

Academies make recommendations for improving public health

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In recent decades, enormous successes have been achieved in the field of public health. Three examples of these are the fight against HIV, the reduction in cardiovascular disease, and protection for non-smokers. For Germany to make even better use of the potential of public health, it needs more political support, improved research structures, and stronger international involvement. The German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, acatech - the National Academy of Science and Engineering, and the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities point this out in a joint statement entitled "Public Health in Germany - Structures, Developments and Global Challenges", published today.

Public health is the science and practice of preventing disease, prolonging life, and improving quality of life across an entire population. The concept covers the general promotion of health via comprehensive, organised measures at all levels of society. Research questions and measures related to public health affect all sectors of the healthcare system, the education and social systems, and parts of the economy. Germany is doing outstanding research on various aspects of public health. However, the structures in research, teaching and practice are not yet optimally developed - especially considering the major international challenges that exist. In their "Public Health in Germany" statement, the academies make recommendations on how the field can be improved in Germany.

(1) The academies' recommendations for education and further training

include: improving collaboration between public health researchers, the public healthcare service, public health practitioners, and the public; coordinating professional education goals at national level; establishing interdisciplinary training schemes; opening up new career paths in public health; and incorporating elements of public health into the curricula of all medical professions. Public health professions should be made more attractive and more respected career options.

(2) The quality and interdisciplinarity of research must improve. The academies also recommend a research agenda to develop political measures and programmes for improving health, and to strengthen the healthcare system. The currently underused potential of cohort and randomised studies should be exploited, in particular to investigate the impact of public health measures. The academies recommend examining legislative proposals on data protection in Germany and the EU to establish whether they might place new and avoidable hurdles in the way of [health research](#).

(3) With regard to implementing research findings in practice, the academies recommend public dialogue and, in particular, building strategic links between science, the public healthcare service, policymakers, the healthcare sector and civil society. These activities should also extend to EU level and to global cooperation in the field of [global health](#).

(4) The academies list four options for structural reforms that will strengthen public health in Germany: a network with competitive financing; a virtual coordinating body; a public health institute; and a centre for public and global health that would steer all activities in this field.

The "Public Health in Germany" statement was produced by an interdisciplinary working group made up of scientists from Germany,

Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and the UK. The experts come from all fields of [public health](#), including economics, the social sciences, medical fields such as infection research and genetics, health services research, and research into global [health](#) issues.

More information: "Public Health in Germany - Structures, Developments and Global Challenges" - A statement by the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, acatech - the National Academy of Science and Engineering, and the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities, 82 pages, ISBN: 978-3-8047-3345-9

Provided by Leopoldina

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