

**Strengthening health information systems in Europe through peer review assessments**

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### **Background:**

How does your Health Information System (HIS) measure up to others in the EU? How can you empower national HIS players with an objective peer-reviewed HIS assessment? Nine InfAct partners engaged in a capacity building exercise where experts in rotating groups of three countries performed peer assessments of each other's national HIS. Using a WHO Europe adapted and refined tool, assessors analysed the HIS of a country (data collection, processing, analysis, dissemination and use) and exchanged practices in an intensive 2-day schedule of interviews with established key stakeholders.

### **Objectives:**

The aim of the peer assessment is three-fold: to test the feasibility of a peer-review HIS assessment, to map health information inequalities across EU MSs, and to strengthen the knowledge of HIS players.

### **Results:**

Two cycles are now complete and the feedback is overwhelmingly positive - from assessors and hosts alike. So far, the HIS assessment has been a major success in its ability to systematically and concisely analyse a HIS. It identifies gaps in the HIS through desk review and interviews, and provides a SWOT analysis and SMART recommendations to address these gaps. Additionally, this exercise has shown the ability to increase stakeholders' awareness of their role in their national HIS, and to build new networks within and between MSs. The exercise is also perceived as an opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and exploration of methodologies on how to address specific challenges. This will stimulate actions to improve national HISs, and will lead to the identification of good practices which can then be used by other EU countries.

### **Conclusions:**

By bringing together key HIS stakeholders from different countries and stimulating the improvement of HIS and the exchange of good practices, InfAct contributes to capacity building in the EU, which in turn may lead to the reduction of health information inequalities between countries.