



[Joint press statement]

European Parliament’s Public Health committee calls for better drinks labeling as part of a new Alcohol Strategy to reduce harm

The European Parliament’s committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety supported a resolution calling for a new EU strategy to tackle health harm from alcohol to be put into action for 2016-2022. The Resolution also emphasizes the importance of better labeling of alcoholic drinks including ingredients and nutritional information.

A coalition of public health organisations (1) working on alcohol policy welcomes the committee’s position as moderate steps towards reducing harm from alcohol.

Glenis Willmott MEP, a sponsor of the resolution, noted *“Many people have no idea just how many calories are in alcoholic drinks, unless they are determined enough to search on the company’s website. This is unacceptable and the vote today paved the way to recognise the need of consumers to take informed decisions when it comes to alcohol consumption”*

The Resolution will now be tabled for approval by the full European Parliament Plenary. *“All MEPs should now support this call for new action on alcohol, what should be considered as an investment in health to ensure a stable, robust long-term economic growth,”* said Mariann Skar, Secretary General of Eurocare. *“Alcohol-related harm costs at least Europe 2-3% of GDP, mostly from lost productivity. Real costs to society are likely double that, as that figure does not include costs to anyone other than the drinker”* went on to say Mrs Skar.

Alcohol harm in Europe

As Europe is the world’s heaviest drinking region, alcohol abuse constitutes a major public health problem that inflicts large-scale socio-economic damage - the social costs attributable to the misuse of alcohol were estimated at [€155.8 billion in Europe in 2010](#), of which a majority (€82.9 billion) lies outside the healthcare system (2). Alcohol costs societies some 2–3% of GDP, mostly from lost

productivity. This figure likely only reflects half of the real costs, as it does not include costs to people other than the drinker (3). The magnitude of the costs shows that not only does alcohol use pose a serious problem to the sustainability of health systems, the scale of the problem also entails a serious impact for the economy as a whole.

A new EU Alcohol Strategy should strengthen the current regulatory framework on alcohol and help national governments to significantly reduce alcohol related harm and the related costs. A new strategy should encourage prevention, health promotion and education. An [Alcohol Minimum Unit Price \(MUP\)](#), such as that proposed by the Scottish Government, is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways for society to minimise the damage from alcohol consumption (4).

Addressing alcohol-related harm is crucial to reduce health inequalities. 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 in Europe (5). Reducing alcohol-induced harm is an active investment in Europe's economies that cuts long-term healthcare expenditures on severe diseases and raises workforce productivity.

➤ **Notes to editors**

(1)The European Alcohol Policy Alliance ([Eurocare](#)), the European Public Health Alliance ([EPHA](#)), the European Association for the Study of the Liver ([EASL](#)), the European Liver Patients Association ([ELPA](#)), United European Gastroenterology ([UEG](#)) the Association of European Cancer Leagues ([ECL](#)) Standing Committee of European Doctors ([CPME](#)) and [Royal College of Physicians](#) (UK) [British Medical Association](#), [SHAAP](#) (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems), and [Alcohol Action Ireland](#).

(2) Rehm, J. et al (2012) Interventions for alcohol dependence in Europe: A missed opportunity to improve public health.

(3)Merkur, S, Sassi, F., and McDaid, D. Promoting health, preventing disease: is there an economic case? OECD; WHO; European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies; 2013. Report No.: Policy Summary 6.

(4) [\[Joint press release\] Doctors take battle to implement "Scotland the brave's" alcohol minimum unit price policy to Brussels](#)

(5)Herttua, K et al (2008) Changes in alcohol-related mortality

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