



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

Europe

Alcohol marketing in the WHO European Region

UPDATE REPORT ON THE
EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDED
POLICY ACTIONS



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ABSTRACT

Alcohol is a global risk factor for disease, and Europe is the heaviest-drinking region in the world. Research has shown a correlation between exposure to alcohol advertising and drinking habits – in particular, between youth exposure to alcohol marketing and initiation of alcohol use – and clear associations between exposure and subsequent binge or hazardous drinking.

This report analyses the current state of regulation concerning marketing of alcoholic beverages in Europe. It shows that, although most countries in the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region have some form of marketing regulation, very few have statutory bans to limit the marketing of alcohol beverages. In addition, the report highlights examples of current effective European alcohol marketing restrictions aimed at protecting young people that have been adopted in some countries in the Region.

In recent years, online platforms have played an increasingly important role in alcohol advertising and marketing, and many countries have updated their legislation in order to mirror the current situation. The report gives an account of online formats used for alcohol marketing and the ways in which they pose challenges for regulation, control and monitoring. It further discusses the need to develop protocols for distinguishing native advertising, user-generated content, and other commercial messages that may be difficult to identify as commercial messages. The real senders of such material are consumers, sometimes teenagers and children.

The report concludes that the global nature of alcohol marketing, and the ease with which it transcends national borders, necessitate regional and global responses, as well as national ones, and that opportunities exist to implement comprehensive, statutory regulations restricting or banning alcohol marketing to protect children and adolescents. In addition, increased awareness of the extensive challenges posed by online marketing, and political commitment to deal with them, are needed throughout Europe.

KEYWORDS

ALCOHOL DRINKING – prevention and control

ALCOHOL – adverse effects

ALCOHOL POLICY IMPACT

BEST BUYS

HEALTH POLICY

MARKETING

NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES

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Document number: WHO/EURO:2020-1266-41016-55678

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was produced by the Alcohol and Drugs Programme of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, under the leadership and with the support of Dr Bente Mikkelsen, Director of the Division of Noncommunicable Diseases and Promoting Health through the Life-course of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and Dr João Breda, Head, WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe would like to thank Research Director Dr Matilda Hellman and Ms Mikaela Lindeman, University of Helsinki Centre for Research on Addiction, Control and Governance, who prepared the first draft of this report.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe would also like to thank Dr Nathan Critchlow, Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling, for his specific contributions and very helpful comments on the report. Dr Carina Ferreira-Borges, Programme Manager, Alcohol and Illicit Drugs, WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, Ms Maria Neufeld and Dr Robyn Burton, WHO consultants, also provided comments and suggestions throughout the development of the report. Special thanks go also to Dr Peter Rice, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP), Edinburgh, for his very valuable insights and contribution to the report.

The publication was made possible by funding given to the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases by the Government of Netherlands, the Government of Norway and the Government of the Russian Federation.

ABBREVIATIONS

AVMSD	Audiovisual Media Services Directive
EU	European Union
EUCAM	European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing
HFSS	high in saturated fat, salt and/or free sugars
NGO	nongovernmental organization
WHO	World Health Organization



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