



## WHO public hearing on a global strategy on alcohol

### What are your views on effective strategies to reduce alcohol-related harm?

As research and meta - analysis of different studies have proven - the working strategies to reduce alcohol related harm and prevent high alcohol consumption are:

1. *Reduced affordability* - via pricing/taxation system. It has been shown that mostly among young people harm caused by alcohol is reduced when the use of this measure is increased.
2. *Reduced availability* - opening hours, and location of outlets with alcohol should be considered. Alcohol should not be available in supermarkets and petrol stations but it should be moved to specialized shops with trained staff. The specialized shops should be away from urban areas.

Marketing activities as “Happy hours” and special offers should not be allowed.

Each country should have established and be able to enforce a minimum legal age for purchase.

3. *Reduced exposure* - by limiting/forbidding alcohol commercials. It has been proven that commercials on alcohol have a positive impact on increase in consumption of alcohol. Alcohol is in commercials often associated with status, successful lifestyle, sexual success, and social behavior and even with good health and for these reasons, people are encouraged to drink alcohol. The financial interest of alcohol industry automatically leads to assumption that the marketing of alcohol will mislead the audience with the purpose of financial benefit. For that reason, alcohol commercials should be restricted.

*Self regulation system of alcohol industry has been proven to fail* in following the basis ethical rules regarding alcohol promotion and that is why it should be taken off the list of possible measures reducing the harm and it should be replaced by another regulatory system of an independent body consisting of NGOs that has an expertise on alcohol marketing.

Alcohol products should not be connected to sport and peak performances in any field.

4. *Early intervention at alcohol addiction should be provided followed by treatment and rehabilitation.*
5. *Protection of unborn child and children in families with alcohol problems.*
6. *Drink driving* - with BAC max 0.2g/l, more random controls, penalties and suspension.
7. *Education and information* - the public should be aware about the consequences of alcohol abuse; education in schools as well as peer to peer education, available resources online and media attention are important.
8. *Labeling* - alcohol products should wear health warnings, giving the consumer information about the consequences alcohol use and abuse can have. All the necessary information should be provided to the consumer about what the products contain.
9. *Prevention* - it is important to intervene at the earliest possible stage, when the problems have not started. It is important to offer alternatives to youth, and empower them to make their own choices.
10. *Elimination of illicit trade with alcohol products in all forms*, including illicit manufacturing and smuggling.

The strategy will be working only if it is:

- Complex - considering public health, economical factors and based on evidence
- Coherent - regarding different sectors (private, state, civil society) and levels of society (local, regional, national, global)

NGO's should be highly recognized as valuable, equal partners and sources of knowledge and expertise in the area, as they are acting out of the interest of public health and well-being.

Youth organizations working in the field, are the main providers of non-formal education as they are the first place for young people next to school for peer learning, which greatly affects young people's behavioral development and confidence. Therefore the role of youth organizations should be acknowledged, especially in the field of prevention.

From a global perspective, what are the best ways to reduce problems related to harmful use of alcohol?

The best way is to have one global attitude towards the best measures reducing the harm. The problems will be solved by having a global strategy that covers different sections of society and encourages inter - sectional and international cooperation. It is important to include all parts of society, starting with local interest groups, local governments and ending with global structures.

Alcohol industry should not have the right to interfere in policies that have in one way or another impact on public health due to the conflict of interests.

More research and studies on alcohol related harm and the best measures of prevention should be conducted. At the same time, the information has to be spread in the countries by many different channels to raise awareness in an effective way.

There is a need for a global monitoring and information system.

Long term action is necessary to improve the global situation.

The best measures carried out on a global level would be:

- Restriction or ban on alcohol commercials
- Reduced affordability and accessibility
- High quality of intervention
- Law implementation and enforcement
- Prevention of drink - driving, alcohol related violence and injuries
- Further research and dissemination of results
- Exposure of alcohol industry's methods of profit-making and how it harms public health
- Information and education on alcohol-related harm
- Health warnings labeling of alcohol products

## In what ways can you or your organization contribute to reduce harmful use of alcohol?

Active - sobriety, friendship and peace is a European youth organization gathering 25 000 young people who have decided to live sober. We consider alcohol consumption an obstacle for development of individuals and society. There is too much harm caused by alcohol. We think we can contribute to improvement of living quality of individuals in different societies by abstaining from drinking.

Active with its 500+ youth groups and 25 000+ members offer a safe and alcohol free environment where children from families with alcohol problems can learn to be children again, experience friendship and trust. By this Active breaks the chain to reproduce the alcohol problem into the next generation.

We are promoting alcohol free life style and offering an alternative to those who do not accept alcohol as a natural part of our cultures.

Active also works politically to encourage alcohol and drug free environment. Active finds that youth organizations are essential in diminishing negative peer pressure and prevent alcohol and drug abuse. We call on the European institutions to recognize and support youth organizations working in these fields by using their expertise and providing them with sustainable resources to carry on their work.

We are contributing to reduction of alcohol related harm:

- By creating alcohol free environment for young people
- By raising awareness about harm related to alcohol and opinion building
- By spreading the idea of alcohol free lifestyle among youth
- By breaking the "tradition" or a certain cultural pattern that associates alcohol with social events, problem solving, status, entertainment
- By testing law enforcement, i.e. if the minimum legal age of buying alcohol is carried out
- By advocating the global alcohol strategy (when relevant)
- By having impact on youth policies in Europe and policies regarding European youth
- By mobilizing civil society - mainly youth