

ALCOHOL POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF A LARGER EUROPE: BRIDGING THE GAP

Concurrent session 5

Place

Saturday 20 June 2004

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ADVOCACY FOR THE PREVENTION OF
ALCOHOL RELATED HARM IN EUROPE

What we will do TODAY:

- ↪ Find a rapporteur, find out who we are and your needs
- ↪ Brief explanation about the making of the European Union (its history)
- ↪ Descriptions of how the EU institutions work
- ↪ The EU competences? What the EU can do and cannot do (Tamsin)
- ↪ Brief explanation about Eurocare
- ↪ Answer any of your questions

Europe: war and peace

- ↪ For centuries, Europe was the scene of frequent and bloody wars. In the period 1870 to 1945, France and Germany fought each other 3 times, with terrible loss of life. A number of European leaders became convinced that the only way to secure a lasting peace between their countries was to unite them economically and politically. So far, it has worked!
- ↪ So, in 1950, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed integrating the coal and steel industries of Western Europe. As a result, in 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was set up, with six members: Belgium, West Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy and the Netherlands.

From 3 communities to the EU:

- ↪ The ECSC was such a success that, within a few years, these same six countries decided to go further and integrate other sectors of their economies.
- ↪ In 1957 they signed the Treaties of Rome, creating the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC). The member states set about removing trade barriers between them and forming a "common market".
- ↪ In 1967 the institutions of the three European communities were merged. From this point on, there was a single Commission and a single Council of Ministers as well as the European Parliament.

From 3 communities to the EU:

- ↪ Originally, the members of the European Parliament were chosen by the national parliaments but in 1979 the first direct elections were held, allowing the citizens of the member states to vote for the candidate of their choice. Since then, direct elections have been held every five years even if the EU elections are often a low turnout;
- ↪ The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) introduced new forms of co-operation between the member states - for example on defence, and in the area of "justice and home affairs". By adding this inter-governmental co-operation to the existing "Community" system, the Maastricht Treaty created the European Union (EU).

What does this mean in practice?

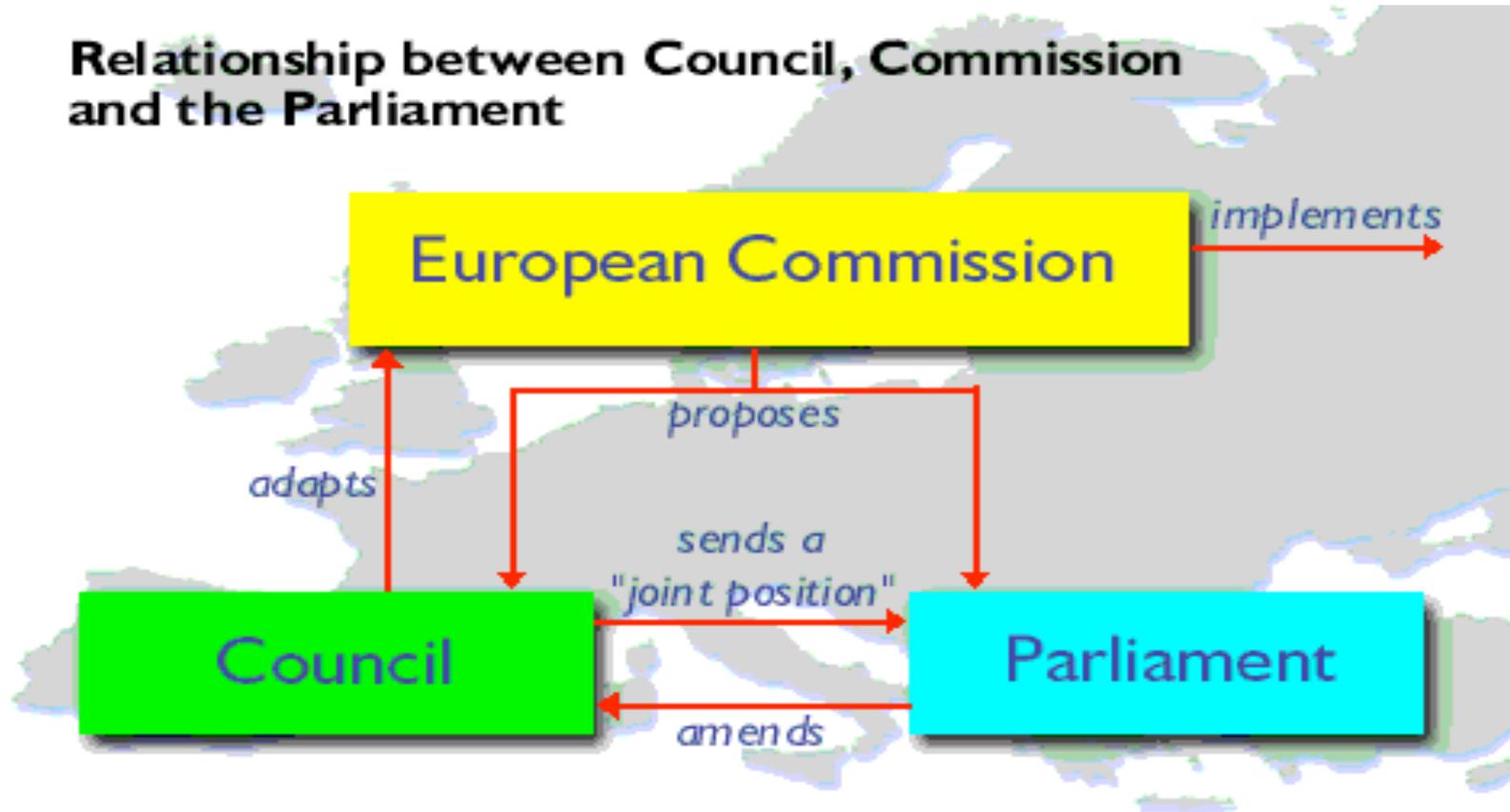
- ↪ Integration means common policies: Economic and political integration between the member states of the European Union means that these countries have to take joint decisions on many matters.
- ↪ The Single Market: banning the barriers: concerned with goods, services, people and capital. completed at the end of 1992, passport and customs checks were abolished at most of the EU's internal borders. One consequence is greater mobility for EU citizens. Since 1987, for example, more than a million young Europeans have taken study courses abroad, with support from the EU.

What does this mean in practice?

- ↪ The Single Currency: the euro - became a reality on 1 January 2002, when euro notes and coins replaced national currencies in 12 of the 15 countries of the European Union
- ↪ The growing family: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973 followed by Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986 and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. The European Union welcomed ten new countries in 2004: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania expect to follow a few years later and Turkey is also a candidate country. Treaty of Nice lays down new rules governing the size of the EU institutions and the way they work. It came into force on 1 February 2003.

Description of how the EU works:

Relationship between Council, Commission and the Parliament



What the Union can do and cannot do:

European Legislation:

- ☞ **Regulations** (binding and applicable in all Member States and taking precedence over national law) (Treaty: Internal Market)
- ☞ **Directives** (binding as to the intentions, terms and conditions, but the form and methods of implementing them are within the discretion of national authorities) (Treaty: internal Market)
- ☞ **Decisions** (binding on those parties to whom they are addressed: governments, institutions, private enterprises) (area where the EU has no competences)
- ☞ **Recommendations, Opinions, Resolutions or Declarations** (not binding).

Why EU advocacy is important?

- ↪ Many EU policies have an impact – direct or indirect – on the health of EU citizens
- ↪ Implementation of internal market legislation is de-facto creating policy on health related issues
- ↪ Health does not stop at internal borders but is a cross-border issue.

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Three things you should remember:

- ↪ It is our national governments who decide on the treaty, on the budget allocated to the different DGs and their programmes; The European Commission is only an executive body;
- ↪ Lobby your own governments for more money and EU competence for health, education, culture.....
- ↪ Join a European Network: EPHA, Eurocare (if you are a genuine non-governmental organization)

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What is EUROCARE ?

↳ The mission of Eurocare is to promote the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm, through **advocacy**, **networking** and **collaboration**, so that alcohol will no longer be a major cause of **premature death**, **interpersonal violence** and **disability** throughout Europe

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To achieve its mission **EURO CARE** works to:

- ↳ Create and nurture ties between organizations concerned with alcohol related harm
- ↳ Influence European policy makers by advocating effective evidence based alcohol policy
- ↳ Publish reports and position papers

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The role of NGOs

“A particularly important role can be played by enlightened non governmental organisations, which can often speak with passion and insight on the true impact of alcohol on individuals, families and communities. Such organisations can also bring the commitment of energy to work even in the face of political risks.”

Dr Asvall, Former WHO Europe Regional Director

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