12. Evidence-informed policymaking in physical activity policy: reflections on Finland

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INTRODUCTION

The public sector has become complex in itself, and therefore it needs to provide extra proof to substantiate its legitimacy. Strong economic, ethical, and political justifications support the enhanced use of evidence in policymaking. Pressure mounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery and to identify cost-effective policy measures based on robust evidence.

Ethically, policymakers bear the responsibility to maximise benefits when intervening in people's lives, such as in education or social and healthcare services, by using the best available evidence (Sebba, 2011). Furthermore, evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) practices are closely tied to public expectations. Broader demands exist to enhance the accountability of policymaking, the perceived legitimacy of processes, and civic trust in decision-makers (Head, 2016). It is crucial for politicians to justify policies by referencing research evidence, or at least appearing to do so (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Sebba, 2011). The use of evidence is also linked to expanding policy authority and exercising control (Daviter, 2015).

In recent years, policymakers, practitioners, and scholars have shown growing interest in evidence-informed approaches across various public services, including education, healthcare, and crime reduction (see Bristow et al., 2015; Head, 2016; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). This interest has also manifested in the field of physical activity (PA) policy, where frequent calls for robust evidence to support initiatives and implementation have arisen in response to the public health issues associated with physical inactivity (Houlihan et al., 2009).

Insufficient PA is a growing concern in Nordic countries. In Finland, approximately one-third of children (Martin et al., 2022) and one-quarter of adults (Husu et al., 2022) meet the national PA recommendations. Physical inactivity

and sedentary behaviours are leading causes of non-communicable diseases, incurring significant social and economic costs (World Health Organization, 2018). The cost of physical inactivity is estimated at EUR 3.2 billion annually in Finland (Kolu et al., 2022).

Over recent decades, Finland has implemented numerous governmental strategies and policy actions with limited success in addressing insufficient PA and sedentary behaviours. It has been recognised that physical inactivity should be treated as a wicked problem, influenced by complex and multifaceted cross-sectoral factors (e.g., Hämäläinen et al., 2016; Mikkonen et al., 2022; Rutter et al., 2019; Ryom et al., 2023). Scholars and practitioners widely concur that there is no singular solution to increasing PA; instead, it demands a systems-based approach (Rutter et al., 2019; Ryom et al., 2023; World Health Organization, 2018).

Both the World Health Organization (2018) and the Council of the European Union (2013) have stressed the importance of evidence use in PA promotion. This principle applies also to Finland, where the state PA policy, under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to bolster the knowledge base in the field and efficiently utilise evidence in decision-making (State Budget Proposal, 2023).

This chapter provides an overview of evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) in the context of PA policy and its implications within the Nordic public policy framework in Finland. Subsequent sections explore the evolution of EIPM approaches and the integration of evidence in policymaking processes, followed by an overview of EIPM development in Finland. Additionally, it presents a methodological framework and current EIPM research approaches, outcomes, and EIPM facilitators. The chapter concludes with reflections on its findings concerning PA policymaking in Finland.

FROM EVIDENCE-BASED TO EVIDENCE-INFORMED

Penrose (1959) was one of the first to combine the efficient management of intangible resources with the competitive advantage of the company. Both Bell (1976) and Masuda (1980) highlighted the central role of knowledge in value creation in post-industrial society. Later, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) simulated the process of generating new knowledge and transforming knowledge types as a social process between people. According to Choo (2006), organisations need knowledge to create a shared context for action, develop new knowledge and capabilities, assess their choices, and make rational decisions (p. 27). All these researchers found the knowledge-based approach to be a useful basis for managing organisations in an increasingly knowledge-intensive society.

Evidence-based paradigms in policymaking have developed alongside knowledge-based management approaches, although the early origins of

evidence-based approaches can be traced as far back as eighteenth-century medicine (Rousseau, 2006). The current evidence-based policy movement started to develop in the 1970s (Aaron, 1978; Bulmer, 1982) and strengthened in the 1990s by focusing more explicitly on the translation of scientific evidence into policy and practice (e.g., Elliott & Popay, 2000; Lomas, 1997; Nutbeam, 1996; Satterfield et al., 2009). Since then, there has been a drive towards evidence-based medicine, at first focused on decision-making by physicians and then extended to other health professionals and consumers, called 'evidence-based healthcare' or 'evidence-based practice' (Oxman et al., 2009). In the context of management and policymaking, this approach started to be referred to as 'evidence-based policy' (Packwood, 2002).

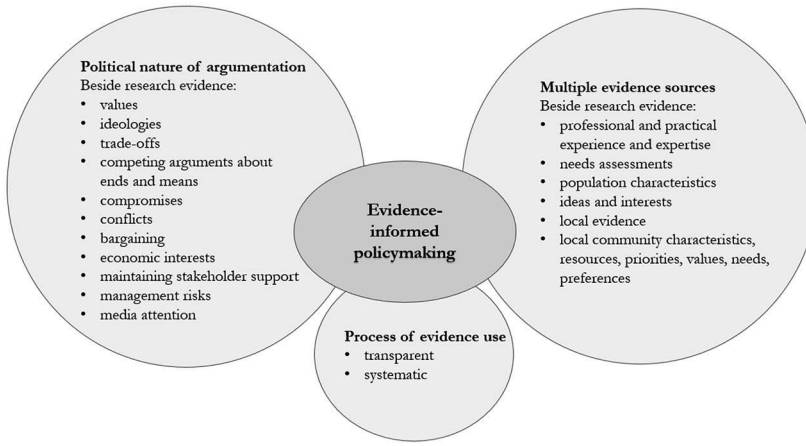
Nowadays, it is widely agreed, at least in democratic countries, that evidence has its role in sound policy processes. However, in practice, problems arise from both organisational and political mechanisms. From an organisational perspective, access to accurate knowledge is crucial in all agencies, whereas the specific administrative practices governing knowledge selection and use vary across policy domains and by organisational types across the public sector (Head, 2016).

In a democratic political system, evidence is confronted by values, ideologies, persuasion, economic interests, and competing arguments about ends and means (e.g., Lindblom, 1979; Majone, 1989; Shulock, 1999). Rather than relying on evidence, politicians may be more focused on political argumentation, maintaining stakeholder support, involving themselves in media debates, and managing risks (Head, 2016). It has been concluded that evidence can inform and enrich policymaking in the long term, but it is not a driver of the outcomes (Majone, 1989; Shulock, 1999).

Despite ever-expanding sound evidence for the use of policy analysis, the political nature of policy debate and decision-making is generally unfavourable to research-based perspectives (Head, 2016). Consequently, the early enthusiasm for evidence-based policymaking has recently been contested by many researchers who adopt the less pretentious approach of EIPM (Head, 2016; Oxman et al., 2009), which highlights that while evidence can be used to support a decision, it is not the same as a decision (Oxman et al., 2009).

Along with acknowledging the political nature of EIPM, the concept can be delineated by the nature of the evidence used in policymaking. The EIPM approach recognises that besides research evidence (RE), there is a need for other sources of knowledge, in a broader environmental and organisational context (Aro et al., 2008; Bowen & Zwi, 2005; Brownson et al., 2009; Oxman et al., 2009; Satterfield et al., 2009). However, systematic and transparent access and appraisal of evidence are vital (Oxman et al., 2009). The key principle of EIPM is an approach that intends to ensure that decision-making is

well informed by the best available evidence (Oxman et al., 2009). Based on the above literature, the elements of EIPM are synthesised in Figure 12.1.



Source: Author's own illustration, based on previous literature.

Figure 12.1 Elements of evidence-informed policymaking

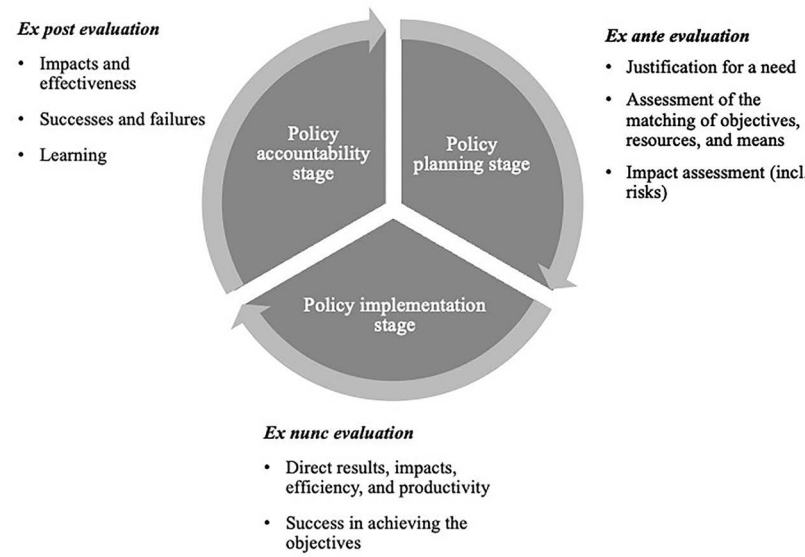
Evidence Use in Different Stages of a Policy Cycle

The conventional way to describe the chronology of a policy process is by differentiating between agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation, leading to termination (Werner & Wegrich, 2007). In simplified terms, the policy process can be divided into three stages: the planning stage; the implementation stage; and the accountability stage (Virtanen et al., 2015). In an ideal EIPM process, evidence is included in all stages of a policy cycle (see Figure 12.2).

At the policy planning stage, *ex ante* evaluation focuses on analysing the appropriateness and feasibility of the planned policy measures (see Virtanen, 2007; Virtanen et al., 2015). During this stage of the policy cycle, policymakers are interested in how the policy is justified based on societal needs and whether the objectives, resources, and means presented for the policy are in balance. *Ex ante* impact assessment has also become increasingly important to analyse the potential impacts, including the risks of the policy reform.

At the policy implementation stage, decision-makers are interested in evidence to determine whether the policy action has succeeded in achieving the objectives set for it at the planning stage (see Virtanen, 2007; Virtanen et al., 2015). The key focus of *ex nunc* evaluation is on the direct results, impacts, efficiency, and productivity of the policy.

At the end of the policy process, during the accountability stage, the focus is on assessing the impacts and effectiveness of the policy (see Virtanen, 2007; Virtanen et al., 2015). This *ex post* evaluation phase is crucial because it generates information about both the success and failure of a policy. Documentation of previous interventions is essential for learning and improving subsequent policies in the new policy planning phase and the next policy cycle.



Source: Adapted from Virtanen (2007); Virtanen et al. (2015).

Figure 12.2 Use of evidence at different stages of the policy cycle

Evidence-informed Policymaking in Finland

The New Public Management paradigm, which arrived in Finland in the 1990s, aimed to enhance economic efficiency and effectiveness (Lähdesmäki, 2003), which included the assessment of work using indicators and key figures

(Jalonen, 2015). This approach laid the foundation for the development of EIPM.

Since the early 2000s, the Finnish central government has implemented several projects and working groups with the aim of developing EIPM. Minister Siimes' working group (2002) on central government reform called for the development of a knowledge management system in the ministries. Subsequently, the POVI project (2010–2011) aimed to improve the impact assessment of policy actions (Prime Minister's Office, 2011). In 2012, the Ministry of Finance (2012) published a handbook for EIPM, whereas the Tietokiri project (2017–2021) aimed to develop data analysis and reporting services and strengthen the culture of EIPM (Tietokiri Project Report, 2020). The most recent project has been carried out by the State Treasury of Finland (2023) in the form of a maturity report on EIPM.

According to the maturity report, the state of EIPM in the central government is currently at an evolving level (level 3 out of 5) (State Treasury of Finland, 2023). The strengths were identified in the management of people and organisations, as well as in the culture of EIPM. Areas needing improvement included the role of EIPM in organisational management, a systematic approach to EIPM, and data management, reporting, and analytics.

The development of evidence-informed approaches in PA policymaking in the Finnish central government has followed the general progress. The initial phases can be traced back to 2005 when one of the objectives in the state budget proposal for the PA policy sector was to support administration with research and effectiveness evidence (State Budget Proposal, 2005). This was followed by a working group at the Ministry of Education (2006) tasked with developing a strategic EIPM approach in the central government of PA. As a concept, EIPM was first mentioned in the state budget proposal for the PA policy sector in 2009 (State Budget Proposal, 2009). Later, the Ministry of Education and Culture published a report on developing the accessibility of PA knowledge (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013) and guidelines for EIPM (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

Despite multiple development efforts, challenges remain in the implementation of EIPM in PA policymaking. Based on Hämäläinen and Villa (2013), although RE was often used as a basis and justification for policy actions related to PA in Finland, it was not possible to trace how the evidence was utilised. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen accountability, improve (cross-administrative) cooperation, adopt a systematic approach to EIPM practices, and enhance monitoring and evaluation in Finnish PA policymaking (Hämäläinen & Villa, 2013; Korsberg et al., 2021; Valtonen & Ojajärvi, 2013).

EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICYMAKING IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RESEARCH

The Methodological Framework

A database search was conducted to explore existing research on EIPM in the context of PA policymaking. Sixteen relevant articles were identified and used as source material for this chapter. The following information was charted in the data extraction form: author; year; title; country; purpose of the study; type of study; and information relevant to the research questions of this study.

The data were extracted and synthesised using thematic analysis (coding). After the thematic analysis, the included studies were categorised into three thematic groups based on the primary focus (see Table 12.1). In cases where multiple equally strong focuses were identified, the article was categorised into multiple thematic groups. It should be noted that the boundaries between the categories are not always precise and, for some articles, other categorisation choices could have been possible.

EIPM Research Approaches and Outcomes

EIPM research within the context of PA policymaking can be categorised into the following three main areas:

(1) Evidence: Sources and utilisation;
(2) Knowledge exchange: Interaction and collaboration among policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders;
(3) Organisation: Systems and capacity.

Evidence

Seven out of the 16 included studies examined *evidence* (sources and utilisation) in PA policymaking. The most studied approach was the sources and extent of evidence use, including the relationship between the use of scientific evidence and other types of information.

The findings suggest that explicit, general, referenced, and peer-reviewed RE are seldom used in PA policymaking (Aro et al., 2016; Hämäläinen et al., 2015). RE seems to form a component of the overall set of information used in policymaking (Castellani et al., 2016; Hämäläinen et al., 2015; Milat et al., 2014), but because it is used in an unsystematic and non-transparent way, it is complicated to trace sources from introduction to actual policy impact (Castellani et al., 2016; Jakobsen et al., 2018).

Table 12.1 The main focus of each included study categorised into the three theme groups

		Evidence: Sources and utilisation	Knowledge exchange: Interaction and collaboration among policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders	Organisation: Systems and capacity
1	Aro et al., 2016	x		
2	Bellew et al., 2010			x
3	Bertram et al., 2018		x	x
4	Castellani et al., 2016	x	x	
5	Fynn et al., 2021			x
6	Fynn et al., 2022		x	
7	Hämäläinen et al., 2015	x		
8	Jakobsen et al., 2018	x		x
9	Milat et al., 2014	x	x	
10	Rigby et al., 2020		x	
11	Rütten & Gelius, 2013			x
12	Rütten et al., 2016	x		
13	Spitters et al., 2017		x	
14	Tudisca et al., 2018			x
15	Valente et al., 2015		x	
16	van de Goor et al., 2017	x	x	x

Source: Author's own.

Instead of RE, other types of evidence are used more frequently, such as former strategies, programmes, demographic and statistical data, recommendations, legislation, or financial information, as well as implicit evidence, such as expert know-how, common knowledge, and good practices (Aro et al., 2016; Hämäläinen et al., 2015; Jakobsen et al., 2018). Locally generated RE is highly valued by policymakers and practitioners because it is perceived to be contextually relevant and likely to translate into practice (Jakobsen et al., 2018; Milat et al., 2014).

It is pointed out that the main evidence gaps in PA research are related to PA policymaking, while there is an abundance of data on health outcomes, risk factors, and various interventions (Rütten et al., 2016). Conversely, another study highlighted the shortage of relevant intervention effectiveness research (Milat et al., 2014). Findings suggest that RE about what works in a particular setting is seldom used; instead, RE about identifying the problem is used to frame the policy and the policy actions (Jakobsen et al., 2018).

Several observations indicate that policymakers appear to experience a lack of usable RE in general (Jakobsen et al., 2018), especially concerning cost-effectiveness (Milat et al., 2014; van de Goor et al., 2017), and the implementation of interventions in local or regional contexts (van de Goor et al., 2017). Another emerging challenge is a mismatch in timing, as policymakers and practitioners often need to make quick decisions in rapidly changing environments, but evidence to inform decisions is not always readily available (Rigby et al., 2020).

Knowledge exchange

Eight out of the 16 studies explored *knowledge exchange*, albeit with varied approaches. Two articles examined the facilitators and barriers for researchers and practitioners to collaborate on research, policy development, and implementation. Knowledge transfer and related practices were studied both at the cross-sectoral local level and between the national and local levels. Models of science–policy interaction adopted by different stakeholders were also explored, along with the roles of different stakeholders in EIPM practices in the framework of evaluation practices and in the process of scaling up interventions.

High levels of engagement, regular communication, and continuity (Fynn et al., 2022), as well as close contacts (Hämäläinen et al., 2015; van de Goor et al., 2017) between evidence users and providers, play key roles in knowledge exchange. Implementation seems to be highly dependent on individual characteristics (Bertram et al., 2018; van de Goor et al., 2017). Policymakers' personal beliefs, values, perceptions, and skills, as well as cultural circumstances and traditions related to appreciating evidence or more system-oriented limitations, are related to the availability or transfer of RE (van de Goor et al., 2017).

It appears that personal, informal, and trust-based interaction between researchers and (local) policymakers is important for knowledge exchange (Fynn et al., 2022; van de Goor et al., 2017), as is having evidence to hand when and where it fits the phase and context of policymaking (van de Goor et al., 2017). Additionally, there is a need for specific skills, particularly those related to communicating and translating RE in continuously changing local contexts (Rigby et al., 2020).

However, knowledge exchange is not solely based on individual factors but on implementing organisational structures, procedures, and systems to support effective partnership working, knowledge transfer, and capacity building (Bertram et al., 2018; Fynn et al., 2022). Structural and active two-way partnerships between researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders are beneficial for generating accessible and applicable evidence (Fynn et al., 2022; van de Goor et al., 2017). In addition, studies show that knowledge exchange happens not only between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, but that the participation of citizens (Tudisca et al., 2018; Valente et al., 2015) and media alike (Valente et al., 2015; van de Goor et al., 2017) plays a significant role in policymakers' use of evidence (Valente et al., 2015; van de Goor et al., 2017).

Organisation

Seven out of 16 studies focused on the *organisational* level of EIPM practices. Research in this area exhibited a high degree of heterogeneity, with various approaches being explored. For example, one study examined how various factors influence evaluation practices, while another focused on assessing organisational aspects that either facilitate or hinder EIPM on a broader scale. Researchers were also interested in investigating the processes and purposes of RE use. Additionally, they examined measurable indicators for inferring and evaluating the extent of EIPM and the potential for contextually tailored interventions to enhance EIPM.

According to research, EIPM can be operationalised into systematic organisational measures in four categories: documentation; human resources; communication and participation; as well as monitoring and evaluation (Tudisca et al., 2018). This model emphasises the need to employ indicators within each category to assess EIPM in PA policy.

Organisational factors have been shown to have a strong potential for promoting the uptake of RE, but it has been noted that attention must also be paid to social and personal factors (van de Goor et al., 2017). From an organisational perspective, particularly concerning evaluation practices as a component of EIPM, it has been emphasised that standardised requirements for evaluation from commissioners can facilitate a systematic approach to evaluation and improve the consistency of reporting (Fynn et al., 2021).

Table 12.2 EIPM facilitators

Evidence	Knowledge exchange	Organisation
• More studies conducted and scoped on PA policy (12) • More policy-relevant and applicable evidence produced to fit for purpose (8, 9, 10, 14, 16) • Evidence production on (economic) impact and costs of concrete policy measures (16)	• Cross-sectoral cooperation (seminars, conferences) (16) • Collaborative research events (knowledge sharing) (10) • Creating a common language by collaboration (1, 16) • Direct, frequent, continuous, versatile (formal and informal/personal) collaboration between researchers and policymakers (1, 3, 4, 6, 13, 16) • Collaboration as early as possible in policy-related research projects (16) • Liaisons/knowledge brokers between knowledge institutes and policymaking organisations (4, 9, 16)	• Implementing organisational structures, procedures and systems for the use of research knowledge (3, 6, 16) • Institutional resources for EIPM practices, i.e. working time (1, 8, 16), funds (16) • Support of administration for EIPM – positive attitudes from managers (16) • Human competences to contribute to EIPM (policymakers, researchers, practitioners) – competence development (1, 8, 14, 16) • Retrieval and production of documents, including RE, during a policy process (14) • Bidirectional communication and engagement with policy stakeholders (14) • Developed monitoring and evaluation practices (including stakeholder involvement) (14, 16) • Policymakers' access to databases and applicable context-relevant RE (1) • Joint criteria and goals for the use of evidence (1) • EIPM interventions (training, education, research capacity building) (2, 3, 5, 8, 11) • Partnerships with researchers and other experts (5, 8)
• Preprocessed evidence to provide more details to allow for the application of RE in (local) contexts (3, 8, 10, 14, 16) • Unravelling the complexity, extensiveness and theoretical approach of evidence for policy purposes (16) • Coproduction of evidence between researchers and users (9) • Matching the time to conduct research and users' needs (9, 10, 16)	• Individual-level factors ('a will to cooperate'): personal characteristics, interests and values of policymakers and researchers (4, 16) • Media attention (1, 16) • Local networks of policymakers, practitioners and researchers (10) • Contextually tailored, multiagency interventions (3, 6) • Communication to support multidirectional flows of information between partners (6) • Awareness raising on RE (i.e. network mailing list, website, social media) (10) • Local networks of policymakers, practitioners, and researchers creating research development groups (10) • Identification (system analysis) of stakeholder interaction (strengths/deficiency) (13)	• More detailed policies, including detailed policy actions (8) • Increasing cross-sectoral collaboration (8, 5, 13) • Thinking forward to the next policy cycle – ensure relevant evidence is generated and used beyond policymaking (6) • Setting clear criteria for proceeding with the policy process (16) • Evaluate the state of EIPM in an organisation into routine job performance (14) • Funders' structural requirements and support for evaluation (projects) (5, 6) • Increased political requests for knowledge use (3) • Comprehensive translation strategies (2) • Improved dissemination and diffusion of relevant and available information (2) • Regularly updated, well-functioning research infrastructure (16) • Research institutes under state administration (16), establishment of policy-relevant research centres (9) • Collaborative research grants (9)

Note: Numbers in parentheses refer to the articles presented in Table 12.1.
Source: Author's own.

Studies also revealed that policymakers may have knowledge gaps related to PA and health, particularly in understanding contemporary policy and translation strategies (Bellew et al., 2010), as well as a lack of scientific and technical training (Valente et al., 2015). In addition, in terms of capacities, it has been concluded that in the field of PA policy, policymakers engaged in health issues demonstrate a wider use of RE than policymakers working with more sport-oriented issues (Jakobsen et al., 2018). This difference can be attributed to the origins of the EIPM approach in the public health field, leading individuals employed in this policy area to be more qualified and trained to work in an evidence-informed manner.

Facilitators of EIPM in PA Policymaking

A synthesis of EIPM facilitators in PA policy identified in the materials is presented in Table 12.2.

CONCLUSION

> Evidence-informed policymaking has no intrinsic value; its legitimacy arises from the improvement of operations. (Jalonen, 2015, p. 41)[1]

In an increasingly complex society, dealing with wicked problems requires a broad utilisation of evidence. Well-functioning EIPM operations can provide extensive and high-quality evidence of the effectiveness of policy actions, which increases the likelihood of successful reforms and improves productivity. The EIPM approach can improve the effectiveness of policy actions, but also legitimate the decisions of policymakers.

A call for ever-stronger legitimation currently exists in Finnish PA policymaking due to changes in the PA state financing system.[2] To legitimise public spending on promoting PA, there is a need for robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of policy measures. Justification for public spending on promoting PA is strongly bound to its effectiveness in reducing societal costs (Klepac Pogrmilovic et al., 2018; Kolu et al., 2022). In Finland, the Ministry of Finance (2023) has called for higher-quality evidence on the cost-effectiveness of policy measures, which has increased pressure on PA policymaking to improve its EIPM practices.

Challenges arise from the circumstance that proving the effectiveness of policy measures in a complex societal problem, such as physical inactivity, is not straightforward. Rutter et al. (2019) developed a system map that identifies 40 factors connected to an individual's overall PA levels. These factors encompass domains related to transportation, the environment, society, socio-politics, individual behaviour, and biology. This comprehensive map highlights the multidimensionality and complexity inherent in both PA policymaking and associated research.

In Finland, a cross-sectoral approach to combat physical inactivity has gained strength over the past few years. In 2023, the National Sports Council (2023) released

an evaluation report that assesses the interests and actions of all 12 ministries regarding the promotion of PA. Furthermore, the Government Programme for the years 2023–2027 introduced a detailed initiative called 'Get Finland Moving', outlining a series of measures aimed at promoting PA across various sectors of the central government (Finnish Government, 2023). These measures encompass legislative actions, such as incorporating the promotion of PA into land use reform, as well as various initiatives, such as integrating PA into the development of work ability and workplace environments, and improving lifestyle and PA counselling in municipalities and wellbeing services counties.

This chapter explores various approaches to EIPM in the context of PA, covering evidence, knowledge exchange, and organisational aspects. It was suggested that EIPM appears to be studied in the most fragmented manner, particularly concerning organisational perspectives. The results also underscore that the state of EIPM is often heavily reliant on individual characteristics (Bertram et al., 2018; van de Goor et al., 2017). Previous studies have recommended reducing the dependency on individual factors in EIPM (Hanney et al., 2003; Rycroft-Malone, 2008; Trickett et al., 2011) and instead grounding it in systematic and transparent organisational processes (Korsberg et al., 2021; Tudisca et al., 2018).

If the quality of EIPM is solely based on individual capacity and will, the level of EIPM becomes unstable, and there is a risk of discontinuity when personnel changes occur within an organisation. Organisational structures, systems, and procedures are vital for accumulating organisational learning, development, and continuity. Ideally, organisations should routinely evaluate their state of EIPM as part of job performance (Tudisca et al., 2018).

The concept of EIPM is relatively new in research in general and even more novel in the field of PA policy research. This groundbreaking concept suggests a growing need for the utilisation of diverse knowledge, in addition to RE, in policymaking. It also highlights the unrealistic expectation that politics *is* evidence-based. The concept of EIPM acknowledges that various political factors, such as values, ideologies, and bargaining, pose challenges to evidence use.

Representative democracy is founded on Weberian dualism, in which political decision-makers represent citizens, while public officials are responsible for the preparation and implementation of decisions (Held, 2006). Rather than relying on the belief that political decision-making aims to be evidence-based, a realistic and feasible goal is to ground the preparation of policymaking in the best possible evidence, using systematic and transparent procedures for evidence production and utilisation. Subsequently, this best possible evidence should be provided to political decision-makers, who ultimately determine its use.

NOTES

1. The translation of the quote was made by the author of this chapter. 'Evidence-informed policymaking' could also have been translated as 'knowledge-based management' in this context.
2. In 2024, state funding of PA and sports was transferred from National Lottery funds to the central government's universal budget, which means the PA and sports sector needs to negotiate its funding annually as part of the major state budget framework.

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