

## International Network Health Policy and Reform

### Project Description

#### *Another network?*

Comparative research on health care systems and health policy reforms is carried out by a number of international bodies such as OECD, WHO, the World Bank, as well as by universities and academic institutions, and among or between countries within a region or with a similar historical background. However, *implementation* of research results in politics and in innovative reform approaches still lags behind the proper *comparative analysis* of health policy.

The Bertelsmann Foundation wants to contribute to narrow the gap between research and policy, *speeding up* information exchange on what works and what doesn't work in health policy reform. Undeniably, health reform issues across countries are similar: Demography, ageing and longevity, modern medicine and new technology, co-ordination, transparency and efficiency, quality and cost, access to and financing of services are all challenges every health policy maker has to address.

With its website [www.healthpolicymonitor.org](http://www.healthpolicymonitor.org) the “International Network on Health Policy and Reform”—another network indeed—has established a *more rapid, reliable, best-practice-oriented monitoring tool*, capable of reporting and commenting on changes and reform processes fast and regularly—twice a year. The “International Network on Health Policy and Reform” is currently composed of independent international experts, think tanks, and/or research institutions from around 20 countries worldwide.

#### Network objectives

- ◆ To obtain and analyse information on changes and developments in health sector reform on a regular basis and over time;
- ◆ To scout, monitor and follow a (new) health policy idea or approach from its inception stage through the policy and law making process until implementation;
- ◆ At each stage of the process, to describe and analyse the formal and informal interactions of all players and stakeholders in the decision making process leading to health sector reform or changes in health policy;
- ◆ To capture best practice models already established.

***What we want to do with it***

- ◆ To establish an effective tool for monitoring innovative ideas as they evolve and travel within and across health care systems;
- ◆ To review and disseminate that information in an efficient, straightforward, and rapid manner among all network partners (half-yearly reports; internet platform [www.healthpolicymonitor.org](http://www.healthpolicymonitor.org) );
- ◆ To organize the transfer of findings and results into the German health policy making process (consultations, advisory activities).

***Countries, participating institutions, and liaison persons***

<b><i>EU Countries</i></b>	<b><i>Partner institution</i></b>	<b><i>Liaison person</i></b>
Austria	IHS – Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna	Maria M. Hofmarcher
Denmark	University of Southern Denmark, Odense	Terkel Christiansen
Estonia	PRAXIS - Center for Policy Studies, Tallinn	Ain Aaviksoo
Finland	STAKES - National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, Helsinki	Ilmo Keskimäki
France	IRDES- Institut de Recherche et Documentation en Economie de la Santé, Paris	Zeynep Or
Germany	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Sophia Schlette
Netherlands	Maastricht University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Health Organization Policy & Economics	Hans Maarse
Poland	Institute of Public Health, Jagiellonian University, Krakow	Cezary Włodarczyk
Slovenia	Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia	Tit Albreht
Spain	Centre de Recerca en Economia i Salut - CRES Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona	Vicente Ortún
UK	LSE Health and Social Care, London	Adam Oliver
<b><i>Other countries</i></b>		
Australia	CHERE, University of Technology Sydney	Marion Haas
Canada	CPRN – Canadian Policy Research Networks, Toronto/Ottawa	Sharon Manson Singer
Israel	Meyers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem	Revital Gross
Japan	Kinugasa Research Institute, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto	Ryozo Matsuda
New Zealand	The University of Auckland	Toni Ashton
Singapore	National University of Singapore, Department of Community, Occupational & Family Medicine	Lim Meng Kin
South Korea	Seoul National University	Soonman Kwon
Switzerland	University of Southern Switzerland, Istituto Mecop, Department of Economics, Lugano	Luca Crivelli
USA – West Coast	IGH – Institute for Global Health, University of California Berkeley/San Francisco	Carol Medlin
USA – federal level	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore	Gerard F. Anderson



<i>Advisers</i>		
Rudolf Klein	Emeritus Professor, University of Bath	
Alan Maynard	University of York, Department of Health Sciences	
Uwe E. Reinhardt	Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School	

For reasons of comparability, we decided to bring together countries of similar economic development and/or with relevant recent health policy reform experience. In each country, we have established partnerships with a renowned and independent research institution or think tank.

Also, we maintain informational relationships with a number of related international organizations and foundations.

***Milestones***

- ◆ The network experts meet annually. A kick-off meeting, bringing together representatives from all partner institutions, took place in Gütersloh in September 2002.
- ◆ The second annual symposium was held in Vienna/Austria, in 2003. The group met again in Berlin/Germany in 2004, in Barcelona/Spain in July 2005, in Helsinki/Finland in June 2006, and again in Berlin in July 2007.
- ◆ The first half-yearly survey was conducted in March 2003. Since then, almost 700 reports have been published on our website [www.healthpolicymonitor.org](http://www.healthpolicymonitor.org) until October 2007.
- ◆ The most recent half-yearly survey, carried out in April 2008, covers October 2007 – April 2008.
- ◆ The first half-yearly report entitled “Health Policy Developments” was published in October 2003. Issue 6 is available since summer 2006 and double issue 7/8 since fall 2007. Issue 9 will be published in early summer 2008.

***Why are we interested? – The German context***

The Bertelsmann Foundation holds a specific view of the German health policy environment: we intend to deepen the analysis of interaction of stakeholders and policy makers, and assist with the management of interests and relationships between different players in the health sector. This, in our opinion, is the key to health policy reform in our country.

In Germany, while access to health care is excellent, there is broad consensus about inefficiencies in the provision of services. Co-ordination gaps, lack of transparency, and a lack of valid and comparable information on cost and quality of services - have also been criticised nationally and internationally.

On the other hand, the current debate is taking place in a rigid, much institutionalised setting and a highly complex, fragmented system of multiple payers, providers and politics. Quite obviously, none of these factors helps with the development of innovative approaches or blueprints for reform and reorganisation. There are established mechanisms for political discussion and decision-making with vested interests and well-known positions. Debate goes on in circles so that new ideas are rarely

generated and seriously considered. Although reform pressure increases with progress, cost and an inelastic demand for better services and therapies, there is little political will – or fear - to profoundly reform a system which for decades has too comfortably catered for many diverse interests.

***What is it that the Bertelsmann Foundation can add to research and debate elsewhere?***

The Bertelsmann Foundation is Germany's largest corporate non-profit foundation. In the current deadlock situation, we are looking for ways and approaches to stimulate debate and speed up health sector reform. We have done so successfully in other fields of social policy, and we are convinced that we can make a valuable contribution to health policy discussions in Germany and abroad.

***Partner institutions: What we expect from them***

- ◆ Interest in the goals of the network and its approach
- ◆ Neutrality and independence
- ◆ Readiness and commitment to participate regularly in reporting and other network activities
- ◆ Willingness to comment and assess current policy developments open-mindedly

***What we can offer: Funds, people, commitment***

- ◆ Professional international networking
- ◆ Cooperation with the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies
- ◆ Expertise in cross-country comparative social and economic studies and benchmarking
- ◆ Guidance and orientation throughout the networking process
- ◆ An international platform
- ◆ A forum for international comparative research on selected health policy issues
- ◆ Sponsorship and organisation of an annual conference of all network partners
- ◆ Additional international workshops on specific health policy issues, or ad hoc meetings if required
- ◆ Dissemination via internet at [www.healthpolicymonitor.org](http://www.healthpolicymonitor.org)
- ◆ Publications in English and German

### *Project management*

The project is sponsored by the Bertelsmann Foundation.

The co-ordination of the project takes place at the Bertelsmann Foundation's Health Program.

The project was initiated in 2002 and will run at least through 2009 under the leadership of the Bertelsmann Foundation.

The [Technical University Berlin](#), Health Care Management Department, is in charge of the network's data analysis and produces the half-yearly reports in close collaboration with the project sponsor.

### *Contact information*

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