

## **Attention to gender differences in public health policies on the prevention of cardiovascular disease: results from case studies in three countries**

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**Background:** Gender mainstreaming is an internationally accepted strategy for making women's and men's concerns an integral dimension of the development of public health policies. Regular monitoring is an important means to identify factors that may hinder or facilitate the implementation of this strategy. In 2004, the Gender Mainstreaming Programme of WHO/Europe initiated a project that had the aim to develop a simple tool for monitoring the implementation of gender concerns into public health policies. In three countries (Netherlands, Ireland, Croatia) this tool was used in case studies to assess how gender considerations were taken into account in recently adopted policies on the prevention of cardio-vascular disease (CVD).

**Aim:** This paper describes the tool and the results from the case studies. Tool The tool consisted of questions to identify if and how gender considerations are included in the problem description, objectives, planned strategies and targets of a policy and the implementation and monitoring plans.

**Results:** In all three countries epidemiological data on male/female differences in CVD were presented in the problem description of the policies. However, these data were not drawn out consistently to formulate gender specific policy objectives, targets or indicators for monitoring the effect of the policies for men and women.

**Conclusion:** The tool was considered useful to clarify gaps in attention to gender considerations in policy documents on the prevention of CVD. Although data on sex/gender differences in CVD are now available, further work is needed to translate this evidence into gender specific public health strategies for CVD prevention.