

5.L. Round table: Empowering All For Health. Engaging citizens in Health Policy Development: Experience From the Field

Organised by: EUPHA Section on Public health practice and policy;
WHO Regions for Health Network
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Chairperson(s): Piroška Ostlin - WHO Europe, Kai Michelsen - The Netherlands

Rationale

Participatory approaches applied to health policy development helps reach sustainable societal health goals. But what does participation mean and why should it be applied to health policy making? Participation means involvement of the people concerned in analysis, decision-making, planning, and programme implementation. Such processes are key for achieving the Whole-of-government (WoG) and Whole-of-society (WoS) approaches promoted by Health 2020 and shed reality to the often cloudy process of policymaking by involving civil society and empowering them to take part in decisions affecting their own health. Participation calls for dialogue and an understanding of what each parties' needs and concerns are. These dialogues provide opportunities for finding innovative solutions to today's public health problems. It also brings sustainability to policymaking; when citizen's voices are heard and their input integrated into health policies, political changes have less impact on what has been agreed through the participatory process.

Objectives

This workshop contributes to the EUPHA Practice Pillar on increasing the dissemination of best practice examples in and between different countries and translation of relevant research outcomes into practice. It will share evidence of good practice and increase networking amongst local and regional public health practitioners. Participants will get in-depth technical knowledge on what participation for health means, entails and its application.

Added value

The round-table offers a forum to discuss how theory can be moved to practice with sharing of lessons learned, challenges and discussion on transferability to other contexts.

Coherence between presentations:

The presentations are complementary. Presentation 1 offers a theoretical framework on participatory approaches, application to health research, lessons learnt, facilitating factors and challenges. Presentation 2 will share how participatory processes were applied in a region. The panel discussion will gather experts from regions using participatory approaches.

Layout of the roundtable workshop:

1. Introduction by the chairs
2. Presentations 1 and 2
3. Panel interventions
4. Discussion

5. Workshop key messages

6. Conclusions

Panelists:

- Solvejg Wallyn, Flemish Agency Care and Health, Flanders, Belgium
- Thomas Claßen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Centre for Health, Bielefeld, Germany
- Gabriele Gruber, Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, Wien, Austria
- Marina Kuzman, Department of Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Disease Detection, Zagreb, Croatia
- Alberto Fernandez Ajuria, Andalusian School of Public Health, Spain
- Beate Wimmer-Puchinger, Klinische und Gesundheitspsychologie, Wien, Austria

Key messages:

- Participatory approaches empower people to impact their health. Healthy choices are natural when citizens are engaged in health policy design and can access knowledge for informed decision-making
- Involving citizens in health policy design contributes to increasing community resilience. Resilient communities respond proactively to health challenges, economic, social and environmental change

Application of a participatory approach to health policy development: What it means and the how to do it

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This presentation provides an overview of what participatory approaches are and how they can be applied to health policy development. It builds upon the discussion on how citizens and regions can join forces for better health that took place at the 2015 EUPHA conference in Milan, Italy. A special focus on why and how participatory processes bring out an understanding of the social determinants of health and how the concept of “sense of coherence” can foster ownership, well-being and its application will also be discussed.

A theoretical framework for a participatory approach highlighting key characteristics and their application in the field is presented. Information on motivations for adopting participatory approaches and applications to public health are provided as well as advantages and challenges.

The examples of Region Skåne (Sweden), the Trentino Province (Italy) and Wales (UK) are shared to illustrate different ways of applying participatory approaches. The open Skåne 2030 is the regional development strategy created by

Region Skåne. The strategy is the result of an extensive participatory process with citizens, civil society, business and the public sector that now work together to achieve an open Skåne by 2030 that welcomes pluralism, more people and new ideas. The strategy also promotes high tolerance and wide participation in common social issues; encompasses an open landscape, as well as urbanization; while offering everyone the opportunity for a good life. The Trentino Province in Italy and Wales examples are also highlighted as using participation to improve health and well-being and shape health policymaking. The presentation will highlight the internal and external processes followed, implementation, evaluation, strengths, weaknesses, lessons learnt and generalisability to other contexts.

Shifting focus from health services to health promotion and from a expert-driven a more participatory approach

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For a number of years the need for a shift from the concept of health as curative to a broader concept of health and well-being has been acknowledged. Health today faces a ‘triple burden of disease’ marked by communicable diseases, newly emerging and re-emerging diseases as well as the unprecedented rise of noncommunicable chronic diseases. Health is also influenced by factors outside the domain of the health sector alone such as social, economic and political forces which shape circumstances in which people grow, live, work and age. To trigger a change and attain optimum health, a comprehensive, holistic approach going beyond the traditional curative care and involving communities, health providers and other stakeholders is warranted. Such an approach results in empowerment of individuals and communities to take actions for their own health, fosters leadership for public health, promotes intersectoral action to build healthy public policies and creates sustainable health systems in the society. The Trentino Province (Italy) adopted a broader approach to health for their 10 year regional health plan by applying a participatory approach. The participatory approach provided all stakeholders, including civil society, an opportunity to make constructive and creative contributions to the health plan. Two consultation phases over a 5 month period (2014 to 2015) received approximately 1200 comments, opinions and proposals. The participatory approach also featured a web platform, “I Participate”, face to face meetings, assemblies, a “World Cafe” to encourage participation of foreign born residents using cultural mediators and open space technology. This was the first time such an approach had been applied to health. Both plan itself and process enabled a shift to be made from health service provision alone to a broader concept of health.