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PRESS RELEASE

SELF-REGULATION IS NOT AN ANSWER

Brussels, Belgium, April 25, 2012

Last week, major producers from the alcohol industry together with the World Federation of Advertising presented The Responsible Marketing Pact which scales up self-regulation¹.

As a response, Civil Society Organisations with diverse backgrounds are now reminding policy makers at European and Member State level about the need for better regulation and co-regulation, and urge the European Commission and Member States officials not to jump on easy solutions in a new EU Alcohol Strategy 2013-2020.

“It cannot be left to the producers of a harmful product to decide how, when and where it will be marketed. Policy makers must not rely on self-regulation, but rather follow up through more statutory measures to protect the consumers. The content of this pact is basically the old ineffective measures of self-regulation in a new package. What we are witnessing are two powerful industries formally coming together to fight regulation- this is alarming”, says Mariann Skar, Secretary General of the European Alcohol Policy Alliance.

Not only the lack of effective regulation that reduces the volume of marketing is of great concern, but also the internal character of the self-regulatory system is problematic. *“The very least the Commission should do is setting the standards for the self-regulation – and standards aimed at protecting health should be meaningful and drawn up in consultation with the health community, with a clear mandate for progression to more overt regulation (Loi Evin) when it becomes clear that the industry is not abiding by them”,* says Dr Nick Sheron, the Royal College of Physicians (UK) representative to the EU Alcohol Forum.

A self-regulatory approach to alcohol marketing and health warning labels has recently been put forward as an important element in a new EU Alcohol Strategy². However, self-regulation has proved not to fulfil its purpose. For example back in 2007 the UK Government tried a voluntary labelling scheme. Regrettably, the industry did not keep its own promises and only 15% complied³ with the agreement they drafted themselves

¹ <http://www.euractiv.com/specialreport-reviewing-europes-alcohol-harm-strategy/alcohol-industry-unites-advert-abuse-clampdown>

² - European Commission about Self Regulation and health warning labels: <http://www.euractiv.com/specialreport-reviewing-europes-alcohol-harm-strategy/health-chief-wanted-drinking-kills-labels-news>

- SAB Miller health warning labels: <http://www.euractiv.com/specialreport-reviewing-europes-alcohol-harm-strategy/europeans-diverge-alcohol-taste-tax-marketing->

³ Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association (CCFRA) 'Monitoring Implementation of Alcohol Labelling Regime. Retrieved from: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicHealth/HealthImprovement/Alcoholmisuse/DH_085390

“The alcohol industry has had more than a fair chance to prove self-regulation can work”, says Andrea Lavesson, President of Active – sobriety, friendship and peace. “Evidence shows that self-regulation does not work for protecting children and youth”.

Europe is still the heaviest drinking region in the world, and the problems arising from alcohol harm are not only matters for Member States alone, but need to be addressed at the EU level to be effectively solved.

Eurocare together with 28 European and national NGOs (see list below) call for European Commission and the governments to take concrete and binding decisions that will help us all to address the alcohol related harm in the new EU Alcohol Strategy.

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SIGNATORIES

Actis (Norway)

Active – Sobriety, Friendship and Peace (Europe)

Alcohol Action Ireland

Alcohol Concern (United Kingdom)

ANPAA - Association Nationale de Prevention en Alcoologie et Addictologie (France)

Asociacion Ex-Alcoholicos Españoles (Spain)

Association of European Cancer Leagues (Europe)

Associacio Rauxa (Spain)

CRA-Ricardo Pampuri (Portugal)

VAD (Belgium)

EMNA (Europe)

European Association for the Study of the Liver (Europe)

EPHA - European Public Health Alliance (Europe)

Estonian Temperance Union (Estionia)

Fundación Salud y Comunidad (Spain)

IOGT International

IOGT Germany

IOGT-NTO (Sweden)

National Youth Council of Ireland (Ireland)

North West Alcohol Forum (Ireland)

Novo Rumo (Portugal)

Royal College of Physicians (United Kingdom)

SOCIDROGALCOHOL (Spain)

Sociedade Anti- Alcoólica Portuguesa (Portugal)

Standing Committee of European Doctors (Europe)

STAP (Netherlands)

UTRIP (Slovenia)

PARPA (Poland)

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EUROCARE (The European Alcohol Policy Alliance) is an alliance of 50 organizations working on the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in research and advocacy, as well as in the provision of counselling services and residential support for problem drinkers, the provision of workplace and school based programmes and the provision of information to the public.

Eurocare advocates the prevention of alcohol related harm in Europe through effective evidence based alcohol policy. www.eurocare.org

FACTS AND FIGURES ON ALCOHOL

- Europe has the highest drinking levels in the world, the highest alcohol per capita consumption and the highest alcohol- related harm problems.
- Chronic diseases, to which alcohol is the 3rd main contributory factor⁴, are in the top of global risks next to such threats like fiscal crises⁵ and are expected to cost global economy over 30 trillion USD over the next two decades.
- Across the EU some €125bn a year (equivalent to 1.3% GDP)⁶. This is figure for 2004 likely to be higher by now
- Alcohol is a major contributory factor in accidents; 1 in 3 of all road traffic deaths are caused by alcohol
- 1 in 4 of male deaths between 15-29 years are due to alcohol
- Alcohol is a risk factor in some 60 diseases such as cancer, liver cirrhosis etc. Taking all diseases and injuries at global level into account, the negative health impact of alcohol consumption is 31.6 times higher than benefit

⁴ World Health Organization (2009). *Global health risks*. Geneva

⁵ *World Economic Forum (2010) Global risks 2010*. Geneva, Retrieved from: <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/globalrisk/Reports/index.htm>

⁶ Actual spending on alcohol related problems accounts for €66bn:

- Healthcare and treatment: The cost of treating alcohol-attributable ill health is estimated to be €17bn, together with €5bn spent on treatment and prevention of harmful alcohol use and alcohol dependence.
- Crime: Alcohol-attributable crime is estimated to cost European police, courts and prisons €15bn per year, as well €12bn in crime prevention expenditure & insurance administration and €6bn of criminal damage.
- Traffic accident damage (€10bn)

Potential production not realised due to absenteeism, unemployment and premature mortality accounts for a further €59bn