



The demand for useful evidence for health policy making: a response from WHO Regional Office for Europe

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Overview

- **Why WHO Regional Office for Europe?**
- **Health Evidence Network**

Challenge: evidence for policy making processes

- **WHO/Europe works directly with policy makers in 52 Member States**
- **Increased interest in “evidence-based policy making”**
- **Information overload, for virtually any decision**

WHO/Europe's aim

To support health decision-making in countries by providing information, knowledge and policy options based on the best available evidence

Definition of evidence

- ✓ findings from research whenever possible
- ✓ also other knowledge that may serve as a useful basis for decision making in public health and health care

Different views of what constitutes evidence

- **Producers' criteria : evidence that is rigorous, comprehensive and can be generalized**
- **Users' criteria: information that is relevant, specific, concise and easy to understand**

Health Evidence Network

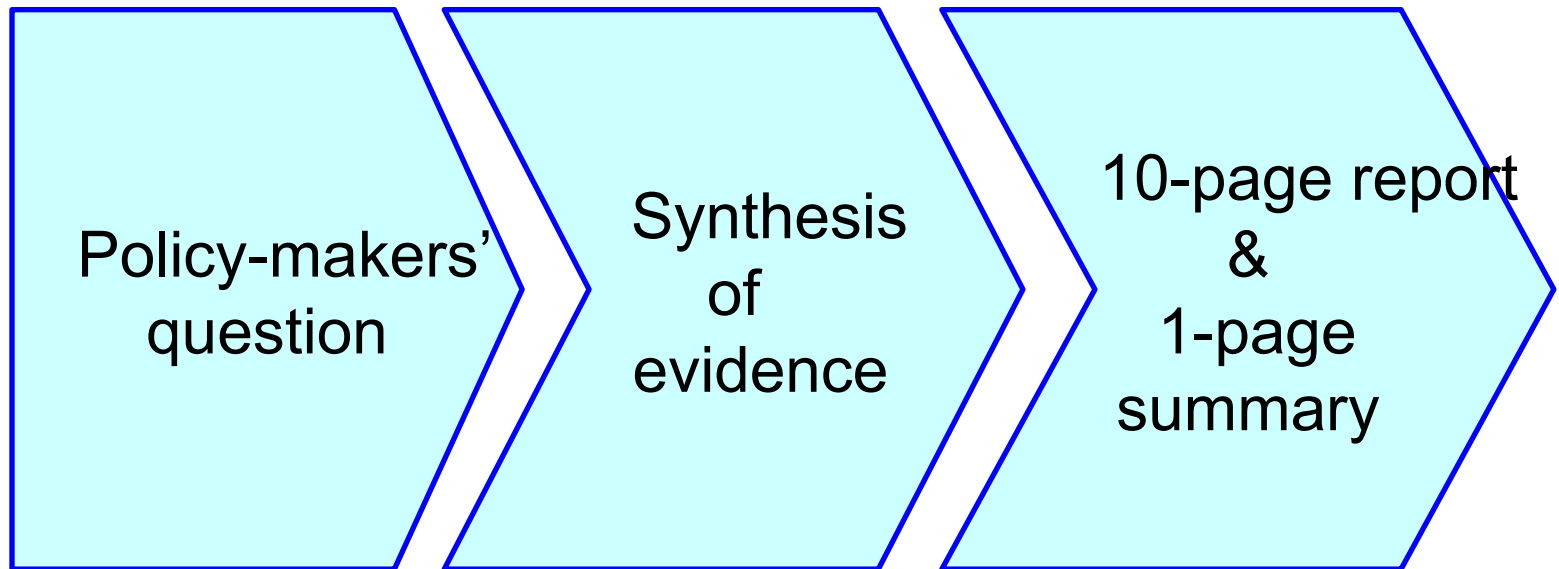
HEN bridges the gap between producers and users of evidence

- **answers questions from policy-makers**
- **provides easy access to a range of information and evidence**

HEN has four means to achieve its aims

- HEN reports synthesising the best available evidence
- Summaries of existing reports
- Brief responses to questions coming from the HEN email box
- Easy access to selected policy-relevant documents and databases on the web

Policy-makers' questions are HEN's starting point



Grading of evidence and strength of policy options

- **Strong evidence – consistent findings in two or several scientific studies of high quality**
- **Moderate evidence – consistent findings in two or several scientific studies of acceptable quality**
- **Limited evidence – only one study available or inconsistent findings in several studies**
- **No evidence – no study of acceptable scientific quality available**

Standard structure for reports

The report

Introduction

Findings from research

Other knowledge

Current debate

Discussion

Conclusions

The summary

Issue

Findings

Policy considerations

Examples of questions

- What is the efficacy/effectiveness of antenatal care?
- What are the main risk factors for disability in old age and how can disability be prevented?
- Which are the most effective and cost-effective interventions for tobacco control?
- Should mass screening for prostate cancer be introduced at the national level?

HEN leverages the knowledge of organizations in the Region

Members of the HEN network include:

- 35 governmental agencies and other public institutions in the field of public health and health care
- The European Commission
- All UN agencies with a mandate in health

Feedback from users

- 40 responses published, 50 in the pipeline, 120 questions received
- A ten-fold increase in the number of visits to the HEN web site in the last year
- Increasing demand from Member States: questions, translation rights
- Interest from other parts of the world (the Americas, and the South-east Asia regions)

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