

Research for Policy (R4P): a reflection tool for researchers to enhance contributions to policymaking

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Background

Interaction between researchers and policymakers is recognized as crucial for knowledge utilization in public health policymaking. However, researchers often experience that contributions to policymaking are difficult to achieve despite their ongoing alignment efforts. To investigate how alignment is reached and how we can enhance contributions to policymaking, we conducted the research project 'Improving Knowledge Utilization', of which we presented the first results during the Fuse conference in 2013.¹⁻³ Based on these findings, we developed a tool to support researchers in alignment with policymakers.

Method

In three case studies, we analyzed the research processes along the lines of the Contribution Mapping model⁴ and identified areas where specific alignment efforts could enhance research contributions to policymaking. We designed the reflection tool 'Knowledge Accelerator' for identifying the need for alignment efforts in research projects. In an exploratory pilot, we asked three researchers starting a new project for feedback on this tool.

Findings

The eight areas for alignment efforts were 'goal', 'tasks and authority', 'quality', 'consultative structure', 'vertical alignment', 'organizational environment', 'presentation' and 'relevance and timing'. Since the continuously changing context of research projects asks for reflection on these areas during the entire process, we formulated open questions illustrated with examples from our case studies to be used by researchers during their project. Researchers recognized the addressed issues in the reflection tool from their own experiences, and found the examples provided for each question helpful in finding an approach for alignment in comparable situations. They considered the Knowledge Accelerator a useful tool that could also be helpful for policymakers.

Conclusion

To enhance research contributions to policymaking, organizations should facilitate researchers to reflect on the research process by offering sufficient time and incentives. For this vital reflection, the

tool 'Knowledge Accelerator' offers a useful alignment guidance to researchers and possibly also to policymakers in everyday work.

References

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Better practices on evidence informed policy making in Moldova through continuing strengthening of capacities

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Background

In Moldova legislation establishes concrete steps for policy making and requires that all policies must be informed by evidences. At the same time, there are no concrete methodologies and tools for supporting the evidence informed policy making.

Methods

The Republic of Moldova, like a number of countries in the WHO European Region, has been supported by the WHO Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe since 2013. Benefiting of EVIPNet Europe's capacity building efforts and methodologies, and building on the results of a situation analysis conducted to understand national EIP opportunities and challenges, Moldova aims to establish systematic, transparent and sustainable mechanisms to promote EIP at country level.

Results

As a result of EVIPNet Europe's capacity building efforts and the findings of the EVIPNet Europe situational analysis, national stakeholders have been enabled to apply a structured and comprehensive approach to develop sound evidence-informed policies. Under the leadership of the Division Policies Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ministry of Health, a national EVIPNet Europe working group was established, composed of researchers, policy-makers and the civil society. The working group focused its initial work on reducing alcohol consumption in Moldova. An evidence-brief for policy was prepared, synthesizing the best available evidence to support policy formulation and was presented at a policy dialogue to provide useful contextual and tacit knowledge to inform decision-making. Discussions on establishing a Knowledge Translation Platform to institutionalize the planning and implementation of EIP activities at national level have been delayed due to a recent change of the Government.

Discussion

Practices on EIP in the European Region varies from country to country. A baseline level of evidence use in policy and practice established by each country will help to strengthening existing efforts and support the work of EVIPNet Europe in promoting the systematic use of research evidence in health policy-making.

Community Sport, Health and Wellbeing : turning research evidence into impact in a local collaborative-partnership project.

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This paper explains the significance of a research-policy-practice partnership in designing, delivering and evaluating a Health and Sport Engagement (HASE) Programme in local community contexts and in developing useful and useable evidence for all partners in the programme. In the aftermath of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games the sport sector is currently one priority area for increasing population rates of physical activity for health and wellbeing. We outline our mixed method and multidisciplinary strategy for evaluating outcomes, costs and processes associated with the HASE project which addresses an identified need for better evaluation of community projects aimed at increasing physical activity through sporting interventions. We specifically discuss the ways that we are seeking to meet the challenges of turning evidence into impact across diverse partners including academic researchers, local and national policy makers, local authority commissioners and managers, service delivery professionals and public participants.