The role of evidence in the development of policies that target health enhancing physical activity in Romania

Diana Rus

RM Chereches\textsuperscript{1}, D Rus\textsuperscript{1,2}, EO Marton-Vasarhelyi\textsuperscript{1}, P Sandu\textsuperscript{1,2}, C Baba\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Babes-Bolyai University, College of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Cluj School of Public Health, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
\textsuperscript{2}University of Medicine and Pharmacy Iuliu Hatieganu, Department of Public Health, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Contact: Diana.rus@publichealth.ro

Background

Incorporating evidence into the policymaking process has been outlined as a key strategy to improve health related policies worldwide. Translating research into policy has been proven difficult although researchers and policymakers acknowledge its importance in the development of effective policies. Therefore, our objective is to identify and describe the role of research evidence and other types of evidence in the development process of health enhancing physical activity (HEPA) policies in Romania.

Methods

Policy document analysis of two national and one local HEPA policies which focused on the increase of leisure time physical activities for all, as well as increase of population’s healthy lifestyles by promoting physical activity followed by interviews with eleven stakeholders of the policy making process.

Results

The leaders of policy making processes usually vary among policies between education, health, youth, and sport or main political actors. Sometimes only politicians or only one single sector was the leader in the policy development phase. The evidence in the policy making process came from epidemiological studies, political motives and requirements set by laws...
for policy, like ‘sport for all’ principle. The Romanian national policy making process mainly guided local authorities in their activities to promote and support the increase of leisure time physical activities, while national policies also encouraged the increase of healthy lifestyles through sport for all. Moreover, the analysis showed that international policies and guidelines were taken into account, while continuity of policies and formal decision making routes were important factors in the development of HEPA policies at national and local level.

**Conclusions**

There is a need of raising policymakers’ awareness of the importance of using evidence to support policies. Generally research evidence was poorly represented in the HEPA policy development in Romania. Moreover, little information was detailed during the policy analysis phase on the usability of any type of evidence; however some trends were observed, e.g. the use of international guidelines and stakeholders’ perceptions and views and/or community beliefs.