
ALCOHOL IN EUROPE

A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

A report for the European Commission

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¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_programme/howtoapply/call_096299_2003.htm.

² <http://www.eurocare.org/btg/countryreports/index.html>.

³ <http://www.ias.org.uk>.

⁴ http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/ev_20050120_en.htm.

⁵ http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_information/dissemination/ev_20050830_en.htm.

⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/ev_20050926_en.htm.

⁷ http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/ev_20050307_en.htm.

⁸ <http://www.eurocare.org/btg/apn/minutes0505.html>.

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
About the authors	iii
Preface	v
Summary	1
Conclusions	11
Recommendations	13
1. Introduction	19
Methods, structure and terminology	21
2. A brief history of alcohol in Europe	37
Alcohol in everyday life	37
Drinking through the industrial revolution	39
Mass movements and alcohol	40
The idea of addiction	40
Alcohol in Europe: past and present	41
3. The economic impact of alcohol	47
The alcohol economy	48
The social cost of alcohol in Europe	59
4. The use of alcohol in Europe	75
The population level of drinking	77
Ways of drinking	86
Alcohol and population sub-groups	97
What explains European drinking trends	115
5. Alcohol and individuals	131
Alcohol and social-wellbeing	135
Alcohol and the risk of ill-health	141
Alcohol and the risk of heart disease	158
Is there a risk-free level of alcohol consumption?	163
What determines risk for alcohol-related ill-health?	166
Does reducing alcohol use reduce ill-health?	169
6. Alcohol and Europe	195
Social harms	196
Health harms	205
The burden of alcohol in Europe	218
The burden of harm and changes in consumption	223

7.	The effectiveness of alcohol policy	239
	Reducing drinking and driving	242
	Education, communication, and public awareness	251
	Regulation of the alcohol market	258
	Reducing harm in drinking environments	288
	Advice and treatment	295
	Cost-effectiveness of policy options	299
8.	Alcohol policy in Europe	343
	World trade law and alcohol	344
	Alcohol trade in the European internal market	348
	Alcohol as an economic commodity	355
	Alcohol policy across borders	360
9.	Alcohol policy in the countries of Europe	373
	Social context of alcohol policies	374
	Alcohol policy in the countries of Europe	376
	Tax and price	383
	Comparing countries	388
10.	Conclusions and recommendations	397
	Conclusions	397
	Recommendations	403
	Annexe Glossary of terms	419

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⁹ www.eurocare.org/btg.

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Preface

In June 2001, the Council of the European Union, in its Conclusions on a Community strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm, emphasized that a high level of human health protection should be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities, and recognized that alcohol is one of the key health determinants in the European Community.¹⁰

The Council stressed the desirability of developing a comprehensive Community strategy aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm comprising, in particular, an effective monitoring system on alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm, and policy measures and their effects in the European Community; and a coordinated range of Community activities in fields such as research, consumer protection, transport, advertising, marketing, sponsoring, excise duties and other internal market issues, while fully respecting Member States' competencies. The Council invited the Commission to put forward proposals for a comprehensive Community strategy aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm, to complement national policies and with a timetable for action.

This public health report on alcohol, requested and financed by the European Commission, will describe the social, health and economic burden that alcohol brings to European citizens, families and to Europe as a whole; this is a burden that increases social marginalization and exclusion and places a strain on the viable, socially responsible and productive Europe, as envisaged by the Lisbon strategy.¹¹

Whilst noting that, in the European Union, alcoholic beverages are important economic commodities, the report will note that alcohol-attributable disease, injury and violence cost the health, welfare, employment and criminal justice sectors some €125bn a year. In particular, alcohol-related harm has a negative impact on the competitive position of European businesses, since it lowers productivity, and causes the loss of working life-years, with €59bn of the costs due to alcohol resulting from lost production. The report will also note that alcohol, as an important contributor to health inequalities between and within European Member States, risks damaging social cohesion throughout the Union.

The report will find that, although much has been on alcohol policy in the countries of Europe, much more can still be done to reduce alcohol's burden and to promote individual and European health. The report will note that alcohol policy is everybody's business; it is not only an issue for the health sector, but also for other sectors of public policy, including, amongst others, agriculture, business, criminal justice, education, finance, labour, municipalities, transport, and social welfare.

The report will find that alcohol policy, a global public good and an integral part of the health and well-being of the citizens of Europe, can enhance social cohesion and social capital and improve health and safety in the living environment, thereby contributing to higher productivity and a sustainable economic development in the European Union, in line with the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy.

¹⁰ http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2001/c_175/c_17520010620en00010002.pdf.

¹¹ Lisbon strategy: http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html.

