Adolescents go through changes in their neurobehavioural and psychosocial functioning that can result in their desire to conform to peer norms taking predominance over cognitive impulse control mechanisms. This can help explain why, when peers are present, adolescent behaviour may not be significantly modified by what they know about risks and consequences. This finding has implications for prevention as it points to the importance of responses that actively target the environment in which substance use takes place, and where social norms are formed and supported. In practice however, across Europe information-only prevention approaches - despite a weak evidence for their effectiveness - continue to be most commonly used. Why this is the case is the question addressed by this editorial. A definition for environmental prevention is also provided: as strategies that aim to alter physical, social and economic environment without relying on persuasion. Boundaries of the definition with health promotion are discussed and the available evidence for the efficacy of this perspective reviewed, as is the information on the availability of environmental prevention within Europe. These data do not support the contention made by some member states that their prevention strategies are comprehensive and cover all addictive substances. Overall, although environmental approaches are becoming more common, they are disproportionately found in the North of Europe, and are most noticeable in three areas: at the macro-level in tobacco bans and alcohol policies, in strategies to improve the school environment and ethos, and in local level policies to regulate recreational settings.

Keywords
Environmental, prevention, social norms, adolescents, neuroscience.