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The Dutch National Prevention Program 'Everything is Health': evaluating governance as a precondition to health impact

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Background

The National Prevention Program 'Everything is Health' (EiH) 2014–2016 has adopted a 'Whole of Society' (WoS) approach by engaging societal and business organisations as well as public authorities and services to pledge their commitment 'to the realisation of the EiH goals by conducting specific focused activities'. Our two-year evaluation focuses on the governance and organisational conditions for the coherence, spread, consolidation and accountability of health promotion activities in the pledges, and the functioning of the EiH arrangements.

Methods

Three research stages consist of (1) a literature study and exploratory interviews of similar programs such as the UK Responsibility Deal, and the Dutch Corporate Social Responsibility program; (2) a qualitative monitoring of the Program Office and a selection of pledges; and (3) a responsive evaluation among and between program officers and pledgeholders in the EiH Platform.

Results

We consider EiH to be a governance experiment sharing responsibilities for health among public and private actors while developing a sustainable social order. One condition is to build an infrastructure for sharing knowledge, experience and feedback for peer review in an advanced pledgeholder community of practice. Another condition is to discourage non-compliance. There will be no sustainable health impact without such a consolidating infrastructure. Evaluating such a complex, ambiguous and uncertain approach requires a careful interaction between evaluators and program officers, pledgeholders and stakeholders. The EiH Platform can serve as a joint evaluative infrastructure.

Conclusions

Evaluating the EiH program as a governance experiment is a necessary precondition to organising health impact. Building a consolidating infrastructure for a sustainable order of responsibilities and health impact takes time, effort and risk. Evaluation design can set an example of an infrastructure for sustainable health impact.