

Italy

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The country

Italy is situated in South Europe bounded on the north-west by France, on the north by Switzerland and Austria, on the north-east by Slovenia, and on the east, south and west by the Adriatic Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Ligurian Sea. In addition to the mainland, Italy also comprises the Mediterranean islands of Elba, Sardinia, and Sicily, as well as many smaller islands. San Marino and Vatican City are independent countries within the Italian mainland. Rome is the capital and the largest city of Italy.

The country covers an area of 301,318 km². With a population of nearly 60 million inhabitants, the average population density is 191 inhabitants per km². Especially during the 1990s, many immigrants have come into Italy, mainly from North Africa, Albania, the Philippines and East Europe. The number of immigrants in 1998 was estimated to be 1.7 million. Some 67 per cent of the population live in urban areas. The dominant religion in Italy is Roman Catholicism.

Before the Second World War Italy was mainly an agricultural country. Since the war a great part of the population has changed its occupation, place of residence and their way of living, thus also changing the traditional image of Italy as a country with a rural lifestyle and a high rate of birth and marriage, as well as large emigration. Between the 1950s and 1970s Italy passed through a profound change and a large migration from the poor rural southern Italy towards the industrial northern Italy. At the end of the twentieth century Italy ranked among the top industrial countries in the world.

Especially in the north, Italy has developed a diversified industrial base. Italian industries produce textiles, chemicals, motor vehicles, heavy machinery, electrical goods, and foodstuffs, particularly pasta. Some 37 per cent of Italy's land area is still devoted to crops, orchards or vineyards, and Italy is one of the leading nations in the production of grapes, wine, olives, and olive oil. In the mid-1990s, about 32 per cent of the population worked in the industrial sector, approximately 8 per cent in the agriculture and about 60 per cent in the service sector. Italy's dependence on essential raw materials usually results in an unfavourable balance of trade, which is partly offset by the tourism industry, remittances from Italian nationals in foreign countries, and shipping revenues.

Italy has been a democratic republic since 1946. The Italian parliament consists of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies elected by popular election for five-year terms. The president is elected for a seven-year term by a joint session of the parliament augmented by delegates from each of the 20 regional councils. The president usually has little to do

with the actual running of the government but has the right to dissolve the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies at any time except during the last six months of the tenure. The actual running of the government is in the hands of the prime minister, who is chosen by the president and must have the confidence of the parliament.

Italy is divided into 20 regions, which are subdivided into a total of 103 provinces. Each region is governed by an executive responsible to a popularly elected council. The regional governments have considerable authority.

Alcohol production and trade

Alcoholic beverages play an important part in the Italian national economy. In 1995 the production and trade of alcoholic beverages contributed to 1.3 per cent of the gross domestic product, and 9 per cent of the cultivable land was used for grape-growing. (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1996). The production of wine has been on the decrease in Italy at least from the late 1970s. In 1980 the production of wine was 87 million hectolitres. In 1995 it was 56 million hectolitres, which is about 65 per cent of the 1980 production level. At that time Italy was the largest wine producer in the world (World Drink Trends, 2002). In 1995 the exports of Italian wine were 17.8 million hectolitres. This was about the same as the average yearly amount of wine exports in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1995 the imports of wine were 0.3 million hectolitres (Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997).

The strong decrease in wine production has also reduced the land area allocated to growing grapes. The drop in the number of vineyards has been noticeable. From 1982 to 1996 the number of vineyards decreased by half, from 1.6 million to approximately 0.8 million vineyards. The total cultivated area for growing grapes was reduced from approximately 1.2 million hectares to 0.9 million hectares (Allamani et al., 1995a; ISTAT, 1999). The decrease in grape production resulted in a large reduction in small mixed farming businesses, especially in fringe areas. In these areas the reduction of vineyards has preceded and often led to collapse of the traditional family-run business. During the 1990s about 100,000 job opportunities have completely disappeared in the wine industry, and during the 1985-1995 period about 200 local wine cooperatives were closed. It has been the traditional wine consumption that has been on the decrease. At the same time the consumption of quality wines has begun to grow (Allamani et al., 1995a). Consequently, there is an increasing number of vineyards producing high-quality wines. In 1996 some 17.6 per cent of the vineyards were allocated for Denomination of Controlled Origin (DOC) wine, while the corresponding figure in 1990 was only 8.3 per cent (ISTAT, 1999).

In 2000, six brewing companies operated 16 breweries in Italy (Assobirra, 2001). Of the beer produced in Italy about 15 per cent was draught and the remaining 85 per cent packaged beer. In 1975 the production of beer was 6.5 million hectolitres, in 1985 it was 10.3 million hectolitres and in the 1990s about 12.0 million hectolitres a year. In 1975 the amount of imported beer was 0.7 million hectolitres. In 1985 it was 2.2 million hectolitres, and 3.0 million hectolitres in 1995, which means that in 1995 a fifth of the beer consumption in Italy consisted of imported beer. In 1999 Italy imported 3.8 million

hectolitres of beer. Furthermore, a variety of foreign beers were produced in Italy under licence. From 1995 to 1999 some 0.4 million hectolitres of beer were exported annually.

According to the Ministry of Finance 1.1 million hectolitres of distilled spirits were produced in Italy in 1985. The corresponding figure in 2000 was 0.7 million hectolitres. The imports of distilled spirits in 2000 amounted to 0.2 million hectolitres. In the same year 0.1 million hectolitres of beer was exported.

The number of places selling alcoholic beverages on the premises keeps on decreasing in Italy. There were 258,000 on-premise establishments in 1992, and every year a further reduction has been experienced, down to 201,000 in 2000. This number includes restaurants, pizzerias, trattorias, restaurants in tourist villages, hotels or pensions, fast foods, bars and coffee houses, pubs and discotheques (Federazione Italiana Pubblici Esercizi, 1999).

Alcohol consumption

At the beginning of the twentieth century annual consumption of alcoholic beverages was in Italy about 15.5 litres per capita in terms of pure alcohol (Table 11.1). Over 90 per cent of the total alcohol consumption consisted of wine. On the average Italians consumed over 110 litres of wine a year. The annual beer consumption was less than one litre per capita. This means that the beer consumption accounted only for 0.3 per cent of the total alcohol consumption.

In the 1920s and 1930s the total consumption of alcohol was on the decrease. By 1940 the consumption of wine had decreased to 84 litres per capita and the consumption of distilled spirits to half a litre per capita in terms of pure alcohol, which means that the consumption of distilled spirits accounted for 2 per cent of the total alcohol consumption. Even if the consumption of beer had increased since the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1940 Italy was a country where 97 per cent of the total alcohol consumption consisted of wine.

Table 11.1. Consumption of alcoholic beverages in Italy by beverage categories, beer and wine in litres of the product per capita and distilled spirits and total alcohol consumption in litres of pure alcohol per capita, 1881-1940, averages for selected years

Year	Beer	Wine	Distilled spirits	Total alcohol consumption
1881/1890	0.8	95.2	1.7	13.3
1891/1895	0.6	93.4	1.2	12.8
1901/1905	0.8	114.2	1.3	15.5
1911/1915	2.1	127.0	0.3	15.4
1921/1925	3.6	111.1	0.7	13.8
1931/1935	1.1	90.7	0.2	11.8
1936/1940	1.4	84.2	0.2	10.3

Source: Cottino & Morgan, 1985.

In the early 1950s, the total alcohol consumption in Italy was about 10 litres per capita (Table 11.2). During the first decades after the Second World War the alcohol consumption was on the increase. In 1973 the total alcohol consumption reached a figure of 13.9 litres per capita. Since then the total alcohol consumption has declined, and in 2000 the Italian per capita alcohol consumption was 7.5 litres. This means that in two and a half decades the total alcohol consumption had decreased by almost 50 per cent.

Table 11.2. Consumption of alcoholic beverages by beverage categories in Italy in litres of pure alcohol per capita and as percentages of total recorded alcohol consumption in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995, five years' averages

	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Alcohol consumption	11.73	13.24	13.34	10.56	8.30
Consumption of spirits	0.92	1.52	2.00	1.26	0.78
Consumption of wines	10.66	11.31	10.69	8.30	6.41
Consumption of beer	0.16	0.42	0.66	1.00	1.11
Percentage of distilled spirits	8	11	15	12	9
Percentage of wines	91	86	80	79	77
Percentage of beer	1	3	5	9	14

Sources: Hurst, Gregory & Gussman, 1997; World Drink Trends, 2002.

The consumption of wine increased during the first decades after the Second World War, from 83 litres per capita in 1950 to 116 litres in 1968. Since the late 1960s the wine consumption has decreased and it is nowadays about 50 litres per capita a year. At the beginning of the 1950s wine accounted about 90 per cent of the total alcohol consumption. In 2000 the corresponding figure was 75 per cent.

Also the consumption of distilled spirits increased in the 1950s and 1960s, reaching in 1973 a figure of 2.2 litres per capita in terms of pure alcohol. By that time distilled spirits accounted for 15 per cent of the total alcohol consumption. In the mid-1950s the corresponding figure had been 8. Since the mid-1970s, the consumption of distilled spirits has decreased both in absolute and relative terms. Nowadays about 7 per cent of the total alcohol consumption consists of distilled spirits. In litres of pure alcohol per capita the annual consumption of distilled spirits is nowadays about 0.5 litres (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Beer consumption has gained in importance in the second half of the twentieth century. The starting level in 1950 was, however, very low, and even if beer consumption has increased almost continuously during the last five decades, its proportion of the total alcohol consumption is still under 20 per cent. In 2000 Italians were annually drinking about 28 litres of beer per capita, which is among the lowest figures in Europe.

In 1985 the consumption of alcoholic beverages in their beverage form was about 100 litres per capita. In 2000 it was 80 litres a year. In the latter year the consumption of commercial non-alcoholic beverages was 371 litres. It consisted of 140 litres of waters, 60 litres of milk, 50 litres of soft drinks, 14 litres of juices, 11 litres of tea and 96 litres of coffee. Since 1985 the consumption of soft drinks has increased by 26 litres, the consumption of waters by 91 litres, the consumption of juices by 10 litres, the consumption of milk by 9 litres, and the consumption of tea by 2 litres. The consumption of coffee has decreased by 6 litres per capita since the mid-1980s (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1992; World Drink Trends, 2002).

Drinking habits

In Italy wine is considered an important ingredient of the daily diet. Drinking wine daily at meals at home with the family and to a lesser extent in other social contexts was a deep-rooted Mediterranean pattern (Allamani et al., 2000). Despite the decrease in wine consumption, wine is still mainly drunk at home during meals. In 1994 nearly 90 per cent, and in 1997 about 88 per cent, of all wine was consumed at home. The reduction in the overall consumption of wine during the last three decades has been partly compensated for by an increase of more expensive high-quality wines, and to a minor extent by sparkling wines drunk on special occasions and even outside mealtimes. In general, there is a notable decrease in drinking wine at lunchtime.

Beer has traditionally been consumed at home or in bars, and especially during the warm season as a thirst quencher. Since the beginning of the 1950s consumption of beer has steadily increased, and especially among young people there has been a clear growth in the consumption of beer, but also the consumption of soft drinks has increased in the 1970s and 1980s. Distilled spirits are drunk occasionally together with friends at home or in bars, or after meals, usually in upper-class households. Sweet liqueurs and digestive are often drunk in the lower social class and among women.

According to some surveys about 23 per cent of Italians 15 years and older are abstainers. Some 15 per cent are occasional drinkers and 62 per cent are regular consumers (Cipriani, Landucci & Voller, 1999; Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998; Rossi & Tempesta, 1999). While the average per capita quantity of alcohol consumed per day has decreased, the total number of alcohol consumers in Italy has increased between 1994 and 1998 (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998).

A large regional variability in drinking alcohol is evident in Italy, with lower consumption in southern than in northern Italy. In the family survey from 1991 conducted by the Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), central regions scored highest in the amount of alcohol consumption with 21 grams of pure alcohol per capita per day, followed by north-western regions with 19 grams, north-eastern regions with 17 grams and southern regions with 15 grams of pure alcohol per capita per day. According to the ISTAT household surveys in the 1981-1991 period, wine consumption decreased by 45 per cent in the north-eastern, 41 per cent in the north-western, 34 per cent in central and 38 per cent in southern parts of Italy. In the same areas, in 1991 the

wine consumption represented respectively 84, 81, 86 and 76 per cent of the overall alcohol consumption. Cross-sectional studies also report a higher alcohol intake in rural than in urban areas (Allamani et al., 1988). According to the latest national survey of the Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, geographic differences were still present in 1997 (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998).

Independently of the data source and of the geographic area, males consume on the average about three times more alcohol than females. Also the rate of abstainers is higher among females. Among youngsters, gender differences concerning the amount of alcohol consumed are now decreasing. Alcohol intake is higher among rural and blue-collar workers, craftsmen, employees in restaurants and bars, and low-educated people. According to Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool the proportion of those who had abstained during the last three months was 15 per cent among men and 30 per cent among women (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998; Rossi, 1999).

While Italians frequently taste wine in their childhood, they are initiated to drinking when they are about 10 to 14 years old. At these early ages, they are mostly consuming small amounts of wine during meals on special occasions at home. During adolescence, around the ages from 14 to 19 years, beer intake increases, and wine intake decreases, presumably as a reactive behaviour to family rules. The 1997 national survey reported that 22 per cent of Italians between 15 and 24 years old were abstainers (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998). In the age group from 18 to 20 years drinking increased regularly with age. Drinkers drank more, and many abstainers became drinkers. However, getting a job or getting married and having a baby is associated with a preference for the traditional wine-drinking pattern.

The relative amount of regular alcohol consumers is 33 per cent in the youngest age group, and this is the lowest figure for all age groups. This percentage increases in the group aged between 18 and 34, and there is a further increase in the age group between 35 and 64 years. In this age group 67 per cent are regular alcohol consumers. In the oldest age group the regular drinkers include 63 per cent. As far as quantities are concerned, the age group between 15 to 24 years has the lowest consumption, 5 grams of pure alcohol per day. The quantities increase progressively after this to 8 grams a day between 25 and 34 years old, to 12 grams between 35 and 44 years old, and peak in the age group between 45 and 54 years old with an average daily consumption of 13 grams. In the age group 55 years and older the consumption decreases to 11 grams of pure alcohol per day (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1998; Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 2001).

Socio-economic conditions largely relate to the transmission of cultural values inside the family and influence the drinking habits. There is an inverse relation between alcohol consumption and social class. The higher the social class, the lower the level of alcohol consumption. People belonging to lower social classes tend to drink cheaper and inferior quality wine, often bought in larger quantities from a wholesaler or made at home, while upper class consumers drink less but higher quality wine. Non-traditional liquors like whisky, cognac, brandy, gin or rum are more common in upper classes of urban areas, while spirits distilled from grapes, lemon or tangerine are drunk largely by the middle and low class of the north-eastern and north-western regions. Older and

tradition-oriented people often drink local alcoholic beverages, for instance in outlets by the market place.

Bars and cafés, often open till late at night, provide a context in which a mixed clientele can socialise. The types of drinks sold at these establishments include mineral water, coffee, soft and long drinks, distilled spirits, wines and beer. Ice cream, light food or a cake can also be consumed.

According to old rural traditions it was mandatory to offer wine to any male visitor. Nowadays hospitality consists of offering to all visitors, males and females, also other alcoholic beverages or non-alcoholic drinks. In connection with nearly all family and social rituals, wine is the main beverage, but also champagne and sparkling wine are consumed (Allamani et al., 2000).

To drink alcoholic beverages at the workplace was frequent in Italy. This culture is more rooted in the countryside and particularly among agricultural workers and residents of rural areas. Within the industrial sector, the amount of alcohol drunk among blue-collar workers was greater than among white-collar workers. Teachers are mainly women and they drink on an average less than any other professional group (Allamani et al., 1988; Allamani et al., 1995b). There are many informal control mechanisms, among which the most important has been to avoid drinking alcohol in the morning and between the main meals (Rossi & Anav, 1998).

Administrative structure of preventive alcohol policies

Many of Italian alcohol control measures essentially date back to the fascist period (Table 11.3). The laws passed during that period limited the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages, as well as reduced grape production in favour of grain production. The 1931 Penal Code, known as Code Rocco, reversed the previous principle according to which being drunk was considered an extenuating circumstance. Consequently, drunkenness in public became punishable and crimes committed by drunken persons became more severely punished than the same crimes by sober people (Cottino & Morgan, 1985). The 1931 Penal Code also fixed the minimum legal age for alcohol purchase at 16 years, which is still in force. However, alcohol as such was not an important policy issue until the late 1970s, when it began to gain importance in the political debate. In 1974 the provision of establishing a ratio between the number of alcohol outlets and the population in a locality was abolished (Moser, 1992).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s two alcohol-related issues gained in importance, namely drunk driving and alcohol advertising. In 1988 the Ministerial Decree 6/9/88 required the indication of alcohol content on the labels of alcoholic beverages. In the same year, another Ministerial Decree 10/8/88 established a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit of 0.08 per cent as the threshold above which a driving licence was suspended (see also Table 11.3). In 1990 the Jervolino - Vassalli law 26/6/90 on drug addiction and alcohol dependence promoted a strategy by which those drug and alcohol addicts involved in the criminal justice system who were sentenced to a maximum of four years' imprisonment were given a choice between prison or rehabilitation.

In the 1990-1992 period, six more alcohol-related laws or decrees were passed in the Italian parliament. Three of them were applications of EEC directives on alcohol advertising (Table 11.3). Of the other three, two regulated television advertisements and one updated the norms for the establishment and activity of public premises and prohibited the sale of beverages with more than 21 per cent of alcohol by volume at public performances such as concerts and sporting events.

In March 2001 the Italian parliament approved a law concerning general policy on alcohol and alcohol-related problems. It lowers the BAC limit when driving to 0.05 per cent, prohibits drinking alcoholic beverages in certain risky work settings and regulates the advertising of alcoholic beverages (Legge quadro in materia di alcol e problemi alcol-correlati, 2001)

The administrative structures for treatment and prevention are the same in Italy. Major changes have occurred since 1970 concerning the autonomy of regions and the creation of the health system. In 1970 regional administrations were established. Since then the regional administrations have been delegated the competence for health issues, while the national government retained the competence for enacting laws and approving specific guidelines. In 1975 a national health system was established, following the philosophy of the British national health system.

The Ministry of Health of the central government in Rome finances the health activities of each region, and can also fund special national health projects. Furthermore, it recommends guidelines to the regions, promotes the National Health Plan and approves national laws and acts for alcohol prevention. Regional health departments implement the national guidelines, laws and acts. They receive funding for this from the government. The health departments are responsible for the regional health budget and may directly fund some regional projects. Treatment and preventive activities are delegated to the local health agencies to carry out. The recent Italian law on alcohol and alcohol-related problems entitles the Italian regions to authorise both hospital and university units to treat patients affected by acute alcohol intoxication and to train health professionals about the alcohol issue. They are also allowed to establish half-way houses.

In each of Italy's 103 provinces there exists at least one local health agency (Azienda Sanitaria Locale, ASL). These agencies receive their funding from the regional level and implement both treatment and prevention projects. Prevention intervention may also be supported through the health education office of the ASL. Other initiatives can be taken through the social department of the provincial government or municipality. Some private agencies, such as consumers' or producers' associations or insurance, companies may support parts of the programmes.

Table 11.3. Alcohol-related laws in Italy

LAW	CONTENTS
CODE ROCCO (1931)	Minimum legal age 16 years. Repeated alcohol abuse punished.
Ministerial Decree, 6 September 1988, no. 438 Enforcement of the Dir. No. 87/250/EEC	Indication of the alcohol content on the labels of alcoholic beverages.
Ministerial Decree 22 May 1990, no. 196 Rules for the measurement of alcohol in the blood of the drivers	Introducing the use of breathalysers.
Law, 26 June 1990, no. 162 Updating of the Law 22 December 1975 no. 685, concerning drugs prevention and treatment, and rehabilitation of addictions.	Creation of the Central Service for the Addictions (Ministry of Health). Promotion and co-ordination of educational and information activities at national level (Ministry of Education).
Law, 6 August 1990, no. 223 Rules and regulations of the public and private radio and TV systems	Radio and TV advertising forbidden to those whose main activity is the sale or production of spirits with an alcohol content of more than 21% by volume.
Ministerial Decree, 4 July 1991, no. 439 Rules on the sponsorship of TV programmes	Radio and TV advertising forbidden to those who got the brands thanks to licences or agreements (concerns only spirits over 21% alcohol by volume).
Law, 25 August 1991, no. 287 Updating the norms on the establishment and activity of public premises	It is forbidden to serve alcoholic beverages stronger than 21% alcohol by volume (and sometimes even under 21% by volume) by the Mayor's temporary order in any place where young people can be present in the crowd.
Law 5 October 1991 no. 327 Ratification and enforcement of the European Convention (Strasbourg, 5 May 1989) on trans-border television	Alcohol advertisement shall not: Be openly addressed to minors. Link alcohol consumption with physical performances and driving. Suggest that alcohol has therapeutical properties. Encourage excessive consumption. Take the high content of alcohol as a good quality.
Ministerial Decree, 30 November 1991, no. 425 Regulations on the enforcement of the articles 13, 15 and 16 of the Council of the European Communities of 3 October 1989 (89/552/EEC) concerning TV advertising of tobacco and alcoholic beverages as well as minors' defence.	TV advertising of alcohol shall not: Be openly addressed to minors. Link alcohol consumption with physical performances and driving. Give the impression that alcohol consumption makes social or sexual success easier. Suggest that alcohol has therapeutical properties. Encourage excessive consumption. Take the high content of alcohol as a good quality.
Legislative Decree, 25 January 1992, no. 74 Enforcement of the Directive 84/450/EEC on	Any advertising concerning products that can be dangerous to the health and safety of consumers without warning them,

deceptive advertising	is considered deceptive, thus leading to disregard for the ordinary rules of safety and control.
Ministerial Decree, 3 August 1993 Guidelines for prevention, care, social recovery and epidemiological survey on alcohol addiction	Regions are entrusted with health promotion, prevention, care and social recovery of alcohol addicts. Establishment of teams for alcohol addiction at local level.
Law Decree, 28 December 1998, converted into Law 26 February 1999, no. 39 – Chapter "The aims of Health" pp. 17-18	Enforcement of the National Health Plan 1998-2000 should Decrease by 20 per cent the consumption of males drinking more than 40 grams alcohol per day and of females exceeding 20 grams alcohol per day. Decrease by 30 per cent the number of those who drink alcohol outside of meals. Carry out specific actions of primary prevention and promotion of moderate consumption, by national provisions and regional or local interventions.
Law 125, March 2001	Forbids advertising of alcohol and spirits beverages that: are broadcast during programmes addressed to minors and during the 15 minutes before and after the programmes. links alcohol consumption to therapeutical properties not acknowledged by the Health Ministry. shows minors drinking alcohol. These are forbidden as well: direct or indirect advertisement for alcohol or spirits on sites attended by minors (under 18). advertisement for alcohol and spirits on radio and TV from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. any form of advertisement for alcoholic beverages on press addressed to minors. advertisement in cinemas during films addressed to minors. counter sales of spirits are forbidden in petrol stations located on highways from 10 p.m. to 6 p.m. private and public radios and TV will adopt by September 2001 the self-regulation code on advertising.
Self-regulation Code on Advertising Art. 22 (2001) – Alcoholic Beverages	Alcohol advertising shall not: encourage excessive consumption. show alcohol addiction. address to minors. link alcohol and driving. link alcohol and physical or mental efficiency. point out alcohol content.

Source: Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 2001.

Licensing policy

The Ministry of Finance grants licences for the production of beer, wine and distilled spirits, while the Technical Offices of Finance (UFT) established at the regional and provincial level exert a control over the excise. The licence is paid annually and re-confirmed. The annual payment is about 104 euro for wine and beer and about 260 euro for distilled spirits. A special office in each region assures the quality of the plants. The province administration controls the building of the plants.

Municipalities grant licences for importers and wholesalers of alcoholic beverages. The wholesalers have to enrol in the Chamber of Commerce in each municipality. After having checked the applicant's fiscal deposit and given a copy of the excise code, the Ministry of Finance authorises the licence through the municipality. The licence costs about 34 euro per year and has to be renewed periodically.

For off- and on-premise retailers the Municipality Office for Public Stores grants permanent licences to medium-size retailers, up to 150 m² in cities with less than 10,000 inhabitants and up to 250 m² in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, as well as to trade centres. The cost of the licence depends on the taxation in the municipality. In a city like Florence, for instance, the licence costs about 35 euro a year.

According to the law (25/8/91) a temporary licence can be granted by the municipal administration for on- and off-premise sales events of alcoholic beverages containing less than 21 per cent alcohol by volume in public events such as rock concerts and sporting. Until 1991 two kinds of licences to sell alcoholic beverages were required. One licence was for selling wine and beer, and another licence for selling distilled spirits. Both on- and off- premise retailers also had to pay yearly a delivery tax of about 95 euro to the municipality administration. Since 1991 there is just one licence for all alcoholic beverages and no delivery tax.

Special restrictions of availability

Legal age limits were set already in 1931 at 16 years both for on- and off-premise retail sales of alcoholic beverages. The limit refers to all kinds of alcoholic beverages. Another measure aiming at protecting young people concerns the prohibition of selling alcoholic beverages in events directed at youth, such as concerts and sporting events.

Alcoholic beverages are available during the normal business hours, which practically means that there is no legal limitation on the retail sale of alcoholic beverages even at night or in the early hours of the morning. In 1998 the Italian highway society prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages containing more than 21 per cent alcohol by volume from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. on premises built along highways. This prohibition has become part of the 2001 Italian alcohol act.

Alcohol taxation

In Italy excise duties are levied on all beer exceeding 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume. Beer excise duties are applied on the basis per hectolitre per degree Plato (Table 11.4). Excise duties on wine and intermediate products are calculated per hectolitre of the product. The excise duty rate for wine is, however, set at zero, which has been the practice for wines at or under 12 per cent alcohol by volume during the whole study period. Excise duty on distilled spirits is levied on the basis of hectolitres of pure alcohol in the finished product. Excise duties are payable when alcoholic beverages are released for consumption. These declarations are controlled by finance officers.

Table 11.4. Excise duty rates for alcoholic beverages in Italy in 2000 in Italian liras and in euro

Alcoholic beverage category*	LIT	EUR
Beer, per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product	2,710	1.40
Wine, and fermented beverages other than wine and beer, per hectolitre of the product	0	0
Intermediate products, per hectolitre of the product	96,000	49.58
Distilled beverages, per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product	1,249,600	645.36

* For details of the lower limits of alcoholic beverages and other EU rules concerning alcohol taxation, see Chapter 2.

Source: European Commission, DG XXI, Excise duty tables, November 2000.

At the beginning of the 1970s excise duty on beer was calculated per degree Plato, and it was 400 liras per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product. Consequently, at 12 degrees the excise duty was 4,800 liras per hectolitre of the product (Brown, 1972). According to Brown (1978) in the mid-1970s the excise duty rate for beer had increased to 600 liras per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product, and at 12 degrees it was 7,200 liras per hectolitre of the product. In October 1979 the duty was increased by 67 per cent to 12,000 liras per hectolitre at 12 degrees. In 1982 the excise duty on beer was doubled to 24,000 liras per hectolitre of the product at 12 degrees. In 1988 the excise duty rate for beer was increased by 30 per cent from 2,000 to 2,600 liras per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product, and at 12 degrees the excise duty was 31,200 liras per hectolitre of the product. In January 1991 the excise duty rate was increased by 7 per cent as an adjustment to costs of living. At 12 degrees it was 33,240 liras per hectolitre of the product. As table 11.4 indicates the current rate is set at 2,710 liras per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product, which means that at 12 degrees the excise duty on beer is 32,520 liras per hectolitre of the product.

At the beginning of the 1970s special taxes on distilled spirits consisted of an excise duty, a surtax and a state seal tax. The excise duty rate was 60,000 liras and the surtax 90,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. The seal tax was set

per bottle, and it amounted to about 100,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. Taken together, special taxes on distilled spirits were 250,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product (Brown 1972). According to Brown (1978) the excise duty rate had increased by the mid-1970s to 120,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product, and the seal tax was on the average 72,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product but it was only payable for distilled spirits made from cereals or sugar cane. Compared with the beginning of the 1970s special taxes on those distilled spirits which were not made from cereals or sugar cane had decreased to 210,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product.

According to Brown (1978) wine over 12 per cent alcohol by volume had also become taxable in the mid-1970s. Wine was taxed like distilled spirits for each percentage of alcohol exceeding 12 per cent alcohol by volume with the exception of seal tax.

According to Brown and Wallace (1980) special taxes on distilled spirits in the late 1970s before October 1979 consisted of an excise duty and a manufacturing tax, which was 120,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. The excise duty was 130,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol on distilled spirits other than those produced from fruit, wine, still wash or waste from wine production, which were freed from excise duty. Consequently, special taxes on domestic wine-based distilled spirits were now decreased to 130,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product while special taxes on cereal-based whisky were 250,000 liras, the same as on all distilled spirits at the beginning of the 1970s.

In October 1979 special taxation of distilled spirits became even more complicated than before because of the increase in different categories of distilled spirits that had different taxes. The excise duty on distilled spirits made from fruit or wine was 290,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. For distilled spirits made from other materials it was 420,000 liras, but, for instance, for rum it was specified to 370,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. Wine over 12 per cent alcohol by volume was taxed as distilled spirits made from fruit or wine for each percentage alcohol exceeding 12 per cent alcohol by volume (Brown, Dewar & Wallace, 1982).

In 1984 excise duty rates for distilled spirits were increased and the categories changed to comply with a ruling of the European Court of Justice (see Chapter 2). The excise duty on distilled spirits made from molasses was set at 420,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product, and on distilled spirits from other materials at 340,000 liras (Horgan, Sparrow & Brazeau, 1986; Sparrow et al., 1989). In May 1991 the excise duty rates for distilled spirits were increased by 172 per cent as the excise duty on distilled spirits made from molasses was increased to 1,146,000 liras and that made from other materials to 928,000 liras per hectolitre in the finished product (Sparrow et al., 1989). Since May 1991 the difference in excise duties between these two groups of products has been gradually decreasing at the same time as the excise duty rates for these two groups of distilled spirits gradually increased to reach in July 1996 a common rate of 1,249,000 liras per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product for all distilled spirits.

Until July 1996, the excise duty on wine containing more than 12 per cent alcohol by volume was connected to the excise duty rate for distilled spirits made from wine or fruit. In 1996 the excise duty on aromatised and fortified wine as well as on all other intermediate products was set at 96,000 liras per hectolitre of the product.

The increases in excise duty rates for distilled spirits at the beginning of the 1990s must be seen in connection with the necessity to bring excise duty rates for distilled spirits, intermediate products and beer to comply with the EU minimum requirements (see Chapter 2). For beer the current rate is 87 per cent over the EU minimum rate. The current excise duty rate for intermediate products is 10 per cent over the EU minimum rate of 45 euro per hectolitre of the product, and the current excise duty rate for distilled spirits is 17 per cent over the minimum EU rate.

Changes in the excise duties referred to above are given in nominal values. During the 1970-2000 period the value of the Italian currency has decreased because of inflation. The increase in the price level in Italy in the 1960-2000 period as described by the consumer price index (CPI) is given in table 11.5.

Table 11.5. Consumer price index in Italy, 1960-2000, 1995 is 100

Year	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
CPI	5,8	7.4	11.7	14.6	31.1	59.2	78.0	100.0	112.8

Source: OECD, Main Economic Indicators, March 2000 CD-ROM.

After taking inflation into account, it can be concluded that beer excise duty was on about the same real level in 1970, 1980 and 1990, but has since then decreased by a quarter. The real value of special taxes on distilled spirits was in 1990 about one fifth or one fourth of their real value at the beginning of the 1970s. By the year 2000 the real value of special taxes on distilled spirits has more than doubled. Still the real value of special taxes on distilled spirits in 2000 was about one half of their real value at the beginning of the 1970s.

A value added tax (VAT) of 20 per cent is nowadays applied to all alcoholic beverages. As table 11.6 shows, uniform value added taxes on all alcoholic beverages are of quite recent origin. In the 1970s, VAT was clearly lower both on table wine and beer than for distilled spirits. Making the VAT uniform by the year 1998 has meant increased VAT rates for beer and wine both in absolute terms and in relation to distilled spirits.

Table 11.6. Rates of value added taxes on alcoholic beverages by beverage categories in Italy, 1973-1999, per cent

Date	Beer	Spirits		Wine*	
		Brandy	Whisky	Still	Champagne
1973 January**	6	14	35	6 – 12	30
1981 January***	8	18	35	8 – 15 - 35	35
1982 August	10	20	38	8	38
1984 December	9	18	18	9	30
1987 September	9	18	18	9	19
1988 August	9	19	19	9	19
1990 July	19	19	19	9	19
1993 January	19	19	19	13	19
1995 January	19	19	19	16	19
1999 January	20	20	20	20	20

* According to Sparrow et al. (1992) the percentage for champagne in the 1987-1992 period was 38 per cent.

** Before 1973 the turnover taxes were 7 per cent for beer, 12 per cent for distilled spirits and 4 per cent for wine

*** 8 per cent for bulk wines, 15 per cent for bottled wines and 35 per cent for quality wines.

Sources: Brown, 1978; Sparrow et al., 1992; Hurst, Gregory & Gussman., 1997.

At the beginning of 1970s, pure alcohol in the form of distilled spirits was taxed about 100 per cent more heavily than in the form of beer. At the end of the twentieth century, pure alcohol in the form of distilled spirits was taxed 1.7 times more heavily than pure alcohol in the form of beer. If the VAT is included in the calculation, taxes on pure alcohol in the form of wine are half of the taxes on alcohol in the form of beer, and the taxes on alcohol in the form of distilled spirits are about 50 per cent higher than the taxes on alcohol in the form of beer.

In 1980 about 14 per cent of the price of beer consisted of different taxes. The corresponding rate for wine was 6 per cent and for distilled spirits it fluctuated from 20 to 40 per cent. In the late 1980s the corresponding rates were nearly 30, about 20 and 8 per cent. In the late 1990s taxes account for a third of the price of beer, some 40 per cent of the price of distilled spirits and about 17 per cent of the price of wine.

Besides taxes, there are many other different factors affecting the prices of alcoholic beverages. One of these is financial support to the alcohol industry. The wine sector, for instance, being the representative of traditional Italian drinking, is granted high support payments for production, as decided by the European Commission. The financial support amounted to 1,112 billion liras in 1996. Distilled spirits are subjected to the highest excise duty, but on the other hand spirits producers could in 1996 rely on

support payments of 653 billion liras for production. Brewing receives the lowest support payments for production, 3 billion liras in 1996.

Wine dominates the total consumption of alcohol. Therefore, changes in wine prices also affect greatly the developments in average alcohol prices. According to Sulkunen (1978, 18), both the real price of wine and the real price of all alcoholic beverages increased by nearly 10 per cent from 1951 to 1958, decreased by over 10 per cent during the next two years and increased again somewhat in the 1960-1966 period. Consequently, in the mid-1960s the real prices of alcoholic beverages were on the same level as at the beginning of the 1950s. According to the data collected in the ECAS project, the real price of alcohol stayed about the same from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s. Then the real price started to decrease and this trend continued to the mid-1980s. In the second half of the 1980s as well as in the 1990s the real price of alcoholic beverages has been constant (Leppänen, 1999).

Alcohol advertising

Advertising of alcoholic beverages has existed on posters and magazines since the beginning of the twentieth century. Modern advertising of alcoholic beverages did not, however, begin until the 1970s. These modern advertisements associated alcoholic beverages mostly with social success, friendship, and sexual attraction. Advertising companies often used images of young women as bait. It is not until recently that women themselves were addressed in advertisements as potential consumers of alcoholic beverages (Beccaria, 1999).

Before 1991, alcohol advertising was not regulated at all. This was mainly due to the minor importance that the alcohol issue had as a social problem. As early as in 1964, however, alcohol producers and manufacturers, media agencies, television and networks had subscribed to a voluntary self-regulation code on media advertising. This code underwent many revisions in the direction of greater restrictions. In 1996 the alcohol industry also subscribed to a self-regulation code. The norms for advertising of alcoholic beverages try to prevent advertising from deceiving the consumer. According to the code advertising should not

- encourage excessive alcohol consumption,
- show alcohol addiction,
- be addressed to minors,
- link alcohol and driving,
- link alcohol and mental or physical special performances, and
- present alcohol content as a good quality of the product.

In 1991 National Law 30/11/91, which was an application of the EEC directive 89/552/EEC, was approved by the Italian parliament. According to this law advertising spots on television should not

- clearly refer to minors or depict minors drinking alcoholic beverages,
- depict people driving and drinking alcoholic beverages,
- give the viewers the impression that drinking equals social or sexual success,
- lead the viewer to believe that alcoholic beverages possess therapeutic qualities or could resolve psychological problems,

- encourage abuse of alcoholic beverages or present abstinence or sobriety in an unfavourable light, and
- portray the alcohol content of alcoholic beverages as a positive quality of beverage.

Legislative decree 25/1/92, enforcing the directive 84/450/EEC on deceptive advertising, regarded any announcement of products without a warning as deceptive if consumption of the product can be harmful and the announcement leads consumers to disregard the ordinary rules of safety and control.

The 2001 Alcohol Act prohibits alcohol advertisements addressed to young people and establishes that a self-regulation code has to be provided together by broadcasting companies, advertisement agencies and producers. Advertisements for alcoholic beverages are forbidden if

- they are broadcasted during programmes addressed to minors and during the 15 minutes before and after these programmes,
- they link alcohol consumption to therapeutical properties not acknowledged by the Ministry of Health, and
- they show minors drinking alcohol.

It is also forbidden

- to advertise direct or indirect alcohol or distilled spirits in places attended by minors (under 18 years),
- to advertise alcohol and distilled spirits on radio and television from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- to advertise in any form alcoholic beverages in press addressed to minors, and
- to advertise alcoholic beverages in cinemas during films addressed to minors.

Education and information

In the health education sector, deterrent messages about the bad consequences of drinking have appeared since the 1980s. They showed the adverse effects of alcohol through dramatic descriptions and images. Such messages were used in school education programmes, and in posters in different educational contexts. At the beginning of the 1990s the World Health Organization (WHO), however, concluded that messages dwelling on the positive benefits of responsible drinking have the greatest impact on the target population, if compared with messages focusing on the negative consequences of drinking alcohol (European Alcohol Action Plan, 1993).

As to the means by which to convey the preventive message, two initiatives in the 1990s might serve as demonstrations for further projects in Italy. One is the alcohol community action carried out by the Permanent Observatory on Youth and Alcohol, in which health messages produced by young people for young people were conveyed through existing mass media channels (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1997a). The contents of the messages were suggestions to drink more responsibly knowing the risks of abuse. The messages were distributed by disc jockeys in discotheques, on local and national radio and through posters. Another example was the experiment of an outdoor display of a few schoolchildren's drawings about the consequences of drinking, created through a teaching and learning process within a network of local schools in the Rifredi Florence Community Project (Allamani et al.,

1999a). A further project is being carried out by the Permanent Observatory on Youth and Alcohol and the Italian Automobile Club (ACI) to develop a video clip addressed to young drivers, aiming at informing them about the risks of driving after having drunk, or of underestimating the effects of alcohol on their capacities.

No comprehensive preventive alcohol policy was really pursued in Italy in the past decades (Cottino & Morgan, 1985; Moser, 1992). Also the planning of settings that promote general health was rarely considered until the 1990s, when a network of Healthy Cities began to be developed. All in all, Italy has been traditionally tepid in starting programmes at the national level, even if more attention has been paid to the issue of alcohol-related problems in the 1990s. In spite of the lack of prevention programmes, the decrease in alcohol consumption during the last 30 years has been dramatic.

Since the 1980s, many alcohol education programmes have been put into effect especially in high schools, funded jointly by the public health agencies and the public school system. These were planned locally with no national or regional coordination. Also a wealth of information tools especially for the schools has been produced during the last years (Orlandini, 1999). Recently a CD-ROM called Message in a bottle was also presented (Beccaria, 1998). One of the main targets of every preventive action has been the youth. Nowadays nearly every school has one teacher who is in charge of planning and carrying out information projects on health, sometimes including alcohol.

Especially during the 1990s, prevention programmes gained some consideration in the opinions of students and the approach was changing from a perspective of top-down campaigns to one involving both formal and informal local actors. The European Regional Office of the WHO supported the philosophy of alcohol prevention and community action through the European Alcohol Action Plan (1993) and the European Charter on Alcohol (1995) (European Alcohol Action Plan, 1993; European Charter on Alcohol, 1995). This has stimulated a few preventive plans in Italy. One of them is a network created in Trento, northern Italy, in 1992, encompassing projects for general practitioners, driving, workplace and school, supported by some public health agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Noventa, 1999).

At the local level a community action project was carried out by the Permanent Observatory on Youth and Alcohol in the provinces of Padova, Rimini-Forli-Cesena and Bari and Biella, representing northern, central and southern Italy (Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, 1997b). Meetings were held with the local authorities, the school representatives, as well as with informal operators, i.e. youth group leaders, bartenders and the like, a basic element of the community action. These meetings resulted in a suggestion of promoting "conscious drinking" (Rossi, 1996).

Another community alcohol project was the Rifredi Community Action Project, an intersectoral and multicomponent prevention project in Florence, promoted by the Centro Alcológico Integrato. The purpose of the project, which started in 1992 and concluded in 1998, was to increase the awareness of the risks involved when drinking alcohol, and to influence community policy when facing alcohol-related problems. The project was able to activate several formal and informal groups in the community. As to the outcome evaluation, the indicators demonstrated that at least 30 per cent of local

residents had been involved in the preventive interventions. There was also a higher awareness than before of hazardous alcohol drinking among both the population and the health professionals. Another outcome has been the building up of a coordinating group on healthy lifestyles, where 16 local associations were represented (Allamani, Ammannati & Basetti Sani, 1999; Allamani et al., 1999a).

Drunk driving

According to the ministerial decree 10/8/88 the BAC limit in Italy was set at 0.08 per cent. There are various tests, well-specified by the ministerial decree 6/9/1988, including blood analysis, to ascertain the BAC level. If a driver is found with a BAC over 0.08 per cent he or she is sent to prison for up to a month and has to pay a fine ranging from 250 to 1,000 euro. The driving licence is suspended from 15 days to three months. In the case of a repeater, he or she is sent to prison over a longer period of time. In March 2001 the Italian parliament approved a law that lowered the BAC limit to 0.05 per cent.

Administrative structure of treatment for alcoholism

In 1978 alcoholism was recognised as a disorder by the National Health Insurance. The increasing concern for alcohol-related problems in the 1990s led to the establishment of the Central Service for Alcohol and Drug Addiction and Drug Dependency Units, reporting to the regional authorities and to the local alcohol services (Law 26/6/90). Furthermore, hospitals were invited to supply treatment to alcoholics. In 1993 the Italian government issued a decree by which regions were delegated to provide prevention and treatment programmes to alcohol addicts based on a multi-professional approach. Hospitals were also urged to add beds for alcoholics. In 1994, as part of a national health reform, the local health units were transformed into local health agencies with budget responsibilities.

In August 1993, a Ministry of Health decree recommended a few guidelines to the Italian regions for the prevention and treatment of alcohol addiction. It stressed the need for multi-professional interventions at the local level and called for an increase in hospital beds, underlining the medical component in the system. It also recognised the importance of self-help groups and the rehabilitation side of treatment.

At the end of the 1970s, four national health services independently applied at least two specific treatment programmes for chronic alcoholics. In Udine, in north-eastern part of Italy, and in Arezzo, Tuscany, a treatment programme was operating according to the Club method of Vladimir Hudolin. On the other hand, a multi-modal approach was provided in Dolo, close to Venice, and in Florence. Developed to overcome the ineffectiveness of the traditional medical or social approaches, the programmes attempted to combine medical, psychological and social concepts and practices (Allamani et al., 1994).

Since the beginning of the 1990s several treatment programmes have started around the country. They were organised as a side activity of general medicine or gastroenterology

units or of psychiatric services. Also the services for the recovery from drug dependencies (Servizi per le Tossicodipendenze, SERT), that was established within many local health agencies, may treat alcoholic patients. In 1996 the Italian Ministry of Health carried out a census that identified 280 alcoholic units with 22,000 clients (Ministero della Sanità, 1999).

Alcohol treatment programmes in Italy may be divided into hospital- and community-oriented. Clinicians in favour of the former approach claimed that medical diagnosis and therapy at the hospital bedside is necessarily the first opportunity for a well-organised biological and psycho-social treatment and the first occasion to tackle the problem. The increasing number of people supporting the community-oriented programmes claim that alcohol problems should be treated as much as possible in the context where they are experienced and defined, i.e. the family and the social network of friends and acquaintances. In fact, a trend is actually established that outpatient service is growing to the detriment of inpatient clinics.

The main NGOs involved in the treatment of alcoholics and their families are Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and its derivations, i.e. AlAnon and AlAteen, relatives and children of alcoholics, respectively, and the Clubs for Alcoholics in Treatment. In 1997 about 40,000 people, 0.07 per cent of the whole Italian population, were estimated to be involved in either a 12-step or a club alcohol treatment programme. It could be estimated that nearly 50 per cent of these were women.

The Italian Society of Alcohol Research (SIA) was established in the late 1970s. SIA has sometimes taken the place of the university, which for a long time was not interested in or able to promote both scientific meetings and alcohol research. It is the only scientific society quoted in the new alcohol law.

The Italian AA was first established in Rome in 1972, and shortly after that extended to Florence and Milan (Allamani & Petrikin, 1996). In the late 1980s, AA started to expand. Another expansion occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. By the year 2000, there were about 450 Italian AA groups, with at least 10,000 participants, of which presumably 3,000 were women. These groups usually meet more than once a week, and exist both in the metropolitan areas, and in small towns, more in the north-western part of Italy than in southern Italy. The first AlAnon group was opened in Rome in 1976. By 1979 there were nine groups in Italy, and from 1980 to 1989 they multiplied. By 2000, there were 398 AlAnon groups including Alateen, children of alcoholics, and AchoA, adult children of alcoholics. Altogether there could be about 20,000 participants of AA and AlAnon in Italy.

The other major NGO is the Italian Club for Alcoholics in Treatment (CAT), which stems from a multi-family group programme established in Croatia during the 1960s by Vladimir Hudolin (Hudolin, 1991; Patussi et al., 1996). In 1979 CAT was imported into Italy through experiences in Trieste and Udine. The clubs consist of groups up to 10-15 persons, where alcoholics and family members meet once a week, guided by a social or health professional or by a recovering alcoholic. This method had a rapid diffusion in many regions in Italy, especially in the late 1980s. In 1997 about 2,500 clubs were reported with about 20,000 members, of which about 50 per cent were women, referred to mainly from hospitals or social services, or from other alcoholic families. CAT

actively cooperates with the public treatment systems for alcoholics and with the political authorities.

For a long time the relationship between AA and the public health institutions was far from optimal. However, because of more information becoming available through the mass media and the growing acceptability of spiritual issues in Italian culture, AA has become better known among professionals and health politicians, as well as lay people. It is a common practice these days that, after or contemporarily to a period of out- or in-patient treatment, the patients are referred to AA or to CAT.

Summary and discussions

In Italy the state has had a passive attitude towards preventive alcohol policies and prevention of alcohol-related problems. However, the question of alcohol use and abuse gained importance in the class-divided society of the nineteenth century, in connection with the industrial revolution. The debates within and between the major political parties changed the definitions of alcohol problems to an issue of law and order (Cottino & Morgan, 1985).

The first temperance organisation in Italy, *La società di temperanza*, was formed in Turin in 1863. Other organisations were started in the late nineteenth century, mainly in the provinces north of Rome. The Italian Temperance League was founded in 1892. Italian temperance groups were particularly concerned with drinking among the urban proletariat. In 1889 the National Minister of Justice, Zanardelli, who was involved in the temperance movement, passed the first penal code resolution against public drunkenness as offensive or dangerous to the public. This law also punished those who caused such a state of intoxication in another (Cottino & Morgan, 1985). Restrictions on working-class drinking taverns began in 1913 with a law limiting the number of establishments to one for every 1,000 inhabitants.

Despite the developments in the late nineteenth and in the twentieth century it can still be argued that in Italy the general public has for a long time regarded, and still often regards, alcohol-related harms and alcoholism as individual problems related to a person's own behaviour rather than as a social problem needing a reaction at a community level. In any case, alcohol-related problems or alcoholism have not been considered a social problem in the same manner as has been the case with illicit drug use, nowadays often subject to wide educational campaigns, or even with smoking; the advertising of tobacco was prohibited in 1975. Accordingly, there prevails a diffused liberal attitude towards alcohol in the Italian society, where especially wine, but also beer, are usually perceived as items connected to food and to meals, and not as alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, quite generally the role of the state has tended to shift from regulations and control to the qualification of structures and services for social security and assistance. This has led to a division between different public functions, which have made it very difficult to enforce a coordinated preventive alcohol policy.

In the 1990s, alcohol issues and alcohol-related problems began to be a notable subject for media reports, political attention and some scientific studies. In recent years articles have also appeared about the benefits of alcohol with regard to the prevention of

coronary heart disease. In any case, the alcohol problem has not got as high a social priority as, for instance, AIDS or drug addiction. The main concern with alcohol regards road traffic accidents involving young people.

The opinion of health professionals has generally been in favour of a standard for responsible drinking, taking into account both the Mediterranean tradition favourable to wine drunk during meals, and the risky behaviour when alcohol is somehow abused or when the drinking pattern gets away from the Italian cultural model. However, there are groups in the health sector, within the Hudolinian movement, that speak in favour of a sort of light prohibition. In such a context, the parties and the parliament seem to maintain a middle position, which reflects their uncertainty between the position, of the Ministry of Agriculture and the wine lobby and other alcoholic beverages producers on the one hand, and the Ministry of Health and the health professionals' sector on the other hand (Rossi, 1991; Rossi, 1997).

The directives of the EU have affected most of all advertising and control measures of some specific aspects of the sale of alcoholic beverages. The most influential outside action has, however, been taken by the WHO-EURO, which has affected health professionals' perception of alcohol-related problems and risks. The European Alcohol Action Plan's guidelines and the European Charter on Alcohol inspired both the chapter on alcohol in the Italian National Health Plan and the Italian general policy law on alcohol and alcohol-related problems.

Since 1992 many proposals for acts on alcohol issues have been put forward by political parties. These proposals treat alcohol as a potential social problem, especially for the younger generation. The proposals have concentrated mainly on prohibiting alcohol advertising or limiting sales. The latest proposal was finally approved in March 15, 2001, by a vast majority of the two chambers of the parliament.

However, it would be a mistake to claim that Italy had in the 1950s or has nowadays a comprehensive alcohol control system. This goes despite the fact that Italy as early as in the 1950s had a licensing system for the production, import, wholesale and retail sale of alcoholic beverages, as well as legal age limits on selling alcoholic beverages to youngsters. Moreover, it is a fact that during the last three decades Italy has begun to restrict alcohol advertising, and adopted a BAC limit for traffic. In fact, a relevant trouble is that many of the aforementioned measures were infrequently enforced. On the other hand, as in the 1950s also in the year 2000 the excise duty on wine was zero liras. All this means that it would also be a huge exaggeration and misinterpretation to claim that the decrease in the consumption of wine and distilled spirits, and in the total alcohol consumption, during the last three decades could be explained by stringent alcohol control restrictions. On the contrary, social and cultural factors seem to have more explanatory power than legislative and control measures in affecting Italian drinking practices and in explaining the sharp decline of alcohol consumption in Italy from the 1970s.

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