

Stewardship approach in comparing cross-country policy intervention results: challenges and options

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Authors: M Bertram, N Loncarevic, G Gulis, C Radl-Karimi, AR Aro and REPOPA WP3 partners. Unit for Health Promotion Research, Department of Public Health, University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg, Denmark

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Background: Stewardship in evidence-informed policy making guides integration of research knowledge and practice; it emphasizes the importance of adjustment to local contexts and needs. The purpose was to study if a stewardship intervention could increase the integration of research knowledge and practice in physical activity policymaking. This presentation will focus on the comparability of country results.

Methods: Six stewardship-interventions of physical activity policy making in Denmark (DK), Italy (IT) and the Netherlands (NL) adjusted their intervention components to the locally salient needs. In DK the emphasis was on strategic cross-sector collaboration, in IT on knowledge and research translation, and in NL on strengthening neighborhood sports and physical activity planning and development. The common outcome was improved evidence-informed policy making, measured by both common and context specific measures; further, process evaluation was used to understand the intervention process.

Results: The interventions did increase awareness, appreciation, critical thinking and also requests for research knowledge among policy makers. Some differences between countries were found: in DK and IT similar patterns were seen in the increased use of knowledge from research and target groups; in NL the use of both of these knowledge types either decreased slightly or varied.

Conclusion: Even when policy making traditions and systems are different in DK, IT and NL, the stewardship-interventions showed promising results in the access, requests and use of research knowledge, in using stakeholder knowledge as well as needs and values of the policy target groups. This study contributes to the across-country research on complex policy interventions, which allow needs-based and contextually tailored intervention contents; in which the process and functions are made similar; and in which integrity means consistency with the theory or the change process.