INFACT
Joint Action on Health Information

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FACT SHEET GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH REPORTS

InfAct WP8: "Tools and methods for health information support"

Key outputs

1. Health reporting should provide up-to-date health-related data and information to inform policy-makers, researchers and the public. To this end, health reporting formats should be tailored to the needs and competencies of the target groups and provide comparable information of high quality.

2. The overall objective of Task 8.3 is to develop guidance for accessibility, availability and reporting of health information, including information on availability and quality of data/ indicators and the quality of reporting. Task 8.3.2 has conducted a web-based desk research to get an overview of the different formats of national health reporting and their target groups.

3. The desk research showed that health reporting practices and quality in EU Member States (MS) are heterogeneous. Currently, quality criteria and good practice examples are derived from the results of the research and translated into a guidance document on good practice for health reporting.

4. The guidance is expected to be an innovative tool for providing high-quality EU-comparable health information adequately to the targeted groups while at the same time reducing inequalities in health reporting across EU MS. The guidance will be made available to stakeholders involved in the development of national health information systems (HIS), and could be integrated into an EU HIS to enhance sustainability.

Background and Rationale

Health reporting should provide up-to-date data and information on the population's health status and its determinants, as well as on healthcare services in the countries (or regions). Establishing an information or discussion base for health policy is a key objective of health reporting ('data for action'). Policy-makers are therefore an important target group, but not the only one. Scientists and researchers, health care providers, the media and the general public are among the other addressees of health reporting.
National health reporting faces a number of important requirements. Health information should be shared in a timely manner and comparable between countries (or regions). The format and communication channel for the dissemination of health information should be tailored to the needs and competencies of the respective target groups [1].

To tackle inequalities in health reporting across EU MS and to make health information adequately accessible and available, Task 8.3.2 aims:

[1] Wilson PM, Petticrew M, Calnan MW et al. (2010) Disseminating research findings: what should researchers do? A systematic scoping review of conceptual frameworks. Implement Sci 5:91

(1) to prepare a comprehensive overview of the different formats of national health reporting for the dissemination of health information and their target groups.
(2) to develop a guidance document on general recommendations for good practice for health reporting in EU MS, including potential formats and target groups.
(3) to facilitate desirable and feasible criteria for creating high-quality EU-comparable public health reports.

Proposal

A web-based desk research was conducted among InfAct countries, generating a comprehensive overview of different national health reporting formats and their respective target groups. For this purpose an explorative search strategy on the status of health reporting in the EU MS has been drafted and circulated among task partners for comments, review and approval. A pre-test of the search strategy was conducted in the federal states in Germany and in partner countries and an analysis plan has been implemented for the outcome of the web-based research.
According to the findings public health reports are the most frequently used health reporting format at national level, followed by social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) and statistical online-databases. The general public and scientists or researchers are the most frequently stated target groups of health reporting formats. The analysis also showed that health reporting practices and quality in EU MS are heterogeneous.
The results of the web-based desk research will be used to identify good practice examples of national health reporting in different formats, based on quality criteria. Building on the results, a guidance document with recommendations for health reporting will be developed. While the focus will be on reporting standards for public health reports, other potential formats and respective target groups will also be addressed.
The guidance document will define desirable and feasible standards for good practice while accommodating the heterogeneity of health reporting practices in the EU.

Recommendations for sustainability

There is often a gap in public health science between gaining new knowledge and its translation into practice and policy[2]. The guidance on good practice for health reporting is expected to be a sustainable tool to facilitate the generation and dissemination of health information to the targeted groups and promote access to high-quality EU-comparable information. Integrating the guidance document into health reporting training programmes could provide practical training in applying the recommendations and increase the reach. The guidance will be applicable at national as well as international level and could be integrated into an EU HIS to enhance sustainability.

[2] Green LW, Ottoson JM, Garcia C et al. (2009) Diffusion theory and knowledge dissemination, utilization, and integration in public health. Annu Rev Public Health 30:151-174