company, Academy of Science and the nongovernmental organization "PAS" Centre for Health Policies and Studies.

- linking the production of data and evidence by researchers more effectively to the evidence needs of policy-makers;
- systematizing the allocation mechanisms of public research funds by the Ministry of Health to support demand-oriented research; and
- strengthening and building upon present EIP efforts to increase national EIP capacities.

The Ministry of Health's **Department of Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies** emerged as a key stakeholder for EVIPNet Europe because of its key role in national public health policy-making. The department is in charge of (i) coordinating, monitoring and evaluating public policy documents in the health sector; (ii) coordinating health system performance assessments; (iii) offering support to other departments in ex-ante policy evaluation; and (iv) ensuring the integration of public policies within the budgetary process.

Existing research and policy-making interfaces in MDA

- The Ministry of Health promotes KT initiatives in policy-making through policy dialogues, steering committees, working groups and other open policy discussions with involvement of the research community, civil society and other stakeholders.
- The National Centre for Health Management is a public institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and is a key stakeholder for providing health data for policy-making and implementing national policies regarding health services. It is responsible for collecting and analysing national public health and medical statistics, and for contributing to the development of health service providers, including their role, objectives and procedures.
- National libraries take on a crucial role in unifying national health databases and making health system data widely accessible for researchers and policy-makers. However, because of a lack of resources and a lack of coordination, past efforts have not succeeded in implementing a unified national health database.
- Conduction of research for policy-making: at the School of Public Health Management, projects for master theses strive to address the latest health topics to help to tackle policy-makers' needs for evidence.

The way forward for KT for better health in MDA

- MDA will invest in EVIPNet Europe as a sustainable, long-term national change process, starting with an initial assessment of the Moldovan EIP context, the actors and interfaces (SA) guided by the WHO Secretariat.
- Experts and stakeholders will lead the delivery of technical and administrative inputs and resources for the national country team, while being able to consult the WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe and international EIP experts.
- Promotion of effective communication and the establishment of systematic mechanisms for interaction between researchers and policy-makers were identified as essential facilitators of success for institutionalizing EIP in MDA by the participants of the EVIPNet pilot phase launch
- MDA's efforts for national EIP capacity building and the implementation of the pilot phase should complement the actions undertaken in the context of the WHO Regional Office for Europe strategic policy framework "Health 2020".

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)