

PRESS RELEASE

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The European Chronic Disease Alliance welcomes the OECD Report “Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use” and its strong alcohol policy recommendations

The European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA)ⁱ welcomes the OECD report launched on 12 May in Paris: “Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use”, assessing alcohol policy scenarios. The report has been developed over the last year and contains strong recommendations for governments to implement evidence based and cost-effective alcohol policies.

Data in the OECD report show that even the most expensive interventions such as health care and work place interventions are cost-effective and yield important economic and health benefits when implemented. Furthermore, the report shows the importance of addressing broad policy approaches such as price and marketing in addition to policies addressing only the “ones who drink most”.

Prof Johan De Sutter, Chairman of the ECDA, said: “Reducing alcohol-induced harm is an active investment into our economies that cuts long-term healthcare expenditures on severe chronic diseases and raises workforce productivity. Moreover, addressing alcohol-related harm is a crucial component of efforts to reduce health inequalities in Europe. There is a clear body of evidence to suggest that the burden of disease and deaths related to alcohol are found to disproportionately affect the most deprived.”

Alcohol is the leading top risk factor in Europe for ill health and for over 60 chronic diseasesⁱⁱ including several cancers, cardiovascularⁱⁱⁱ, kidney, liver and respiratory disease.

Harmful use of alcohol also generates outstanding healthcare and social costs related to the treatment of alcohol-related diseases, public order, labour and productivity. The most recent estimate from 2006 suggested that harmful alcohol consumption costs the EU economy between €125 billion and €155 billion in tangible costs each year.^{iv}

The report comes at a time of intense discussions on alcohol policies in the European Union. In April 2015, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a Resolution calling on the European Commission to present a new EU Alcohol Strategy to tackle health harm for 2016-2022^v.

According to ECDA, the OECD report – coupled with the strong view of EU Health Ministers and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) – should be a clear wake-up call to the European Commission to move ahead urgently with a new EU Alcohol Strategy and measures to urgently reduce the severity, scope and huge cost imposed by alcohol-related diseases across Europe, which claim 120,000 lives every year in the EU.

In its recently published position paper ‘Don’t bottle out – why the EU needs a comprehensive alcohol strategy’^{vi} ECDA calls on the EU and its Member States to implement the following policies by 2020:

EU

- › Adopt a new, comprehensive, EU alcohol strategy (from 2016)
- › Enact legislation requiring health information labels on all alcoholic products sold and marketed in the EU
- › Prohibit the cross-border advertising of alcohol products within the EU

- › Revise directives 92/83/EEC and 92/84/EEC to increase EU alcohol excise rates
- › End all EU-funded marketing subsidies for alcohol products
- › Provide more Horizon 2020 and public health funding for research into alcohol related harm
- › Adopt and achieve WHO Global NCD target #2: At least (a) 10% relative reduction in the harmful use of alcohol, as appropriate, within the national context.

Member States

- › Adopt, fund and implement national alcohol strategies
- › Enact effective minimum unit pricing policies for alcohol products
- › Prohibit the advertising of alcohol products on their territory
- › Provide resources for brief interventions on alcohol consumption in healthcare settings
- › Monitor compliance with all relevant legislation and policy by all stakeholders

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ⁱ www.alliancechronicdiseases.org

ⁱⁱ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0174&language=EN&ring=B8-2015-0357>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/content/ehj/33/13/1635.full.pdf>

^{iv} Alcohol in Europe a public health perspective:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_europe_en.pdf

^v <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0174&language=EN&ring=B8-2015-0357>

^{vi} <http://www.alliancechronicdiseases.org/assets/docsforsite/pdfs/ECDA%20position%20paper%20on%20alcohol%20-%20March%202015.pdf>