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Comments on:

**EVALUATION OF POLICY OPTIONS
EX-ANTE: Meeting the needs of decision
makers and making good use of the
analysis provided (Bertholt Leefink)**

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- **MODERN SOCIETIES NEED SOLID AND APPROPRIATE INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE FOR DECISION MAKING**
- **INFORMATION NEEDED ON ALL LEVELS: governments, private sector, households & individuals**
- **VITAL FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL WELFARE**
 - **Appr. 40% of national budget (health & social services, social security)**
 - **Health & crucial value and important for economic developments**

CURRENT ISSUES



- **Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (STM)** reorganizing service structure and launching new policies and programmes to face the many challenges
- **Challenges**
 - Ageing of the population
 - Control of health care costs
 - Increasing demands, new service options
 - Globalization
 - Many specific challenges: inequalities, alcohol & obesity, biothreats etc.

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In response STM reorganising its institute base:

- 1) Control agencies**
- 2) Research & expert institutes ("information guidance")**

Global tendency: "Shift from control to influence"

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FOR (HEALTH) POLICY MANY STAKEHOLDERS

- Government ("Health in All Policies")
- MoH (health policy leadership)
- THL (evidence base, information guidance)
- (municipal) health & social services
- civil society (NGO's)
- private sector
- media

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GOVERNMENT/MoH INSTRUMENTS:

- Health policy (Health in all policies)
- Health & social services

NOTE:

- Services necessary, but costly and impact on public health limited (10%?)
- Health policy (legislation, taxes etc.) usually effective and cheap, but politically difficult

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ROLE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTE



- Research and expertise for decision making: understanding the problems, forecasting, policy options, impact assessment, etc.
- **Development of intervention models (innovations)**
- Evaluation of policies, programmes, monitoring of indicators etc.
- **Coordination, facilitation of national programmes**
- **Information guidance: services (to assist MoH), other stakeholders (interaction with NGO's, private sector, media)**

"TWO-WAY TRAFIC": MoH supervises THL to implement its programmes, but THL advises MoH on future challenges and policy options.

ALSO FOR SERVICES TWO-WAY INTERACTION IS CRUCIAL

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EVIDENCE BASED POLICY?



- **"Evidence based medicine": Concept from RCT's**
- **For policies and complex programmes (health promotion) it is difficult to obtain simple "clean evidence"**
- **Evidence on many background factors**
- **Evidence is not the only driver of policy (values, democratic processes etc.)**

➔ EVIDENCE BASED POLICY OR POLICY BASED EVIDENCE?

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STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE vs. POTENTIAL IMPACT



WE NEED TO BALANCE:

- Strength of evidence
- Potential effects
- Potential harm

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MORE INFORMATION, MORE TRANSPARENCY?



YES, BUT

- More data and more information is not the same as more understanding
- Trend seems to be that more and more is known about smaller and smaller details
- Need for broader and balanced syntheses

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HEALTH & POPULATION IN MACROECONOMIC MODELS



POPULATION GROWTH:

Fertility, life-expectancy, migration

AGEING OF THE POPULATION:

Cohort effects, reduction in premature mortality

AVAILABILITY OF LABOUR FORCE:

Early mortality, disability, absenteeism (eg. in Finland annual loss appr. 500.000 years)

INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY – INCREASE IN HEALTHY YEARS: (pension policy?)

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DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF HEALTH – CHALLENGE FOR MODELS



- **CHRONIC NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES** (eg. CVD, Ca, diabetes):
Of overwhelming importance for mortality, risk factors known
- **MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS:**
Of great importance for work force availability
- **BIOTHREATS:**
Difficult to predict

NOTE: A serious pandemic would lead to world economic crises much worse than the current one!

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NEW EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF THE NEW INSTITUTE (THL – NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE)

- **FROM RESEARCH TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATIONS**
- **"HELP TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF FINNISH PEOPLE"**
- **STRONG EMPHASIS ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**

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THE FINNISH SYSTEM: NETWORK OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTES

- **"SECTOR INSTITUTES": Assist ministries in (research based) expertise/evidence, help implement programmes, certain centralized functions**
- **Collaboration with universities, but different roles**
- **International research & expert collaboration (also WHO etc.)**

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IMPLEMENTATION BLOCK



- On many societal problems there is much research and evidence, but weak implementation (because of various reasons)
- Eg. Health inequalities
 - KTL/Stakes has well demonstrated major reasons
 - From evidence to political decision making?
 - How to influence policies?
- When do we need research, when action?
 - Is research sometimes substitute for political action?

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CONCLUSIONS



MERITS OF POLICY EVALUATION

- Provide sound mental framework

MANY LIMITATIONS HENCE:

- Common sense
- Policy assessment
- Political assessment

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