

Physical Activity in Policy Context: Insights From the German GoPA! Country Card

Katja Siefken¹, Juliana Mejía-Grueso², Michael Pratt^{3,4}, Pedro C. Hallal⁵, Andrea Ramírez Varela^{6,7,8,9}

¹ Medical School Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

² Global Observatory for Physical Activity – GoPA!, Houston, United States

³ The Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science, University of California San Diego, San Diego, United States

⁴ Institute of Public Health, University of California San Diego, San Diego, United States

⁵ Department of Health and Kinesiology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, United States

⁶ Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston), Houston, United States

⁷ Department of Pediatrics, McGovern Medical School, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston), Houston, United States

⁸ Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston), Houston, United States

⁹ Institute for Implementation Science, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston), Houston, United States

Purpose: This study examines the potential of the updated GoPA! (Global Observatory for Physical Activity) Country Card to increase the visibility of physical activity promotion and to inform strategic policy development in Germany.

Method: The research provides a critical analysis of the updated Germany Country Card, developed in collaboration with academic institutions, the German Ministry of Health and the German Public Health Institute (Robert Koch Institute). It explores how GoPA! functions as both an international benchmarking tool and a national self-assessment instrument. The focus lies on the Card's capacity to highlight progress, identify policy gaps, and stimulate political engagement.

Results: The updated GoPA! profile for Germany shows positive developments, such as the establishment of national health goals and a growing body of scientific research on physical activity. These elements reflect a rising awareness of physical activity as a health issue. However, the profile also exposes key policy deficits. Germany lacks a standalone national action plan for physical activity and does not yet operate a permanent, well-funded surveillance system. Moreover, responsibilities for promoting physical activity remain dispersed across multiple sectors and administrative levels, often hindering a coherent and unified approach. The GoPA! Country Card makes these strengths and weaknesses visible in an internationally comparable format, creating a foundation for evidence-informed dialogue.

Conclusion: The GoPA! Country Card is more than a descriptive monitoring tool – it is a strategic resource for policymaking. By making data, policies, and research outputs visible, it supports evidence-based communication with both policymakers and the scientific community. This visibility can help identify neglected areas, foster intersectoral coordination, and strengthen political commitment. To fully harness its potential, the Card must not remain a static report but should be actively used to inform and align national strategies. Positioning physical activity promotion as a central, rather than peripheral, health policy concern is crucial. The updated GoPA! profile offers a timely opportunity to transform visibility into action, and to embed physical activity more firmly within Germany's health policy agenda.

