

Health literacy across Europe; policies, interventions and actions on health literacy improvement in Europe uncovered in the HEALIT4EU study

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EPHORT consortium

- **NIVEL**: Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research (consortium leader)
- **RIVM**: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
- **EPHA**: European Public Health Alliance
- **Subcontracted experts**: from 26 Member States



Main objectives of HEALIT4EU

Provide a state-of-the-art insight into:

1. **Intervention studies on HL** that are performed in EU Member States (→ effectiveness and cost-effectiveness)
2. **Existing policies, programmes and actions on HL** that are (being) implemented in EU MS
3. The possibility to estimate health literacy levels in the EU by using a **multivariable prediction model**

HL intervention studies in EU

Systematic literature review

- Intervention study
- Using *objective or subjective* HL measure
- Conducted in one or more of the EU MS
- Describes an outcome measure related to HL

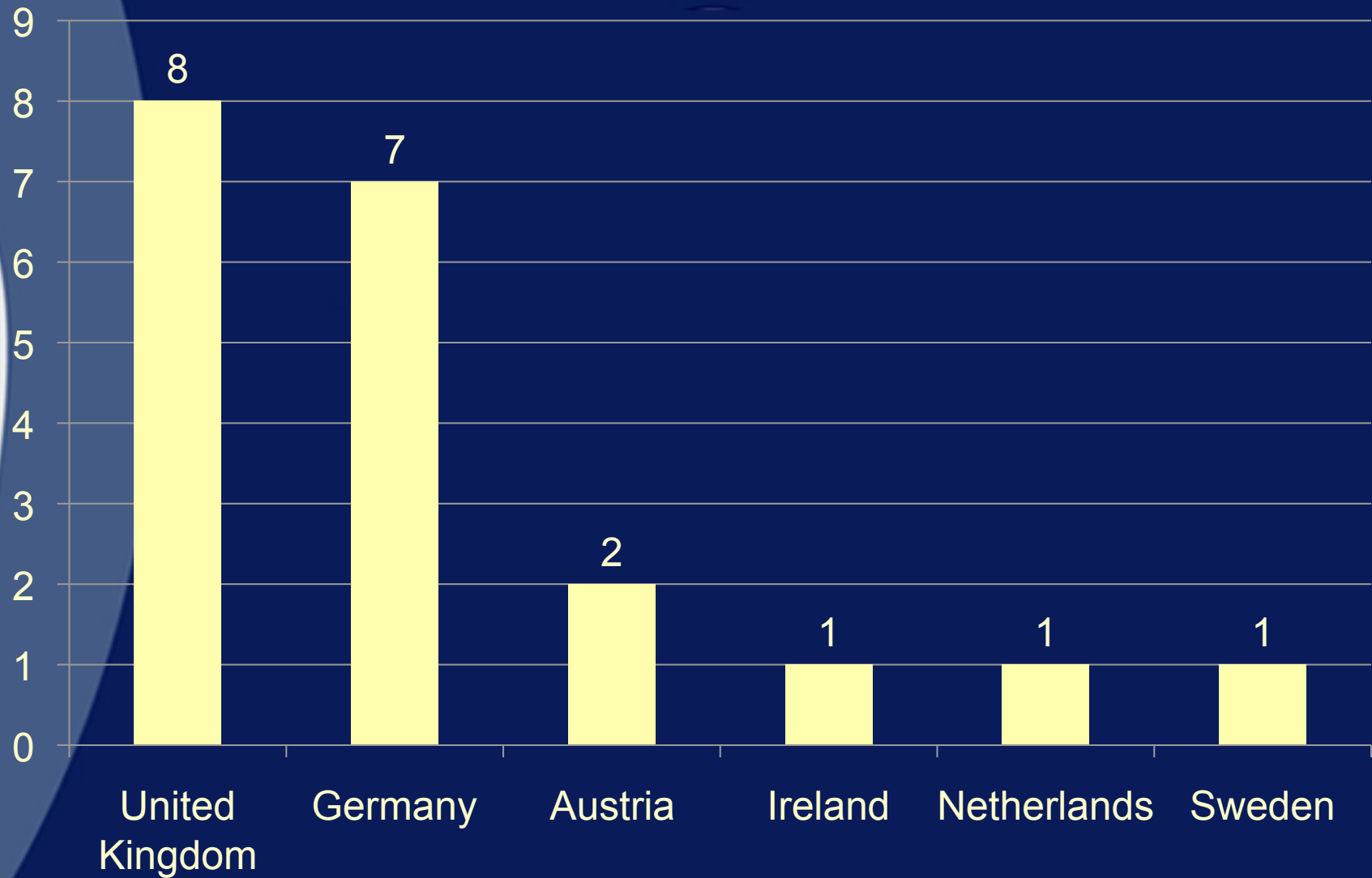
4.258 publications found; 20 studies included

→ no study about cost-effectiveness

Publication year of selected studies (n=20)



Member state (n=20)



Promising interventions

- **tailor** their efforts to the needs of patients in general or low-literate groups specifically (→ involvement)
- address **critical** and/or **interactive skills** and **competencies** (and not knowledge only)
- have a **positive impact on the personal level** (knowledge, motivation, self-confidence, stronger feelings of control)

Existing policies, programmes and actions in EU Member States

- Mapping exercise resulted in **82 policies and actions** in 16 countries
- 6 countries have a **national policy** on HL: Austria, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom → but: not a requirement for the development of programmes and activities

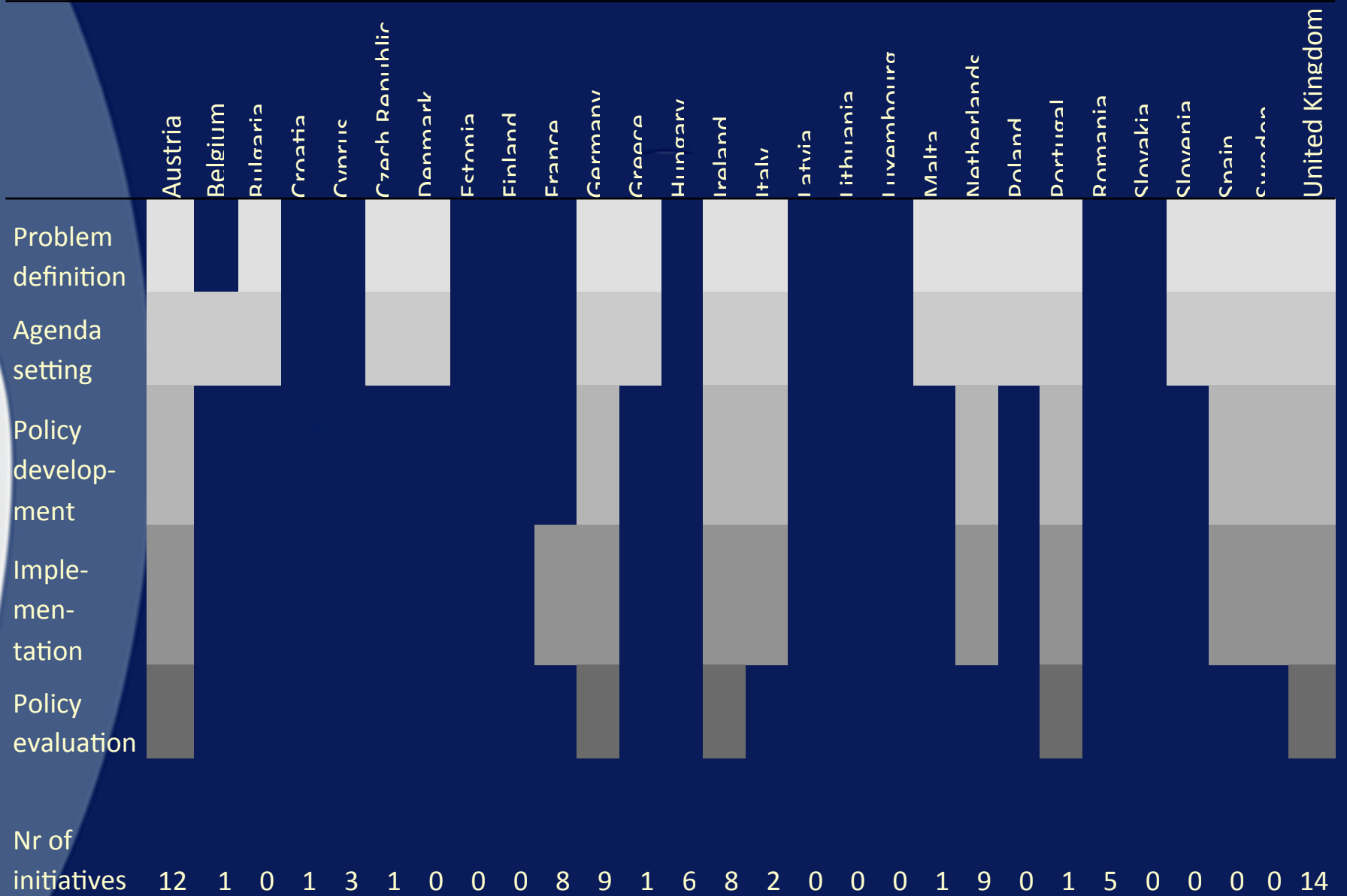
Category of policies / actions

	n	%
• Policy	14	17
• Subsidy	6	7
• Guideline	22	27
• Programme – intervention	32	39
• Programme – research	10	12
• Programme – other	4	5
• Advocacy Network	3	4

More than one answer was possible, thus the total
n>82 and %>100

Distribution in Europe

- **Most active countries:** Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom
- **Recently** also Austria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands
- Concept has **not 'caught on'** in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia



Overall conclusions HEALIT4EU

- In recent years HL **definitely gained attention** in EU
- In most countries HL is just **starting being addressed** through policies or activities
- Current evidence **does not enable** firm statements about the effectiveness of interventions, policies and programmes; but
 - interventions should be **tailored to the needs** of the patients / groups with inadequate HL
 - interventions should target **critical and/or interactive** skills and competencies

Recommendations (I)

- More attention for **development and evaluation of HL interventions** in a European context
- HL can be considered a useful **complement** to more general health promotion and education policies ('tailored interventions')
- Health literacy research **funding** should give more attention to (a) the quality of the studies and (b) the need for specific kind of evidence

Recommendations (II)

- A more **programmatic and evidence-based policy** to HL in individual EU MS and further exchanges of knowledge and best-practices at EU level
- Policies on HL should also **address the context** in which people have to be “health literate”

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Disclaimer

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