

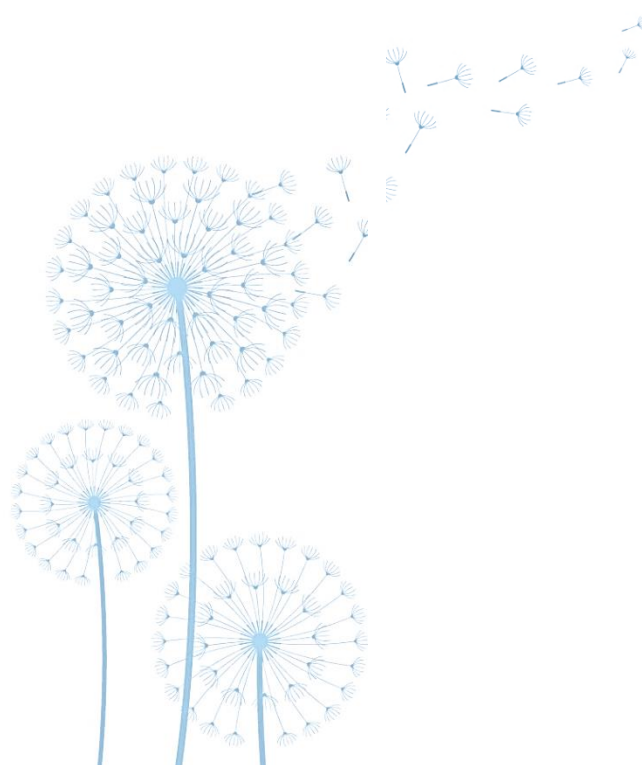


# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

## EVIPNet Europe

Towards a world in which the best  
available research evidence informs  
policy-making

Evidence-informed  
Policy Network  
(EVIPNet) Europe



# Abstract

This report summarizes the accomplishments of the Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe in 2019. During the year, several evidence briefs for policy, situation analyses and other reports were finalized and published, as well as multiple stakeholder meetings held. An addition, EVIPNet made available a customized online training to network members, which was complemented by a series of webinars facilitated by McMaster Health Forum. The sixth EVIPNet Europe multicountry meeting occurred in 2019, where member countries came together in Istanbul to highlight achievements across the network and learn from each other. EVIPNet Europe representatives participated and presented at different international conferences, further highlighting the importance of knowledge translation and closing the research-policy gap. The successful collaborations with McMaster Health Forum, Cochrane and Wellcome Trust continued to support the work of the WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe.

## Keywords

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE  
HEALTH POLICY  
HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH  
POLICY MAKING  
EUROPE

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## Abbreviations

|                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>AMR</b>     | antimicrobial resistance         |
| <b>EBP</b>     | evidence brief for policy        |
| <b>EHRN</b>    | European Health Research Network |
| <b>EIP</b>     | evidence-informed policy-making  |
| <b>EVIPNet</b> | Evidence-informed Policy Network |
| <b>KT</b>      | knowledge translation            |
| <b>KTP</b>     | knowledge translation platform   |
| <b>SA</b>      | situation analysis               |

## Foreword

Last year, 2019, marked another eventful year for the Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe. The Network's mission is to increase the evidence uptake in policy-making to improve public health, strengthen health systems and reduce inequalities. Consequently, network member countries have continued to remain active in building capacity, engaging with stakeholders and formulating and publishing evidence briefs for policy (EBP), situation analyses and other publications.

EVIPNet Europe's EBPs from 2018 have been brought to a greater audience in 2019 through conference presentations, citations and undergraduate teaching. In addition, EVIPNet Europe is particularly excited about the policy impact their work has had. For instance, following the dissemination of the EBP in the Republic Moldova, changes to the country's alcohol policies, including on taxation, have been implemented. This is highly encouraging to the ongoing work of EVIPNet Europe and helps to maintain momentum for the years to come.

The sixth multicountry meeting was another highlight of the year. Representatives of 12 member countries came together in Istanbul in September 2019 not only to learn about, and from, each other's achievements but also to further strengthen their capacity in evidence-informed policy-making. This meeting had a specific focus on rapid synthesis and the interface between cultural contexts of health and knowledge translation.

EVIPNet Europe has also continued to build relationships with other regional EVIPNet networks for an improved knowledge and capacity exchange, as well as for greater support and collaboration beyond EVIPNet Europe's borders. Efforts will be made to uphold, intensify and expand these newly established partnerships.

The achievements of EVIPNet Europe have only been possible through the close collaboration and commitment of various actors. The WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe would like to thank all member countries for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. Further appreciation and thanks are also due to the members of the EVIPNet Global Steering Group for their dedicated support in achieving EVIPNet's mission; the external partners who have contributed to EVIPNet Europe's growth by sharing their invaluable expertise and funding resources; and our WHO colleagues across the world for their continued support.

The WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe also wants to express their thanks and appreciation to the Wellcome Trust for their Secondment Fellowship programme, through which the Secretariat has continued to receive great support throughout the year. We would also like to thank our partners at the McMaster Health Forum and Cochrane for their continued collaboration in building capacity for evidence-informed policy-making.

WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe

## Objective

The objective of this report is to provide an overview of the Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe's activities during 2019 and to demonstrate its progress and achievements during that period.

## Background

EVIPNet is a WHO initiative promoting the systematic use of health-research evidence in policy-making. EVIPNet was established on a global level in 2005 in response to the World Health Assembly resolution 58.34 on health research, which urged Member States to improve the knowledge base for decision-making (1). In Europe, EVIPNet was launched by the WHO European Region under the umbrella of the WHO European Health Information Initiative in October 2012. It brings together stakeholders from different sectors to define policy questions, develop evidence briefs for policy (EBPs) and explore, create and strengthen ways to translate evidence into policy.

The Network establishes links between researchers, policy-makers and other stakeholders, including civil society actors, through knowledge translation platforms (KTPs). In order for each country to develop its own capacity in evidence-informed policy-making (EIP), EVIPNet Europe supports national stakeholders in gaining knowledge, skills and experience. A leader in EIP in each country is identified to serve as national champion, who is supported by country teams in developing EBPs, convene policy dialogues and engage in regional EVIPNet Europe capacity-building activities. Throughout these activities, member countries benefit from cross-network exchange of experience, guidance from international experts in the field of knowledge translation (KT) and EIP, and the support of the WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe based at the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen.

In working towards its goal, EVIPNet Europe contributes to the aim of the WHO European Health Information Initiative, namely "improving people's health by enhancing the information that underpins policy". It further supports governments to implement the European policy framework Health 2020 (2) and advances the implementation of the *Action plan to strengthen the use of evidence, information and research for policy-making in the WHO European Region* (3). In 2019 EVIPNet Europe comprised 21 member countries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

## EVIPNet Europe's activities in 2019

EVIPNet Europe has continued to make good progress in 2019, as its member countries remain highly engaged in their mission to support the translation of research evidence into policy. This report summarizes EVIPNet Europe's achievements and illustrates the diverse contributions that have been made throughout the year.

### Evidence briefs for policy

A key tool of EVIPNet Europe is the EBP, which synthesizes research evidence in a user-friendly and concise format to address a specific priority policy issue by offering evidence-informed policy options to policy-makers. As a result, EBPs have the potential to improve the likelihood of policy-makers reading, considering and applying its content in the policy-making process (4,5).

The Republic of Moldova has one of the highest alcohol consumption levels and related mortality rates in the world. In response, the country team developed an EBP entitled *Informing amendments to the alcohol control legislation directed at reducing harmful use of alcohol*, which was published in 2019 (6). This EBP calls attention to the high consumption of alcohol in the country and proposes different options to introduce stricter regulations on alcohol advertising, pricing or access. EVIPNet Europe is particularly excited about the policy impact this EBP has had during the past year, such as increased taxation on alcoholic beverages, including beer.

In addition to the finalization of this EBP, the country team in the Republic Moldova started work in 2019 on an EBP on combating antimicrobial resistance (AMR). On 27 December 2019, the Moldovan Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection organized a workshop on developing the EBP on AMR, focusing on defining and reframing the problem of overconsumption of antibiotics. The issue was discussed by about 30 participants from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection; medical institutions/hospitals; the National Agency for Public Health; the State Medical and Pharmacy University; and the Medicines and Medical Devices Agency. It was emphasized that all stakeholders need to work together to effectively address the issue. It is expected that, following this workshop, the EBP development process will continue.

AMR is a global priority issue threatening the effectiveness of medicines in combating diseases and infections and leading to the emergence of so-called super-bugs. For this reason, combating AMR was identified as a priority for a number of countries and, with support from the European Commission, has led to the formation of two EVIPNet Europe cohorts<sup>2</sup> aiming to inform policy-makers on AMR and the potential ways to tackle it. These

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<sup>2</sup> The first cohort (launched 2017) encompasses six countries (Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Slovenia), while the second cohort (launched 2018) contains a further four countries (Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Serbia).

cohorts have provided a supportive network for country teams to develop what has in some cases been their first EBP. Various EBPs on AMR are currently in progress, with some due for publication in 2020.

Following the finalization and publishing of the EBP on *Promoting the appropriate use of antibiotics to contain antibiotic resistance in human medicine in Hungary* in 2018 (7), this EBP was brought to a larger audience in 2019. During the World Antibiotic Awareness Week (18–24 November 2019), the EBP was referred to during several presentations in the country, and was cited in the European Commission report *State of health in the EU: Hungary* (8). Hungary has written and published the lessons they learned during this work to support other countries in similar activities (9). The report provides an overview of the steps involved in creating an EBP as well as their experience when undertaking it.

Slovenia has reported the successful distribution of their EBP on antibiotic prescribing in long-term care facilities for the elderly, published in 2018 (10). The EBP was presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Union–Joint Action on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-associated Infections in September 2019, when the National Champion of EVIPNet Slovenia was invited to share their experience for peer-learning on EIP. In addition, the EBP has been used in a training and teaching session at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ljubljana.



AMR training and teaching session at University of Ljubljana © WHO/Maja Šubelj

Romania and North Macedonia have also published EBPs on AMR.<sup>3</sup> Romania identified three policy options to combat AMR, focusing on legal and financial measures, as well as a campaign of public education. North Macedonia also identified three potential avenues, though differing markedly in their focus, with two aimed at strengthening clinical guidelines around the use of antibiotics and one targeted at teaching these guidelines within educational settings.

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