

SIMPLE Modules FAQs

Purpose | Use | Content

What is a SIMPLE module?



Selected Instruments for Multilevel Policy and Impact Evaluation (SIMPLE) modules are short sets of instruments allowing for a) the assessment of individual health indicators (behaviour and BMI) and b) the alignment with determinants of these behaviours (upstream indicators) from a policy, community and organizational level. Instruments that measure the indicators directly or variables describing the indicators were selected based on important criteria, such as validity, reliability and robustness of indicators in a cross-cultural context and their established use in European monitoring and surveillance systems (Hebestreit et al., 2019). They allow the influence of policies to be assessed at different levels of an ecological model, i.e. from national public policies down to health-related behaviours of individuals (McLeroy, Steckler, & Bibeau, 1988). Thus, SIMPLE modules collate instruments to measure the impact of national policy action and infrastructure support on a) individual health and b) proximal and distal determinants (upstream indicators).

What is the purpose of the SIMPLE modules?



SIMPLE modules aim to harmonize data collection and assess comparable health-related data across European monitoring and surveillance systems which will facilitate the evaluation of temporal and regional changes in physical activity, dietary behaviour and associated health outcomes (individual level). In addition, they allow the measurement of proximal and distal determinants of individual behaviours from a policy, community and organizational level since individual level modules are embedded in the multilevel modules. Their structure enables policy indicators to be assessed in combination with related community or organizational level indicators, thus creating a series of indicators that are interconnected on different levels of an ecological model. The development of the SIMPLE modules is a crucial step in establishing a 'road map' that supports the harmonization of monitoring and surveillance systems across Europe (Hebestreit et al., 2019).

How can these SIMPLE modules be used?



Individual level modules will be used differently from the multilevel modules. PEN researchers who developed the SIMPLE modules suggest the following approaches:

1. First, individual level modules (orange coloured) were developed for primary data collection by health-related surveillance systems for physical activity and diet. Organizations that run European, regional or national health surveillance systems can integrate one or more modules into their established instruments and measures in order to provide and analyse comparable individual data.
2. Second, instruments of the multilevel modules (green coloured) are also used in existing surveillance systems to measure variables that may determine health, thus providing routine monitoring data. Hence, researchers, key stakeholders, and policy-makers could use these different data sources to evaluate outcomes related to policy actions and infrastructure support influencing individual and population behaviour at a national or pan-European level.

Which SIMPLE modules were developed?



Within PEN, seven SIMPLE modules were developed. The modules were collated by PEN researchers as well as invited experts.



Three modules focus on physical activity:

- Physical Activity Recommendations
- Cycling & Walking
- Physical Activity at School

And four modules focus on dietary behavior:

- Food Prices
- Food Promotion
- Food Provision
- Equity

Where can I find more information?



A detailed description of all SIMPLE modules, their strengths and weaknesses and the methodological development is published in the Guidance Document "Selected instruments for Multilevel Policy and Impact Evaluation (SIMPLE) modules" on the PEN website:

<https://www.jpi-pen.eu/physical-activity-and-diet-simple-modules-overview.html>