

PRESS RELEASE

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Public Health Community United Against Alcohol-Related Harm in the SANT Report on Non-Communicable Diseases

As the European Parliament prepares for the vote on the Subcommittee on Health (SANT)'s Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) report, leading health organisations across the EU are actively highlighting the need for more robust public health policies in Europe. These policies should effectively address the harms caused by the alcohol industry and prioritise evidence-based approaches in public health.

This action comes at a pivotal moment, reflecting on the SANT's Own Initiative Report on NCDs, which rightly addresses alcohol as a key preventable risk factor. The report highlights the urgent need to reinvigorate the EU's approach to alcohol policy, which has seen little advancement since the EU's sole Alcohol Strategy from 2006-2012. Key areas where the European Commission could demonstrate more leadership include raising minimum alcohol taxes, enforcing stricter regulations on alcohol marketing, and implementing warning labels and ingredient information on alcoholic products. These measures have been long sought by stakeholders¹ but have seen limited progress since 2017, when the Commission reported a lack of "objective grounds to justify" the absence of information on alcoholic beverage labels².

The inclusion of a prevention pillar, and several actions targeting alcohol in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP) was a moment of hope for people and communities in Europe³. However, the implementation of the EBCP alcohol policy measures has faced delays and controversies⁴. Recent initiatives by the SANT Subcommittee have the potential to propel these issues forward.

This joint effort, supported by leading community and civil society organisations - working for NCD prevention and control, public health, and social development across the European Union is strategically positioned to influence Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) ahead of the plenary vote on the Report on NCDs. This critical vote represents an opportunity to align with WHO recommendations, uphold scientific evidence, and prioritise public health considerations to protect people and communities from avoidable alcohol harm and in this way contribute to promoting health for all in Europe.

Addressing the Alcohol-Related Challenges in the SANT Report

As it stands, the report acknowledges that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption, which is an improvement compared to the original draft. However, when calling for the provision of better information to consumers the text suggests incorporating "moderate and responsible drinking information" on alcohol beverage labels. This wording is misleading citizens by downplaying the association between alcohol consumption and the incidence and mortality of cancer caused by

¹ [EU needs an alcohol strategy, local and regional leaders say \(europa.eu\)](#)

² [Alcohol labelling | Think Tank | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [Joint Statement | Prevention at the heart of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan - EPHA](#)

⁴ [E-9-2023-000427-ASW EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

alcohol. In addition, the entire text precedes “*alcohol consumption*” with “*harmful*”, implicitly suggesting the existence of “non-harmful alcohol consumption”. This terminology, aligning with an industry narrative that shifts blame for alcohol harm to individuals, is stigmatising and poses challenges for society-wide policy implementation and effectiveness measurement.

Our unified stance is catalysed by the recent WHO European Region and International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) joint statement⁵, which underscores the clear link between *alcohol consumption* and various NCDs, including cancer. The current draft of the SANT report presents a significant opportunity to align EU policies with robust scientific evidence and public health needs, reintroduce a long-awaited alcohol strategy into the European public health agenda, and deliver on all the Commission’s promises included in the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.

Key Concerns and Recommendations

1. **Recognising the Full Impact of Alcohol:** The WHO European Region faces the highest level of alcohol consumption globally, leading to substantial health, economic, and social burdens. The current SANT report draft fails to address this adequately.
2. **Challenging Industry Influence:** The alcohol industry’s lobbying efforts have led to worsened alcohol-related sections in the report. This undermines the effectiveness of policies aimed at preventing and reducing alcohol harms.
3. **Advocating for Clear Labelling and Public Awareness:** There is a vital need for mandatory health warnings and full ingredient listings on alcohol products, in line with the goals of the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.
4. **Promoting Evidence-Based Policies:** We urge MEPs to thoroughly fight any language that contradicts scientific evidence on the adverse health implications of alcohol consumption.
5. **Strengthening EU Alcohol Strategy:** A renewed commitment from the European Commission is needed to ensure transparent, evidence-based messaging on alcohol consumption, aligning with the EBCP and broader EU public health initiatives.

A Call to Action

As the plenary vote approaches, we call on MEPs to prioritise scientific evidence and public health over industry interests. It is imperative to recognise the role of alcohol as a major risk factor for NCDs and take decisive action to mitigate its impact.

About the Coalition

This press release is signed by a broad coalition of leading health organisations, united in their commitment to influencing positive change in European health policy. Our collective effort focuses on preventing all preventable non-communicable diseases (NCDs), tackling major common risk factors, and highlighting the role of alcohol in NCDs. The coalition, which includes key community and civil society organisations working in disease prevention and control, public health, and social

⁵ [Joint statement by WHO/Europe and IARC to the European Parliament – raising awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer](#)

development across the European Union, advocates for equity, solidarity, sustainability, universality, diversity, and good governance in evidence-based health policies.

Organisations: Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI), Association Addictions France, European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), European Alcohol Policy Alliance (EuroCare), European Cancer Organisation (ECO), European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA), European Liver Patients Association (ELPA), European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), Guttempler in Deutschland, IOGT-NTO, Lithuanian Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition (NTAKK), Movendi International, Slovenian NCD Alliance (SNCDA), and Univers santé ASBL.



For Further Information

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