Internet-Based Tobacco Control Network
Launched in Czech Republic

Brief Project Background

The Internet Based Tobacco Control Network uses ICT as a basis for communication and training of professionals working in the field of health and awareness raising.

As the traditional media, such as TV and newspapers, refuse to publish anti-tobacco information an Internet-based demonstration project is now used to reach the Network's target group: decision-makers and the general public.

The project shows how specialized knowledge on awareness raising campaigns can be transferred from one country to another by using relatively simple ICTs: email and Internet.

The creation of a Control Network has been not an end in itself. It was a necessary step towards the establishment of the Czech Heart Association, which was inaugurated in May 2000.

Introduction

The World Bank enabled the US-based Centre for Communications, Health and Environment (CECHE) and its two Czech partners- the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine (IKEM) and the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH)- to launch an Internet-based communications program aimed at tobacco control in the Czech Republic.

The initiative is a direct follow-up to a joint US-Czech program in 1991, aimed at reducing the risks of cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases in the Czech Republic. The main goal of the initiative is to build capacity amongst Czech health professionals, non-government organisations and lay volunteers in the use of contemporary information technology to heighten public awareness and catalyse policy change necessary for the creation of a tobacco-free environment in the Czech Republic.

The project set out to reach this objective by forming an Internet-based network comprising health professionals and NGOs and by training individuals and organisations to enhance their use of the Internet for research and communication. One of the main results of the project is the establishment of an advocacy NGO dedicated
to reducing tobacco use and reforming tobacco policies in the Czech Republic, the Czech Heart Association.

The Tobacco Control Network started in June 1999, and is being financed in by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development-infoDev Trust Grant. Key international partners are UICC-GLOBALink of Geneva, for providing training in Internet and tobacco control communications, and the National Centre for Tobacco-Free Kids and the Advocacy Institute, both in Washington, D.C-for training in advocacy and policy reform.

Results

- Since its inception in June 1999, over 30 DITs and NGOs have become members of an electronic tobacco control network.

- The project has developed an electronic listserve for members in Czech and set up a website that describes the program, offers information and resources and reports project activities and results.

- The project has fostered the creation of the Czech Heart Association in May 2000.

- Strategic partnerships have been established with Internet-based organisations such as UICC/GLOBALink; the American Heart Association and pioneers in tobacco control advocacy and policy reform such as the Washington DC-based National Centre for Tobacco-Free Kids and The Advocacy Institute. Furthermore, partnerships have been formed with tobacco control organisations that are closer to home in the Poland, Hungary, Russia, and elsewhere in the CEE-NIS.

- A demand-based resource service through the Czech Heart Association and website on tobacco control equipped with high-quality resource materials for the Internet and computerised database research capabilities that will cater to requests. [http://www.ceche.org/Programs/CZE-CVD/cvdsum.htm](http://www.ceche.org/Programs/CZE-CVD/cvdsum.htm)

- A program monitoring system to support program operations through pre- and post-surveys of knowledge, skills and applications among the participating organisations to assess program impact.

Lessons

Global applicability:

The potential for replication and extension of this approach to other CEE-NIS countries and worldwide was the subject of a symposium hosted by CECHÉ at the recent 11th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Chicago in August 2000. While numerous organisations expressed their interest in the Network’s approach, the real potential for replication can only be assessed after the evaluation of the project at completion, in October 2000. Obviously, any application in other counties will require adaptation to local needs.

Local champions:

The whole process of establishing this type of network is impossible without local champions that lead the effort on a national level. In the Czech case, the project could not have worked without the constant presence and leadership of both the NIPH and IKEM.

Constant evaluation and assessment:

To make sure that all members of the Network can voice their interests and needs, the project designers have to allow for ample resources for assessment and evaluation. Only by listening to the participants will it be possible to ensure that both training and advocacy activities are effective. Assessment and evaluation are necessary to redefine campaigns that have worked in other countries to fit the local context.

Project Information

Country of activity: Czech Republic [CZ]

Contact Information

Dr. Sushma Palmer
4437 reservoir Road, NW
Washington DC 20007
Tel: 1-202-965-5990
Fax: 1-202-965-5996
Spalmer.CECHE.DC@worldnet.att.net

Project website: http://www.ceche.org/Programs/CZE-INT/czechtcc.htm
Web pages on general information on a certain aspect of the ICT-activity analysed.

http://www.ceche.org on this site, you will find links to other health and environmental awareness sites, publications, programs, etc.

http://www.ceche.org/Programs/Elixir/Evaluati/evaluati.htm