Reviewer’s report

Title: Non-communicable diseases: mapping research funding organizations, funding mechanisms and research practices in Italy and Germany.

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Reviewer: Fabio Zicker

Reviewer's report:

The article is interesting but the analysis should go beyond describing the national institutions and offer readers an overall research context. More information is needed on the role, mandate and existing mechanisms for research promotion from the different institutions, if the goal is to map funding and practices. It would be interesting to learn about their operations and the outcome of any special initiative. As the motivation for the study is to disseminate information for possible cross-country collaboration, it would be useful to assess the level of institutional international collaboration.

An estimate of the extent to which the national scientific community counts on international funding would allow assessing the relevance of national sources of funding. Barriers or challenges faced by the organizations in supporting funding are not addressed. No analysis is done on how the institutions interact, nor on potential gaps, overlaps, synergies and opportunities as proposed in the Mapping_NCD project. Overall the discussion is superficial and some statement not supported by the review.

Some specific points and suggestions

* justify the selection of Italy and Germany for the study
* give some background in terms of existing national research system, research policy and/or research governance.
* figures 1 and 2 can be excluded
* explain how the literature review and selection of organizations were done
* explain how the cut-off funding for inclusion was defined
* inform how the key opinion leaders were selected and their role in the RFOs
* describe/discuss the balance between public and private funding.
* a table with side-by-side country comparison of the different characteristics of research institutions would facilitate the reader

* explain which other approach could be used in the comparison as mentioned

* the conclusion refer to "cross-country and system comparison", although the description is segmented without cross-country or system discussion

* some statements of the discussion does not seem to be derived from or related to the objectives of the study (i.e, the "European layer" comments or the "ability to coordinate large multinational trials for CVD")

* a relevant aspect of the research-funding mapping, which was not addressed in the study, would be the perception of the final users of funds (investigators and research institutions). This perspective would add essential knowledge when discussing cross-country collaboration.

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