

Factsheet

Evidence-based Policy and Practice (EVPOP)

M-POHL
September 2023

Why, after measuring national population health literacy, do we need to focus on evidence-based policy and practice?

Results from the most recently conducted European Health Literacy Population Survey 2019–2021 (HLS₁₉) demonstrate the relevance of general health literacy (HL) and of specific HLs for considerable proportions of adult residents: Low HLs are widespread, HLs are associated with a social gradient, and there are significant potential effects of HLs on health-relevant indicators. Based on the HLS₁₉ results, first recommendations to improve HL were developed (see <https://m-pohl.net/Results>).

But, while the data from the HLS₁₉ provided evidence for areas where interventions are needed, further research is required to analyse or assess the feasibility, effectiveness, efficiency, or cost-effectiveness of potential existing interventions to improve HL and, where effective interventions cannot be identified, to highlight the necessity to develop them. This type of work is beyond the scope of a HL survey and requires a project of its own.

In 2023 a first project on evidence-based policies and practices was initiated by M-POHL and financially supported by the Swiss Ministry of Health. In this project a guide on how health literacy policies can be developed and implemented is produced.

For the 2024–2027 period, M-POHLs efforts on evidence-based policies and practices will continue. Countries participating in this project will have the opportunity to present their national experiences in implementing HL interventions, to influence priority setting concerning the focus of collecting and mapping evidence on policies and interventions, and to learn from the experiences of the other participating countries. Furthermore, participants can be leading authors or co-authors of papers and publications that result from this project.

For being able to co-steer the planning and execution, it is recommended to join the project in 2023, although later membership will be possible.

Workplan of the EVPOP project

During the explorative phase of the project, which will build up on the HLS₁₉ results in general and on the ‘Recommendations for policy, practice, and research’ in specific, the priority areas of interest will be determined, and the research questions for these areas will be formulated. For example, the focus could be on specific population groups most affected by limited general HL, or on specific concrete tasks that were identified as especially difficult by the HLS₁₉ survey, or on specific HLs such as digital HL, navigational HL, communicative HL, or vaccination HL. Subsequently, working groups will be set up to develop study protocols to answer the research questions in the specific fields of interest and to guide the EVPOP project. In order to allow covering different areas of interest in an extensive and comprehensive way and to incorporate new and emerging topics along the way, a four-years project timeline was decided by the M-POHL General Assembly.

The main aims of the EVPOP project are:

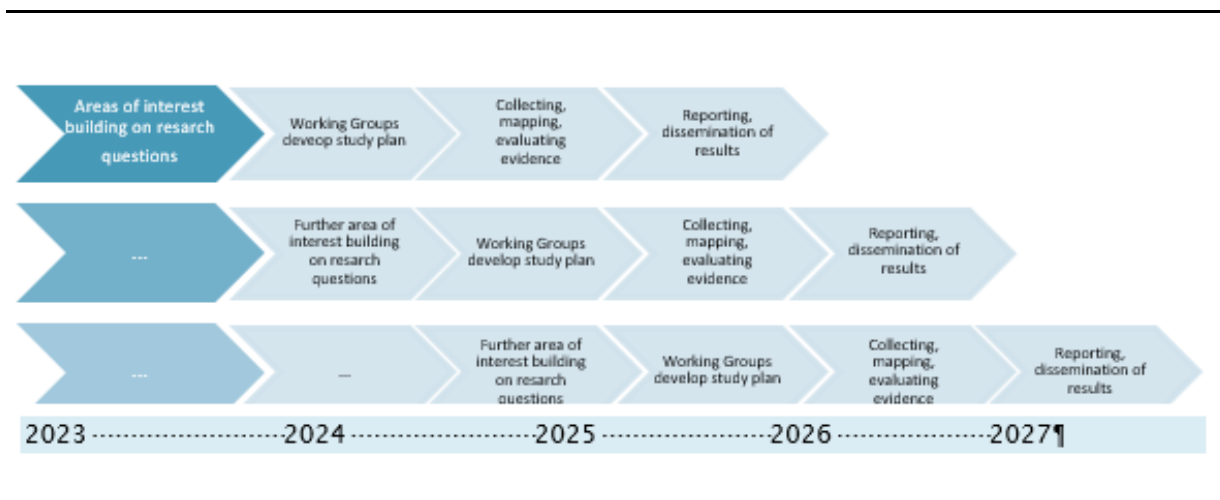
- » to facilitate the link between research, policy, and practice and
- » to provide and exchange knowledge and experiences among M-POHL member countries on policies and interventions to improve population and organizational HL.

Thereby we aim to facilitate:

- » capacity building for HL policies and
- » capacity building for effective interventions to improve population and organizational HL.

Figure 1:

Process of collecting, mapping, and evaluating the evidence for effective interventions to deal with low HL and to improve HL



Source: M-POHL

Funding of the EVPOP project

The International Coordination Center (ICC) will provide international coordination, administration, and scientific support. This will include the facilitation of the development of research questions and study plans, the support of working groups, the support of national and international collection of evidence, the structuring and analysis of results, the coordination of international reporting and editing, and support in disseminating results. Participating countries will share the costs of the ICC according to their GNI. The national fees for the international support of the ICC were agreed by the M-POHL General Assembly at the 15th M-POHL Meeting in June 2023.

In addition to the project fee, each participating country will need to ensure funds for the following national activities:

1. working time of national researchers involved in the project,
2. supporting the collecting and mapping of evidence on the national level, for example by identifying relevant national sources or experts,
3. (possible) travel costs for participation of national policy representatives and principal investigators in project meetings (one personal meeting each year is envisaged from 2024),
4. national dissemination activities.

Typically, national participation in the EVPOP project will be commissioned by a MoH or other public policy body. Financing of the project activities needs to be in line with WHO funding rules. This applies to all actors involved in the project. In case of the involvement of non-state actors, they will have to meet the funding criteria outlined in the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA) (see https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/wha69/a69_r10-en.pdf).

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