

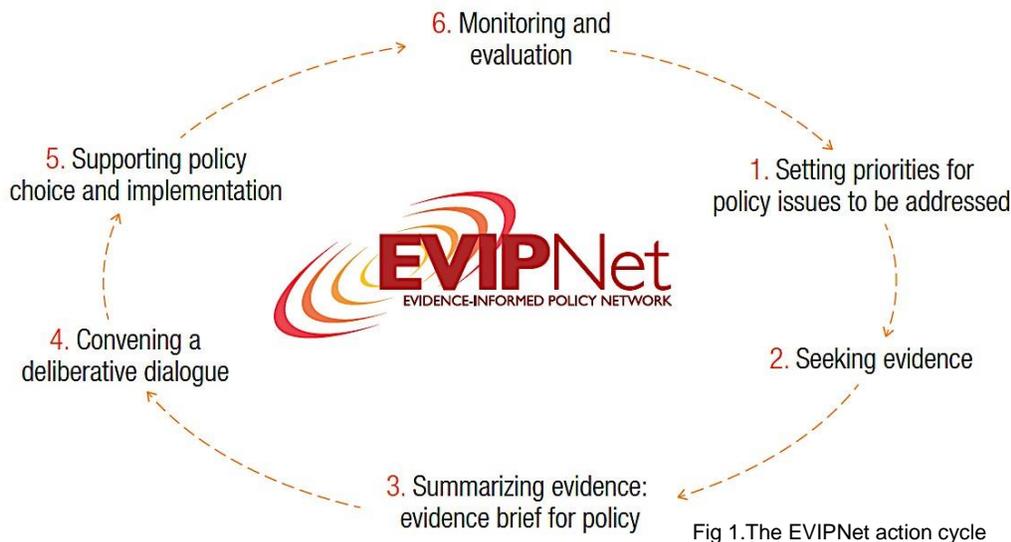
## EVIPNet success story: reducing alcohol intake in the Republic of Moldova

Marcela Țârdea, Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe national champion and Head of the Division of Policies Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Health in the Republic of Moldova, describes her initial experience with the network and its country capacity-building activities.

In our country, alcohol consumption is increasing and the burden of disease caused by alcohol is high. In November 2014, the two Deputy Ministers, the Head of the Public Health Department, the WHO Country Office and I had several consultations where we identified alcohol consumption as a priority health issue on the basis of international and national statistics and data from surveys. To ensure sound decision-making, it was decided to apply an evidence-informed systematic approach: to develop an evidence brief for policy (EBP) followed by a policy dialogue engaging key stakeholders to inform future policy and practice in the Republic of Moldova.

### ***Our current position in the EVIPNet action cycle***

Our team is currently seeking evidence to identify options of how to reduce alcohol consumption. These options will be presented in an EBP, a user-friendly instrument facilitating research uptake by policy-makers (Fig. 1: stages 2 and 3). Through the organization of training workshops and distant support, the Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe at the WHO Regional Office for Europe strengthened the evidence-informed policy-making skills of our team and other stakeholders required to develop an EBP.



The capacity-building events organized in our country were attended by policy-makers; researchers from the Academy of Sciences, the State University of Medicine and Pharmacy and the School of Public Health Management; and civil society representatives.

What is in it for the Republic of Moldova?

*“Being a member of EVIPNet Europe is a great benefit. EVIPNet Europe’s capacity-building workshops have changed my understanding of how to address and solve health problems.”*

Marcela Țârdea  
EVIPNet Europe national champion

After the workshop on preparing EBPs, a working group was created within the Ministry of Health that includes policy-makers (Ministry of Health), researchers (School of Public Health Management), services providers and a civil society representative to develop the EBP on reducing alcohol consumption.

### ***Communication as a key***

The development of an EBP is an activity that requires the coordinated involvement of stakeholders from different sectors. Communication between them is crucial for work on the EBP. Regular communication as frequently as required (can be daily) is key for success.

### ***Challenges that we face and how we overcome them***

As a new step in the Moldovan policy-making process, retrieving, analysing and contextualizing primarily international evidence has required new knowledge and skills from the EBP writing team. The great interest of national stakeholders in the capacity-building activities supported by EVIPNet Europe contributed to overcoming these challenges.

### ***How being part of EVIPNet Europe contributed to our achievements***

Being a member of EVIPNet Europe is a great benefit. EVIPNet Europe's capacity-building workshops and its structured, analytical approaches have changed my understanding of how to systematically address and solve health problems. For example, the EBP structure for addressing and solving a health issue has helped us to target all aspects of the alcohol consumption problem and to identify cost-effective and feasible solutions supported by sound research evidence. In the past, often only one aspect of the problem was tackled, for example, the lack of public awareness about the harm of alcohol, or the access to treatment services for alcohol-dependent people. A systemic approach of providing three options and looking at potential local implementation challenges has never been used. Using EVIPNet Europe's methodologies and tools allows me to identify gaps in the governance of the Republic of Moldova's health system, financing mechanisms and service delivery.

### ***Our greatest lesson learnt***

Once the problem is identified, it is necessary to seek local and international evidence – instead of using personal opinion to define the problem and its solutions.

### ***Our next steps***

The Ministry of Health plans to finalize the EBP on “Reducing alcohol consumption in the Republic of Moldova” in autumn 2015 prior to the policy dialogue in October 2015. Decisions made by the leadership of the Ministry of Health based on the EBP and the policy dialogue discussions will be used to promote amendments to the laws that regulate the production, sale and consumption of alcohol in the Republic of Moldova.

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Marcela Țirdea facilitating © WHO

## What is EVIPNet?

EVIPNet is a global WHO initiative that promotes the systematic use of health research evidence in policy-making.