Reviewer’s report

Title: The opportunities for and obstacles against prevention: the notable example of Germany

Version: 1 Date: 22 March 2010

Reviewer: Steve Allsop

Reviewer’s report:

I found the report interesting. However, I think that the report requires some major changes before publication.

1. The title and the content do not align. Most of the discussion focusses on alcohol and tobacco, but the title implies broad based prevention foci. To that end, I suggest that the authors either indicate the focus on alcohol and tobacco in their title or include greater focus on other prevention domains

2. The paper will benefit from a more critical analysis and connection to the body of work on the links between research and policy. There is an extensive literature on this and it is largely neglected in the paper. For example, if the authors were to include the work of Kingdon, and the models he has described, this would provide a framework for their hypotheses about the limited preventive effort in Germany. As it stands, the hypotheses seem more like a speculative list rather than having emerged from critical appraisal of the research-policy process - why are these areas selected and not others. (e.g.see KINGDON, J. (1995) Agendas, alternatives and public policies Boston, Little, Brown & Co.; SABATIER, P. A. (1999) Theories of the Policy Process (Boulder, Westview); BERRY, F. S. & BERRY, W. D. (1999) Innovation and diffusion models in policy research Theories of the Policy Process, pp. 169-200 (Boulder, Westview). Such an approach will move the paper from being merely descriptive to a more important critical analysis and consideration of the key issues. This relates to the next point.

3. Also, is there any evidence supporting the hypotheses - that is, how did the authors arrive at these? I am surprised that there is little about the long-term impact of preventive policy being at odds with the short time frame for political investment (ie the relatively short term focus of most governments)

4. Page 8 surely some consideration should be given to the combined effect of interventions? After all, smoking interventions have rarely been provided in isolation?

More minor issues

page 2 use of shortened "especially" is this acceptable in the abstract?

page 4 smoking rate of 31% for women is even the highest (suggest delete word "even")

page 6 minor change to language - suggest that line 9 should read "adolescents
stated they had bought..." rather than current "stated to have bought" - smae changees on line 10
Page 6 line 13 insert comma - "to some, if volunatary, regulation"

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.