

European status report on alcohol and health 2014

Leadership, awareness and commitment



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Background

Strong leadership from national and local governments is essential for enacting effective alcohol policy and creating the necessary conditions for a comprehensive national alcohol action plan or strategy, which is a key way to raise awareness and ensure societal commitment. For an action plan on reducing alcohol-related harm to be effective, it is necessary to ensure that the requisite infrastructure for policy development, priority-setting, monitoring and surveillance, research and evaluation, workforce development and programme delivery is in place.¹

Strategies

Key among the strategies set out in the *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020*¹ is the development of a national alcohol action plan or strategy. National health goals can set priorities, express commitment to new action and allocate resources. The action plan advises that such goals and priorities should be based on epidemiological evidence and that the choice of policies and interventions should also be evidence-based. Furthermore, the action plan notes that measurable outcomes make policy objectives more specific, allowing progress to be monitored and often inspiring partners to support policy initiatives.

Methods

This chapter presents the results from the WHO survey on alcohol and health, carried out during the period February–December 2012. Unless otherwise noted, the responses reflect the policy situation in each Member State as at 31 December 2011. The survey was sent to the WHO national focal points for alcohol policy in each Member State, to be completed in consultation with various national experts. All 53 Member States of the WHO European Region participated in the survey.

Results

Respondents were asked to rate whether action in various policy areas had been strengthened, weakened or remained unchanged over the past five years.

The areas where the most Member States reported positive developments were public awareness-raising (37 Member States), drink–driving policies and countermeasures (37 Member States) and advice and treatment (35 Member States).

¹*European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2012.

Importantly, more than two thirds of responding Member States (34) reported strengthened action in controlling the availability of alcohol, one of the best-buy interventions recommended by WHO to reduce harmful drinking and thereby the burden of noncommunicable diseases.²

The other two best buys (increasing alcohol taxes and introducing bans on alcohol advertising) have seen fewer positive policy developments in recent years, with approximately half of responding Member States reporting that policies to control the affordability of alcohol and policies to regulate the marketing of alcoholic beverages have been either weakened or remained unchanged (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Alcohol policy changes 2006–2011



^a Data missing from five Member States.

^b Data missing from six Member States.

As of September 2013, 37 Member States had a written national policy on alcohol, defined as an organized set of values, principles and objectives for reducing the burden attributable to alcohol in the population which is adopted at the national level.³ Ten additional Member States reported that they are in the process of developing such a policy.

Table 1 provides Member State-specific information on the status of national alcohol policies and action plans, including the level of adoption, year of adoption as well as last and planned revisions.

² *From burden to “best buys”: reducing the economic impact of noncommunicable diseases in low- and middle-income countries.* Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2011.

³ In the United Kingdom, England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each have their own alcohol strategies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, alcohol policies are adopted at the entity level.

All but one Member State with a written national alcohol policy indicated that the policy is multisectoral, with health, education, law enforcement and transport/road safety as the most commonly represented sectors.

Table 1. Member State-specific data on the status of national alcohol policies

MEMBER STATE	WRITTEN NATIONAL POLICY ON ALCOHOL	YEAR OF ADOPTION	YEAR OF LAST REVISION	NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONAL POLICY	FURTHER INFORMATION
Albania	National	2002	2011	No	Revising the adopted policy	
Andorra	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Armenia	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No change	
Austria	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Azerbaijan	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No change	
Belarus	National	2000	2011	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Belgium	National	2008		No	Revising the adopted policy	Preparation of a new alcohol strategy started in February 2013
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Subnational ^a	2002		N/A	No change	
Bulgaria	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Croatia	National	2010		Yes	Revising the adopted policy	Proposal for alcohol action plan submitted to the Ministry of Health in 2012
Cyprus	National	2004	2008	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Czech Republic	National	2002 (Health 21) and 2010 (national antidrug policy strategy)	2010	Yes	Revising the adopted policy and developing a national alcohol action plan	Alcohol policy is integrated into the national antidrug policy strategy 2010–2018 and the national public health policy (Health 21). A national action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol is in preparation
Denmark	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No change	
Estonia	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Finland	National	2003	2011	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
France	National	2008		No	Ongoing revision of the national addiction plan	New addiction plan due in 2013
Georgia	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Germany	National	2003	2012	No	No change	
Greece	National	2006	2008	Yes	No change	
Hungary	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written sector-level policy	
Iceland	National	2011		No	Revising the adopted policy	Draft for new national policy on alcohol and other substances presented to the Ministry of Welfare in January 2013

MEMBER STATE	WRITTEN NATIONAL POLICY ON ALCOHOL	YEAR OF ADOPTION	YEAR OF LAST REVISION	NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONAL POLICY	FURTHER INFORMATION
Ireland	National	1996	2012	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Israel	National	2009	2012	Yes	No change	
Italy	National	2001	2010	Yes (implemented by regions)	No change	
Kazakhstan	No	N/A		No information	No information	
Kyrgyzstan	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Latvia	National	2005	2012	Yes	No change	Action plan for reduction of alcohol consumption and restriction of alcohol addiction for 2012–2014 adopted in December 2012
Lithuania	National	1995	2011	Yes	No change	
Luxembourg	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Malta	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Monaco	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No change	
Montenegro	National	2012		Yes	Implementation in progress	
Netherlands	National	2007		Yes	No change	
Norway	National	1998	2012	No	No change	
Poland	National	1996	2011	Yes	No change	
Portugal	National	2000	2010	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	National Action Plan for Alcohol-related Problems 2013–2016 adopted in 2013
Republic of Moldova	National	2007	2012	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Romania	National	2005	2010	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Russian Federation	National	2009		No	Revising the adopted policy	
San Marino	National	2006	2011	No	No change	
Serbia	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Developing a written national policy	
Slovakia	National	2006		No	Revising the adopted policy	
Slovenia	National	2000	2008	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Spain	National	1985	2009	Yes	No change	
Sweden	National	2001	2011	Yes	No change	
Switzerland	National	2008	2012	No	Revising the adopted policy	In May 2012, the Federal Council prolonged the national policy on alcohol for 2013–2016. February 2013, work to fine-tune implementation is continuing
Tajikistan	National	2012		No	No information	
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	National	2008		No	Revising the adopted policy	
Turkey	National	2013		N/A		

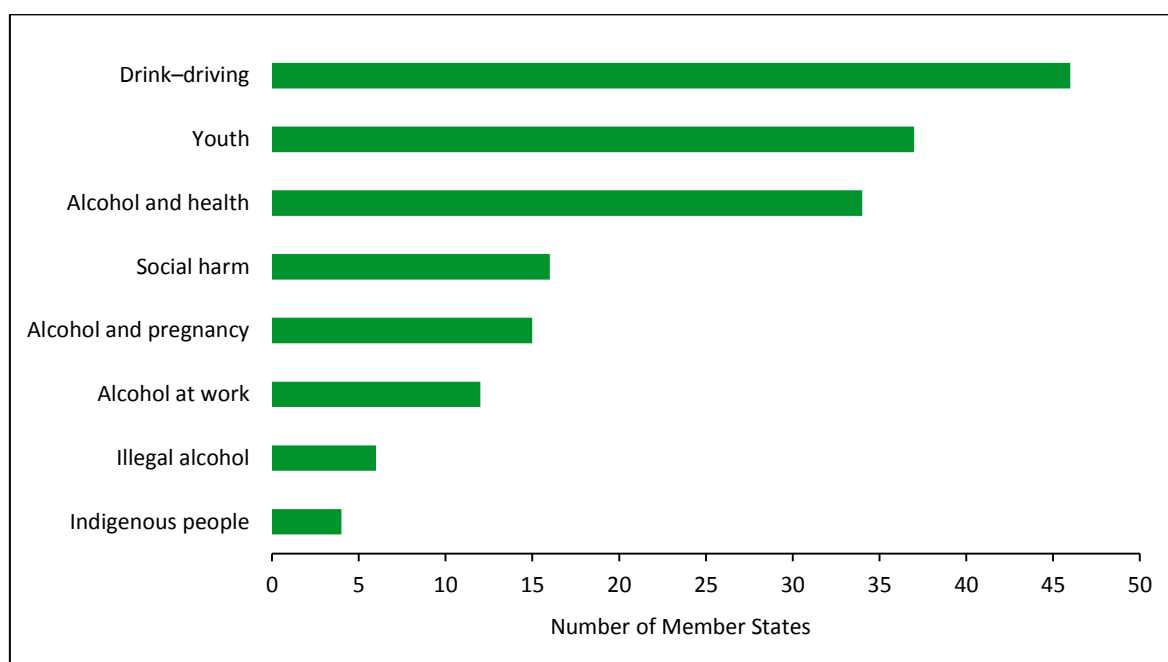
MEMBER STATE	WRITTEN NATIONAL POLICY ON ALCOHOL	YEAR OF ADOPTION	YEAR OF LAST REVISION	NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONAL POLICY	FURTHER INFORMATION
Turkmenistan	National	2000	2012	Yes	Revising the adopted policy	
Ukraine	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No change	
United Kingdom	Subnational ^b	2012	2012	Yes	No change	
Uzbekistan	National	2011		Yes	Revising the adopted policy	

^a At the entity level.

^b Some policies cover England, England & Wales, Wales only, Northern Ireland only and Scotland only. Tax policies are United Kingdom-wide, crime and policing, alcohol licensing and pricing apply to England & Wales.

All but two Member States reported that they had carried out some form of national awareness-raising activities in the previous three years. The most commonly addressed topics were drink-driving (46 Member States), alcohol and youth (37 Member States) and alcohol and health (34 Member States) (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Number of Member States carrying out national awareness-raising activities during 2009–2011



Conclusion

The *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020*¹ proposes a portfolio of policy options and strategies to promote strong leadership in alcohol policy. As outlined in the action plan, Member States are expected at least to have: an identifiable national action plan or strategy on alcohol, including measurable health and policy outcomes; a coordinating body or mechanism to promote policy coherence and joined-up action across relevant government departments and sectors; and an adequately resourced nongovernmental sector, free of potential conflict of interest with the public health interest, to

give voice to civil society. Of the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region, 37 reported having a written national or subnational policy on alcohol, and an additional 10 are in the process of developing such a policy. All but one Member State with a written national alcohol policy indicated that the policy is multisectoral, and the health sector was the sector of the government most frequently cited as having the main coordinating responsibility for the written national policy on alcohol.

The action plan advises that information-based public education campaigns about alcohol and responsible drinking behaviour should be proportionate and should concentrate on providing information about the risks of alcohol and the availability of help and treatment to reduce harmful use. The action plan proposes that public education programmes can be used to support alcohol policy measures, particularly when new measures are introduced such as a reduced blood alcohol limit for driving, an increase in the minimum age for purchasing alcohol or tax increases on alcohol.¹ Results from the 2012 WHO survey on alcohol and health show that 51 Member States had carried out some form of national awareness-raising activities in the previous three years. Nearly 87% (46 Member States) have implemented awareness-raising activities addressing drink–driving and nearly 70% (37 Member States) have implemented awareness-raising activities addressing alcohol and youth (Fig. 2).