

# Naturally (un)convinced: Domestic epistemic communities as mediating factors of diffusion of Health Technology Assessment agencies in CEE

## Abstract

Establishment of health technology assessment (HTA) agencies in Europe represents one of the clearest instances of policy diffusion, spreading from North-Western Europe to the South and East. However, the trend has all but stopped at the former Iron Curtain in the mid-2000s, with only Poland and Hungary establishing strong HTA bodies. This paper takes two Central and Eastern European countries (Poland, which founded an HTA agency in 2005, and the Czech Republic, which does not have a similar body to this date) and asks what factors mitigated the diffusion process. It proposes the influence of domestic epistemic communities around HTA and examines in detail the mechanism through which they aimed at influencing decision-making in favor of their preferred policy. It finds that while the causal parts related to the emergence, activity and gaining access to decision-makers of the communities were similar in the two countries, the mechanism was interrupted in the Czech Republic by missing demand of the decision-makers, which was not compensated by increased activity from the epistemic community. The paper concludes with tentative remarks on consequences of succeeding or failing in achieving the policy goal for an epistemic community.