

GUIDE TO QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY-MAKING

USING RESEARCH IN THE EVIPNET FRAMEWORK

EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY NETWORK (EVIPNET) EUROPE



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Abstract

The Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) is an initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) that promotes the use of evidence from health research in policy-making. EVIPNet Europe focuses on increasing country capacity to develop evidence-informed policies on health system priorities, and thus contributes to the achievement of WHO's triple billion targets, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

EVIPNet Europe is committed to increasing the capacities of countries in utilizing the best available evidence in all the relevant forms, both quantitative and qualitative, to support policy-makers' needs when making decisions. This guide aims to support country efforts to generate

evidence, including qualitative evidence. It summarizes what a qualitative evidence synthesis is, and how it can contribute to the evidence-informed policy-making process; how a synthesis can be retrieved, appraised and used; how to develop a qualitative synthesis as recommended by Cochrane.

This document can be used when commissioning, developing or reviewing a qualitative evidence synthesis, or any other synthesis product that includes qualitative data. It is not intended to provide a detailed step-by-step guide, but gives a broad overview of the methods, and provides references to other relevant sources of information.

Keywords

Qualitative evidence, Capacity-building, Evidence synthesis, Policy-making, Health policy

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ABBREVIATIONS

CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (tool)
DIR	Division of Information, Evidence, Research and Innovation
EBP	evidence brief for policy
EIP	evidence-informed policy-making
EHII	WHO European Health Information Initiative
EQUATOR	Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research
EVIPNet	Evidence-informed Policy Network
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation
GRADE-CERQual	Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research
KT	knowledge translation
QES	qualitative evidence synthesis
SPIDER	Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research type
UHC	universal health coverage
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO Europe	World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EVIPNET EUROPE

Knowledge translation (KT) links researchers and knowledge users through interactions that can be of different complexity, intensity or level of engagement. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines KT as *“the synthesis, exchange, and application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people’s health.”* KT in the context of evidence-informed policy-making (EIP) involves summarizing and contextualizing research evidence in a suitable manner for policy development. This seeks to ensure that decisions made about health policies are based on the best available evidence. Policy decisions typically need to be informed by integrating a broad range of various types of evidence. This is especially the case for complex policies that involve implementation at systems level and across different sectors. Qualitative research is therefore integral to such an evidence landscape, where the addition of an interpretive naturalistic approach¹ helps us to better understand whether interventions will work or not; whether they are feasible and acceptable for implementation. In order to fully understand the potential of effective policy options, for example, stakeholder views might be important in determining what should be implemented, where, for whom and how.

The Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe was launched in October 2012 in recognition of the need to scale up national efforts aimed at closing the gap between research and policy. EVIPNet is a global WHO initiative that promotes the systematic use of health-research evidence in policy-making. It has a presence in all WHO regions and is coordinated at both the regional and global levels. EVIPNet Europe focuses on increasing country capacity to develop evidence-informed policies on health system priorities. As such, it supports the implementation of the Action Plan to strengthen the use of evidence information and research

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