WP5: REPOPA evaluation and impact report

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This report has been written by WP5 leader, University of Ottawa (uOttawa), Canada (Beneficiary 7): Nancy Edwards, Susan Roelofs, and Cody Anderson.

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Reference:

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Acronyms

DK - Denmark
DOW – Description of work
EC – European Commission
EIPM – Evidence-informed policy making
EU – European Union
FI – Finland
HEPA – Health-enhancing physical activity
IT - Italy
NL – the Netherlands
RE-AIM – Research, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance
REB – Research Ethics Board
REPOPA – REsearch into POlicy to enhance Physical Activity project
RO - Romania
RTD – Directorate-General “Research”
SWOT – Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
UK – the United Kingdom
WP – Work package
Executive Summary

Background

The REPOPA programme – Research into Policy to Enhance Physical Activity – was a five-year (2011-2016) project funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under the grant agreement n° 281532. REPOPA brought together scientific excellence in health research including physical activity, and linked it with real-life experience in policy making and knowledge translation expertise from six countries in Europe (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Italy, Romania, and the United Kingdom). Project partners were from these six European countries and Canada. REPOPA’s goal was to increase synergy and sustainability in promoting health and preventing disease among Europeans by building on research evidence, expert know-how and real world policy-making processes. This involved studying innovative ‘win-win’ approaches for collaboration between academia and policy makers, and establishing structures and best practices for future European health promotion, in line with the concept of Health in All Policies.

Seven work packages (WPs) comprised the project:

WP1: The role of evidence in policy-making.
WP2: Research into policy making game simulation.
WP3: Stewardship approach for efficient evidence utilization.
WP4: Implementation and guidance development.
WP5: Evaluation.
WP6: Dissemination.
WP7: Coordination and management.

Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

The WP5 evaluation team (based at the University of Ottawa, Canada) was the sole project partner from outside Europe. We were imbedded in the REPOPA project as a full Consortium member, and were responsible for both internal (formative) and external (summative) monitoring and evaluation of the REPOPA project.

WP5 Objectives, as outlined in the REPOPA Description of Work:

1) To monitor and evaluate the working process, content, scientific product and added value of each work component and the synergies among work package components;

2) To apply the RE-AIM framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance) to analyze impact of project activities (in line with the REPOPA framework of evidence-informed policy making in physical activity, REPOPA indicators and policy making platforms) in the participating countries/context and in relation to development in policy making more widely.
**Approach**

Our formative monitoring and evaluation strategy was underpinned by a participatory, consensus-orientated, utilization-focused approach.

Our annual evaluations solicited Consortium input into monitoring reports and action recommendations. The outcome evaluation was conducted using an external summative approach.

**Guiding Evaluation Questions**

Our final evaluation process and report were guided by four evaluation questions:

- How did REPOPA enhance the scientific and policy relevance and impact of its outputs for EIPM?
- What consortium synergies and added value were achieved during the project period?
- How did Consortium working processes and collaboration evolve over the project period and what were the influences on this?
- What was the impact of the REPOPA project?

**Methodology (sampling data collection limitations)**

We used a mixed methods approach for the outcome evaluation. As detailed below, we included data collected during four annual cycles (2013-2016) of monitoring and evaluation and reviewed additional documents.

1) **Scientific and policy relevance**

Scientific relevance assessment was used for the four WPs that collected and analyzed data (WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4). Sources of data included WP final reports, coding frameworks (for WP1 and WP4), interview schedules (WP1, WP2, WP3), and REPOPA publications. We used a validated tool that incorporates REAIM dimensions to assess external generalizability and transferability (Green & Glasgow, 2006), and then adapted the tool to assess scientific validity. We applied two additional criteria (gender and context).

2) **Project working processes**

Interviews were conducted annually with work package and country teams; topics included consortium diversity, stakeholder engagement, REPOPA knowledge products and dissemination products, and priorities for upcoming work. Transcripts were categorically coded by the WP5 team.

The document review was conducted annually to examine project and WP progress, management, and implementation challenges. Documents reviewed included REPOPA periodic reports to the EC, WP final reports, six-month internal reports, and minutes of Consortium and work package meetings.

The Consortium collaboration survey was conducted annually; team members were asked to rate their level of agreement with 34 positively-worded statements on a six-point Likert scale. The survey assessed five domains: communication, collaboration, knowledge translation, project management, and evaluation. Mean scores were calculated, and compared year-to-year. Statistically significant changes between 2013 and 2016 were assessed through a Mann-Whitney U Test.
The junior researcher competency self-assessment survey was delivered annually to all Consortium members who were trainees. They were asked to rate their level of improvement in the previous year, on 27 competencies and skills related to research methods, knowledge translation, evaluation, research writing, project management and communications, and mentorship. Mean scores were calculated for each item across all respondents. Any competencies with a mean score in the top third of the range (above 2.33) were considered to have seen a major improvement in that year.

The social network survey examined internal scientific contact among project team members and external contacts with stakeholders. Network maps were made using NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002) to help visualize the REPOPA networks. The composition of external stakeholders was compared descriptively year-to-year.

3) **Synergies among work package components and value added to the project**

Annual interviews with work package and country teams (data and methods described above) were used to examine synergies related to collaboration, publications, research, innovation, and challenges to achieving synergies.

4) **Dissemination**

We examined national platforms and the web-based umbrella platforms developed by the project, and project dissemination approaches through a document review relating to dissemination activities and interviews with work package and country teams. RE-AIM indicators were developed and applied to examine national platforms and the web-based umbrella platform.

**Key Findings: Scientific Relevance**

WP Projects provide considerable value added, with a number of key strengths: rigorous methods (including case studies), good heterogeneity in types of stakeholders and sectors involved and rich descriptions of context that informed several processes (e.g. context mapping) developed uniquely for each WP.

WP1 yielded insights into cross-sectoral policy making that may inform both policy makers and researchers. Findings highlighted some critical considerations in facilitating cross-sectoral policy development approaches and yielded methodological advances in the meta-analysis of cross-sectoral policies.

Both WP2 and WP3 used a context-informed adaptation of their intervention approaches. They provide strong illustrations of how to address the tension of standardizing form versus function in interventions. The use of actual (rather than hypothetical cases) strengthens the applicability of their findings.

WP 4 identified a set of measureable indicators, informed by a Delphi process and refined with input from stakeholders across six European countries. Processes used in both conceptualizing and refining indicators were robust.

There were several limitations. Although not a requirement of the DOW, the lack of any costing data or specific documentation of human resource requirements makes it difficult to assess the feasibility of adapting and using the interventions in other settings. While gender considerations and analysis as
stipulated in the DOW were met, a more explicit set of overarching questions regarding gender and the use of a more explicit gender analysis framework across all four studies would have been useful. It is likely that team members were working with “early adopters” and some of the findings may only be transferable to other municipalities that are willing to engage (or already have relationships) with external researchers. WP1 only looked at the phases of agenda setting and policy development. WP4 provides some promising indicators for EIPM. Those which were least developed were in a sub-category of “complex indicators”. These warrant further development given the nature of intersectoral decision-making.

**Key Findings: Project Working Processes**

The REPOPA project accomplished the ambitious scope of work outlined in the DOW despite several implementation challenges. Collaboration networks that developed within and across WP teams helped Consortium members accomplish their ambitious scope of work. Between 2013 and 2016, there were improvements in team collaboration scores (defined as a difference score of .10 or more between year 1 and year 4) for 5/6 communication items, 3/7 collaboration items, 4/7 knowledge translation items and 2/3 evaluation items. During this same period, there were declines in project management scores for 5/5 items.

Involving junior researchers in REPOPA proved mutually beneficial for both the project and these trainees. A total of 12 junior researchers were linked to the project at different points in time. They reported the largest increase in competencies in the final year of the project with significant improvements in 11/17 (64.7%) competencies in 2016.

Country and WP teams developed and extended their networks with policy stakeholders as the project progressed. There were shifts noted from single to multiple sector engagement and from the involvement of municipal to national and international decision-makers. External connections became deeper and more deliberate although not necessarily more numerous. In the first year, researchers reported that the primary benefit of working with external stakeholders was understanding the policy context. In the last two years, they described their external stakeholders as primarily assisting with the dissemination of research findings and providing access to decision-makers.

**Key Findings: Synergies among Work Package Components and Added Value for the Project**

During interviews, Consortium members stated their commitment to maximize the added value of a multi-country initiative and its multi-disciplinary team. The structure of work packages, planning meetings and the commitment of WP leads helped to facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas, approaches and findings.

Policy makers’ engagement in all phases of the project was seen by the team as an important success. While the involvement by Consortium members in multiple WPs contributed positively, it also carried a cost, since it meant that a number of team members faced multiple and significant competing priorities. When members were pulled in too many directions, manuscript writing efforts were most often deferred.
Key Findings: Dissemination

By the end of the project, all countries had established national platforms though to varying extents. Teams were starting to use national platforms to disseminate REPOPA findings. Plans to continue the web-based umbrella platform beyond the end of the project may provide a useful resource to support national platform efforts. Because country teams involved with WPs 2, 3, and 4 had to prioritize WP research activities for much of the project duration, dissemination tools developed by WP6 were underused.

REPOPA used a variety of dissemination strategies to reach researchers, policy stakeholders, and the general public. As a multi-country project, teams had to find the right balance between producing dissemination materials in English versus tailoring language and content to the needs of national policymakers. Stakeholder engagement is essential to intervention success and creates expectations from external participants (and related time commitments for the project team) that go beyond the effort required for more traditional dissemination efforts (e.g. conference presentations and publications).

Conclusions

Participatory, utilization-oriented process evaluation can strengthen project implementation and science. It can increase utility, uptake, and ownership of evaluation findings and related recommendations.

Projects that deliberately bring together multiple countries, contexts, and interventions may deliver outputs with stronger scientific and policy relevance. They also face particular challenges in tailoring interventions and developing targeted dissemination strategies for a variety of policy stakeholders.

An optimal evaluation design may need to involve a combination of participatory process evaluation that supports iterative planning and decision-making, along with an outcome evaluation to assess impact and the added value of synergies. Imbedding an evaluation team into a Consortium is an effective tool for internal and external evaluation.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are for researchers in other programmatic and multi-country research teams, and for future research projects funded by the EC. The latter recommendations may also be pertinent for other funding agencies.

Recommendations for Researchers:

Deliberate team science strategies are needed to support and maximize synergies and cross-learning in multi-site Consortia projects.

Commit additional project time (person-months, project duration) and financial resources to achieve programmatic, cross-site synergies.
Balance scientific and lay dissemination priorities in the project schedule and provide resources for both in the budget.

Provide adequate resources to develop targeted, tailored materials for policymakers. Producing effective materials for lay audiences takes time and resources, and possibly outside expertise.

Consider how and what trainee (junior researcher) capacities can be enhanced through a multi-site project Consortium.

**Recommendations to the EC**

Encourage project teams to include costing estimates as part of intervention studies to better inform feasibility considerations.

Ensure that the criteria used for the peer review of scientific relevance are explicit in their inclusion of non-quantitative research designs such as case study methods.

Encourage the explicit use of gender analysis within studies to build strength in this area.

Funding agencies should consider how they could provide the longer term research support required for research teams to build relational capital with decision-makers, to adapt and implement interventions and to conduct longer-term post-intervention followup.

Consider use of the model of an embedded evaluation team for other EC-funded projects. Identify best practices for this evaluation approach across EC-funded projects.
1. Introduction

This report begins with a brief description of the REPOPA project and its work packages, and the specific objectives of Work Package 5 (WP5), the evaluation work package responsible for REPOPA internal and external monitoring and evaluation. We then describe our guiding analysis questions and approach for the final evaluation of REPOPA, and how these link to the REPOPA project description of work (DOW). We follow this with the four areas of assessment covered in our outcome evaluation of the project. Each section begins with a description of methods relevant to that area of assessment, a presentation of key findings, and a discussion highlighting the implications for the project. We begin with an assessment of the scientific relevance of the project, examining the scientific validity, generalizability and feasibility of research projects undertaken in the four RTD (Directorate-General “Research”) work packages (WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4). Next, we examine the project’s working process, covering a documentation and activity analysis, Consortium and WP management, and project strategies to mitigate risks and challenges. We then assess the synergies among work package components and value added that these collaboration, research, and network synergies contributed to stakeholder networks and relevance of REPOPA outputs. We follow this with an examination of the impact of the REPOPA project in terms of national and umbrella platforms, dissemination, and scientific impact. The subsequent section highlights the overall conclusions from our evaluation of the project. We finish with several recommendations for future research projects and for the EC.

2. Background to the REPOPA Project

The REPOPA programme – Research into Policy to Enhance Physical Activity – was a five-year (2011-2016) project funded by the European Commission (EC). REPOPA brought together scientific excellence in health research including physical activity, and linked it with real-life experience in policy making and knowledge translation expertise from six countries in Europe (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Italy, Romania, and the United Kingdom). Project partners were from these six European countries and Canada. REPOPA’s goal was to increase synergy and sustainability in promoting health and preventing disease among Europeans by building on research evidence, expert know-how and real world policy-making processes. This involved studying innovative ‘win-win’ approaches for collaboration between academia and policy makers, and establishing structures and best practices for future European health promotion. REPOPA’s aims were in line with the concept of Health in All Policies.

The REPOPA project comprised seven work packages:

WP1: The role of evidence in policy-making. Selected and analyzed 21 health-enhancing physical activity policies across the six European REPOPA countries (October 2011 – May 2013).

WP2: Research into policy making game simulation. Developed and tested a policy game simulation in three REPOPA countries: the Netherlands, Denmark, and Romania (December 2012 – June 2015).
WP3: Stewardship approach for efficient evidence utilization. Carried out six stewardship interventions in three REPOPA countries: Denmark, the Netherlands, and Italy (December 2012 – September 2015).

WP4: Implementation and guidance development. Implemented an online Delphi survey tool and six national conferences to refine and test a set of REPOPA indicators for EIPM in all six European REPOPA countries (June 2014 – June 2016).


WP6: Dissemination. Developed project dissemination plan and web-based umbrella platform, as well as guidelines for national platforms (November 2011 – September 2016).

WP7: Coordination and management. Provided overall project coordination including the administrative responsibilities of REPOPA, coordination of Consortium meetings, SharePoint site, and reporting (October 2011 – September 2016).

3. Background to the Evaluation

3.1. Work Package 5 Role and Objectives

Role of WP5 in the Consortium and project

The WP5 evaluation team was based at the University of Ottawa, Canada, and was the sole project partner from outside Europe. We were fully imbedded in the REPOPA project as a full Consortium member for the duration of the project.

WP5 was responsible for internal and external monitoring and evaluation of the REPOPA project, and as such we provided both an internal and external lens on project activities and impact. The WP5 evaluation work plan was implemented throughout the REPOPA project, alongside the activities of the six other work packages. It was designed to be complementary to other internal Consortium evaluation processes, for example, those by the WP7 management team (e.g. administrative monitoring of work plans by WP leaders), the WP6 dissemination team (e.g. assessing implementation and reach of dissemination activities), and evaluation activities conducted internally by RTD work packages 1-4.

Objectives of WP5

The DOW (REPOPA Consortium, 2015) outlined two objectives for WP5:

1. To monitor and evaluate the working process, content, scientific product and added value of each work component and the synergies among work package components;
2. To apply the RE-AIM framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance) to analyze impact of project activities (in line with the REPOPA framework of evidence-informed
policy making in physical activity, REPOPA indicators and policy making platforms) in the participating countries/context and in relation to development in policy making more widely.

**Description of work**

- Initial work plan and evaluation protocol with agreed upon responsibilities.
- Project documentation and activity analysis – comparison with expected outcome reports, dissemination and knowledge translation activities, and deadlines.
- Scientific validity and feasibility of the products, including the REPOPA framework, indicators and platforms – comparison with state-of-the-art developments in the field, and international generalizability and validity of findings.
- Evaluation of implementation and dissemination measures, including web resources and project workshops (e.g. participants’ integration of learning from other projects into analysis and interpretation of findings), scientific production during the project period including learning synergies across projects and settings.

### 3.2. Ethics Approval

In line with REPOPA’s Ethics Road Map and Ethics Guidance Document to coordinate varying national ethics clearance procedures in the partner countries, WP5 submitted a full ethics package to the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board in February 2013. The ethics package described all recruitment and data collection procedures for the WP5 evaluation work, and included consent forms, interview schedules, and survey instruments, and outlined data analysis strategies. Ethics approval was received from the uOttawa REB on March 20th, 2013 and renewed annually. The challenges of ethics clearance in international health policy research are described elsewhere, in a publication led by the WP5 lead and co-authored by other WP leads (Edwards et al., 2013).

### 3.3. WP5 Evaluation Approach and Strategy

**Participatory development of the evaluation approach**

Our evaluation strategy was underpinned by a participatory, consensus-orientation utilization-focused approach (Patton, 2008). The WP5 evaluation plan was developed and refined through iterative rounds of Consortium consultation and input in the first year of the project. Our plan was approved by the Consortium following the November 2012 annual Consortium meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

There were three core elements to our evaluation plan: a set of evaluation principles that guided our approach; an evaluation framework grounded in the literature on the use of the RE-AIM framework for evaluative purposes and on knowledge translation in the policy context (we continued to draw on emerging scientific literature throughout the project); and a set of indicators, measurement tools and data collection strategies.
Guiding principles for the evaluation

A set of Consortium-approved principles guided our monitoring and evaluation work:

- A participatory approach will be used, with regular input solicited from Consortium members on key aspects of the monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Both formative and summative evaluation processes will be used with a focus on overall programmatic coherence of the linked projects.
- Internal Consortium communication approaches related to evaluation activities will recognize that partners are working across different languages, cultures, and contexts.
- Monitoring and evaluation findings will be used internally to inform and strengthen Consortium decision making and team processes during the project.

In terms of process:

- Annual targeted feedback from WP5 to the Consortium about evaluation findings will contribute to appropriate Consortium adjustments to work plans, methodological approaches, and team processes based upon reflection on successes and challenges.

In terms of outcomes:

- The evaluation design and feedback processes are intended to optimize learning and cross-learning that will be generated from working across diverse contexts, settings, and WPs with various Consortium members.
- The monitoring and evaluation functions will provide external points of reflection for the WP activities to strengthen and maximize learning from and gains achieved through implementation of REPOPA.

Evaluation framework

The REPOPA evaluation framework included indicators for both internal and external components, with both formative and summative evaluation processes. The final selection of indicators was based on relevance, validity, and suitability to REPOPA’s needs and DOW evaluation requirements.

The internal evaluation concentrated on six focal areas related to internal Consortium processes and management. Focal areas for internal evaluation were:

- Effective Consortium project management processes
- Effective Consortium communication and collaboration
- Mentorship enhanced by diversity of Consortium contexts, settings, projects, and partners
- Robust work package methods and approaches
- Application of Reach element of RE-AIM
- Consideration of equity and citizen engagement

The external evaluation addressed six focal areas related to the influence and impact of REPOPA activities on policy stakeholders: Focal areas for external evaluation were:
• Effective dissemination about REPOPA programme to external audiences
• Effectiveness of REPOPA interventions
• Adoption of REPOPA products and findings
• Implementation of REPOPA products and findings
• Knowledge exchange networks within and between countries
• Sustainable REPOPA contributions to new knowledge approaches and structures

3.4. Formative Process Evaluation

Purpose

WP5 conducted four annual process evaluation cycles (2013-2016), grounded in a participatory, consensus-oriented, utilization-focus approach. The formative evaluations were intended to:

• Strengthen ongoing Consortium processes during the life of the project for decision-making, management, and research implementation;
• Serve as a learning opportunity for Consortium members;
• Support the Consortium in refining its dissemination plans and strengthen members’ scientific and policy networks within the Consortium and with external stakeholders.

The overall aim for annual formative evaluations was to support the Consortium’s consideration of:

What are the most effective and appropriate resources (time and strategies) that the Consortium can use to enhance REPOPA’s ability to deliver on research outcomes and impacts?

Methods

Evaluation activities used a mixed methods approach, with multiple qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis. Five data collection tools were used to monitor and evaluate the REPOPA project (see Table 3-1). Qualitative tools included interviews and focus groups. Quantitative tools included social network analysis, surveys, and document review.

Assessment Tools and Data Collection Schedule

The five assessment tools were informed by a literature review of potential instruments, undertaken by our evaluation team in 2011-2012, and examined for relevance, validity, and suitability to REPOPA’s needs.

For the three survey questionnaires, WP 5 adapted versions of existing tools:

Consortium collaboration survey: We used the structure of several collaboration/partnership surveys as the basis for developing the Consortium collaboration questionnaire: Partnership self-assessment tool (National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools, 2008) A Collaboration Checklist (Borden & Perkins, 1999); TREK baseline survey on collaboration readiness (Hall et al., 2008). We then adapted and substantially modified the items to fit our particular project and what we intend to evaluate.
Junior researcher competency self-assessment: We used the structure of several trainee self-assessment surveys as a basis for developing the questionnaire: Post-doc/scholar individual development plan self-assessment (University of California, Irvine, 2010); Trainee’s self-assessment of research competence (University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHSC), n.d.). We then adapted and substantially modified the items to fit our particular project and what we intend to evaluate.

Network mapping survey: We used the structure of several social networks surveys as a basis for developing the questionnaire: Coordination of Care Pilot Project Social Network Survey (D’Andreta, 2011); Conference Network Mapping (McLeroy, n.d.a.) and Inter-organizational Network Mapping (McLeroy, n.d.b.). We then adapted and substantially modified the items to fit our particular project and what we intend to evaluate.

In the case of interview schedules and document review, approaches were developed by the WP5 evaluation team.

**Table 3-1: REPOPA evaluation assessment tools**

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tr>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>The document review examined REPOPA’s progress achieving milestones and deliverables, use of internal project guidelines; WP application of REPOPA's knowledge-to-action principles, the “Reach” element of RE-AIM, and research utilization goals; effectiveness of dissemination and mechanisms for stakeholder input; and the dissemination of “REPOPA Indicators” to targeted policy stakeholders.</td>
<td>Consortium and WP documents on Consortium SharePoint site</td>
<td>Annual (2013-2016)</td>
<td>Documents reviewed included: WP scientific reports, WP dissemination reports, Periodic REPOPA reports to EC, WP 1-4 final reports, REPOPA publications, REPOPA website and umbrella platform, Selected WP meeting minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with country and/or work package teams</td>
<td>All REPOPA team members were invited to participate in semi-structured annual WP team interviews. Members were also offered the option of individual interviews for those who want to express their views more openly to us. They were asked to offer their perspectives on the effectiveness of communication</td>
<td>All country and work package members were invited to participate. Country teams: Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Italy, Romania, UK</td>
<td>Annual (2012-2016)</td>
<td>Interviews conducted by Skype, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Coding framework developed and applied to interviews. Content and thematic analysis done.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and collaboration across the various WPs and countries regarding sharing of research findings, coordination of intervention activities across settings, and the usefulness of WP5 internal monitoring reports. Interviews were be conducted via Skype.

| Collaboration survey | All REPOPA team members were invited to participate in an annual questionnaire examining collaborative mechanisms among and across the different partner countries and the various work packages. Topics include timeliness of feedback from other REPOPA teams, satisfaction with communication modalities used to integrate work across the Consortium, and engagement in collaborative activities. | All Consortium members | Annual (2013-2016) | Survey administered through Survey Monkey. Descriptive analysis and Mann-Whitney U Test done using Excel. |
| Collaboration network mapping survey | All REPOPA team members were invited to participate annually in the collaboration network mapping survey, in order to map the knowledge exchange networks within the Consortium, as well as between REPOPA members and external policy stakeholders. The survey examined the level of scientific communication and collaboration within REPOPA, and identify those external policy stakeholders considered most important to the effectiveness of members' work to influence physical activity policy-making. | All Consortium members | Annual (2013-2016) | Survey administered through Survey Monkey. Analysis done using UCINET (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). Network maps drawn using NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002). |
Research competency self-assessment for junior researchers  | Junior researchers (team members and graduate students) associated with REPOPA were invited to annually complete a self-assessment questionnaire about their familiarity and competency with a range of research methodologies. | All trainees (post-doctoral, PhD, masters, bachelors) | Annual (2013-2016) | Survey administered through Survey Monkey. Descriptive analysis done using Excel.

**Consortium feedback processes**

Annual evaluation feedback was provided to the Consortium through a written monitoring report (an internal document circulated to project members) and discussed at the annual face-to-face Consortium meeting. Internal monitoring reports provided targeted feedback on project strengths and weaknesses, and recommended action strategies to enhance project implementation (adjustments to work plans, methodological approaches, and team processes). The Consortium and Coordinator were then responsible for possible followup such as an action plan if needed, based on discussion at annual meetings. Consortium feedback and input during this process (regarding monitoring findings and the evaluation process itself) were actively solicited by WP5 and incorporated into the final version of the internal monitoring report.

**3.5. Summative Outcome Evaluation**

A final outcome evaluation (described below and in the remainder of the report) was conducted by WP5 during the final months of the project. We drew on data collected during the four cycles of annual process evaluations as well as additional document review and analysis. We were able to draw on our familiarity with project experiences to provide useful context for our analysis.

While the annual formative evaluations which were conducted with an internal lens and solicited Consortium input into monitoring reports, the outcome evaluation marked a change in orientation and approach, as is appropriate for an external evaluation. The shift to an external evaluation perspective meant that while the Consortium received a draft of our final report, they were invited only to provide corrections or clarify missing information, unlike the process for final reports from other work packages. The Consortium was not invited to provide input on WP5 outcome evaluation findings or conclusions in order to achieve an external evaluation approach for our final evaluation and impact assessment.
4. Outcome Evaluation of the REPOPA Project (Summative Process Evaluation)

4.1. Guiding Analysis Questions for the Outcome Evaluation

Our final evaluation process and report were guided by four evaluation questions:

1. What was the impact of the REPOPA project?
2. How did REPOPA enhance the scientific and policy relevance and impact of its outputs for EIPM?
3. What consortium synergies were achieved during the project period?
4. How did Consortium working processes and collaboration evolve over the project period and what were the influences on this?

4.2. Link between Evaluation Questions and the DOW

The guiding questions (see above) arose from the WP5 evaluation objectives for WP5 defined in the project DOW (REPOPA Consortium, 2015). In Table 4-1, we outline the links between our guiding questions and the DOW evaluation objectives.

**Table 4-1: Link between evaluation questions and DOW objectives for WP5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis questions for outcome evaluation</th>
<th>Link to WP5 evaluation objectives in DOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How did REPOPA enhance the scientific and policy relevance and impact of its outputs for EIPM?</td>
<td>Evaluate the scientific products, including the REPOPA framework, indicators and platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What consortium synergies were achieved during the project period?</td>
<td>Evaluate the added value of each work component and synergies among work package components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How did Consortium working processes and collaboration evolve over the project period and what were the influences on this?</td>
<td>Evaluate working process and content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- project documentation and activity analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- evaluation of implementation and dissemination measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- summative process evaluation (management processes, collaboration, mentorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What was the impact of the REPOPA project?</td>
<td>REAIM analysis of impact of scientific products, including the REPOPA framework, indicators and platforms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluate the scientific products, including the REPOPA framework, indicators and platforms - scientific validity, feasibility, generalizability (the What)

5. Scientific Relevance Assessment

5.1. Introduction

In this section, we provide an assessment of the scientific validity, generalizability and feasibility of research projects undertaken in four work packages (WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4). These three assessment criteria were outlined in the DOW (REPOPA Consortium, 2015). We begin the methods section with our operational definitions for each criterion, and a discussion of their relevance and interpretation, given the research methods used in the WP projects. We augment these criteria with others that are pertinent to the research undertaken and research methods used by REPOPA. Analytic methods used in this evaluation are then described. The findings section includes an overview of key findings from each of the four WP research projects. We then apply the criteria for scientific relevance. In our discussion, we highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these REPOPA projects, identify data gaps and areas for further research, and briefly situate the WP findings within the larger field of published research. Recommendations arising from this part of the evaluation are included in the recommendation section at the end of the report.

5.2. Methods

The scientific relevance criteria outlined in the DOW included scientific validity, generalizability, and feasibility of results. Intervention fidelity, sampling procedures and representativeness were additional sub-criteria outlined in the DOW. No further definitions or descriptions of the assessment criteria were included in the DOW. Two additional criteria (described in the methods section) were also used to assess scientific relevance. These additional criteria were selected given the aims of REPOPA, the focus of inquiry (evidence-informed policy), the research methods of the WPs and the state of science in this field. While assessment of the REPOPA framework and indicators were listed in the DOW, the overall framework for REPOPA is still under development and the only indicators available for assessment are those developed in WP4. Various theories and frameworks underlay each of the work packages and these are assessed here along with the WP4 indicators. We did review an early draft of the REPOPA indicator framework linking the indicators to a wider evidence-informed policymaking framework; this early draft is intended for the REPOPA final report due November 30th, 2016.

5.2.1. Operational Definitions of Assessment Criteria

We reviewed literature on qualitative, quantitative and case study methods to assemble operational definitions for each of the assessment criteria outlined in the DOW.
Scientific Validity

The scientific validity of a study is defined as the integrity of methods used, the extent to which findings reflect the data and are well-founded, the consistency of analytic methods and the credibility of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). There are differences in the assessment of scientific validity for studies using quantitative versus qualitative methods because the aims and underlying epistemology of these research approaches differ.

Generalizability

The external generalizability of study results is a criterion normally used for quantitative research, which aims to assess causality and to generalize from study samples to populations. External generalizability is defined as “the extent to which causal inferences reported in one study can be applied to different populations, setting, treatments and outcomes” (Thomson & Thomas, 2012). To help users of research assess generalizability, details about the population characteristics and the sampling process, the setting and the intervention (including how it was implemented and adapted to local conditions) are needed (Thomson & Thomas, 2012). In quantitative studies, external generalizability is stronger if the study sample is representative of the larger population, and if the settings where an intervention was tested and/or the populations that were sampled for the study are similar to settings or populations to which the findings might be applied.

Qualitative research designs aim to enhance transferability rather than external generalizability. This is because they use purposeful or convenience sampling rather than representative sampling. Purposeful sampling enhances transferability because it yields a study sample that is heterogeneous, with a diversity of cases, views and perspectives reflected among participants (or participating entities). Qualitative researchers aim for analytical generalisation such as generalizing to theories (Yin, 2009). For these reasons the term transferability rather than generalizability is normally used for qualitative studies. In case study research, generalizability (transferability) is enhanced by using multiple (rather than single case studies).

Feasibility of results

Feasibility concerns the practical application of results. Pertinent considerations include the time and resources that would be required to implement and if appropriate to adapt the results (e.g. intervention tested, indicators developed, analysis framework used) to another setting.

5.2.2. Data Sources

Scientific relevance assessment was used for the four WPs that collected and analyzed data (WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4). Sources of data used for this assessment included WPs final reports (Aro et al., 2015; Hämäläinen et al., 2013; Valente et al., 2016; Van De Goor et al., 2015), coding frameworks (for WP1 and WP4), interview schedules (WP1, WP2, WP3), and publications. REPOPA publications were reviewed to augment and/or update information contained in the final reports. Publications provided a more fully
developed analysis strategy and robust results in comparison with final reports. For two of the WPs (WP2 and WP4), we reviewed the longer internal report as a more detailed description of the methods and findings were available in that longer report and final major findings have not yet been published in English in the peer-reviewed literature. The foregoing data was supplemented by informal discussions with REPOPA members during the final annual meeting (held in September, 2016) when members were asked for clarifications, elaborations or confirmatory information concerning their work package projects.

5.2.3. Analysis Approach

We identified key attributes of the research undertaken in each research package (i.e. research design and methods used, frameworks/theories used to guide the work). We then examined and summarized the relevance of these criteria to each WP given the methods deployed.

We identified a validated tool that incorporates REAIM dimensions to assess external generalizability and transferability (Green & Glasgow, 2006). We then adapted this tool to assess scientific validity, using criteria developed by several authors (Baškarada, 2011; Baškarada & Koronios, 2009; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012; Gerring, 2004; Loseke, 2012; Noble & Smith, 2015; Sarker & Lee, 1998; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Wang & Strong, 1996; Yin, 2009).

Finally, we applied two additional criteria (gender and context). We added gender since the integration of a gender analysis approaches reflects EC directions on more robust approaches to addressing gender in research. We did a word search to identify descriptors of gender in final reports, and we examined published results of studies to determine if a sex breakdown of participants was provided. We added context given the extensive use of case study methods in REPOPA. We reviewed WP final reports and identified descriptions of context (e.g. local and country contexts, approaches used to assess context, and intervention adaptation to local/country context). Data for each WP was inserted into a matrix using EXCEL, facilitating comparisons on this dimension across WPs.

5.3. Findings

We begin with a WP-specific summary of methods and findings. We then present findings from the application of the two tools used to assess external generalizability/transferability and scientific validity. For additional criteria (feasibility, context description and gender analysis), we provide a summary of findings across all four WPs.

5.3.1. WP-Specific Summary of Methods and Findings

This section provides some further background on the studies and their results. It outlines the basis for the application of scientific relevance criteria (later in this section) and the summary of strengths and limitations of these research projects (provided in the discussion section). By design, WP1, with its focus on policy analysis was the first study completed and thus, this team has had the time to prepare more manuscripts and produce more publications than any of the other WPs reviewed here. As is evident
below, these publications yield a richer set of data and more mature findings for WP1 than the other WPs.

**WP 1 – Policy Analysis**

This retrospective, multiple case study, examined physical activity policies from six countries. An inventory of potential national, regional and local cross-sectoral policies was generated by the research team. Criteria for selecting (Hämäläinen et al., 2015) the 21 policies included in the study were variations in the scale and topics of the policies. Interviews were conducted with 86 policy makers who had had some involvement in the development of one of these policies. The agenda setting and policy-development phases of the policy cycles were the focus of the research.

The frameworks outlined in the project provided some guidance for the policy analysis. Initial elements considered were barriers and facilitators of evidence use (Hämäläinen et al., 2015). Examples of questions in the interview schedules that were novel in their orientation and clearly build on research in this field included: triggers for evidence use, use of evidence for intersectoral policy-making by stakeholders in different sectors, how research evidence was used to inform the selection of population sub-groups and accountability for evidence-informed policy-making. Interviews elicited responses addressing the contextual influences on policy making. The cross-sectoral orientation of policies under review/discussion is an important contribution to the literature, although themes reflecting this cross-sectoral focus are not as apparent in publications as some other themes.

A content analysis of research evidence used in the policies was published in 2015 (Bertram et al., 2015). A published protocol and tool were used to identify the explicit use of evidence in the policies reviewed. Research use was described as predominantly ad hoc. Epidemiological research, population studies or statistics and case studies were the most common types of evidence used, and often as a basis for justifying the policy rather than as an explicit source of evidence for the actual policy. “Routine reporting mechanisms for [reaching] policy decisions using research evidence” (Bertram et al., 2015, p. 7) were absent in most countries and there was a lack of citable research evidence in most documents. These findings largely reinforce what has been observed in other studies, but add strength to this previous work given commonalities observed across a range of policies in diverse country settings. The retrospective nature of the policy analysis and related interviews is identified as a limitation given problems with recall about specific examples of evidence use among informants.

The publication by Castellani, Valente, Cori, & Bianchi (2016) uses the policy analysis data from Italy to describe several new theoretical constructs, which augment existing research on evidence use and an approach to the analysis of meta-policies that is feasible and has strong potential for use by others interested in meta-and cross-sectoral policies. The analytic approach involved the construction of a policy trajectory and development of a citation network using publically available documents. This aided an assessment of contextual knowledge within the policy including an examination of the person(s) and/or entity that mediated research use, the identification of triggers for knowledge (evidence) use and the identification of limitations to evidence use such as “a time shift (i.e. delay) between the research [generation] and its use” (Castellani et al., 2016, p. 9).
The third publication by Eklund Karlsson (2016), using the Denmark case study, examines stakeholder involvement in the policy making process with emphasis on their “knowledge intermediation and relationship(s) to policy-makers”. Kingdon’s Multiple Streams theory (2011) and a policy network approach were used to guide analysis. Inductive coding of six interviews was completed to identify themes “related to public officials’ perceptions on the involvement of external stakeholders in policymaking” (Eklund Karlsson, 2016, p. 7). Results emphasize the importance of collaboration between researchers and policy-makers, explain what primes such collaboration, reinforcing findings from other authors such as Lavis, Ross, & Hurley (2002) and Oliver, Innvar, Lorenc, Woodman, & Thomas (2014).

In the fourth publication by WP1 (Hämäläinen et al., 2016), the qualitative content analysis of HEPA policies and interview results across all 6 European countries are provided. A common guideline was used for the analysis of policies. Examples of codes included stakeholders, processes and sectors involved; broader political forces that influenced policy decisions; and cross-sector cooperation in policy-making. A wide range of stakeholders and sectors were identified and analysis confirmed that a cross-sectoral approach was reflected in the policies assessed. However, not surprisingly, “explicit definitions of cooperation and modes of cooperation… were rarely described [in the policy documents]”. (Hämäläinen et al., 2016, p. 6). Interviews yielded some insights on these processes. Financial and managerial inputs to these processes were described as critical. The research sheds light on the importance of governance structures (across system layers) and leadership to develop a cross-sectoral policy. While there were some commonalities across countries and policy cases, there were also important differences with particular variability seen in the types of governance and coordination structures (e.g. steering committees, scientific advisory groups/institutes/individuals, public hearings for citizens and field visits) used to support cross-sector policy development. Issues of demonstrating value-added to a particular sector, sorting out accountabilities related to the policy and dealing with competing institutional interests were identified as challenges in cross-sectoral policy making by interviewees.

The WP1 final report (Hämäläinen et al., 2013) highlighted a number of potential indicators that were adopted and tested in WP4. In addition to indicators that might be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes, findings from WP1 could inform the development of other types of tools (such as checklists) for policy analysts and policy-makers that highlight considerations requiring attention in cross-sectoral policy development. The development of such tools might further enhance the uptake of findings from this study.

Generalizability or transferability of findings from this WP is enhanced by publications that describe findings across the participating countries. Collectively, the publications highlight tools and analytic approaches useful for work in this area. The retrospective nature of the case studies is identified as a limitation in several of the publications for this WP. However, rigorous methods were used in data collection and analysis phases; analysis was appropriately guided by both theory and prior work in the field of evidence-informed policies. Results from this WP, contribute some novel approaches that could be used to extend work in this field as well as some new insights, particularly around cross-sectoral policy-making.
**WP2 Policy Game**

The policy game was developed as a novel intervention to “enhance organizational and policy aspects related to the use of evidence among stakeholders in cross-sector policy making” (Van De Goor et al., 2015). More specifically, the policy game aimed to improve communication and collaboration between stakeholders in a cross- and multi-sector health policy-making process (Van De Goor et al., 2015). It was undertaken in three countries (The Netherlands, Denmark and Romania). It involved a systems analysis approach used in combination with simulation techniques including scenario building, role playing and other group techniques.

A common set of explicit inclusion criteria were used for the selection of cases. Country working groups provided input that was used to adapt (and fine-tune) the generic game to the local policy setting. The components, rules, and flow of the game are all detailed in WP reports as well as the roles of the game leader and participants. A detailed description of the cases is provided, along with a discussion of how the game was adapted for each setting, what participants were invited and what roles were established for participants in the game.

Observations carried out during the game and questionnaires were the main outcomes. Questionnaires were administered at baseline and at two time periods post game (1-2 weeks and 6-8 months after the game). Measures included intention to collaborate; and attitudes, intentions and behaviour with respect to organizational networks and using evidence in policy making (among others). A total of 53 individuals participated in the policy game (across three countries). Attrition rates after the game were 25% at Time 1 and 30% at Time 2.

Actual use of evidence by teams involved in the simulation was limited although the authors note that there was evidence built into the game including the systems (situational) analysis used to guide adaptation, and recognition of leadership and collaboration models that inform decision-making.

Results indicate that the generic policy game is feasible to use (and adapt) to an intersectoral context and to the type of policy under discussion. This simulation approach could be adapted for other cross-sectoral policy issues. There were some short and longer-term impacts seen among participants. Reports suggest that substantial efforts were required to develop contacts and recruit individuals for the game. It is not clear whether the target group for the policy (e.g. representative organizations of those target groups) were included as stakeholders.

The case study approach with before and after measures was appropriate at this stage of development for the policy game. Next steps would necessarily involve quasi-experimental or experimental study designs, and might involve the use of several interventions in tandem.

Manuscripts have been drafted and will be submitted for publication in the next couple of months. We did not have access to these manuscripts and they are not included in this review.

**WP 3 – Stewardship**

The stewardship intervention built on natural experiments of intersectoral policy implementation that were underway in the three study countries. “The interventions had the same overall goal - to increase
knowledge integration in evidence informed policy making”. Sites also used essentially the same outcome measures. While a commonly agreed research protocol was created to be used in all sites in three countries, “the intervention contents, processes and intensities varied according to the contexts” (Bertram et al., 2016).

Response rates are provided for the participants who were invited and agreed to be part of the intervention, but not for the number of municipalities invited to participate. A range of vulnerable groups were identified as a focus (e.g. elderly in Denmark, a low SES community in The Netherlands etc.). There was a requirement for at least one of the two policy cases in each country to include reducing health inequalities as one of its aims. All policy cases were intersectoral in their orientation.

All were operationalizing within a policy change process (e.g. new laws related to physical activity and home care, and/or policy changes in responsibilities for municipal versus national authorities). These created an interesting set of conditions for a stewardship approach to be tested in the real-life adoption of the policy being developed/adopted.

A context mapping exercise, needs assessment, qualitative interviews and pre-measures were both part of the intervention itself, as well as providing baseline data. Data from 29 qualitative interviews and 74 questionnaires with an array of stakeholders helped to inform tailored interventions that addressed identified needs. These data were an important source of information for context-specific intervention adaptation. Thus, the stewardship intervention was purposefully adapted to local needs and priorities.

The WP3 final report (Aro, Radl-Karimi, et al., 2015a) indicates that there were some improvements in scores that were sustained at the 2nd post-intervention observation period. Some indicators showed a drop in scores (i.e. worse scores) post-intervention. This may have been due to participants developing a better understanding of what was meant by evidence-informed policy making through the intervention. A publication detailing these quantitative results is forthcoming.

There were a small number of participants in each of the municipalities although there was diverse representation across sectors (in keeping with focus of the intervention). Participant dropout rates at 12 month post-intervention were as high as 40% in some sites. There were some differences in methods descriptions across the sites. For example the Netherlands reported the use of appreciative inquiry (Aro, Radl-Karimi, et al., 2015a) in their setting, while others did not. There was also some variability in the intensity of the interventions. For instance for one of the sites in The Netherlands, the intervention is described as “light touch” since it only involved one meeting (Utrecht West). However, a strong process evaluation sheds light on reasons for this variability and illustrates the importance of testing this kind of intervention across a range of naturalistic settings and stakeholders.

**WP 4 - Implementation and guideline development**

The fourth work package developed measureable indicators to assess evidence-informed policy-making. They used findings from other WPs as one source of indicators and also used input from the literature and stakeholders. The WP4 final report (Valente et al., 2016a) outlines how they derived indicators from each of the WPs and also how they used an internal consultation process with all WP members (including the evaluation team) to arrive at the initial set of indicators, and to develop relevance and
feasibility scales used during the Delphi. They conducted a two stage process, involving two internet-based Delphi rounds. These involved 76 international panellists who participated in both rounds (68 of whom were working in the national contexts of the participating EU countries). Six national conferences were then held in each of the participating European countries. During these sessions, participants were asked to map the final set of indicators to policy phases and to participate in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the indicators for their country setting.

They describe how their work involved “strong synchronization ... of all the involved European country teams... through all stages of WP development” (Valente et al., 2016b). Their report maps the processes for indicator development onto the Knowledge to Action Framework.

Two broad categories of indicators emerged – those considered measureable and a second category of complex indicators, which were identified as important given the nature of intersectoral decision-making, but which require further development to enhance their usability.

5.3.2. Scientific Relevance Assessment

There are several critical considerations in the application of these scientific relevance criteria to the REPOPA work. First, the research undertaken involved a range of designs and methods including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches. Furthermore, only two of the studies (WP2 and WP3) involved intervention development and testing. Thus, the criterion of intervention fidelity is only pertinent to WP2 and WP3. The metrics applied need to appropriately reflect the underlying epistemology of the research projects. Table 5-1 summarizes the documents reviewed for this evaluation, and the methods used by each project. Table 5-2 illustrates how criteria were applied to examine each WP project.

Table 5-1: Summary of WP projects research methods and documents reviewed for evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Package</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Context Assessment Approaches</th>
<th>Guiding frameworks and/or theories</th>
<th>Documents Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP1 – policy analysis</td>
<td>Retrospective, multiple explanatory case studies</td>
<td>Rich description of context for each policy</td>
<td>Multiple Streams Theory (Kingdon, 2011)</td>
<td>WP1 final report (Hämäläinen et al., 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 countries</td>
<td>Retrospective, multiple explanatory case studies</td>
<td>Rich description of context for each policy</td>
<td>Knowledge to Action (Graham et al., 2006)</td>
<td>Long and short versions of interview schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrospective, multiple explanatory case studies</td>
<td>Rich description of context for each policy</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis Satterfield (2009)</td>
<td>5 publications (Aro, Bertram, et al., 2015; Bertram et al., 2015; Castellani et al., 2016; Eklund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WP2 – Policy game (intervention study)  
3 countries  
Comparative explanatory case studies with mixed methods, before and after data collection**

Systems analysis of relevant policy network

Social science theories on organizational collaboration and change  
Knowledge to Action (Graham et al., 2006)  
Program theory  
RE-AIM framework (Glasgow, 2006)

WP2 final report (Van De Goor et al., 2015)  
WP2 unpublished data (Van De Goor et al., 2016)  
2 manuscripts to be submitted for publication

WP3 – Stewardship approach (intervention study)  
3 countries  
Comparative explanatory case studies (natural experiments) with mixed methods, before and after measures (3 sets of measures (pre, post and post))**

Context mapping, Needs assessment

Stewardship Approach (Satterfield et al., 2009)  
Knowledge to Action (Graham et al., 2006)  
RE-AIM framework (Glasgow, 2006)

WP3 final report (Aro, Radl-Karimi, et al., 2015a)  
WP3 unpublished data (Aro, Radl-Karimi, et al., 2015b)  
1 publication (Bertram et al., 2016)

WP4 – Delphi  
6 countries  
Development of indicators using SMART criteria and a multi-phase validation process

N/A

Typology for use of knowledge  
Knowledge to Action (Graham et al., 2006)

WP4 final report (Valente et al., 2016a)  
WP4 unpublished data (Valente et al., 2016b)  
1 publication (Valente, Castellani, Larsen, & Aro, 2014)

Notes:

*Publication provides an overview of methods for several work packages and some preliminary findings from WP1.

** With respect to the analysis of intervention outcomes, a before and after study was used to examine the policy game and stewardship interventions. Neither study included an external control or comparison group. Before and after measures were assessed. The purposeful sampling of cases ensured some heterogeneity in contextual conditions, setting, and natural policy experiments examined, thus enhancing the feasibility and utility of the approach.
Table 5-2: Application of Assessment Criteria Given Research Methods used by WPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Package</th>
<th>Criterion 1 Generalizability</th>
<th>Criterion 2 Scientific Validity</th>
<th>Criterion 3 Feasibility of results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What was assessed?</td>
<td>What is pertinent, given methods used?</td>
<td>What results were assessed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP1 – policy analysis</td>
<td>Analysis framework</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Purposeful sampling of policies and interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP2 – Policy game</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Generic policy game with standard elements.</td>
<td>Purposeful selection of policy case and stakeholders within each country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP3 – Stewardship</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Generic approach with some standard elements and substantial adaptation to local context.</td>
<td>Purposeful selection of natural case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP4 – Delphi</td>
<td>Generalizability of indicators</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Purposeful selection of participants at validation workshops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*External generalizability and scientific validity assessment*

Table 5-3 and Table 5-4 summarize external generalizability/transferability and scientific validity, respectively for each of the WPs. Some criteria did not apply given the methods used. In particular, several criteria were N/A for WP1 and WP4. For the external generalizability/transferability assessment, studies were strongest on the categories of B. intervention implementation and adaptation and D. maintaining and institutionalizing the intervention (but note that category D only applied to WP2 and WP3). Ratings were more mixed for the other two categories (Population representativeness and reach...
and outcomes for decision-making). All WPs met each of the scientific validity criteria. As noted in Table 5-4, there were particularly rich descriptions of operationalizing concepts (WP4), strategies used to reduce internal validity threats (WP1) and strategies used to strengthen the reliability of case studies (WP2 and WP3).

Table 5-3: Assessment of external generalizability and transferability of research undertaken by WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4 using scale adapted from Green & Glasgow (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>WP1 (Policy case studies)</th>
<th>WP2 (Policy game)</th>
<th>WP3 (Stewardship approach)</th>
<th>WP4 (Delphi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Population: Representativeness of target population, setting &amp; reach of intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Data presented on variations in participation rate and variations in composition of participants across cases.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Intended target audience for adoption (of results) is clearly described.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Intended target setting for adoption (of results) is clearly described.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Analysis provided of the baseline socio-demographic and ‘condition tested’ (health status) of evaluation participants versus non-participants.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 Baseline of participants was assessed</td>
<td>0 Baseline of participants was assessed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Intervention: Implementation &amp; adaptation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Data presented on consistency of implementation of intervention &amp; its different components.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Data presented on the level of training of experience required to deliver the programme or quality of implementation by different types of staff.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Information reported on whether/how the intervention is adapted across cases and the rationale for same.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>WP1 (Policy case studies)</td>
<td>WP2 (Policy game)</td>
<td>WP3 (Stewardship approach)</td>
<td>WP4 (Delphi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Data presented on mediating factors or processes (mechanisms) through which the intervention had an impact.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C Outcomes for decision making</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Reported outcomes assessed are comparable to other studies.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Additional outcomes of potential adverse impacts reported (e.g. variable impacts on vulnerable populations, potential misuse of indicators).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Authors demonstrated consideration of variation in reported health outcomes (key outcome of interest) by population sub-groups, or intervention setting/delivery staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Sensitivity analysis reported of dose–response/threshold level required to observe health effect (effect on key outcome of interest not proxies).</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Data on costs are presented. Standard economic/accounting methods used.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D Maintenance and institutionalisation of intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Long term effects reported (12 months or longer since exposure to the intervention).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Data reported on the sustainability (or reinvention or evolution) of programme implementation and intervention, at least 12 months after the formal evaluation.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>WP1 (Policy case studies)</th>
<th>WP2 (Policy game)</th>
<th>WP3 (Stewardship approach)</th>
<th>WP4 (Delphi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16a Drop-out rate/attrition rate reported.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b Data reported on attrition by baseline status of dropouts and analyses conducted of the representativeness of remaining sample at time of final follow-up (or main follow-up time point-as appropriate).</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Responses coded as follows (and using guide to assessment developed by the original authors of the tool): Large extent = 3, Some extent = 2, Unclear = 1, Not at all = 0, and N/A = not applicable

### Table 5-4: Assessment of scientific validity of research undertaken by WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Validity Criteria</th>
<th>WP1 (policy case studies)</th>
<th>WP2 (policy game)</th>
<th>WP3 (stewardship approach)</th>
<th>WP4 (Delphi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Construct Validity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Construct validity – concepts are operationalized using attributes and variables to make them measurable through empirical observations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Threats to construct validity identified (e.g. inadequate explication of constructs, construct confounding, confounding constructs with levels of constructs)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Strategies used to improve construct validity (e.g. multiple sources of evidence used, key informants asked to review the case study report, and a chain of evidence (audit trail for data) is maintained).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Internal validity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Validity Criteria</td>
<td>WP1 (policy case studies)</td>
<td>WP2 (policy game)</td>
<td>WP3 (stewardship approach)</td>
<td>WP4 (Delphi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Threats to internal validity identified (e.g. ambiguous temporal precedence, selection,</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history, maturation, instrumentation, and additive and interactive effects).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 One or more mitigation strategies used to reduce internal validity threats (use of</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methodological and data source triangulation (including cross-case comparisons, investigator and theory triangulation))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Case study reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WP1 (policy case studies)</th>
<th>WP2 (policy game)</th>
<th>WP3 (stewardship approach)</th>
<th>WP4 (Delphi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Threats to case study reliability identified (e.g. inconsistent application of protocols)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Strategies used to strengthen/ensure reliability of case studies (e.g. case study protocol created, case study database prepared and used, field procedures and guiding principles developed, rich description of context provided)</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. Integrates criteria described in section 5.2.1 of report.
2. Ratings used are: Yes (1 or more threats identified, 1 or more strategies used) or No (no threats, no strategies identified), N/A=not applicable. Two asterisks ** are used when this was identified as a strength of the WP.

Feasibility

A limitation to the assessment of feasibility is the lack of any costing data from the two intervention projects regarding the interventions or approaches used. There were no explicit stipulations in the DOW regarding costing the interventions or doing economic analysis. Both intervention studies provide solid preliminary evidence of approaches that appear to enhance the use of evidence in cross-sectoral policy decision making. As noted by in reports and publications, both interventions appear to be rather resource intensive, particularly when the developmental stages are taken into consideration (and these would need to be replicated) if the approaches were used elsewhere.

The input of stakeholders on the WP4 indicators suggests that they are feasible to implement. Based on our review of the indicators, we propose that some refinements in wording are still needed, and that
the indicators developed need to be compared to indicators arising from other developmental and validation studies (Kothari, Edwards, Hamel, & Judd, 2009; Kothari, MacLean, Edwards, & Hobbs, 2011). Validating a tool to examine the capacity of health organizations to use research. Such comparisons would help identify those indicators that are specific to policy-making and also new additions to the literature. Development of a checklist that incorporates indicators (such as that proposed by one of the REPOPA members during the recent annual meeting) would also increase their practical utility.

WP1 provides some useful inputs on analyses approaches that can be used to examine intersectoral policies and the details of one of these approaches has already been published (Castellani et al., 2016).

**Context Description**

The use of case study methods in several of the WPs yielded rich descriptions of context. These were informed by several approaches including context mapping, needs assessments and systems analysis. There are numerous indications in the reports and publications that these descriptors of context were appropriately used to adapt intervention processes during planning and implementation phases (WP2 and WP3). Context considerations also informed important aspects of the analytic processes used for WPs 1, 2 and 3.

For WP4, a SWOT analysis of indicators and other inputs from the national conferences yielded a number of country-specific considerations in the refinement and prioritization of indicators. In part, this was because different approaches and structures to support evidence-informed policy making were identified in the participating countries. This likely reflects differences not only in how researchers and decision-makers interact within countries, but also organizational differences, with a unique mix of individuals, coming from various organizations, participating in the workshops. Although there were many commonalities in stakeholders’ views about the indicators and a final set of indicators was developed through the Delphi process, the relevance of indicators to policy phases (agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation) did differ somewhat among participating countries (Valente et al., 2016b). Finally, there were some differences in viewpoints among country participants with respect to the potential relevance, and utility of the complex indicators.

**Gender**

The project DOW stipulated that “When it comes to research participants in the REPOPA [project], gender balance is one of the guiding principles in putting together research groups. Further, when selecting and analysing policies, an eye will be kept on potential gender issues in them.” Gender and gender balance were explicit considerations in the selection of policy case studies and/or participants for all of the studies. For example, the WP1 coding framework specifies considerations of sex and gender in the review of policies and there is some evidence of this provided in the WP1 final report (Hämäläinen et al., 2013) and publications (Aro, Bertram, et al., 2015; Bertram et al., 2015; Castellani et al., 2016; Eklund Karlsson, 2016; Hämäläinen et al., 2016). The interview guide for this study included questions such as “What kind of research evidence and other kind of evidence was used for vulnerable groups children, women, migrated, ethnicity, disabled, for example?” Nevertheless, and perhaps because gender is listed alongside other population sub-groups, it receives limited attention in the
write-up of study findings for WP1. For WP4, gender balance (as well as local/national representation and previous participation in Delphi rounds) were “respected” in the selection of national conference participants.

Sex disaggregation statistics for participants are not provided for any of the WP studies published thus far. However, WP final reports and WP unpublished raw data indicate that this information is available for some studies (e.g. unpublished raw data for WP4 (Valente et al., 2016b) provide sex of participants for both the panels and advisory boards for the study). However, the use of explicit frameworks for gender analysis is not evident in reports or publications.

5.4. Discussion

5.4.1. Summary of Strengths and Limitations

Key Strengths of WP Projects

WP Projects provide considerable value added. Key strengths are summarized below:

Overall, an examination of WP projects against established criteria for scientific validity and generalizability indicates a rigorous approach to the methods deployed. For all WPs, purposeful sampling yielded good heterogeneity in terms of the types of stakeholders and sectors involved. Descriptions of context were rich and informed by several processes (e.g. context mapping) developed uniquely for each WP.

Research on cross-sectoral policy making approaches remains sparse, yet the importance of effective cross-sectoral approaches has been emphasized in a plethora of government documents dating back to the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care (Gillam, 2008), the Adelaide Statement on Health for All policies (WHO & Government of South Australia, 2010) and more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.). WP1 yielded insights that may inform both practitioners (e.g. policy makers and other stakeholders working on cross-sectoral policy development) and researchers who are continuing to work in this field. It helps set the stage for research on cross-sectoral policy implementation, and makes explicit some critical considerations in facilitating cross-sectoral policy development approaches. These considerations are pertinent to a wider range of health issues, not just those in the field of physical activity.

Both WP2 and WP3 set out to use a context-informed adaptation of their intervention approaches. They provide clear distinctions between what was generic/standard and what required adaptation. Processes and inputs used in the adaptation processes are also described. Both of these projects provide strong illustrations of how to address the tension of standardizing form versus function in interventions (Hawe, Shiell, & Riley, 2004).

The use of actual (rather than hypothetical cases) strengthens the applicability of findings. WP 1 and WP3 used actual policy cases, which enhances the relevance of their findings. WP 2 (policy game), used an approach which had some hypothetical elements but insofar as possible incorporated actual roles of
stakeholders pertinent to both the intersectoral policy and provided a reality-informed description of the local and/or country context for the simulation. For both WP2 and 3, case examples used were highly pertinent to current policy discussions in each country.

WP 4 identified a set of measureable indicators, informed by a Delphi process and refined with input from stakeholders across six European countries. Processes used in both the conceptualization and refinement of indicators were robust. Discussions about the indicators during national conferences yielded some interesting insights regarding the use of evidence in policy across the EU country contexts.

**Key Limitations of WP Projects**

There were several limitations.

Although not a requirement of the DOW, the lack of any costing data or specific documentation of human resource requirements makes it difficult to assess the feasibility of adapting and using the interventions in other settings. This is a particularly pertinent limitation for both WP2 and 3. Second, gender considerations and analysis received limited and/or uneven attention. A more explicit set of overarching questions regarding gender and the use of a more explicit gender analysis framework across all four studies would have been useful.

Third, there was no attempt to identify a representative sample of communities/municipalities or of participants engaged in the intervention/stakeholder workshops for either WP2 or WP3. Neither would have been feasible. Municipalities that varied on a number of parameters were selected – this does help enhance transferability. However, due to the timelines of the project and given other pragmatic considerations, teams in each country opted to work primarily with municipalities where team members and/or the institution where they worked had pre-existing relationships with the municipal government or other government authorities. Thus, it is likely that team members were working with “early adopters” and some of the findings may only be transferable to other municipalities that are willing to engage (or already have relationships) with external researchers. With respect to stakeholder engagement, the aim was to support intersectoral processes. Therefore, it was entirely appropriate that those in formal positions of authority were invited to participate. The project did address conditions of heterogeneity, which are considered paramount in implementation science approaches (Edwards & Barker, 2014). While this heterogeneity might have been enhanced by selecting some municipalities without prior engagement of the university or of university researchers, it is likely that this would have further limited intervention implementation and may not have been feasible given the time and resource constraints for REPOPA.

Fourth, WP1 necessarily selected a retrospective set of policy cases for analysis and this, by default involved retrospective interviews with those who had been involved in the policy process. This limitation is offset, somewhat, by the breadth of policies reviewed, the range of European countries included, and the intersectoral nature of the policies examined. WP1 only looked at the phases of agenda setting and policy development, acknowledging that other phases of the policy process are also important. The analysis framework they developed could potentially be used in other studies but a more explicit description of the framework would enhance its replication or adaptation.
The second set of followup information for both the policy game (WP2) and the stewardship approach (WP3) revealed some challenges with the attrition of participants (non-responses at time 3) and also some deterioration in their responses following the intervention. Longer-term followup is important to inform questions of sustainability and while a second followup period 8-12 months post-intervention is longer than most studies, results suggest that an even longer period of followup would be useful. Results also suggest the need for a more robust and possibly multi-faceted intervention. This is not surprising given the many pressures on the time of decision-makers and the lack of institutionalization of evidence-informed processes within their respective organizations. Scaling-up efforts are needed to try and institutionalize what appear to be some promising changes in their use of evidence from WP2 and WP3.

The actual use of research evidence by WP2 and WP3 may be considered a limitation. However, both studies highlight the range of evidence used by decision-makers, only a portion of this being research evidence. These findings are complemented by findings from WP1 suggesting that the explicit use of evidence in written policies is most apparent in the discussion of the underlying problem and in the justification for the policy.

WP4 provides some promising indicators for EIPM. Those which were least developed were in a sub-category of “complex indicators”. These warrant development given the nature of intersectoral decision-making.

5.4.2. Data Gaps and Areas for Further Research

Data gaps and areas for further research include:

- What is the combined impact of the policy game and the stewardship approach, particularly in settings where cross-sectoral collaboration is very weak (i.e. vertical silos of decision-making are strong)?
- Do those involved in the evidence-informed policy interventions such as those tested in the REPOPA initiative replicate/apply their learning and approaches to other policies and domains of work?
- What organizational structures are required to support these kinds of approaches?
- Does the one-day intervention of a policy game provide the necessary “force” to change collaborative behaviour and decision-making processes? How might it complement other approaches to engage policy makers such as those involved in deliberative dialogues?

5.4.3. Situating REPOPA Research in Field of Science on Evidence Informed Policy

The field of evidence informed program planning and policy making has advanced considerably, although many implementation gaps remain. El-Jardali et al. (2012), for instance, in their study of 10 eastern Mediterranean countries found that lack of timely evidence, lack of budgets to support identification of relevant evidence, lack of supporting administrative infrastructure, and lack of collaboration with researchers were among the deterrents to evidence-informed policy.
Brownson, Fielding, & Maylahn (2009) and Oliver et al. (2014) describe an abundance of literature examining barriers and facilitators to evidence informed approaches in public health. Oliver et al. (2014) noted a wider range of policy topics being covered in recent literature. Barriers to evidence uptake most commonly reported were “poor access to good quality relevant research, and lack of timely research output. The most frequently reported facilitators were collaboration between researchers and policymakers, and improved relationships and skills” (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 1). These findings are consistent with an earlier review (Innvaer, Vist, Trommald, & Oxman, 2002), which concluded that while there has been an increase in research evaluating models for and interventions to improve the use of evidence (e.g. evaluations of knowledge brokerage), robust definitions of policies and policy-makers were often missing and empirical data about policy processes and policy implementation are sparse.

Clearly, there is still much to be understood regarding interventions that can support and advance the use of research evidence within policy. REPOPA’s focus on meta-policies and cross-sectoral decision making helps to advance an important area of research that has received limited attention. Methods developed for the meta-analysis of policies provide an additional contribution to this field.

Various interventions have been used to try and enhance the use of evidence in practice and policy. Earlier interventions included capacity development initiatives such as training. These have been enhanced by the development of tools. Jacobs, Jones, Gabella, Spring, & Brownson (2012) provides and inventory of tools that have been developed in support of evidence-based approaches. Among these tools are training modules, program planning frameworks, policy tracking and surveillance tools, evidence-based guidelines and economic evaluation approaches. Although both program planning and policy making have been the subject of inquiry for evidence-informed approaches, in public health, the latter has received less attention than the former. REPOPA has a number of tools to add to what already exists.

Other, more recent approaches to advance the use of evidence in policy include setting up supportive infrastructure such as institutional nodes for research and/or knowledge translation (El-Jardali et al., 2015) or establishing data portals (e.g. IFACARA in Tanzania, http://www.ihi.or.tz/research-1).

Organizationally-directed interventions (Stetler, Ritchie, Rycroft-Malone, Schultz, & Charns, 2009) have helped to institutionalize evidence-based practice. Various approaches have been developed (Cochrane, n.d.) to support institutionalization such as the use of evidence briefs (Chambers & Wilson, 2012), deliberative policy dialogues; (Boyko, Lavis, Abelson, Dobbins, & Carter, 2012), and simulation modelling (Basu & Kiernan, 2016). The REPOPA intervention studies complement these approaches.

The K2Action framework (Graham et al., 2006) that underlay the WPs for REPOPA, has been used extensively, particularly for adoption of clinical practice guidelines. Recognizing the need to adapt guidelines to local contextual conditions, facilitated approaches have been used to foster local engagement and adaptation. However, these have proven resource intensive and required expert facilitation and involved an extended period of time (approximately 2 years) (Harrison et al., 2013). Both the stewardship approach and the policy game suggest that more intensive interventions are needed and questions arise as to the role of facilitators in this approach. They extend some of this work by shifting it into the policy arena, and notably the arena of intersectoral policy development.
There is a great deal of literature on how to review and use evidence (Lavis, Permanand, Oxman, Lewin, & Fretheim, 2009; Lewin et al., 2012), how to prepare systematic reviews with more utility for policy users (Lavis et al., 2005). The importance of taking context into account in the review of evidence (Luoto, Shekelle, Maglione, Johnsen, & Perry, 2014) and in the preparation of evidence summaries has received increasing attention over the past five years (Rosenbaum et al., 2011). However, there are only limited accounts as to the “how” of contextualizing approaches. REPOPA brings a set of approaches to contextualizing evidence-informed policy making that is promising.

While prior work has identified a number of indicators that may be used to assess evidence-informed processes within health care organizations (Kothari et al., 2009, 2011), the REPOPA work package on indicators provides additional concrete measures of how, in the policy context, supports for evidence-informed decision-making can be assessed.

### 6. Project Working Processes

In this section, we examine the project’s working process. We describe our methods (data sources and analysis). This is followed with a presentation of findings: response rates for surveys and interviews, a documentation and activity analysis, and findings related to Consortium implementation and responses strategies to mitigate risks and challenges, internal project collaboration and communication, junior researcher capacity building, internal project networks, and Consortium networks with external policy stakeholders. In the discussion, we highlight the key strengths and weaknesses of project implementation.

#### 6.1. Methods

**Collaboration survey**

A collaboration survey was delivered to all Consortium members annually from 2013-2016 via Survey Monkey. Members were asked to rate their level of agreement with 34 positively-worded statements on a six-point Likert scale about Consortium communication, collaboration, knowledge translation, project management, and evaluation. Consortium members could rate their agreement with these statements as either strongly disagree (score of 1), mostly disagree (score of 2), somewhat disagree (score of 3), somewhat agree (score of 4), mostly agree (score of 5), or strongly agree (score of 6). Mean scores were calculated, and compared year-to-year. A Mann-Whitney U Test was performed on the collaboration survey results to identify significant changes between 2013 and 2016.

**Junior researcher survey**

A junior researcher competency self-assessment survey was delivered annually from 2013-2016 via Survey Monkey to all Consortium members that were trainees (i.e. enrolled in degree programs (bachelor, master or doctorate) or postdoctoral fellows). In this survey, all junior researchers were asked to rate their level of improvement in the previous year, in 27 competencies and skills related to research
methods, knowledge translation, evaluation, research writing, project management and communications, and mentorship. Responses were no improvement (score of 1), minimal improvement (score of 2), or major improvement (score of 3). Mean scores were calculated, and any competencies with a mean score in the top third of the range (above 2.33) was considered to have seen a major improvement in that year.

**Social network mapping survey**

The network mapping survey was administered to all Consortium members via Survey Monkey on an annual basis from 2013-2016. The internal networks portion of the survey asked respondents to indicate the frequency of scientific contact that they had with each of the other Consortium members over the last year. The internal networks were analysed using UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002) to determine the clustering coefficient (the number of connections over the total possible connections), average shortest path (the mean of the shortest possible path length between any two Consortium members), network diameter (the longest of all the shortest path that exist in the network), and node degree distribution (the distribution of the number of connections each Consortium member has) for each year of data. Network maps were made using NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002) to help visualize the REPOPA network.

The external stakeholder portion of the survey asked respondents to list the physical activity stakeholders that they had contact with over the last year, whether as part of REPOPA or not, and to answer questions about each stakeholder’s sector, level of impact, and importance to the REPOPA member. The survey tool allowed for a maximum of 10 stakeholders, but Consortium members were invited to send more by email if applicable. Data were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and the composition of external stakeholder characteristics compared year-to-year.

**Interviews with WP and country teams**

Consortium members were invited to participate in team interviews via Skype on an annual basis from 2013 to 2016. In 2013, these interviews were carried out with country teams, as these comprised the major unit of work teams in the first year. From 2014 to 2016, interviews were conducted by work package, as this was a better reflection of the division of work in these years. Interviews covered topics including consortium diversity, stakeholder engagement, REPOPA knowledge products and dissemination products, and priorities for upcoming work. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were categorically coded by the WP5 team. In accordance with uOttawa ethics requirements, individual names, countries, and WPs were anonymized for any interview quotations included in public reports such as this one.

**Document review**

We conducted an annual review of project documents available on the internal project SharePoint website. Documents were examined for topics relating to project and WP milestones and deliverables, management strategies, and implementation challenges. Documents reviewed included REPOPA periodic reports to the EC, WP interim and final reports, six-month internal scientific and dissemination
6.2. Findings

6.2.1. Response Rates to Evaluation Tools

Responses to interviews and survey tools are summarized in Table 6-1. Comparisons are provided across the four years of data collection.

Table 6-1: Evaluation tool response rates, 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment tool</th>
<th>2013 Response rate (# of participants/# eligible to participate)</th>
<th>2014 Response rate (# of participants/# eligible to participate)</th>
<th>2015 Response rate (# of participants/# eligible to participate)</th>
<th>2016 Response rate (# of participants/# eligible to participate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with work package teams</td>
<td>n=10 interviews: 4 team interviews (average length 64 minutes)</td>
<td>n=6 interviews: 5 WP team interviews (average length 64 minutes)</td>
<td>n=8 interviews: 5 WP team interviews (average length: 68 minutes)</td>
<td>n=8 interviews: 5 WP team interviews (average length: 72 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 individual interviews (average length 39 minutes)</td>
<td>1 country team interview on a single WP topic (length 37 minutes)</td>
<td>2 country team interviews on a WP topic (average length: 52 minutes)</td>
<td>1 country team interview on a WP topic (length: 94 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 sets of written responses</td>
<td>Response rate: Representation from 100% of country and WP teams</td>
<td>Response rate: Representation from 100% of country and WP teams</td>
<td>Response rate: Representation from 100% of country and WP teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response rate: Representation from 100% of country teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration survey</td>
<td>N=21/30 Response rate: 70.0%</td>
<td>N=20/26 Response rate: 77%</td>
<td>N=26/27 Response rate: 96.3%</td>
<td>N=19/22 Response rate: 86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network mapping survey</td>
<td>Internal: N=28/33 Response rate: 84.8%</td>
<td>Internal: N=24/27 Response rate: 89%</td>
<td>Internal: N=29/33 Response rate: 87.9%</td>
<td>Internal: N=22/26 Response rate: 84.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2. Project Documentation and Activity Analysis

Fulfillment of WP implementation schedule v. the DOW

All seven WPs were implemented in accordance with start and end dates listed in DOW, with the exception of WP4, as per Table 6-2.

Early in project implementation, the project sought and obtained approval from the EC to advance the start date for WP4 from Month 40 to Month 28, in response to WP4 concerns about needing additional time to develop and implement Delphi and national conference activities. The expanded timeframe was fully used by WP4 to fully refine its research protocol, conduct the Delphi and national conferences, and produce a key output, an agreed multi-country slate of EIPM indicators.

Table 6-2: WP implementation schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WP</th>
<th>Implementation schedule</th>
<th>Month due</th>
<th>Month delivered</th>
<th>Divergence from DOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP1</td>
<td>WP1 Start</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP1 End</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP2</td>
<td>WP2 Start</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP2 End</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP3</td>
<td>WP3 Start</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP3 End</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP4</td>
<td>WP4 Start</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>EC approval to start 17 months early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP4 End</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP5</td>
<td>WP5 Start</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP5 End</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6</td>
<td>WP6 Start</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP6 End</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP7</td>
<td>WP7 Start</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP7 End</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>On schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Status of Project Deliverables & Milestones

The project met all six milestones and all 11 deliverables listed in the DOW, and these were submitted on time to the EC (see Table 6-3). Appropriate internally-agreed processes were followed regarding approval by the Consortium prior to each submission.

Table 6-3: Delivery of Milestones and Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WP</th>
<th>Deliverables &amp; Milestones</th>
<th>Month due</th>
<th>Month delivered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP1</td>
<td>MS3: REPOPA framework and indicators</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D1.1: WP1 Final Report - Role of evidence in policymaking</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP2</td>
<td>MS4: Preparatory phase done</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D2.1: WP2 Interim Report on the game simulation tool, feasibility and process of the intervention in across sectors</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D2.2: WP2 Final Report - Game simulation intervention</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP3</td>
<td>MS5: Preparatory phase done</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D3.1: WP3 Interim Report – Results of the Stewardship-based intervention</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP4</td>
<td>MS6: Country teams selected and trained, Delphi instrument ready</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D4.1: WP3 Interim Report on the ongoing Delphi process on the feasibility, acceptance and feedback from the stakeholders</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D4.2: WP3 Final Report – Delphi-based implementation and guidance development</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP5</td>
<td>MS1: Initial evaluation plan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D5.1: WP5 Final Report- REPOPA evaluation and impact report</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6</td>
<td>MS2: Dissemination Plan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D6.1: WP6 Midterm Report on dissemination activities, country platforms, and repository functions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D6.2: WP6 Final Report – Dissemination, monitoring and research into policy repository</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP7</td>
<td>D7.1: REPOPA Website Description</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3. Consortium and WP Management

Consortium management and administration

Administrative hurdles: The project successfully navigated several unexpected administrative hurdles over its five years. These required substantial unanticipated time from the Coordinator to negotiate the
legal, financial, and research implications for the project resulting from one partner’s termination and another partner’s bankruptcies:

- Termination of one beneficiary’s (UK) involvement in the Consortium;
- Two bankruptcies by beneficiaries (NL);
- Adding in a sub-contract to a consultant (UK expert) to ensure fulfillment of intended work given loss of UK beneficiary who was to be involved in WP4;
- Managing four amendments to the DOW;

**Internal Consortium processes:** Two documents required by the DOW (Consortium agreement and Internal ethics guidance document) were agreed and adhered to by the Consortium. Ethics clearance was appropriately obtained by all partners, who subsequently published an article on REPOPA experiences with varying country-specific approaches to research ethics. Several additional Consortium documents were developed to supplement and strengthen internal project processes, including guidelines and templates for project communication, scientific publications, dissemination, and reporting, as listed in Table 6-4. A common internal website (password-protected SharePoint) ensured all project members could readily access and upload common project and WP documents.

**EC periodic reports:** Three periodic reports to the EC were submitted by REPOPA. Each reporting cycle yielded learnings that improved EC acceptance timelines and coupled with good internal communication processes led to the 2nd and 3rd periodic report being accepted by the EC on first submission. Reporting challenges included coordinating internally consistent reporting from 10 institutions, each with differing institutional reporting approaches, and sometimes long response delays to questions raised by the Coordinator to the EC.

### Table 6-4: Internal Consortium agreements and guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Status of required documents</th>
<th>Additional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consortium agreement</td>
<td>Signed by all partners</td>
<td>• On SharePoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant agreement</td>
<td>Signed by SDU as a coordinator accepted by all partners</td>
<td>• On SharePoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical clearance</td>
<td>Internal ethics guidance document prepared and followed</td>
<td>• All WP and institutional ethics approvals or authorization to proceed are on file, on SharePoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPOPA SharePoint</td>
<td></td>
<td>SDU-hosted password-protected website accessible to all Consortium members, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Project documents – DOW, ethics approvals, deliverables and milestones, reports, meetings documents, publication plans, WP folders, REPOPA newsletters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal communication documents (SharePoint)</td>
<td>Accepted by all partners</td>
<td>• REPOPA Internal and external communication guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reporting guides and documents (SharePoint)
- Consortium partner contact details
- Project steering committee decision documents

### Dissemination templates and documents (SharePoint)
- REPOPA internal guide to EC periodic reporting
- Templates for EC periodic reports
- Templates for 6-month internal reporting (scientific, dissemination)
- Templates for PowerPoint presentations, REPOPA logo, posters, email signatures, project flyer
- REPOPA publication guidelines for peer-reviewed publications
- Publication plans for WPs 1-6
- WP6 (dissemination) deliverables and activities plan

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**Annual Consortium and WP leader meetings:** Five annual Consortium meetings were held of approximately 2.5 days each, and were consistently attended by representatives from all countries and WPs. Meeting content covered essential topics including WP research, project dissemination, and Consortium management issues. Agenda were agreed with Consortium and circulated in advance, and minutes were finalized after participants’ review. Meeting locations alternated every year to allow partner countries the opportunity to host the meeting and familiarize Consortium participants with the differing project contexts. To this end, meetings always featured a presentation from a senior country policymaker to discuss current EIPM issues with the team. During the last year of the project, the Coordinator organized regular “WP leader” skype meetings as a forum for joint planning of the end-of-project symposium in Brussels.

*We’ve initiated now WP leader meetings…. that is one way to facilitate this multidisciplinary [approach] across Work Packages. (WP interview)*

**Final project symposium:** The final project meeting was held in Brussels and included a one-day symposium involving two external stakeholders from each country, the EC project officer, and international representatives. Informal participant feedback indicated that the event successfully engaged Consortia members and external stakeholders through country presentations on EIPM and a world (learning) café. It helped to deepen stakeholders’ understanding of EIPM issues and introduce them to REPOPA outputs. Internal project matters were addressed during pre- and post-symposium meetings.

### 6.2.4. Implementation Challenges

The project experienced four main implementation challenges:

**Repercussions from unexpected loss of beneficiaries**
Two countries (UK, NL) were confronted with hurdles relating to the unexpected withdrawal of institutional partners, presenting significant challenges to Consortium work plans. The original UK beneficiary organization was required by the Consortium to legally withdraw from the project when it became clear they were not able to fulfill their contractual and financial commitments. The Netherlands experienced two consecutive bankruptcies, resulting in a loss of team members who had been heavily involved in WP3 and WP4 research, and a loss of some WP3 qualitative interview data (due to institutional bankruptcy consequences that were, out of REPOPA control). All three of these institutions were from outside academia, and had brought to the project the potential of working directly with policy stakeholders in the healthcare and governance.

While involvement of non-academic institutional partners had been valued by the project given its focus on linking research to real-life policymaking processes, the events surfaced difficulties in working with sometimes turbulent socio-economic and political contexts.

*It's very good to work in the real life setting...but it always also generates more difficulties in the research projects... It's very difficult to plan ahead for three, four, five years ..... Things are changing and happening in this field in [WP interview]*

Implications for the project included: a lack of UK dissemination of WP1 policy analysis findings; potential loss of UK stakeholder perspectives in the WP4 EIPM indicator development process (threat ameliorated, see Table 6-5); increased human resource constraints for the NL team to complete WP3 analysis and disseminate and organize the WP4 national conference after their country team size had halved; knock-on effect constraining NL involvement in WP3 publications (departed team members had worked most directly with WP3 stakeholders); administrative burden for Coordinator office to negotiate four amendments with EC.

*We did get the results that we wanted to. But the problem is that those [WP1-UK] results are sitting on somebody's desk gathering dust because nobody's going to publish them or disseminate them in any sort of way. [WP interview]*

**Team vulnerabilities**

Team size, shifts in team membership, and timing of project involvement varied across the six European country settings and created some vulnerabilities for the project. Beginning with its first annual process evaluations, WP5 flagged to the Consortium potential concerns for project implementation arising from WP or country teams which were: small in size or lost members (e.g. due to beneficiary withdrawals); had to deal with temporary or permanent changes in members and team roles; or had non-continuous rather than continuous engagement in project activities. WP5 analysis of internal Consortium networks (see section 6.2.7) revealed that certain country teams were particularly isolated (few or limited connections across the breadth of the Consortium).

Most country and WP teams spoke during interviews of challenges related to handover issues and leadership gaps arising from temporary or permanent changes in member involvement, particularly with the specificity of knowledge about tailored interventions. Two countries were identified as vulnerable
because their contracted involvement in the project came at the beginning (WP1) and the end (WP4) of the project, with no explicit project engagement in between.

It's a challenge...there's a lot of tacit knowledge... there are very specific activities and it's difficult to hand it over to someone else. (WP interview)

_Constrained project resources (human resources and financial) relative to project scope_

While the project budget approved in the DOW was expected to adequately fund project work, in reality several of the partner institutions repeatedly noted resource constraints as a limitation. Person-months required by the Coordinator to fulfill project administrative and management activities went beyond EC budgetary contributions for administrative responsibilities, but were contributed regardless, as an in-kind contribution. One of the beneficiaries substantially exceeded his contracted hours in order to bring work he considered of high scientific relevance to completion.  

_WP sequencing and member overlap enhanced science but heightened work pressures_

The original project schedule had planned for two short but intensive periods of overlapping work package activities of five months each, during which time there would be three RTD WPs simultaneously active (Months 15-20 involving WPs 1, 2, and 3; and Months 40-45 involving WPs 2, 3, and 4). Advancing the start date for WP4 by 17 months, while agreed by the Consortium and approved by the EC, substantially heightened work pressures for several countries. The revised project schedule extended the second period of overlapping WPs from 5 months to 17 straight months (Months 28-45 for WPs 2, 3, and 4). The impact differed by country: Denmark and the Netherlands were involved in all three RTD WPs, while Romania and Italy were engaged in two. The challenge was especially marked for the Netherlands, which had a much smaller country team than other countries (particularly after two successive bankruptcies of institutional partners), and was also responsible for leading WP2.

A number of Consortium members spoke about the intertwined successes and challenges relating to implementing a complex, intensive, multi-year project, striving to achieve programmatic synergies and accomplish the ambitious scope of work.

It's really a complex project and having the same persons and many work packages just mean[s] that we are busy with new things all the time, that’s been a challenge and also just getting all the connections with the people that we wanted involved, taking care of those connections, that’s really time consuming. (WP interview)

So it is really a challenge to coordinate different disciplines, different ambitions, different collaborative willingness... so that we could find the common direction, level

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1 This was also the experience of the Canadian team implementing the WP5 evaluation work package.
of ambition in the work, and also keep some effective scientific reporting going on 
(WP interview)

Project response to implementation challenges

The Consortium responded to implementation challenges with a range of formal and informal strategies, as shown in Table 6-5.

Table 6-5: Implementation challenges, strategies to address challenges and outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Project strategy</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Loss of beneficiaries: potential for incomplete research and/or dissemination compared to original plans for data collection and analysis and dissemination for WPs 1-4. | • Invitation extended to former UK team member to co-author publication to disseminate WP1 country findings  
• NL team extended themselves to complete work for WP2, 3, and 4; hired former member to assist with WP4 final activities.  
• WP4: Sub-contract to former UK team member established to carry out UK Delphi and national conference. | • Publication interest expressed for WP1 UK manuscript; outcome will not be evident until after project end-date.  
• WP3 analysis completed though some remaining gaps due to loss of some qualitative data (beyond REPOPA control)  
• Successful completion of WP4 Delphi and national conferences in all 6 countries. UK stakeholders’ perspectives were included in EIPM indicators. |
| Team vulnerabilities: small country or WP teams, non-continuous project engagement | • Provide junior researchers (PhDs, postdocs) with opportunity to co-lead WPs, or take on larger WP coordination role  
• Proactively strengthen connections with small teams  
• Hire former members as temporary replacements when possible. One former member hired for last few months of project as maternity leave replacement | • WP leads deliberately increased communication with small teams.  
• Two former members were brought on a short-term personnel (maternity leave replacement or as consultant). Their pre-existing project familiarity allowed them to more easily step in to complete work.  
• Several junior researchers took on greater leadership and coordination responsibilities. |
6.2.5. Internal Consortium Collaboration and Communication

The annual (2013-2016) results of the 35-item collaboration survey are shown in Table 6-6. In the first year of REPOPA, the collaboration items had the lowest average scores (4.61) while the evaluation scores were highest (4.88). Between 2013 and 2016, there were improvements in scores (defined as a difference score of .10 or more between year 1 and year 4) for 5/6 communication items, 3/7 collaboration items, 4/7 knowledge translation items and 2/3 evaluation items (only 3 of the 10 evaluation items were assessed each of the four years). During this same period, there were declines in project management scores for 5/5 items. However, statistically significant improvements in mean scores were only observed for two of the statements:

1. “I have had sufficient opportunities to lead or join REPOPA writing teams” improved from a mean score of 4.72 in 2013 to a mean score of 5.44 in 2016 (p=0.011);

2. “I have successfully involved graduate students in the activities of my WP” improved from a mean score of 3.65 in 2013 to a mean score of 5.10 in 2016 (p=0.025).

There were no statistically significant declines in mean scores between 2013 and 2016.
### Table 6-6: Collaboration survey findings, 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication within the Consortium</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When my WP team circulated documents to other WPs to get their input, we received adequate feedback from them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was given enough time to provide feedback when documents were sent to me for review.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to easily access Consortium documents I needed such as annual REPOPA meeting information and scientific and financial reporting templates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received timely updates from other WPs and the Coordinator about REPOPA activities/findings pertinent to my WP work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received and read summaries of WP findings relevant to my country.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have contributed by suggesting resources (articles) to share with other Consortium members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration within the Consortium</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have gained new insights from REPOPA colleagues in other WPs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have gained new insights from REPOPA colleagues from other countries.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REPOPA structure helped us work as a strong team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REPOPA structure capitalized on our diversity of skills, organizations, and countries.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My formal research networks have grown as a result of my REPOPA involvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had sufficient opportunities to lead or join REPOPA writing teams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have successfully involved graduate students in the activities of my WP.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REPOPA Knowledge Translation**
### REPOPA Evaluation and Impact Report

#### Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having multiple countries involved in the REPOPA Consortium has increased the impact of REPOPA activities.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPOPA activities in my country have created new networks among researchers and policy makers.</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPOPA activities in my country have strengthened existing networks among researchers and policy makers.</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My country’s context was appropriately reflected in how WPs analyzed and interpreted data.</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My REPOPA country team successfully disseminated REPOPA findings to external policy stakeholders in my country.</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My REPOPA country team successfully disseminated REPOPA findings to other researchers in my country.</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPOPA has successfully disseminated REPOPA findings to the international arena.</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### REPOPA Project Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My institution had sufficient REPOPA funds to adequately undertake the WP activities I was involved in.</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution had sufficient REPOPA human resources to adequately undertake the WP activities I was involved in.</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the most recent annual REPOPA Consortium meeting, we covered all the necessary topics to allow our WP team to move ahead.</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the most recent annual REPOPA Consortium meeting, we spent sufficient time discussing pertinent research issues of each WP.</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the most recent annual REPOPA Consortium meeting, we spent sufficient time discussing administrative issues.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### REPOPA Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of the WPs I was involved in.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of WP 7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the progress of REPOPA activities in my country.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The WP5 evaluation activities provided useful feedback for our WP.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The WP5 evaluation activities provided timely feedback for our WP.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

Mean scores of agreement with each statement. The possible range of agreement to each statement was strongly disagree (score of 1), mostly disagree (score of 2), somewhat disagree (score of 3), somewhat agree (score of 4), mostly agree (score of 5), or strongly agree (score of 6).

### 6.2.6. Junior Researcher Capacity Building

A total of 12 junior researchers were linked to the project at different points in time. The annual breakdown of junior researchers by degree enrollment and gender is provided in Table 6-7. Researchers were predominantly female. Most were postdocs or PhD trainees. They were involved in all WPs at some point in the project.

**Table 6-7: Junior researcher involvement in REPOPA, 2013-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Junior Researcher</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postdoc</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender breakdown</td>
<td>8 female</td>
<td>6 female</td>
<td>5 female</td>
<td>5 female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 male</td>
<td>1 male</td>
<td>1 male</td>
<td>1 male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The junior researcher competency self-assessment provided a summary of skills junior researchers developed in each year of the project, with skills showing major improvement (a mean score in the top third of the range, i.e. above 2.33 on the scale of 1-3) across all participants in at least one year of the project identified with a checkmark in Table 6-8.

The skills for which the greatest improvements were documented varied from year to year as work packages entered different stages of the research and dissemination process, providing junior researchers with different types of learning opportunities. Across all project years, respondents most often described improvements in specific research methods and competencies and least often identified improvements in either knowledge translation or evaluation skills. Improvements in writing skills were most notable in the final year of REPOPA.

**Table 6-8: Competencies of junior researchers showing major improvement, 2013-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Categories</th>
<th>Research Competencies</th>
<th>Evaluation year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2013 (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methods</td>
<td>Analyzing existing health policies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competencies</td>
<td>Conducting qualitative interviews with decision-makers</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing qualitative interview data</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using game simulation methods to explore the policy development process (WP2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a Delphi process (WP4)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting stakeholder mapping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Tailoring dissemination strategies to different audiences</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>translation skills</td>
<td>Identifying key policy stakeholders for the research project</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging policy makers during the research process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation skills</td>
<td>Assessing whether policy stakeholders are using research findings and knowledge</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>products (e.g. policy briefs, articles)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on REPOPA evaluation results to make adjustments to our work</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing skills to manage a research project</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Research writing, project management, and communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Initial Improvement</th>
<th>Additional Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using common authorship and publication guidelines/principles</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a manuscript with other co-authors</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing reports for the EU Commission</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making presentations at research conferences</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentorship</strong></td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating the mentorship process with a more senior researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of items with significant increases in mean scores of 2.33 or more**

| 7 | 9 | 4 | 11 |

*Note:*

Major improvement in any given competency is considered to be a mean score above 2.33 on a scale of 1-3.

### 6.2.7. Internal Consortium Networks

The strength of connections among and across members of the six country teams are shown in Figure 6-1, illustrating the changes in network strength that occurred in the REPOPA Consortium over the course of the four years of evaluation.

Notable differences across the years include a general increase in the strength of connections (frequency of scientific contact) from 2013 through 2015, with somewhat weaker connections in 2016. There was also a change from strong connections in 2013 that were centered on the country teams interacting with the Coordinator team, to strong connections between multiple country teams as the work packages have evolved in 2014 through 2016. The Canadian team, as evaluators with limited involvement in other WPs, consistently had weaker connections with the rest of the Consortium than other countries.
Figure 6-1 Internal Networks - Connectedness of REPOPA Country Teams, 2013-2016
While there were some increases in the average strength of internal REPOPA connections from 2013-2016 (Figure 6-1), both the clustering coefficient and average shortest path did not show much change through the four years of evaluation (Table 6-9), suggesting few changes in the tightness of the REPOPA network through the project. The network diameter did fall from 3 to 2 in the final year of the project (Table 6-9), though this may be associated with having fewer outlier members as the Consortium had become smaller by 2016.

Table 6-9: REPOPA Consortium internal network measures, 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clustering Coefficient (0=no connections, 1=fully connected)</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Shortest Path (± St Dev)</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.5</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.5</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.5</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Diameter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the node degree distribution (Table 6-10) did not show much variation from year-to-year, with the exception of 2015, which had higher minimum and mean connections than other years, indicating an increase in the frequency of scientific communication among members in that year of the project. This is consistent with the increase in the strength of connections seen in 2015 (see Figure 6-1).

Table 6-10: REPOPA Consortium internal network node degree distribution measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution Measure</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max possible</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (70.6% of max)</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (70.1% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (83.1% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (74.8% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Dev (21.9% of max)</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Dev (21.4% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Dev (15.1% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Dev (20.3% of max)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.8. Networks with External Policy Stakeholders

External policy stakeholder characteristics varied in each year of the project as the needs of REPOPA members changed, as seen in the increasing variety of stakeholders’ sectors of impact in Figure 6-2. Notably, from 2013 to 2016, there was a shift in sectors from single (health or other sector) to multiple sectors. Only 1.2% of external stakeholders were identified as multiple sector in year 1; this increased to 33% in 2016. There was a slight increase in the involvement of citizen groups by year 2016, although compared to others stakeholders, this was only a small proportion of external stakeholders identified by Consortium members. As shown in Figure 6-3, the primary external stakeholders impacted over the
years of the project shifted from predominantly local/municipal to national and international. In 2013 and 2014, the proportion of municipal stakeholders was 52.2% and 60.3%, respectively. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of national and international stakeholders was 45.2% and 60.9% respectively. Figure 6-4 also shows a change. The primary benefits of working with external stakeholders identified by REPOPA members shifted from an emphasis on understanding the policy context in 2013 to providing access to decision-makers and helping to disseminate research findings in 2015 and 2016.
Figure 6-2 Consortium’s external stakeholders – primary sector of impact from REPOPA perspective, 2013-2016

2013

- 38.4%
- 7.0%
- 1.2%
- 2.3%

2014

- 32.4%
- 17.6%
- 13.2%
- 22.1%

2015

- 38.4%
- 9.6%
- 5.5%
- 1.4%

2016

- 33.3%
- 8.9%
- 6.7%
- 6.7%

Legend:
- Government - health sector
- Government - other sector
- Academia
- NGO
- Citizen group
- Politician
- Funding agency
- Multiple Sectors
- Missing Response
- Other
Figure 6-3 Consortium’s external stakeholders – primary level of impact from REPOPA perspective, 2013-2016
Figure 6-4 Consortium’s external stakeholders – primary benefit to REPOPA members, 2013-2016

- Helps me understand the policy context for my work
- Helps me disseminate my research findings
- Helps me identify other stakeholders
- Provides access to decision-makers
- Helps me gain political support for my research findings
- Gives me feedback on scientific aspects of my work
- Other
- Missing Response

2013:
- 52.9%
- 10.6%
- 9.6%
- 3.8%
- 3.8%
- 10.6%
- 4.8%

2014:
- 33.3%
- 8.3%
- 6.9%
- 19.4%
- 22.2%
- 1.4%
- 2.8%

2015:
- 24.1%
- 8.9%
- 19.0%
- 20.3%
- 19.0%
- 7.6%
- 2.5%

2016:
- 31.1%
- 42.2%
- 4.4%
- 17.8%
- 4.4%
- 4.4%
- 4.4%
Engaging external stakeholders across WPs

Each of the RTD work packages (WPs 1-4) worked with external stakeholders in different ways through their research process. As described in Table 6-11, all countries participated in at least two of the research WPs, with two countries (Denmark and the Netherlands) involved in all four of these WPs. While every WP and intervention had a different focus and involved varying groups of stakeholders, the overlap among countries and WPs presented teams with the potential to develop network synergies between participant networks, and to continue engagement of some stakeholders over the project period.

Table 6-11: Country team involvement in REPOPA work packages (WPs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>WP1</th>
<th>WP2</th>
<th>WP3</th>
<th>WP4</th>
<th>WP5</th>
<th>WP6</th>
<th>WP7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ LEAD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Since project involvement by the original UK institutional partner was terminated in 2014, UK involvement in WP4 and WP6 was through a former UK later taken on as a beneficiary.

Many country teams reported that their networks with external stakeholders continued to develop as the project unfolded. The extent to which teams were able to use each subsequent WP to engage and re-engage external stakeholders varied by setting and depended in part on the level that each WP intervention was aimed at (e.g. municipal or national) and the national policymaking processes.

Our network of researchers [and] policy makers, both on local level and on national level has been growing from the beginning... Some come from Work Package 3 and some come from Work Package 2. (WP interview)

Some people came to disseminations of presentations at our national conferences and work from the activities and were interested. And then we approached them again for the national conference for Work Package 4. (WP interview)
**Developing and extending networks**

Through implementing WP interventions, some teams were able to develop new networks with institutions or stakeholder groups. In some cases, they also talked about continuing the networks beyond the end of the project.

*We contacted a lot of institutions that we didn’t have personal contacts in... and then we made a couple of very important contacts... I think with some of these people we would be able to collaborate also after the end of the REPOPA project.* (WP interview)

Countries used a variety of means to contact with stakeholders.

*The most useful common contacts... for the external stakeholders came during the national conference when we invited people, both policymakers and some researchers... It’s not easy to get the others’ [policy makers’] attention, but it was a good way to do it.* (WP interview)

*I’ve been quite ambitious in trying to invite... high-level politicians like the Minister for Health...So if the...hot and the really influential people can’t come then we can always try to convince somebody else who’s more local to come join us, maybe a local councillor for example.* (WP interview)

**Benefits to external networks**

Teams described some of the benefits of these extended networks in both the shorter and longer-term.

*We are known there and the networking is expanding especially when they need expertise in evidence informed policymaking.* (WP interview)

*And this cooperation with the National Institute of Public Health is bringing us... a few steps further into the field of actually helping the local actors, local stakeholders to find each other, to build coalitions and to use knowledge and use evidence in all kinds of ways while making public health policy.* (WP interview)

EC-sponsored workshops that brought together participants from various projects proved valuable opportunities to extend networks and interest other researchers in REPOPA’s EIPM approach.

*Ours was the only policy group [attending the EC workshop] and they [other participants] said something very often that “what you do is really challenging, but it’s good you do it. Someone has to do it.”* (WP interview)
Increasing the relevance of REPOPA outputs for external networks

The project had to consider how best to tailor and target outputs and findings to interest different stakeholder audiences across six countries and languages.

So we are forced to think about how we will... package our information, our knowledge, the information we want to share, the different kind of target groups because the language that we use is always different. (WP interview)

Some policymakers expressed interest in learning about experiences from other countries.

Another interesting point of the project was moving between different geographic levels from more autonomous country specific activities to very strictly coordinated and synchronized European activities ... and then go back to country context to gather reports. (WP interview)

6.3. Discussion

Successfully navigating implementation challenges

The REPOPA project DOW had outlined an ambitious scope of work, and faced several challenges during implementation: the loss of several beneficiaries, team vulnerabilities, human resources and financial constraints, and competing priorities resulting from lengthy overlaps in several WP implementation schedules.

While a five-year project can anticipate that implementation circumstances will change over its duration, REPOPA could not have anticipated the specifics of several threats that arose (in particular, the loss of three beneficiaries due to termination and bankruptcy). We found that the high level of Consortium commitment to the project and the collaboration networks that developed within and across WP teams were key factors in the project being able to accomplish its ambitious scope of work, in spite of the foregoing constraints.

The project did face one challenge that arose out of its own making – the decision to substantially advance the start date by over 1.5 years for one of the RTD WPs, which had sound management justification but proved a mixed blessing. The additional time did prove to be essential for the WP to meet its research objectives and produce one of the key REPOPA outputs (the EIPM indicators). However, the Consortium may not have fully anticipated the implications of the decision for other WPs or the project publication schedule. The overlapping WP implementation timelines stepped up the already-intense work plans for the two other RTD WPs, and these competing priorities somewhat constrained the project’s ability to fully integrate learnings and research findings from WP2 and WP3 into the WP4 indicator development process. WP presentations on findings at the annual meetings, and a series of joint cross-WP meetings involving several WPs were project strategies that somewhat ameliorated this concern.
Building research competency and leadership skills among junior researchers

Involvement of junior researchers in REPOPA proved mutually beneficial for both the project and the junior researchers. Junior researchers were involved in all seven WPs in each year of the project, primarily as postdoctoral fellows and doctoral students; the majority were female. Findings from the research competency self-assessment indicate that junior researchers were able to enhance their research skills corresponding to the WP in which they were involved (since research methodologies were WP-specific), and the timing of their involvement (according to the WP’s implementation phase).

The project gained in three ways from their involvement. Junior researcher contributions brought much-needed additional human resources to WP and country teams. REPOPA’s publication efforts were enhanced by masters and doctoral theses that were completed, and especially by the commitment from postdoctoral fellows to continue writing REPOPA publications after the end of the project. Three of the work packages developed co-lead structures with several postdocs and doctoral students taking on a supporting co-lead role over the course of the project. This provided juniors with hands-on learning about project coordination and research implementation, and proved an essential leadership supplement to support WP activities.

While mentoring of junior researchers was not an explicit REPOPA aim, it was discussed at every annual meeting, illustrating the Consortium’s recognition of their value added. At the same time, the project did not always provide the clear mentorship that some trainees had hoped for, particularly during when WP activity was at its most intense. Nevertheless, the annual survey of trainees indicates that they did gain a number of skills from their involvement in REPOPA. Informal conversations with junior researchers during annual meetings suggests that they particularly appreciated the opportunity to interact with and extend their links with decision-makers and to improve their writing skills. Findings from the network mapping survey show that by the end of the project, all juniors were connected with each other across country and WP lines.

Developing and extending external stakeholder networks

Country and WP teams developed and extended their networks with policy stakeholders as the project progressed, with their external connections becoming deeper and more deliberate although not necessarily more numerous. While early on in the project, networks were focused on local (e.g. municipal-level) stakeholders, this shifted to an emphasis on national and international stakeholders in the final two years. This is linked to WP4 activities, which involved national workshops, and expanded set of dissemination strategies. Country teams indicated that they had expanded their reach to new stakeholders and in some cases indicated their intentions to continue to build on these new networks, post-REPOPA.

Country teams were able to leverage WP activities over the project timeline to engage and re-engage policy stakeholders. Although not all interventions were carried out in all countries, every country was involved in WP1 (policy analysis) and WP4 (Delphi and national conferences on EIPM indicators), creating mechanisms that teams could build on to sustain stakeholder interest.
7. Synergies among Work Package Components & Added Value for the Project

7.1. Methods

*Interviews with WP teams*

Consortium members were invited to participate in team interviews via Skype on an annual basis from 2013 to 2016. In 2013, these interviews were carried out by country team, which was the major unit of work in that year. From 2014 to 2016, interviews were conducted by work package, as this was a better reflection of the division of work in this period. Interviews covered the consortium’s diversity, stakeholder engagement, REPOPA knowledge products and dissemination products, and priorities for upcoming work. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were categorically coded by the WP5 team. In accordance with uOttawa ethics requirements, individual names, countries, and WPs were anonymized for any interview quotations included in public reports such as this one.

7.2. Findings

Interviews conducted and annual response rates to interviews are shown in Table 7-1. Each year, all countries involved and all active WPs were represented by one or more members of their team, yielding a 100% response rate for countries and WPs.

7.2.1. Summary of Interviews Conducted and Response Rates by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Interviews conducted</td>
<td>n=8 interviews:</td>
<td>n=6 interviews:</td>
<td>n=8 interviews:</td>
<td>n=8 interviews:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 country team interviews (average length 64 minutes)</td>
<td>5 WP team interviews (average length 64 minutes)</td>
<td>5 WP team interviews (average length 68 minutes)</td>
<td>5 WP team interviews (average length: 72 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 individual interviews (average length 39 minutes)</td>
<td>1 country team interview on a single WP topic (length 37 minutes)</td>
<td>2 country team interviews on a WP topic (average length: 52 minutes)</td>
<td>1 country team interview on a WP topic (length: 94 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sets of written responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 individual interviews on a WP topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-1: Number of REPOPA evaluation interview conducted, 2013-2016
7.2.2. Collaboration Synergies

WPs, and the Consortium as a whole, had to develop collaborative processes that would work over distances, since team members were usually spread across several countries.

A high level of Consortium engagement and commitment to the project work arose as an outcome of the collaborative processes examined in the previous section. Positive team dynamics were frequently described during evaluation interviews with WP and country teams.

While all teams mentioned points when their WP was faced with significant challenges, collaboration mechanisms served to maintain cohesion and commitment to research goals. The project benefited from team members’ willingness to resolve sometimes quite-challenging scientific and communication issues, reach a common understanding about research approach and implementation, and find ways to accomplish the ambitious scope of work.

... We have been in several European projects in the last 10-15 years and this one is one of the most... strenuous projects that I’ve been with because it has a lot of work for each work package... All parties, all actors were working very hard together to bring the aims of the project and the work packages to a good end. (WP interview)

Some compared the positive experience of REPOPA with other EC projects.

I also heard of other FP7 projects where people do not work together at all. Where Work Packages are just single Work Packages and there is no communication and there is no trying to connect these Work Packages... We are... all are very committed. But then, again, there is quite a high expectation of what we all want and what is expected of us to do. (WP interview)

WP1 was first to be implemented and involved all six countries. Its findings were critical to inform subsequent work packages. The WP1 experience provided an important scientific foundation for later REPOPA work, as the WP1 team had to reach a common approach to carry out the research, and then analyze multi-country findings in ways that allowed for identifying both tailored findings for specific countries as well as generalizable findings across policies in all settings.

WP1 was also first off the mark to navigate the demanding team dynamics. It had the largest WP team (18 of members from 6 countries) and developed internal communication structures and approaches to bring together members coming from a diversity of settings, scientific disciplines, research cultures, and languages. The WP1 lead successfully brought the work package to conclusion and met milestone and
deliverables. Important and relevant learnings emerged from the research that were incorporated by WP2 and WP3, and later informed the WP4 indicator development process.

These processes provided a crucial team-building function early on, stimulating an emerging Consortium-wide sense of cohesiveness and collaboration that continued through all subsequent work packages as each team addressed their own particular implementation challenges.

Positive collaboration experiences across WP, country and institutional lines enabled the Consortium to efficiently complete the project’s intense scope of work. Cross-WP learning was enhanced as project members reflected together on activities and challenges.

[Everyone’s] real involvement and engagement... made this... very good work because if we would have... looked at how many person months we have, I don’t think we would have achieved half of the work that we did. (WP interview)

Managing Diversity

Teams had to manage the diversity of country setting as well as the diversity of scientific backgrounds, cultures and languages. This required each work package team to work towards a common understanding about the research protocol, key terms and concepts, comparative analysis approaches, and on writing reports and manuscripts. Recognizing that they couldn’t take for granted being “on the same page” was a stimulus to look into exactly how each team member was interpreting key aspects of the work package.

So it is really a challenge to coordinate different disciplines, different ambitions, different collaborative willingness... so that we could find the common direction, level of ambition in the work, and also keep some effective scientific reporting going on. (WP interview)

Although many of the partners had experience with multi-country projects, the research WPs had not fully anticipated the intensity of time that they would need in order to thoroughly work through language and perspective differences with team members from other countries.

It has been interesting to check and compare with different ways of organizing dissemination but I would say also communication activities. (WP interview)

There were also administrative issues that had to be addressed because of this diversity. At one member noted:

It is a challenge still to coordinate all the partners and the countries because they have a different way of financial reporting and recording and we have to somehow maintain the system to the EC reporting. (WP interview)
7.2.3. Project Publications

Research first priority, then writing after the WP was done

While the project plan intended for manuscript writing to be done simultaneously with project implementation, the reality was that all teams found themselves having to prioritize the research process over dissemination. Scientific publications were sometimes started during the life of the WP, but Consortium members were only able to dedicate significant time to writing once the WP intervention had been completed and the EC report submitted. For WPs carrying out their research later in the project timeline, this set them up against the nearing end-of-project deadline.

Yes, there is a challenge of the publication. This is for WP3, WP4 because activities were a lot and very complex... we had to stop... writing articles because activities were so... time consuming. (WP interview)

Work on scientific publications is expected to continue post-project, bolstered especially by the doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows who linked their REPOPA work to their personal scholarship.

Yes, it’s as with the other work packages. There are still some manuscripts coming, so I guess that we are still working beyond the final date of REPOPA. (WP interview)

7.2.4. Research Synergies

Cross-WP learning

REPOPA’S structure of overlapping WP team membership and WP sequencing provided an appropriate structure (though not without its challenge) to encourage integration of learnings across work packages and countries. The involvement by Consortium members in multiple work packages contributed to synergies as members brought with them familiarity with research results and strategies for multi-country research from other work packages.

This work package cross-fertilization contributed notably to the WP4 research process which was tasked with developing indicators that built on findings from WPs 1, 2, and 3. It was initially slightly more challenging for the Finnish team (which wasn’t part of either WP2 or WP3) to bridge the gap when they were re-engaged at the start of WP4. Some of the collaboration was achieved through formal WP meetings, some through informal channels.

I think maybe on a lower scale we have had some successes also in collaborating. For example, [X] and I have spent some time discussing in between WP2, WP3, just in daily context and I think that that also really counts as a good experience. (WP interview)
Participants noted that making the connections across work packages and countries was a source of innovation but also time-consuming.

Maybe the biggest challenge is to make a connection between all the work packages and at the same time, I think that is one of the successes... [W]hat we have been trying to do in REPOPA is quite innovative, to contextualize and to try to do similar interventions... in different EU countries and that has taken a lot of time and effort, maybe more than we estimated when starting this.

Team members identified the need for face-to-face meetings for analysis, particularly for qualitative data. They thought that additional travel funds should have been allocated for same.

If you really want to have these projects where you work intensively together across countries... it would be much more effective or efficient to have a half a day... at a consortium meeting, or an extra day together just to focus on data analysis and [writing]. (WP interview)

7.2.5. Challenges to Achieving Synergies

For countries responsible for implementing interventions from two or more WPs with overlapping timelines, the WP leads in particular found themselves stretched thin to accomplish all the work related to all the WPs. This resulted in some loss of synergy when, for example, the potential for comparative analysis across WPs could not be accommodated in the work schedule. It also slowed progress on manuscript writing.

Because the project was structured with overlap among countries and WP implementation sites - each country implemented research for at least two WPs, and two countries implemented four research WPs – this created an opportunity to compare results from two interventions in the same setting. However, time constraints during the project meant that the latter has not yet taken place.

We... were so busy with our Work Package at the same time, that we could really not pay very much attention to where some similar or comparisons [across WPs] could be made. (WP interview)

7.2.6. Consortium Members’ Perceptions of Innovation and Impact

Consortium members identified three main areas of innovation and impact: imbedding EIPM research in real-life policymaking; developing tools that respond to ongoing changes in health policy processes that many countries are facing, and examples of uptake and potential for uptake of REPOPA products.
Imbedding EIPM research in real-life policy making

Consortium members highlighted the value of conducting REPOPA research directly with policy stakeholders.

One of the greatest successes is that we really tried and also did to have all the interventions and all the research activities embedded in practice of real life policy making and with practitioners and policy makers. (WP interview)

It was the first project where we had to work so close with stakeholders... It really opened for me and for other colleagues that were not involved in the project, some opportunities in directly working with stakeholders and contacting policy makers and getting them more involved in research projects. (WP interview)

...the [WP4 national conference] panel was quite helpful in giving us advice on what we could do with the results... They gave us a structure of a guidance document and also suggested how we could think of drafting this tool that we've been discussing. (WP interview)

Responding to changing country landscapes in health policymaking processes

Given ongoing national changes in health policymaking processes, including new responsibilities for policy development and implementation, project members felt that REPOPA’s EIPM outputs could prove valuable tools.

... there are a lot of new innovative ways of looking at evidence-informed policy making that’s come out of this project that can actually fit in a lot of countries at this moment where we’re actually having this discussion about how could we develop policy in a different way. (WP interview)

Uptake of REPOPA products

One country (the Netherlands) has already begun a joint initiative with a national institute to develop a new policy simulation game based in part on the WP2 intervention.

We have a follow-up for the policy game in a new game that is offered by the National Institute... they developed their own internet based policy game and we added our In2Action policy game which is more of a role-playing policy game to do that. So our network also evolved with it that we are involved in that project also. (WP interview)

Team members spoke of potential influence of REPOPA due to the innovative EIPM research approaches and products.
There are a lot of cross-sectional descriptions of how policies have been made and what they should be made, et cetera, but we did interventions on equal footing... between researchers and policymakers and with usable results. (WP interview)

...we have a lot of discussions about evidence-based policy, but the way I see it is you’ve got a box that says research and you’ve got a box which says practice and policy. And in-between those two, you’ve got a black hole and nobody understands what goes on [in] that black hole. And as part of the work that we have done in REPOPA, we’ve tried to... create an understanding of what actually happens within that black hole. (WP interview)

Most of what has been going on in use of evidence and integrating evidence in public health policy is still quite in the traditional way of having scientific results translated. Try to just publish them and then evidence will get used in policy... that’s part of the struggle. It’s our success that we ...look[ed] for different ways in how evidence can actually be used in policy making. (WP interview)

Several project members also referred to hopes that REPOPA will succeed in having policy stakeholders use REPOPA tools after the project.

I think the REPOPA has succeeded when some policy maker unit or department or ministry or someone else, is using our indicators, for example, so then we have achieved something. (WP interview)

7.3. Discussion

Several drivers of success were apparent from interviews. Consortium members were committed to maximizing the added value of a multi-country initiative and its multi-disciplinary team from the get-go. The structure of work packages, planning meetings and the commitment of WP leads helped to facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas, approaches and findings.

The engagement of policy makers in all phases of the project was also seen as an important success. Many Consortium members extended their own links with external stakeholders and the breadth of their stakeholder engagement increased. Several members indicated that this opportunity would help extend their future research efforts. They noted that this engagement had helped to increase the relevance of REPOPA outputs to policy stakeholders. However, our evaluation team does not have direct input from external policy stakeholders to confirm this perspective.

Internal sharing of scientific learnings and external networks contacts with other consortium members can amplify the potential for synergies.
Missed opportunities for synergy

While the involvement by Consortium members in multiple WPs contributed positively, it also carried a cost, since it meant that a number of team members faced multiple and significant competing priorities. They were expected to balance their involvement in whichever work package was currently being implemented alongside reporting and publication efforts for completed work packages, planning for upcoming work packages, as well as undertaking WP6 dissemination activities (notably, establishing national platforms in a locally-relevant format). When members were pulled in too many directions, it was manuscript writing efforts that were most often deferred. This meant that the project was not able to publish as many articles during the project period as originally planned. Nonetheless, there are manuscripts under development for each of the WPs and at the recent annual meeting, leads for each of these manuscripts and deadlines for submission were agreed to.

8. Dissemination

In this section, we examine REPOPA’s dissemination efforts: the national platforms developed in each country, the web-based umbrella platform, and dissemination to lay audiences. We have used RE-AIM to assess the impact of national platforms and the web-based umbrella platform, as required by the DOW.

8.1. Methods

Document review

We conducted a review of all project documents relating to dissemination activities, to understand the scope of dissemination activities being done in each country. References to national platforms were examined with a particular focus on the elements of the RE-AIM framework and associated indicators (see p. 63). Documents reviewed included the WP6 Midterm Report (Deliverable 6.1), the REPOPA dissemination plan, project publication list prepared for the final project symposium, internal six-month dissemination reports submitted by each institution, REPOPA periodic reports to the EC, and the web-based umbrella platform.

Interviews with WP and country teams

Annual interviews with country and WP teams included questions related to lay dissemination activities, to the progress of teams on national platform activities, and to the use of the umbrella platform. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were categorically coded by the WP5 team. In accordance with uOttawa ethics requirements, individual names, countries, and WPs were anonymized for any interview quotations included in public reports such as this one.
To better understand the status of country platforms and the web umbrella platform near the end of the project, further questions were put to each country team in September 2016, with responses received via both email and informal Skype calls.

**RE-AIM Indicators to Assess National Platforms and the Web-based Umbrella Platform**

The RE-AIM framework (Glasgow, 2006) - Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance - has scientific underpinnings in the fields of epidemiology, human and organizational behaviour change. It reflects evaluative processes used to assess the impact of health interventions targeted at individuals and populations.

Three criteria were used to select RE-AIM impact indicators for the national and umbrella platforms:

1. **Relevance to DOW:** A thorough reading of the DOW to understand the project’s intention for the policymaking platforms, including all references to platform descriptions, objectives, and activities. Search terms used were: national or country platform, umbrella platform, web-based platform, policymaking platform;

2. **Relevance to RE-AIM:** Potential indicators were considered in light of their suitability to the five RE-AIM elements (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) and how these elements could be most appropriately applied to evaluating the platform initiative.

Since RE-AIM has more typically been used to assess health interventions, several references were particularly useful in determining indicator relevance in the REPOPA context (Jilcott, Ammerman, Sommers, & Glasgow, 2007; Rogers, EM, 2003; Sweet, Ginis, Estabrooks, & Latimer-Cheung, 2014)

3. **Availability and feasibility of measuring the indicators:** Measurability of potential indicators were examined, and were retained provided that data could be collected from existing WP5 evaluation instruments (review of REPOPA documents accessible on SharePoint, surveys, team interviews), verified through informal discussions with Consortium members, or drawn from data collected by other WPs. Optimally, for each category of indicator, findings were triangulated by collecting data from more than one source.

**RE-AIM Indicators selected for national platforms**

Table 8-1 lists indicators for each RE-AIM element and data sources that were used to assess impact of the national platforms established in each country.

**Table 8-1: RE-AIM indicators and data sources to assess national platforms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicators for National Platforms</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform status</td>
<td>• Extent to which the five country platforms were operational by end of project</td>
<td>• REPOPA guidelines for national platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal description available describing platform aims, membership, stakeholder engagement strategies</td>
<td>• WP team interviews conducted by WP5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• REPOPA project periodic report #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reach | • Stakeholder needs assessment was conducted for each country setting  
• Country-specific platform strategy was identified and tailored by each country based on needs assessment  
• Intended membership is clearly described  
• Members are stakeholders involved in HEPA policymaking or representatives of those affected by policies  
• Membership is cross-sectoral | • WP6 dissemination reports  
• REPOPA website [http://www.repopa.eu/content/eipm-umbrella-platform](http://www.repopa.eu/content/eipm-umbrella-platform)  
• “National platforms for evidence-informed physical activity policy making” (presentation at HEPA Europe, Oct 2015)  
• WP Leaders meetings  
• Informal discussions with Consortium members |
| Effectiveness | • REPOPA guidelines for platforms agreed by Consortium and applied to platform  
• Country platform has an identified purpose in line with REPOPA’s platform purpose  
• Purpose responds to an identified country gap in HEPA evidence-based policymaking  
• Membership is accessible and open  
• REPOPA member was involved in platform activities for at least 12 months (as described in DOW) | |
| Adoption | • # of external members participating in or indicating commitment to participate in the platform  
• Platform members represent different HEPA stakeholder groups | |
| Implementation | • REPOPA findings from at least one WP are shared with platform members  
• Platform activities (e.g. meetings held, planned) are taking place | |
| Maintenance | • Status of concrete plans to continue platform post-project  
• Members include a REPOPA “champion” and a non-REPOPA “champion”  
• Status of formal agreement with another organization to continue platform activities | |
RE-AIM Indicators for Web-based Umbrella platform

Table 8-2 lists indicators for each RE-AIM element and data sources that were used to assess impact of the REPOPA web-based umbrella platform.

Table 8-2: RE-AIM indicators and data sources to assess web-based umbrella platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicators for the web-based umbrella platform</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform status</td>
<td>● Status of the umbrella platform at the end of the project</td>
<td>● Relevant web pages on REPOPA website <a href="http://www.repopa.eu/content/epm-umbrella-platform">http://www.repopa.eu/content/epm-umbrella-platform</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>● # of unique visitors to umbrella platform pages for each country</td>
<td>● WP6 templates for policy briefs and advocacy plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Live link to contact platform organizer is posted for each country</td>
<td>● REPOPA website tracking information tracked and provided by WP6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Templates for policy briefs and advocacy templates are posted</td>
<td>● WP team interviews conducted by WP5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Summary description is posted of each national platform</td>
<td>● REPOPA EC project report #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>● Guidelines and format for umbrella platform agreed by Consortium</td>
<td>● WP6 dissemination reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Information populated for each country for web pages labelled:</td>
<td>● Informal discussions with Consortium members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Country profile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evidence-informed policymaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>● # of posts to Discussion Box for each country and internationally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>● Web activity by REPOPA host and other members continues to fit stated purpose of umbrella platform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>● Status of interest or commitment from organization to host website post-project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

Since the WP5 outcome evaluation report was due to the EC by September 30th, 2016, for the purposes of our data collection and analysis, the “end of project” was considered as September 21st, 2016. Since we recognize that Consortium platform and dissemination efforts continued until REPOPA’s end-date of September 30th, our assessment may be incomplete.
8.2. Findings

8.2.1. National Platforms

The five national platforms varied across the REPOPA countries in the extent of their development and level of activities by the end of the project. The DOW described the purpose of national platforms as being: “to facilitate and enhance sustainability in evidence-informed policy making, the consortium will support establishing platforms (workshop process) in participating countries for cross-sector evidence-informed policymaking processes.” (REPOPA Consortium, 2015, p. 36)

All countries conducted informal needs assessments to identify HEPA and EIPM networks in their settings and developed tailored approaches for REPOPA platform activities in that context (primarily whether to establish a new platform entity or join an existing platform or network). For most of the countries this phase required considerable time. Table 8-3 presents findings from the assessment of national platforms using the RE-AIM criteria described on p.63.

Country platform experiences and strategies varied. Finland was the first to establish their platform (a working group nominated by the Ministry) and shared REPOPA findings at meetings involving policy stakeholders; the platform was completed as per its objectives during the project. The other countries required more time to assess the HEPA and EIPM landscape. By the end of the project, the other four countries had all determined their platform approach and participated in platform activities such as meetings with network stakeholders representing different HEPA stakeholder groups. Most of the platforms had identified at least one ‘champion’ who was committed to continuing platform efforts after the project.

Table 8-3: Findings – Assessment of national platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicators for National Platforms</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>FI</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform status</td>
<td>Extent to which the five country platforms were operational by end of project*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal description available of platform aims, membership, stakeholder engagement strategies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>Stakeholder needs assessment was conducted for each country setting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Platform strategy tailored to each country based on needs assessment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intended membership is clearly described</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members involved in HEPA policymaking or represent those affected by policies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Membership is cross-sectoral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>REPOPA platform guidelines agreed by Consortium and applied to platform</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country platform has identified purpose in line with REPOPA’s platform purpose</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose responds to an identified country gap in HEPA EIPM</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership is accessible and open</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPOPA member involved in platform activities for at least 12 months (as described in DOW)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Over 5,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of external members participating in or indicating commitment to participate in the platform</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform members represent different HEPA stakeholder groups</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings from at least one WP were shared with platform members</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform activities (e.g. meetings) have taken place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent to which platform has specific plans to continue post-project**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform members include both a REPOPA “champion” and a non-REPOPA “champion”***</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of formal agreement with another organization to continue platform activities post-project****</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
* “Extent to which the platform was operational by end of project” was coded as follows: Sustained engagement = 4; Platform completed as per objectives = 3; Some platform meetings held = 2; Initial meetings held with stakeholders = 1; Platform dissolved = 0.

** “Extent to which platform has specific plans to continue activities post-project” was coded as follows: Large extent = 3; Some extent = 2; Unclear = 1; No plans = 0; Not applicable (platform completed) = N/A.

*** “Platform members include both a REPOPA ‘champion’ and a non-REPOPA ‘champion’” was coded as follows: Both REPOPA and non-REPOPA champions = 3; Either a REPOPA or non-REPOPA champion = 2; Unclear = 1; No champions = 0.

**** “Status of formal agreement with another organization to continue platform activities” was coded as follows: Formal agreement in place = 3; Agreement under development = 2; Too early for an agreement = 1; Agreement not desired = 0; Not applicable (platform completed) = N/A.

**Use of national platforms for REPOPA dissemination**

In the final year of the project, teams spoke of starting to use national platforms to disseminate REPOPA findings.

“So with the national platforms we did a dissemination of the possible results for the manuscripts, other channels that are available... and with the very good publicly-available reports. (WP interview)
Challenges with developing an appropriate platform approach for each country context

The project developed generic project guidelines for national platforms across countries that provided countries with the flexibility to tailor their platform strategy to the national HEPA and EIPM landscape. Still, teams found it challenging to identify the right “fit” for their context.

Well I think the biggest challenge... was the aspect concerning the platform.... We had to navigate around all kinds of national sensitivities or already existing structures in place who felt like their turf might have been affected by our platform. (WP interview)

Post-project plans for national platforms

As the project concluded, several teams spoke of their intentions to work with stakeholders to further establish the national platform.

And I think the first step will also be to discuss with them [stakeholders]... what they need and how we should reformulate the policy briefs so that they can actually be used. We might also try to develop some and test them based on some of the participants in this interest group. (WP interview)

8.2.2. Web-based Umbrella Platform

The purpose of the web-based umbrella platform was: “to share up-to-date information, documents to be discussed, and debated with different stakeholders. Further, the platform will include guidance for writing policy briefs and for the development of the advocacy plan to lobby nationally and internationally for increasing evidence-informed physical activity policy making. The platform will support and facilitate establishing the REPOPA policy making platforms in the participating countries. In the beginning of year 5 the platform will be used to carry out an e-survey in the partner countries and in other EU countries mapping the activities and developments in evidence-informed policy making in physical activity, including other projects and networks (e.g. HEPA)” (REPOPA Consortium, 2015, p. 22).

The web-based umbrella platform http://repopa.eu/content/eipm-umbrella-platform was launched in mid-2015 after consultations by the WP6 team with Consortium members to determine appropriate format and content, and technical instruction. Finding a structure suitable for the range of country settings and national platform considerations took some time. Table 8-4 shows the results of our assessment of the web-based umbrella platform impact based on RE-AIM indicators.

Integrated into the re-designed project website, the umbrella platform provides informative content about HEPA and EIPM in each platform country. The umbrella platform includes profiles of the five national platforms, a twitter feed, and an online discussion box. Because country teams involved with WPs 2, 3, and 4 had to prioritize WP research activities for much of the project duration, dissemination tools developed by WP6, such as the discussion box, were underused. While web statistics for number of unique visitors to each national platform page were not available, analytics in the draft WP6 final
report (Chereches et al., 2016) indicated regular twitter and web traffic to the REPOPA website. Post-project arrangements for hosting and updating the website are in place, so the website with integrated umbrella platform will not end with the project.

Table 8-4: Findings – Assessment of the web-based umbrella platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicators for the web-based umbrella platform</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform status</td>
<td>Status of the umbrella platform at the end of the project</td>
<td>The umbrella platform was launched in 2015. Content has been posted for all major sections of the platform. Some pages for each country are missing content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td># of unique visitors to umbrella platform pages for each country</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live link to contact platform organizer is posted for each country</td>
<td>Denmark: Yes, Finland: No, Netherlands: Yes, Italy: No, Romania: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Templates for policy briefs and advocacy templates are posted</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary description provided of each national platform</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Guidelines and format for umbrella platform agreed by Consortium</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                        | Information populated for each country for web pages labelled:                                                | ● Country profile populated for all countries except Finland, which had 2 of 3 pages populated  
● EIPM section completely populated by Denmark. All other countries have only populated the stakeholder page. |
| Adoption               | # of posts to Discussion Box for each country and internationally                                           | No posts for any country. One post made to the international section, but no responses. |
| Implementation         | Web activity by REPOPA host and other members continues to fit stated purpose of umbrella platform           | Yes - for news, dissemination and information on the various national platforms. |
| Maintenance            | Status of interest or commitment from organization to host website post-project                              | Indications that the website will continue to be hosted by DK, and the RO team will continue to update the site as needed. |
8.2.3. Project Dissemination

Assessment of dissemination approaches

REPOPA used a variety of approaches to disseminate findings. In addition to scientific dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and research conferences, the project also put effort into dissemination to lay audiences (policymakers and the general public). Approaches for the latter included presentations at lay conferences and stakeholder meetings, publications for lay audiences, web-based dissemination (REPOPA website and web-based umbrella platform), REPOPA e-newsletters, national platforms, WP evidence briefs, WP videos, and participation in EC workshops involving multiple EC projects.

We assessed the project’s dissemination approaches (see Table 8-5) according to the type of access, targeted level of the system (national or international), type of audience (research, policy, or public), and whether the language for the dissemination product was English or the national language. National and umbrella platforms were assessed in more detail in Section 12.2.1 and 12.2.2.

Scientific dissemination: The project reach a scientific audience primarily through peer-reviewed publications and presentations at research conferences, as well as through the project website, platforms, and EC workshops with other research projects. Almost half (7/16) of the project’s peer-reviewed publications were published in open access journals; 13/16 of the journals had an international focus and were published in English. Three national language peer-reviewed articles were in Finnish.

Lay dissemination: Policy stakeholders were reached primarily through nationally-focused conferences and stakeholder meetings, primarily in the national languages. The 23 lay publications were produced for policy stakeholders and the general public. Other English-language dissemination outputs included the 7 issues of the project’s e-newsletter were produced, 3 WP videos, and 5 evidence briefs (1 per WP 1-5).

Table 8-5: REPOPA dissemination approaches – Access, level, audience, and language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-reviewed articles and chapters (n=16)</td>
<td>Open access: N=7/16</td>
<td>Total N=4/16: Fl=4/16</td>
<td>N=12/16</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference presentations and meetings (n=90)</td>
<td>Published abstracted=35</td>
<td>N=22: DK=10 NL=8 Fl=2 IT=1</td>
<td>N=68: CA=2</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Lay publications (n=23)

- **Public**
  - N=14/23: DK=5, NL=2, FI=2, IT=3, RO=2
  - N=9/23: Euro=8, Int=1

| Lay publications (n=23) | Public | RO=0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### Project website

- **Public**
  - DK, NL, FI, IT, RO

| Project website | Public | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### National platforms

- **DK, NL, FI, IT, RO**

| National platforms | DK, NL, FI, IT, RO | ✓ |

### Umbrella platform

- **Public**
  - N=7

| Umbrella platform | Public | N=7 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### REPOPA newsletters

- **N=7**

| REPOPA newsletters | N=7 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### WP evidence briefs

- **N=5** (1 per WP)

| WP evidence briefs | N=5 | ✓ | ✓ |

### WP videos (n=3)

- **N=2 (NL, IT)**
  - N=1

| WP videos (n=3) | N=2 (NL, IT) | N=1 | ✓ | ✓ |

### EC project workshops

- ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

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**Note:** Nat’l=national; Int’l=international; Pub=public

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**Balancing scientific and lay dissemination efforts**

It provided difficult for WP and country teams to simultaneously disseminate to both scientific and stakeholder audiences, particularly while their WP was still “live”. As an EC research project, REPOPA’s dissemination priorities focused on project deliverables and scientific publications, which sometimes left less time than teams desired for lay dissemination.

> It was hard to do that also in a systematic way from the beginning until the end, for the whole project. Because we have been quite busy in our own work packages... And then it’s difficult to do the parallel trajectory for Work Package [dissemination] so in a systematic way. (WP interview)
**Challenge of finding windows of opportunity and interest with policymakers**

Identifying and leveraging windows of opportunity to introduce policymakers to REPOPA products was an ongoing challenge.

> We still need people’s attention, those who are working in this field of policy and it’s difficult you when you [are] not, on a day-to-day basis, are in connection with them. (WP interview)

> The biggest challenge is to be able to get the information from the REPOPA project on a good spot on the different websites and national websites... because there's a lot of stuff going around in [country X] when it comes to public health. (WP interview)

**Contextualizing and tailoring dissemination materials**

As a multi-country project, REPOPA sometimes had difficulty finding the right balance to fit each country’s needs, between producing dissemination materials in English versus tailoring language and content to the needs of national policymakers.

> Of course we can have policy briefs in English but for a lot of policy makers that’s difficult. Not personally difficult to read or understand but it creates a distance. (WP interview)

While members identified the need to provide policymakers with appropriately tailored material in their national language, this required additional time and resources for translation that were not always available.

> But to have a more substantial description of how we develop this game and how it was performed, how the process was in each country... we don’t have time anymore and resources within the work package... We have... the materials and everything, in every country’s language, but we don’t have [it] in English. (WP interview)

Members spoke of the need for new skills and expertise to develop tailored, targeted dissemination materials appropriate to different stakeholder audiences. During the final two years of the project, the Consortium tested some dissemination materials using readability scores.

> If we really want to do that and if EC wants to do that, then you should really hire someone who is an expert in writing for these different audiences, for lay people or for professionals or for policymakers. (WP interview)

The involvement of six European countries in REPOPA enriched project research but the teams needed to think through strategies to link local to international when communicating with policymakers.
So even if it's really a strength that we have this big project and that it's going on in collaboration between so many different partners, ... it can also be a challenge to...take it out of that context and put it into the very local context. (WP interview)

**Potential for sustained dissemination post-project**

Teams intended to continue and intensify their dissemination post-project with a focus on lay audiences.

So I will share... our products with key people of those ministries also, showing them and presenting our research... all those groups, they are very interested also about the compared results. So they would like to see how... the indicators, how they are seen in other countries also. (WP interview)

We have promised... the people from the platform, but also the people who engaged in Work Package 3 and 2, that... we send them all the results... also scientific publications that we had. But also newsletters... of course two of them are going to participate in the final meeting in Brussels. (WP interview)

There are some networks with platforms where... we could add these policy briefs and evidence briefs around indicators on their platforms... We will translate them and send them to people that have been involved in the Delphi study. (WP interview)

**8.3. Discussion**

Nurturing and sustaining networks with policy stakeholders is not optional for policy research projects; therefore time and resources required for these activities need to be built into the project schedule and accounted for in WP planning. Stakeholder engagement is essential to intervention success and creates expectations from external participants that go beyond the time required for usual feedback efforts.

Establishing the national platforms and web-based umbrella platform required the project to find the right balance between country-specific approaches and project-wide considerations. While this process took time, it increases the potential that platforms will continue to develop as a resource for EIPM activities after the project.

Because country teams involved with WPs 2, 3, and 4 had to prioritize WP research activities for much of the project duration, dissemination tools developed by WP6 were underused.

EC efforts to create links among EC-funded projects are valuable and should continue. Involvement of consortium members in cross-project workshops and events is critical for creating program to program linkages.

Funding agencies have a potential role in incentivizing research to engage with policy-makers, both in the development and implementation or a research agenda and in the knowledge translation phase.
Time is required to build relational capital as a pre-requisite for research in this area and the relational capital needs to be built across sectors (not just within the health sector) to address critical public health questions.

9. Project Achievements and Challenges

Project achievements of note

- All work packages were successfully carried out within their mandated time frames. All deliverables and milestones were met as per the DOW. This is a significant accomplishment given the ambitious scope of work set by the project plan;
- Findings from the research work packages (WPs 1, 2, 3, and 4) contributed new scientific knowledge in the form of innovative methods for evidence-informed policy making and the emerging REPOPA indicators for monitoring EIPM processes;
- There are early and promising indicators of further uptake of some project outputs, in particular the emerging joint initiative in the Netherlands linking the WP2 policy simulation game with the National Institute of Health;
- Work package sequencing and diversity of members contributed to the synergies across work packages and countries, promoting integration of findings and strengthening a common understanding of each team’s approach to their work;
- The necessity of tailoring to context was recognizing early on in the project, and the experiences of each work package in attempting to successfully negotiate the balance between tailoring and consistency/rigour have led to important learnings within the Consortium that can be applied to other research.

Project challenges of note

- Managing the administrative processes for four amendments to the DOW and the legal, research, and financial implications from changes to three beneficiaries necessitated significant Coordinator time, much of it contributed in-kind;
- Human resources challenges were considerable. These included maintaining research momentum and work package leadership in the face of periodic leaves by team members, and the imbalance between the funds available in beneficiaries’ contracts for person-months compared to the actual person-months required to undertake and satisfactorily complete project activities;
- Substantial project time was needed by each work package to negotiate an appropriate balance between tailoring research and dissemination strategies to each setting to maximize relevance, versus ensuring consistency of approach across settings to maximize comparability and rigour. WP schedules had not fully anticipated the effort that would be required to achieve this, and several of the work packages had to deal with the resulting implementation delays or analysis challenges.
10. Impact

This evaluation revealed some early and promising indications of REPOPA impact. These are summarized below:

The initiative provided an important learning venue for a number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, particularly in relation to working with policy stakeholders, writing for publication and qualitative (e.g. case study) data analysis. These graduate students, and those they may mentor in the future, have directly benefited from the REPOPA work.

Members of the REPOPA team broadened and deepened their relationships with stakeholders at local, national and international levels. These provide a solid basis for the ongoing dissemination (and uptake of REPOPA findings) and for future research initiatives that build on the work completed.

Robust methods used for each of the work packages provide a strong basis for the publication (and uptake) of findings. The national platforms and umbrella platform created for REPOPA provide a sustainable venue for disseminating findings.

Methods used and/or developed by REPOPA teams are replicable by other researchers working on evidence-based policy not only on questions of physical activity policy but also on policies pertinent to other sectors. The work completed on methods to examine intersectoral policies is particularly timely given the emerging importance of cross-sectoral issues in public health.

Both interventions tested (stewardship approach and policy game) will require further examination in other contexts. Nevertheless, both interventions appear to be promising approaches to enhance the use of evidence in policy. Indicators developed will be useful for others who are aiming to conduct a situational analysis or to monitor and evaluate the use of evidence in organizations involved in cross-sectoral policy making.

11. Conclusions

Participatory, utilization-oriented process evaluation can strengthen project implementation and science. It can increase utility, uptake, and ownership of evaluation findings and related recommendations.

Projects that deliberately bring together multiple countries, contexts, and interventions may deliver outputs with stronger scientific and policy relevance. They also face particular challenges in tailoring interventions and developing targeted dissemination strategies for a variety of policy stakeholders.

An optimal evaluation design may need to involve a combination of participatory process evaluation that supports iterative planning and decision-making, along with an outcome evaluation to assess impact and the added value of synergies. Imbedding an evaluation team into a Consortium is an effective tool for internal and external evaluation.
12. Recommendations

This section presents several recommendations arising from this evaluation report for researchers in other programmatic and multi-country research teams, and for future research projects funded by the EC. The latter recommendations may also be pertinent for other funding agencies.

**Recommendations for Researchers:**

Deliberate team science strategies are needed to support and maximize synergies and cross-learning in multi-site Consortia projects.

Commit additional project time (person-months, project duration) and financial resources to achieve programmatic, cross-site synergies.

Balance scientific and lay dissemination priorities in the project schedule and provide resources for both in the budget.

Provide adequate resources to develop targeted, tailored materials for policymakers. Producing effective materials for lay audiences takes time and resources, and possibly outside expertise.

Consider how and what trainee (junior researcher) capacities can be enhanced through a multi-site project Consortium.

**Recommendations to the EC**

Encourage project teams to include costing estimates as part of intervention studies to better inform feasibility considerations.

Ensure that the criteria used for the peer review of scientific relevance are explicit in their inclusion of non-quantitative research designs such as case study methods.

Encourage the explicit use of gender analysis within studies to build strength in this area.

Funding agencies should consider how they could provide the longer term research support required for research teams to build relational capital with decision-makers, to adapt and implement interventions and to conduct longer-term post-intervention followup.

Consider use of the model of an embedded evaluation team for other EC-funded projects. Identify best practices for this evaluation approach across EC-funded projects.
13. References


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