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**USING THE DELPHI METHOD FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PUBLIC HEALTH  
POLICY MAKING  
IN THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT**

Doctoral thesis

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## SUMMARY

Evidence-based public health policy making has a great impact on the lives of the population and their health status. In this process, an important role is played by the way research results are being applied into practice. As stated by the Evidence Informed Policy Network, created within the World Health Organization, a lot of effort needs to be put into bridging the gaps between the evidence (research results) needed and the evidence already existing, and how the two aspects can be tackled with. By taking these actions, the health of the population would be improved, and policy makers would ensure better life conditions for them. The report also mentioned that the evidence resulted from research studies has little added value if it is not undertaken in the day-to-day activities of different professionals, and if it is not monitored and evaluate to see the results obtained. For these measures to be adopted, all stakeholders involved need to better understand the mechanisms and implications of evidence uptake in the policy making field (The Evidence-informed Policy Network Europe, 2008).

Evidence-based policymaking is a dialogue or compilation of methods that clarify the policy-making course and not necessarily influences immediately the policy's fundamental goals. It organizes the process in a more rational and systematic way (Sutcliffe & Court, 2006). Sutcliffe and Court bring into discussion the consultative role that evidence needs to have within the policy-making process. Policy makers should not see the process of gathering evidence as a burden, but rather as a means through which they are well informed about the existing evidence, thus taking informed decisions.

Evidence-based policy making is a concept employed by many governments and policy makers worldwide to ensure the fact that the policies are well documented, based on comprehensive data, and well adapted to the needs of the citizens they serve and the communities they are implemented in. Some countries have more experience with evidence-based policy-making processes than others that have not yet adopted this way of approaching the policy-making field.

The present thesis had the aspiration to analyse and discuss the role of evidence into the policy making process and to test a participatory methodology, the modified Delphi method, within the context of evidence-based policy making in Romania.

The rationale of this thesis resides in lack of methods and procedures from the Romanian national policy making system for the use of evidence that could enhance the positive outcomes of the policies. As shown in the introduction of the thesis, few initiatives have been found on this topic.

The isolated nature of these initiatives means that no coordinated efforts for the adoption of evidence-based policy making have been made. Of course, this current situation represents the beginning of the movement, and each project is valuable not only for the results produced but also for offering the exposure of the human resources to this field. The projects` results have a short life span if they are not adopted in the mechanisms and procedures of an institution. But as long as these initiatives keep flowing the culture of using evidence will be slowly internalized by the public institutions` staff.

Three main steps guided the structure of this thesis into several parts, each of them casting the light on specific facets of the evidence-based policy making field. **The aim of this research is to create a framework for the Romanian policy makers in the field of health promotion and physical activity in which** practical steps of the evidence-based policy making are recommended.

The assumptions and research questions identified in the introduction have been put to the test throughout the course of the research undertaken in this thesis and answers were searched to show if they are either valid or not. The arguments and research results will be presented below, for each of the chapters.

Each objective set for the current paper had the purpose to bring into discussion a specific aspect of the evidence-based policy making process and build the path toward a better understanding of it. The evidence-based policy making field in Romania is underdeveloped which means that policy makers and policy implementers do not have the institutional culture to use evidence and research results in most (if not any) of the phases of the policy making processes. This current thesis had the modest ambition to bring into the public eye the need for evidence into the policy making process and the need for a better collaboration between the stakeholders at national, regional, and local levels.

The thesis is divided in three main parts, each of them having a different focus, but complementing each other for the purpose of creating the general focus and then contextualize it to the national Romanian specifics. Put together, the three parts offer a complete framework of the evidence-based policy making processes, the knowledge to action framework and specific tools that can be used in this field.

Below is the description of the main parts and how they complement each other in the efforts to create the specific recommendations:

- (1) The focus of the first part was bringing clarity over the term evidence-based policy making and the processes that should be taken into account by policy makers when searching for evidence to inform their policies. The concepts, frameworks and resources needed were reviewed and a general image was drafted.
- (2) In the following step of the research, out of the participatory methods that can be applied for generating evidence for the use of policy makers, the modified Delphi method was chosen, and a systematic literature review was conducted in order to show its advantages and processes. Investigating the modified Delphi method and showing the advantages of using the modified version over the classical one was the focus of the second chapter. This step concluded with generating a list of criteria to be used by researchers when reporting the modified Delphi studies
- (3) The third step consisted in implementing a modified Delphi study at national level, within the framework of the REPOPA project. The modified Delphi method was applied in a national study in order to generate and contextualize a list of indicators to be used for the policy makers in their efforts to integrate evidence into the policy making process. The data collected in Romania was analysed independently of the data collected for the whole consortium of partners and generated recommendations for policy makers adapted to the Romanian national context. This study produced a series of suggestions and tools for the Romanian policy makers that can be adopted into their work.

## Assumptions

The following assumptions were formulated as the base point of this research. These assumptions served to better organize the structure of this thesis.

The modified Delphi methodology is better suited to seek consensus than the classical Delphi methodology. – chapter 2

The lack of reporting recommendations for the modified Delphi studies results in poor reporting of the studies. – chapter 2

The modified Delphi methodology is a suitable instrument to be used for the contextualization of a framework to the Romanian context. – chapter 3

The evidence-based policy-making processes are not used in Romania by the policy makers when formulating, implementing, or evaluating the policies. – chapter 3

The development of a framework (list of indicators) would support the policy makers` efforts to use the evidence in the process of making and implementing the policies. – chapter 3

The direct involvement of the policy makers within the process of adapting the framework (list of indicators) to the Romanian context would make it more prone to be utilized in the policy-making stages. – chapter 3

## Objectives

In order to test the assumptions and to find the answers to the research questions, for each of the chapters described above there are one or several objectives that have directed the research efforts.

The first chapter was a review of the literature and emphasised what purpose evidence has when referring to public health policy making process.

For the second chapter, the objectives were (1) to review the particularities of the modified Delphi process and to assess the methodological quality of the reporting process, by applying the systematic literature review framework. (2) Develop a template for reporting purposes of the modified Delphi method.

The third chapter had two objectives: the first objective was (3) to implement a modified Delphi study with the participation of Romanian stakeholders, in order to contextualize a list of

indicators for the use of evidence-based policy making in the field of health promotion and physical activity; (4) the second objective was to draw conclusions and recommendations related to the necessary resources and tools having as basis the data gathered during the national consensus meeting that was part of the Delphi study.

Each of the three four serves as a jigsaw piece of the narrative this current thesis draws, and the motivation that stands behind it. The evidence-based policy making field in Romania is underdeveloped and policy makers do not have the institutional culture to work using evidence and research results. The research undertaken had the modest ambition to bring into discussion the need for evidence into the Romanian policy making landscape and the need for better collaboration between the policy makers and researchers at different levels.

## **Chapter 1**

This chapter had the purpose to provide a theoretical support on what evidence-based policy making is and what are the aspects that need to be put into practice in order for it to be adopted into practice. During this first chapter, different aspects of this field were discussed and analysed, such as the definition and sources of evidence, the role of the stakeholders, different mechanisms for the knowledge translation processes that can facilitate the evidence uptake, the barriers and facilitators in the implementation of the evidence-based policy making process.

The information found in the literature showed that the evidence-based policy making field has been intensely studied and developed and a lot of theories, mechanisms and recommendations have been made over the years. The most important ones were discussed and presented in the thesis, with the purpose of creating the theoretical context of the evidence-based policy making frameworks.

There are a long series of studies that have **demonstrated the positive influence that evidence** has when used at the basis of the policy creation. Also, it has been showed that the policies that are created with the use of evidence have had better evaluation results with regard to the positive effect in the communities (Newson et al., 2018; Zardo et al., 2018).

McMichael and colleagues explained that the evidence-based policy making in the field of **public health is of great importance particularly in the** governments that have few resources



available (McMichael et al., 2005). When scarce resources are available it is of utmost importance to take informed decisions that address the real problems from the community.

There are two dimensions that need to be explored at this point of the discussions, when it comes to evidence. The following two perspectives need to find a common ground and to complement each other for the greater good of the communities: who uses the evidence (and where does them find it) versus who produces the evidence (and with what purpose do they produce it). Both these perspectives need to meet with each other with the purpose of creating a better environment and better lives for the citizens, who should be the end beneficiaries of the policies (The Evidence-informed Policy Network Europe, 2008).

The process of informing the policies and the pathways to be followed have not been standardised and many recipes have been published in the literature. As a proof of concept, throughout the process of building this chapter, an array of words and expressions that refer to the evidence-informed policy making process were found, and here are some examples:

Knowledge to action process (I. Graham et al., 2006), knowledge translation (I. Graham et al., 2006; Langlois et al., 2016), knowledge transfer (I. Graham et al., 2006; Mitton, Adair, McKenzie, Patten, & Waye Perry, 2007), knowledge exchange (I. Graham et al., 2006; Mitton et al., 2007), research utilization (I. Graham et al., 2006), implementation research (I. Graham et al., 2006; Langlois et al., 2016), dissemination (I. Graham et al., 2006), diffusion (I. Graham et al., 2006), knowledge co-production and integrated knowledge translation (IKT) (I. D. Graham et al., 2019).

The policy makers need to use **evidence for a better understanding of the situation they address** in their policies. They should be able to easily find the evidence they need and have a support system put in place for these purposes. On the other hand, researchers should be able to disseminate the results of their research widely, and for diverse groups of people, in order for the research to have a practical applicability and not stay behind under the form of a report or scientific article published. Zardo and colleagues mention that the research that does not leave the academic confines has no real life impact whatsoever (Zardo et al., 2018). This is the reason why additional fields have been created in order to bridge the gaps between the researchers and policy makers and create a common ground for them to work together.

To this end, the **knowledge transfer and exchange field** has taken more and more space into the public arena. This means that both sides are seeking a common ground for the better use of evidence. Mitton and Adair mention that the knowledge transfer and exchange processes should

ensure the fact that the results produced by the researchers have been up taken and used by the policy makers for informing the policies and decision they take. This work should be based on the reciprocity concept and should be a collaborative effort made by the two parts (Mitton et al., 2007).

Several mechanisms for a better collaboration of the researchers and policy makers have been developed. One of them consists in the **dissemination of the research results in different formats** such as layman reports, policy briefs, evidence briefs or summaries. These types of documents have the advantage to be of short length, easy to understand and based on data resulted from sound research studies (Beynon et al., 2012; The SURE Collaboration, 2011; World Health Organization - Regional Office for Europe, 2020). These recommendations have inspired the final product of chapter three of this thesis, which consists of three guiding documents addressed to policy makers and researchers.

Tait and Williamson (Tait & Williamson, 2019) bring into the discussion the concept of integrated knowledge translation (IKT). According to their research, delivering the research results to the end-users is not enough in order to avoid research waste. To ensure the uptake of the evidence produced by the researchers into the policy making process, there needs to be a collaboration relationship, translated into a partnership, between the two categories, and they should co-produce knowledge that is of interest for the policy-makers on the one hand, and respects the research methodological requirement, on the other hand (Tait & Williamson, 2019).

When little data and evidence is available for a specific policy, a possible way of taking informed decisions is to involve experts in different phases of the policy (agenda setting, development or even implementation). Some advantages to this line of action consists in ensuring a transparent decision making process, and up taking the existing evidence directly from the stakeholders that have it (Fischer et al., 2014). This kind of method has been chosen in the third part of this thesis – the consultation of stakeholders with the purpose of collecting knowledge and evidence, for the formulation of recommendation and guidelines in the field of evidence-based policy making.

Research co-production is the process where the research is conducted with the participation of the groups that will benefit and use the results (I. D. Graham, McCutcheon, & Kothari, 2019). The desired result of such collaboration is to produce studies that are significant, beneficial, easy to use and understand, practical (I. D. Graham et al., 2019). The research co-production is

ensuring that the research will not only reach the intended goal but will ensure the improvement of the subject under research, and, in the end, will benefit the targeted population.

It has been demonstrated that the evidence used in the policy making process is beneficial and that the collaboration between the two main actors, policy makers and researchers, is crucial in this process. It is important to also take into consideration the barriers and facilitators of this process. Mitton and colleagues explain that there are several levels that need to be brought in the discussion: individual barriers and facilitators, organizational ones, but also related to timing and communication (Mitton et al., 2007).

Most of the barriers and facilitators discussed in chapter one of this thesis have been also identified during the implementation of the national modified Delphi study which makes the subject of the third chapter of this paper. Specially during the national consensus meeting the experts present have explored this topic and have proposed solutions that can be taken in order to weaken the barriers and strengthen the facilitators.

## **Chapter 2 - modified Delphi systematic literature review**

In the second chapter of the thesis, the methods of promoting the knowledge production and evidence uptake have been explored, with a specific focus on the modified Delphi methodology and the variations that can be brought to this method. As a product of this piece of research, a set of recommendations on how to report the Delphi studies was created.

The Delphi methodology is a consensus research method that brings together different types of stakeholders in order to find the best possible and informed actions to be taken (Hasson et al., 2000; Powell, 2003; Tudisca et al., 2018).

There is no unanimously validated working definition for the modified Delphi methodology, fact that represented the grounds for this chapter and study rationale. This situation makes it also complicated to report the modified Delphi studies, as there are lots of variations that can be brought to it (Boukdedid et al., 2011). For these purposes, the systematic literature review methodology has been used to find the particularities of this method and to draw conclusions about the best way to report the findings of the modified Delphi studies.

Practically, the modified Delphi method combines the questionnaire iterative rounds of the traditional type of Delphi study with an array of other methods that most often involve the face-to-face interaction of the participants (A. Aro et al., 2016; Schneider et al., 2017). Some of the methods that modify the traditional Delphi are the following: face-to-face meetings, nominal group technique, interviews, focus groups, scenario writing (Landeta et al., 2011; Rowe & Wright, 1999; Singh et al., 2013).

The traditional Delphi method has four main characteristics worth mentioning: first of all, the anonymity of the participants, conferred by the fact that they are not interacting in person. Secondly, it is an iterative process of questionnaire with the add-on of controlled feedback of the group generated data between the rounds. Another characteristic of the Delphi process consists in the opportunity for the participants to change their position based on the general summary feedback collected from the group of panellists. At the end of the process, after several rounds (depending on the study methodology) the results can be statistically calculated to generate the findings of the study (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Landeta, 2006; Rowe & Wright, 1999).

The modification of the traditional Delphi comes to meet the disadvantages reported in the literature. So, first of all the disadvantages are the following: the missing face-to-face interaction between the participants could generate high variability between the iterations. Also, the feedback is provided by filtering the data through the researchers' perspective, which may raise subjectivity issues. Last but not least, the anonymity can be considered also a disadvantage as it might generate low accountability from the participants (Gupta & Clarke, 1996; Hung et al., 2008; Powell, 2003; Vakil, 2011).

When using the modified Delphi method, researchers can explore both the advantages of the traditional methodology in the first part of the study, and they can tackle the disadvantages, by adding a face-to-face interaction of the participant.

The use of the modified Delphi method as a tool for evidence-informed public health policy making was investigated and specific recommendations for researchers using the modified Delphi in this field were provided.

The systematic review aimed to assess the methodological quality of the studies adopting the modified Delphi method in the field of public health policy making, based on a systematic

review, and providing specific recommendations for researchers using the modified Delphi in this field. The two objectives were to (1) identify studies using the modified Delphi methodology in evidence-informed public health policy making; and (2) assess the methodological quality of the studies identified.

Following the literature review, 15 articles were identified as responding to the selection criteria objective one of this systematic review. These articles have the modified Delphi methodology as their main research method, and their results have implications in public health policy making. The 15 articles included in the systematic review were analysed using a data extraction form.

Considerable variations were observed in the way the 15 selected studies describe the implementation and reporting of the modified Delphi method.

The main finding is that there is the lack of details when reporting the Delphi. Some articles present in detail the technical steps used in implementing the Delphi method. There were a few articles that responded to most of the criteria established in the evaluation grid, but others made only a general presentation of the steps undertaken to implement it, meeting none of the criteria proposed. It can be argued that either the Delphi methodology was not employed properly, or that the research teams did not report all the technical details related to the implementation process. In delineating the results of this systematic review, some good practices and gaps identified in using the Modified Delphi methodology in evidence-informed public health policy making can be discussed. One good practice is focusing a separate article on the methodological aspects, an article which is cited in the Methods section and referred to when describing the methodology used.

For a better reporting system of the modified Delphi method, a template for reporting purposes is suggested to be used by the researcher working with this method. This grid was developed based on the above-mentioned criteria used for the analysis performed in this systematic review.

### **Chapter 3 - the modified Delphi study**

The first two chapters of this thesis discussed the theoretical aspects of the evidence-informed policymaking and also the details about the Delphi methodology. The third chapter presents the practical part: the description of the Delphi study implemented in Romania within the REPOPA project. To facilitate understanding of the methodology used, international Delphi process is presented, but the second part of the study is detailed, as the data resulting from this second phase of the Delphi process was collected and analysed independently.

**The third chapter of this thesis** focused on creating recommendation for the adoption of evidence-based policy making by the Romanian policy makers. A modified Delphi study at national level has been implemented. Taking into account the assumptions, objectives and research questions, the third chapter had the purpose to bring into discussion the benefits of using evidence informed policy making tools, and the way to do this. As a result of the research work, several instruments have been developed and a checklist with the elements to be taken into account when using evidence in the policy making process. As a final product of the third chapter two policy briefs and a recommendation document for policy makers have been developed, with the purpose of understanding and enhancing the use of evidence informed policy making in Romania.

The methodology of the Delphi study was developed by the project partners and was coordinated by the National Research Council (CNR), Italy. Each partner was responsible for implementing the Delphi study at the national level and reporting the data to the Delphi coordinator to be integrated into the project findings. The focus of this current thesis is to analyse and produce recommendations based on the Romanian data collected, for which approval was granted.

The main purpose of the national consensus conference was to adapt the indicators validated in the previous rounds, to the national Romanian context. Given that the list of indicators was developed with the support of experts in the field of sports and policy makers from six different countries, the national consensus conference served the purpose to take the final REPOPA list of indicators and adapt it to the Romanian needs and environment.

Following the adapted Delphi methodology, the panellists met face to face for the consensus meeting where they debated based on the final list of indicators, bringing into the discussion

their expertise and experience in working within the Romanian system. This process was proven to be of great importance in the development of policy briefs and guidance instruments as the stakeholders brought into discussion different aspects at the system level, gaps that were present in the public institutions but also miscommunication between different institutions or lack of procedures for the inter-institutional change of information. Also, having the input of the Romanian policy makers, experts and researchers, conferred the instrument not only adaptability to the national specifics, but also more confidence to be adopted by other national stakeholders due to the involvement of their Romanian colleagues.

After implementing the modified Delphi study at national level, the conclusion is that this methodology is a useful instrument to be used in the Romanian context. The study performed at national level was smoothly implemented and a large pool of data has been gathered as a result of the implementation process. The results of the study confirm that the instrument can be easily adapted to the Romanian context, and it can generate valuable insights gathered from the experts.

The modified Delphi method is a suitable instrument for the generation of guiding documents and recommendations for the enhancement of the evidence-based policy making by policy makers. The resources developed on the basis on the modified Delphi study include sound information based informed by the experts` opinions and expertise.

The first assumption *the modified Delphi methodology is a suitable instrument to be used for the contextualization of a framework to the Romanian context*, was validated, as the modified Delphi study has been smoothly implemented and has had the result of contextualizing the list of indicators for health enhancing policy making to the Romanian context. The experts participating to this study were pleased with their contribution and suggested that developing a list of recommendation with the involvement of the professionals increases the chances of the recommendations to be up taken in the real-life processes.

A modified Delphi study is an optimal tool used for engaging specialists in the development and adaptation/contextualization of a list of indicators to be used in the evidence informed policy making processes in the field of physical activity promotion (and beyond).

The second assumption *the evidence-based policy making processes are not used in Romania by the policy makers when formulating, implementing, or evaluating the policies*, was confirmed by the experts present at the national Delphi consensus meeting. As detailed in the

results section of the third chapter, the Romanian policy making system has an array of shortages and one of them is the poorly use of evidence.

The results of the Romanian consensus conference concluded that the participants were mostly aware of the institutional gaps, and the shortfalls within the system, so they easily identified the opportunities that were present and the threats that impede a smooth evidence informed policy making process. Also, for some of the shortfalls within the system they have created mechanisms to overcome the lack of resources. For example, even if they were aware of the importance of having a department for documentation within the institution; because this was lacking, they turned to the internet to find the public research data and results available. Also, in the absence of procedures and protocols for the inter-institutional cooperation and exchange of information, they still considered important to keep in touch with their counterparts from other policy making institutions or from research institutions. So extra efforts were made to develop such relationships in using other mechanisms.

The third assumption that *the development of a framework (list of indicators) would support the policy makers` efforts to use the evidence into the process of making and implementing the policies* was supported by the experts present in the national consensus conference. They said that such a list could prove beneficial for the use of policy makers, but it is too general to some extent, as the resources available and the processes differ from institution to institution. No investigation on how the policy makers used the instruments developed was made, so this assumption cannot be verified.

The fourth assumption, *the direct involvement of the policy makers within the process of adapting the framework (list of indicators) to the Romanian context would make it more prone to be utilized in the policy making stages* was confirmed by the participants to the national consensus conference. They stated that having the input of the experts within the system thoroughly adapts this instrument to the Romanian realities and makes it valuable for them and their decision makers colleagues. They added that there are differences from institutions to institution in terms of available resources and in terms of needs, which will create disparities in the use of the list of indicators.

As a final product of the practical work of this thesis, a series of recommendation documents were developed, recommendations related to the necessary resources and tools having as basis the data gathered during the national consensus meeting that was part of the Delphi study.



Two policy briefs and a guiding suggestions document were developed to serve to the policy makers and researcher as a basis for their collaborative work.

The first policy brief, if focused on general information about evidence-based policy making, its important and why this method of developing policies should be uptaken by the Romanian policy makers. This document is addressed to policy makers and the employees in the policy making institutions. It serves the purpose to inform them on the importance of using evidence and the way to do this. The dissemination of this document among the policy makers and policy implementers was encouraged.

The second policy brief focuses on the relationship between the policy makers and the researchers. A strong link between the policy makers and the researchers needs to be maintained for the benefit of creating and using the right evidence in evidence-based policy making. To foster the evidence-informed policy making process, both the policy makers and the researchers need to participate in a co-creation process. The collaboration between policy makers and researchers was encouraged, to create the proper environment for information exchange and knowledge transfer. This collaboration should be initiated and fostered by both parties, as the benefits are reciprocal. Specific recommendations were given for both parties in order to maintain this process.

The guiding suggestions document presents a list of criteria that can enhance the use of evidence and provides an overview of the resources needed to do this. This document was addressed to the management of the public institutions that can influence the internal regulations and processes, supporting thus the adoption of the evidence used into the policy making process.

Examples of enablers recommended: Assess the available resources, in order to ensure there is enough capacity to properly implement the policies and strategies; Create stronger links with policy makers and researchers from other countries with the purpose of knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange; Train the human resources with basic research skills. They need to know how to read, assess and work with research results; Create or maintain good collaboration with a research institution; Enhance inter-ministerial collaboration (ex. Ministries of Health, Sports and Youth, Research and Education). These efforts can foster comprehensive policies and trans-disciplinary solutions to the gaps currently existing in the system; Ensure a transparent way of disseminating the results of different activities, policies, or strategies; Create a department for the documentation of the research results, data, and for the transfer of knowledge to other stakeholders and target groups.

Examples of barriers identified: Lack of financial resources is affecting the development and provision of all the other types of resources; Shortage in research centres that could support the production of data, reports and recommendations to be used during the evidence-informed policy making process; Lack of harmonized procedures – Intra and inter institutions (ex. sports and health-enhancing physical activity is not related to the ministry of health); The absence of institutional memory (key personnel often replaced due to shifts in the political arena), which creates a framework where regulations and practices are often changing, and the continuation of activities and strategies cannot be insured; The lack of continuity in implementing the strategies and policies due to political changes and shifts in priorities; The lack of resources directed to the evaluation process (missing procedures); The intrusive and interfering nature of the monitoring activities generates difficulties for some employees, who might create obstacles for the monitors.

The results presented in the third chapter were based on the implementation of the modified delphi method within the framework of the REPOPA project, *Research into policy to enhance physical activity*, funded through the European Union seventh framework programme (FP7/2007-2013) under the grant agreement n° 281532. The author of this thesis received the approvals from the project coordinator and the institutional coordinator in order to use the data collected through the project for the purpose of this these.

## **Final considerations**

Consensus methods are a tool used to generate the best available advice when lack of hard evidence is encountered in the field of policy development (European centre for disease prevention and control, 2011). The ideal situation is when evidence is available for policy makers to use in the policy formulation stage. These pieces of evidence can be taken from different sources, depending on the field. The alternative is to work with the best available expertise from stakeholders in the field, which it was done in the case of the Romanian REPOPA modified Delphi study.

The main research method tested in the study presented in chapter three is the modified Delphi method which has passed the applicability test to the Romanian context. By implementing the above-mentioned study a series of recommendations contextualised to the Romanian context were put together for the policy makers` and researchers` better collaboration.

The Productivity Commission within the Australian government mentions the fact that evidence-based policy processes have been used in a long time by some of the policy makers, without having a general framework to have been referred to. The stakeholders involved in these processes have tried to work in the spirit of the evidence-based policy making, by fostering openness to collaboration with colleagues from other fields, searching for available data and using it in their activity. The authors think that the evidence based trend represents a series of theories and techniques that want to revive and enhance the already existing endeavours (Productivity Commission, 2010).

The current thesis had the modest ambition to review the evidence-based policy making theories and techniques proposed by the literature and test them through a national Delphi study implemented in 2016. The findings and conclusions included in this paper have the purpose to contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms used at national level in Romania. They are also the basis of a series of recommendations that can be used by the policy makers and the researcher in a collaborative work to enhance the production and then the use of evidence in the national policies. These efforts need to be taken for the mutual benefit of the two groups, with the bigger purpose of creating policies with greater impact for the well-being of the population. Only by having the large array of stakeholders at the same table the knowledge transfer process can be ensured and the evidence is used at its greatest potential.

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Key words: public policy, evidence, public health, Delphi method, evidence based