

Methods

The analysis of the case study was conducted by means of qualitative content analysis of documents and interviews of 14 stakeholders involved in the policy making processes. In-depth interviews to five policy makers were carried out, and the emerging elements were compared with the results of the content analysis of the policy documents.

Results

Complex interactions and multilayered decision making in a meta-policy (i.e. a policy embedded in a broader system of decision processes) were revealed by the analysis at national, regional, and local levels involving two Ministries, one Region and two local health units. The focus was on four research issues: a) analyzing the different sources of evidence; b) studying how the considered researches varied over time; c) finding possible contradictions and conflicts in evidence production; and d) exploring the “knowledge conversion processes” between local, national and international levels. The role of “pivot” persons, already emerged in the document analysis, was proved to be crucial not only in the development of policy path, but also in the inclusion of evidence. The interviews showed that in the analyzed meta-policies the use of scientific research was almost completely driven by the local level decision makers.

Conclusions

Possible consequences could be a delay between the research evidence and its use, and the mixing of evidence between different levels, without putting enough attention to the limits of extrapolation of research evidence to other contexts. We also suggest developing indicators to understand if the use of research in a meta-policy is by nature symbolic or instrumental.

Evidence and knowledge use in a meta-policy: results from an Italian case study

Tommaso Castellani

A Valente¹, T Castellani¹, L Cori², F Bianchi²

¹Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies, National Research Council, Rome, Italy

²Institute of Clinical Physiology, National Research Council, Rome, Italy
Contact: tommaso.castellani@cnr.it

Background

The analysis of Italian policies on physical activity initiated in 2012, with the aim of assessing the use of scientific and other type of evidence in policy making in four national, regional and local HEPA policies.