Reviewer’s report

Title: The implementation of Health in All Policies initiatives: a systems framework for government action

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Reviewer: Timo Stahl

Reviewer's report:

The paper considers a recent public health approach, Health in All Policies (HiAP) that has drawn a lot of attention during the last years, both nationally in several countries, regionally and globally. Since 2006, Finland's European Union Presidency, a growing number of practical tools and frameworks has been introduced in order to implement Health in All Policies approach in practice. Recently also scientific research on HiAP has increased. However, it has been mostly descriptive. This paper takes a step further in order to provide a systems framework to increase understanding why, how and under what circumstances HiAP has been successful. It uses a case study from Finland to illustrate the framework's explanatory power.

The authors rightly argue that HiAP is merely a concept (or I would say an approach) rather than a model, and they continue "... every HiAP initiative is uniquely designed and governed, and so it is challenging to understand how to translate studies of one case to others" (lines 76-77). However, when they apply the systems framework for HiAP initiatives, HiAP is somehow understood as a project or limited to a case - it's not anymore an approach or concept. It is not clear what the authors mean with the initiative. This is to some extent confusing since the focus is not on whether the key elements of HiAP approach (see e.g. Health in All Policies (HiAP) Framework for Country Action. Health Promot Int. 2014; 29 Suppl 1: i19-i28.) have been implemented but whether a single policy has been successful or not.

Is the systems framework merely intended to explain why and how certain public policies succeed in certain circumstances than others' don't regardless of whether it is called HiAP initiative or not? This should be made clear in the paper. Why the alcohol case is a HIAP case? Based on what criteria the successfulness is evaluated?

What comes to systems framework, I found it useful in order to increase understanding of the sub-systems and systems components' roles and significance.

The paper argues to apply the framework to a specific case, the Health 2015 strategy of Finland. That's not accurate. The case study is a very good example of public policymaking where health
arguments were overcame by economic arguments but it is not fair to say that it is about the implementation of the Health 2015 strategy. Finland's alcohol strategy faced many challenges after Finland joined the European Union and further challenges when Estonia joined EU which is well described in the paper.

In general I found the paper useful. It is clearly contributing the current field of research.

**Level of interest**

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An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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