

HEALTH PROMOTION FOUNDATION WARSAW, POLAND



The Health Promotion Foundation (HPF) was established in Warsaw, Poland in 1991 to improve public health in Poland. Using Polish and international experience, it extended its national remit to advocate for improvements in the health status in other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Former Soviet Union republics (FSU) through implementing effective public health measures.

The current objective of the Foundation is to organise and support the health promotion campaigns and other activities. Although the most important part of the Foundation's work is still to prevent smoking-related diseases, for some years its activities have also been focused on changing the Polish diet (population-based programmes on the protective role of fruit and vegetable consumption, including vegetable fats) and combating obesity epidemics.

In Poland and other CEE/FSU countries, the Foundation supports scientific research on tobacco control and public health. The scope of the HPF research projects on tobacco control is focused on patterns and changes in smoking behaviours and its health consequences, the impact of rapid socio-economic transformation on health improvement in CEE/FSU countries, attitudes toward tobacco control legislation and policy, economics of tobacco control, and the effectiveness of smoking prevention and cessation population-based programmes, including public awareness and media campaigns as well as clinical trials.

Recently, the Foundation works also on population and community-based educational and intervention tobacco control programmes, makes attempts to introduce tobacco control issues into curricula of public health schools, advocates for comprehensive approach in tobacco control among politicians, media professionals and public health leaders, supports measures to protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke in their work, public and home environment, and helps smokers to stop smoking. Since the beginning of the 1990s, HPF has co-ordinated the Smoke-out campaign in Poland and other CEE countries that is evaluated as one of the most successful health promotion campaigns in this region of Europe.

The Foundation has also been strongly involved in advocacy for tobacco control legislation in Poland and the whole CEE region, including most comprehensive national measures and FCTC recommendations. Within the Open Society Institute's public health programme, the John Hopkins University international projects and the Bloomberg Foundation grant, HPF has conducted several studies and interventions that strengthen tobacco control in Poland and FSU countries, especially Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Together with WHO, World Bank and other international experts, HPF staff have taken part in tobacco or health missions and site visits to many countries of the region in order to develop their public health education system and build capacity for tobacco control research, policy and programs. In collaboration with the Cancer Center and Institute and the WHO Collaborating Centre in Warsaw, the Foundation has

also been a partner of the European Union (EU) Public Health Programme. These projects were especially focused on causes of the health gap between new and old EU members, with emphasis on lifestyle, environment, economic transformation and social inequalities. Together with other NGOs, the Foundation creates the Civil Society Coalition “Tobacco or Health” that is member of the European Network for Smoking Prevention.

As a result of these and other activities, positive changes in health behaviours are observed in recent years in Poland’s population and other Central European societies. It especially concerns decline in smoking prevalence and increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. These have had a substantial influence on health improvement. Epidemiological studies show that life expectancy is again on the rise in Central Europe.

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