WORKING TOGETHER

to build future evidence into policy making

WHAT IS REPOPA?

REsearch into POlicy to enhance Physical Activity (REPOPA) is a five year project within the EU research funded Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) financed to:

- Build on evidence and experiences on policy making processes
- Study innovative ‘win-win’ ways to collaborate between academia and policy makers
- Establish structures and best practices for future health promotion

WHAT WE DO?

As REPOPA members we will try to integrate scientific research knowledge, expert know-how and real world policy making process to increase synergy and sustainability in promoting health and preventing disease, and promote physical activity in structural policy making.

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 281532
REPOPA produced usable knowledge and tools for policymakers!

REPOPA project is coming to the end! The five project years are full by 30 September 2016. Five years might sound like a long time but when those years are filled with a large number of goals, tasks and roles, some of which are overlapping, the time has run actually very fast. Those 20+ researchers involved in REPOPA have struggled to balance the REPOPA tasks, other tasks such as teaching or other projects, family life such as starting families and so on. As the REPOPA coordinator I am grateful and thankful for the input of all the project staff. I think we can be proud of what we have achieved!

So what did we actually achieve?

Our aim was to find ways to integrate research evidence with other kinds of evidence such as local priorities, values and resources. We call this evidence-informed way of working. REPOPA used physical activity as the theme in its work; however, the lessons learned and tools developed can be applied to other fields, especially in the area of healthy living.

I can state with confidence that REPOPA did reach its objective!

We found empirical evidence that researchers can support policymakers in their work!

We also developed tools to help policymakers to assess their work.

What did we do?

We studied how evidence was used in policymaking

In the first project year we started by studying the gaps in relation to evidence-informed policymaking. We found that research evidence was not systematically used in policymaking; it was other kinds of information and priorities, which were more central. Further, several barriers were found for using research; for example, research was not available or applicable when needed, academic language was difficult, and there were no procedures to gather research knowledge or meet researchers. This was found by studying 21 existing policies in six European countries and by interviewing 86 stakeholders involved in making those policies.

We developed and tested two sets of interventions

Based on the first year findings, the project went further to develop two kinds of interventions to learn if policymakers could be helped in finding and using research evidence. Simulation policy game proved to increase mutual understanding between policymakers and different organizations involved. It also helped to see how important organizational and leadership support is for using research evidence especially in cross-sector collaboration. Stewardship-based interventions, which were tailored to local policy needs, proved to be useful for policymakers to learn to take the needs and values of the policy target groups into account. Also politicians learned to request for more research evidence. Both simulation policy game and Stewardship interventions were carried out in three countries.

We developed indicators for evidence-informed policymaking

REPOPA project further developed the findings into usable tools such as indicators for evidence-informed policymaking. These indicators can be used as a checklist in policymaking to assess how well the policy in question is actually evidence-informed. The indicators were developed by an international two-round Delphi panel of 82 and 103 experts respectively, and further, the indicators agreed were also tested in six country contexts.
REPOPA also built a web-based umbrella platform with country platforms

These platforms for evidence-informed policymaking in physical activity bring together different actors and sectors in the countries to network and collaborate in combining research evidence and real-life policymaking. The idea is that these platforms increase sustainability in policymaking in the field where people change positions and collaboration networks change.

REPOPA is one of the few projects with an in-built evaluation mechanism

The Canadian evaluation team in the project monitored and guided the project work but also assessed its potential impact more widely in the field.

REPOPA output

The scientific publication and other forms of dissemination continue after the project time. So far we have published 16 peer-reviewed papers, 26 publications or news for lay people; 143 conference presentations were given. To read more, please visit www.repopa.eu

REPOPA also developed policy briefs (evidence briefs) based on its findings; these briefs are meant for policymakers who need a quick overview of the evidence and practical suggestions for action. In addition, so far two animations have been made and more are to come. We also started to use twitter to spread news about our activities and tried blog writing, too.

THE REPOPA results were presented at the Final Symposium of the project in Brussels on Thursday September 8th, 2016. The REPOPA results and action points rising from them were discussed in the Symposium, where over 20 invited experts representing ministries, institutes and different organizations in Europe took part, together with the same number of REPOPA researchers.

The Symposium program consisted first of short presentations of the six REPOPA country representatives (Denmark, Finland, Italia, the Netherlands, Romania, UK) providing experiences with evidence-informed policy making. Then the most central REPOPA results were presented. The afternoon of the Symposium was reserved for group discussions in the format of world café (learning café) on four central topics needing further work in the area of evidence-informed policymaking especially in physical activity. The topics concerned facilitators and barriers, competences needed, contextual factors and implementation challenges in developing evidence-informed policies.

For more information about the Symposium and presentations there, please follow the REPOPA website, where the Symposium material will be uploaded soon.

Final REPOPA Symposium wrapped up the project work

The REPOPA project is officially over 30 September 2016. However, the Coordinating office will still work two months to produce the Final Project Report summarizing the work, findings and implications. This report, once accepted, will be a public document, also available at the REPOPA website. We will keep the REPOPA website active also after the project so that we can upload news on publications and activities related to the project. We are also looking into options to develop another research proposal to test some of the tools developed in REPOPA. As the REPOPA Coordinator, I express my warm thanks to the Coordinating team at SDU, to all REPOPA partners and very importantly, also to all those policymakers and researchers beyond the project members, for their participation and input! And I am grateful for the EC support for REPOPA, both in terms of money we received and in terms of guidance by our Project Officer and her colleagues in Brussels!
In this article we present the work that was done before the real interventions of work package number three in REPOPA. The aim of this work package was to develop and carry out interventions to help policy developers to use evidence from research together with knowledge from stakeholders and knowledge on target groups.

We started by finding six municipalities across three counties that were about to start development of a policy on health enhancing physical activity. Then we talked to the policy developers to find out what they needed from us in order to be better at using evidence in the policy development process. We also had a look at the factors in their surroundings that could have an influence the use of evidence in the policy development process. Based on this information we developed the interventions for each municipality based on their own needs and contexts. This means that the interventions were different in their form – we did different things in each municipality. But we had the same goal – to increase the use of evidence and knowledge.

To find out if the interventions made any difference, we made a questionnaire. This questionnaire should be answered by all the people who took part in the policy development. We asked them about the use of evidence from research, knowledge from stakeholders and knowledge on target groups. To find out what the participants were thinking about the interventions, we also planned to talk to them afterwards.

*The results of the interventions will be published soon in other articles.*
Exploring the use of research evidence in health-enhancing physical activity policies by Riitta-Maija Hämäläinen


The study focused on looking at the use of research results in policies to enhance physical activity. It has been known for a long time that research results are not arriving at the desks of policy makers. Therefore this study aimed to find what kinds of research results were used and which parts of the policies were more justified by research results. The gaps seen between the uses of research results in policies include the different ways of using research evidence in policymaking by researchers and actual policymakers.

After reviewing 21 policies related to physical activity and 86 interviews of those involved in developing policy documents, it was found that some of the policy processes and policies use more research results than others. Often research results were used to justify the policies to enhance physical activity. However the source of research results was often not mentioned. Mostly research results were used only on an ad hoc manner. If research results were used, they were mostly coming from population studies and studies on various diseases and description of cases or projects on physical activity promotion. Mostly the policies referred as sources of information laws, regulations and recommendations and news found in various media sources. Other sources of information were experience based knowledge and intuition.

In summary the study found that research results are only one type of information that is used to build up policies for physical activity promotion. Therefore the various sources of information, specifically in the Internet bring challenges to base policies on research results. In addition researchers need more opportunities and skills to translate the research results into practical policy making in physical activity promotion.
Cross-sector cooperation in health enhancing physical activity policy making: more potential than achievements? by Riitta-Maija Hämäläinen


Our countries include health, social services, transport, employment or housing sectors, for example. To improve our health, these sector need to cooperate to get best possible benefits for us.

Our countries face complex challenges. To resolve these challenges the cooperation of actors across sectors is important. For that purpose the relevant authority structure between policy sectors is needed to develop cooperation across sectors. Therefore, cross-sector cooperation and its structures need to be better understood for improved implementation. The article reported on the authority structures and processes of cross-sector cooperation in health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) policies in six European member states.

The cross-sector cooperation was studied through the content of HEPA policies and semi-structured interviews with key policymakers in six European countries. The study concluded the major differences between cooperation were found in stakeholder involvement, authority structures and coordination structures and processes. Stakeholder involvement included citizen hearings and gatherings of stakeholders from various non-governmental organizations and citizen groups.

Authority structures with policy and political discussions included committees, working groups and consultations for HEPA policymaking. Coordination structures and processes included administrative processes with various stakeholders, such as between ministerial departments, research institutes and private actors for HEPA policymaking.

Successful cross-sector cooperation required joint planning and evaluation, resources, laws or agreed methods of work, communication, and appreciated processes of cross-sector cooperation.
Four evidence briefs were developed to disseminate and inform policymakers and researchers about the REPOPA interventions and research by Diana Rus.

**Evidence Brief no. 1: Evidence Informed Policy through Simulation Games – A practice in collaboration;** based on the WP2 simulation game work. REPOPA investigated if a policy game intervention - based on needs, context and systems analysis – could be used to improve communication and collaboration between stakeholders in a cross- and multi-sector health policy making process. In which way does a policy game enhance the level of evidence-informed HEPA policy making and lead to a more efficient and successful policy? Some results are presented in the evidence brief along with the steps we used in simulation game.

**Evidence Brief no. 2: Recommendations for Locally Tailored Interventions – Knowledge integration in physical activity policy making;** based on the WP3 stewardship-approach work. Policymakers often have a hard time to find and apply research evidence in their real life contexts, which are loaded with different stakeholders, priorities and values. So far there has been rather little research on interventions to support policymaking in balancing these different kinds of evidence and information. REPOPA took this challenge and developed and implemented locally tailored interventions. The evidence brief goes through the steps of the tailored-stewardship intervention.

**Evidence Brief no. 3: Recommendations for Using Evidence in Real World Physical Activity Policy Making;** based on the WP4 Delphi Study work. Evidence-informed policies take into account both research evidence and contextual resources, priorities and values. There is a need for tools to assess how well policies are evidence-informed. Based on our Delphi study we developed and validated indicators to do this and to offer guidance for the integration of evidence in policymaking. Recommendations are detailed in the evidence brief.

**Evidence Brief no. 4: Recommendations for Identifying Optimal Evaluation Processes for Funded Research Projects;** based on the WP5 internal and external evaluation research work. Research funding agencies need to demonstrate the health and policy impact of their research funds using optimally-designed evaluation processes. Some controversy and debate exist about the value of external project evaluations, and expectations and requirements for project teams for process evaluations. Our experience evaluating a multi-country research project offers one effective approach and is presented in the evidence brief.
Recommendations for Locally Tailored Interventions

Knowledge Integration in Physical Activity Policy Making

REPOPA Project Evidence Brief no. 2
A document for policymakers & researchers

STANDARDIZATION

Policy makers often have a hard time finding and applying research evidence in their real-life contexts, which are faced with different stakeholders, priorities, and values. By doing so, there has been little research or interventions to support policymaking in balancing these different kinds of evidence and information. REPOPA aims to challenge and develop and implement locally tailored interventions.

WORKING IN LOCAL CONTEXT

The EU-funded REPOPA project operates in 5 European Union countries and Canada, and aims to incorporate evidence and open insights into the development of health-promoting policies.

From the literature, we know that the integration of evidence and knowledge in policy making is crucial. We also know that context plays an important role when thinking about how to do this integration best. Hence, it is important that local stakeholders can experience effective integration in physical activity policy making.

How can knowledge integration be facilitated in physical activity policy making?

STEWARDSHIP APPROACH

The stewardship approach is an ethical approach to policy making within public health. It emphasizes the importance of:

- Needs and values
- Cross-sectional action
- Structural changes
- Attention to vulnerable groups
- Equal and participatory approach

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Start by performing a needs assessment.

Interviewing the policy stakeholders on current procedure and judgmental needs and barriers in relation to knowledge and new ways to do this and let this information to quantify the needs for knowledge integration.

This can be demonstrated through the facilitation of a symposium on policy processes, through knowledge symposiums, or in relation on an online forum. Approach.

2 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Interventions work differently in different contexts.

Once it is important to know which context the knowledge integration intervention will be implemented in. As a result, the intervention can be relevant to different localities and will be informed on the community characteristics, such as the political system, health status, etc.

Plan the knowledge integration intervention according to the context identified.

3 COLLABORATION

A clear collaboration between policy makers and experts will give the opportunity for knowledge integration on a daily basis.

This can be achieved through the development of cross-functional relationships.

Establish an equal relationship between policy makers and researchers to facilitate knowledge integration.

4 CHANGE

The information can increase the access, awareness, and use of research knowledge and decrease the barriers for using research knowledge in policy making.

A certain scope of the intervention's time and resources is recommended for providing sustainable results.

What is REPOPA?

REPOPA is a project funded by the European Commission that brings together seven research hubs, policy makers, and civil society organizations to improve public health knowledge integration.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The full report can be found on the REPOPA website at www.repopa.eu

This project has received funding from the European Unions Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration under grant agreement no. 600700.
Describing the REPOPA Interventions using animations

by Diana Rus

As final project outputs we have developed two video animations for our main intervention work packages. The animations have as purpose to inform larger audiences about what a policy game is about, and what a stewardship-approach intervention is. The animations will be used as end-products to inform, disseminate, and teach beyond project REPOPA. The videos will be available on our videos section on the REPOPA website: www.repopa.eu/content/video-records

The scenes are included below as part of the report and where first presented at the REPOPA Project Final Symposium, September 8, Brussels.

The biteable app was used to create the animations.

WP2. Policy Game (Scenes 1-3)
Tessa Heeren, MSW
University of Iowa Public Policy Center, Summer intern, Babes-Bolyai University

Tessa is a recent graduate from the University Of Iowa School Of Social Work, and joined the REPOPA team in the summer of 2016, as the five-year project was nearing the end of its duration. Tessa completed an internship in the Violence and Injury Prevention Unit under the supervision of Diana Rus during June and July in 2016.

During her time at the Cluj School of Public Health, Tessa contributed to dissemination efforts, which was the main focus of the Romanian-led WP6. Because the REPOPA project engages a diverse set of people, the various stages of the project needed to be adapted to meet the needs and competencies of all stakeholders. Along with technical scientific manuscripts, REPOPA reports were streamlined for general audiences and peripheral stakeholders. Tessa is passionate about making research findings accessible to a wide audience, and she gained valuable experience in creating user-friendly print and video info-graphics for REPOPA projects.

Along with dissemination strategies, Tessa contributed to a scientific manuscript, specifically, a systematic review. The subject of the review was the process of integrating evidence into health policy. The reviewed articles covered a wide range of topics, such as barriers and facilitators to multi-sector collaboration, differences in professional cultures, and systemic obstacles in creating evidence-based health policy. Tessa gained experience synthesizing information as she assisted in writing the results and discussion sections of the paper.

Tessa is currently working as a Research Assistant with the University of Iowa Public Policy Center in the Health Policy Research Group, and hopes to collaborate with Diana and the Cluj School of Public Health in future projects.
I am Tara Ballav Adhikari from Nepal, currently pursuing Master of Science in Public Health, specializing in Global Health, at University of Southern Denmark (SDU). As a public health aspirant, I am interested to work in the field of adolescent friendly health services, sexual reproductive health (SRH), urban health policy and elderly health. Besides academia, I had been professionally involved with International Medical Corps Nepal (Program Assistant), Association of Youth Organization Nepal (Project coordinator) contributing my part in the field of reproductive health, disaster relief and youth engagement in Nepal. Currently, I am also active as Global Country Representatives Coordinator in Healthcare Information for All Initiative (HIFA) and is supporting and advocating ‘health for all’, through global People’s Health Movement.

I have been associated with REPOPA project as a student assistant since last six months (March to September 2016) at Unit for Health Promotion Research, SDU Esbjerg, Denmark. During this time, I worked closely with REPOPA dissemination activities. This has been a great learning opportunity for me. Firstly, I got to learn about multi-country research project reporting systems and challenges that comes along. Secondly, now I have better understanding of Evidence Informed Policy Making (EIPM), its importance and implications. Working in this dynamic team of REPOPA, I had opportunity to listen and learn from professionals and researchers in the field of EIPM working in European region.

I believe my experience with REPOPA will be an important stepping stone in my public health professional carrier and thirst to work in the field of EIPM.
REPOPA indicators for evidence-informed policy making presented at the next EPH conference in Vienna by Valentina Tudisca

How to understand if a health policy or organization is informed by scientific evidence? To answer this question, REPOPA researchers have produced a list of measurable indicators to be used by policymakers and researchers for assessing if, and to what extent, they are working evidence-informed, looking at specific and concrete aspects (concerning, for example, human resources or documentation use and production). These indicators, based on the knowledge gathered during REPOPA, were developed and contextualized by means of an international Delphi study consisting of two internet Delphi rounds and six national conferences in the REPOPA countries (DK, FIN, IT, NL, RO, UK), involving more than 100 experts from different EU areas.

Now the indicators and the relative Delphi process will be presented during a 90-minutes workshop at the 9th European Public Health Conference “All for health-health for all”, organized by the European Public Health Association, which will take place in Vienna, Austria, from November 9 to 12 2016. The workshop, promoted by the National Research Council of Italy and the REPOPA project, is scheduled on November 11, 2016 from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. and is organized in three oral presentations concerning, respectively, the frameworks and participatory processes for developing indicators for evidence-informed policy making (EIPM), the indicators development by means of an international Delphi study and their contextualization in Denmark and Italy as a case study, focusing on the strengths, weaknesses and recommendations in using the indicators emerged in the Danish and Italian national conferences. Moreover, in the afternoon of the day before the workshop, a poster presentation entitled “Indicators for evidence-informed policy making and policy phases in the Italian and Danish context” will focus on a comparison between the results of the Danish and Italian national conferences, but this time focusing on the use of the indicators in different policy phases.

This will be a further opportunity for disseminating of the indicators, which is a crucial step towards their implementation in future conferences.

We are live on Twitter

Project REPOPA has joined Twitter, where you can follow us for regular updates on our activities, participation in conferences, new publications and progress within the project. You can find us via @ProjectREPOPA or our new website http://repopa.eu/ and click on the Twitter icon.