



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**2767th EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Council meeting
Brussels, 30 November and 1 December 2006**

Council Conclusions on EU strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union

(1) RECALLS

- Article 152 of the EC Treaty, which states that a high level of human health protection is to be ensured by all Community institutions in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities,
- the Council Resolution on action on health determinants¹, which underlines the importance of taking forward, in a fully coherent and systematic way, work on health determinants,
- the Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people², which invited the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to make full use of all Community policies to address the matters covered in the recommendation, inter alia, the development at national and European level of comprehensive health promotion policies addressing alcohol,

¹ OJ C 218 of 31.07.2000.

² OJ L 161 of 16.6.2001.

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(2) RECALLS SPECIFICALLY

- the Council Conclusions of June 2001 on a Community strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm³, which emphasized that alcohol is one of the key health determinants in the Community and invited the Commission to put forward proposals for a comprehensive Community strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm, comprising inter alia a co-ordinated range of Community activities in all relevant policy areas to ensure a high level of health protection in fields such as research, consumer protection, transport, advertising, marketing, sponsoring, excise duties and other internal market issues, while fully respecting Member States' competencies,
- the Council Conclusions on alcohol and young people of June 2004⁴, which reiterated the invitation to the Commission to put forward a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm, reiterating the need to give attention to public health aspects in other policy areas;

(3) RECOGNISES that in 2005 all the European Union Member States supported the adoption of a Resolution endorsing a framework for alcohol policy in the WHO Europe Region and likewise supported the adoption of a resolution in the 58th World Health Assembly on public-health problems caused by harmful use of alcohol;

(4) POINTS OUT that many Community policies have a potential, either positive or negative, impact on health, and stresses the importance of considering the health impact of decision-making across all policy sectors;

(5) UNDERLINES that the European Court of Justice has repeatedly stated that public health ranks foremost among the interests protected by Article 30 of the Treaty, and that it is for Member States, within the limits imposed by the Treaty, to decide upon the level of health protection they seek to assure through national policies and legislation;⁵

³ OJ C 175 of 20.06.2001.

⁴ Doc. 9507/04.

⁵ Case C-320/93 Ortscheit [1994] ECR I-5243, paragraph 16; Case C-394/97 Heinonen [1999] ECR I-3599, paragraph 45; Case C-434/04 Ahokainen and Leppik [2006] ECR I - paragraph 33; Cases C-1/90 and C-176/90 Aragonesa [1991] ECR I - 4151, paragraph 16; Case C-405/98 KO [2001] ECR I-1795, paragraph 29; Case C-262/02 Commission [2004] ECR I-6569, paragraph 24.

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- (6) EMPHASISES that harmful and hazardous consumption of alcohol in the population is a major risk factor for public health and safety, a contributory factor in a range of health conditions including injuries, and associated with social harm such as domestic abuse, street disorder, violence, and social exclusion;
- (7) STRESSES that in many cases alcohol-related harm affects people other than the drinkers themselves; this includes foetal damage, suffering by family members, third party deaths and injuries in traffic accidents, and lost productivity at work;
- (8) POINTS OUT that alcohol-related harm contributes to inequality in health between population groups, also in the level and nature of alcohol related harm experienced by women and men, and to health gaps between Member States;
- (9) CONSIDERS that the primary aim of alcohol-related policies should be to reduce alcohol-related harm and that reduction of alcohol-related harm would promote growth and employment and strengthen European productivity and competitiveness;
- (10) UNDERLINES the competence of Member States to develop and strengthen national alcohol policies, appropriate to national needs and contexts;
- (11) NOTES that the alcoholic beverages production, retailing and hospitality sectors can contribute by adhering to national regulations and by ensuring that high ethical standards are met especially in the development and marketing of alcoholic products appealing to children and young people, and by ensuring responsible sales and serving of alcohol beverages in order to prevent binge drinking and harm from intoxication;
- (12) WELCOMES the Commission communication on an EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm⁶ as a major step towards a comprehensive and coherent Community approach to tackle the adverse impact of excessive alcohol consumption on health and well-being in Europe;
- (13) CONCURS with the Commission on the priority themes of protecting young people, children and the unborn child; reducing injuries and death from alcohol-related road accidents; preventing alcohol-related harm among adults and reducing the negative impact on the workplace; and ensuring that EU citizens obtain relevant information on alcohol-related risks;

⁶ Doc. 14851/06.

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- (14) ENDORSES the actions set out by the Commission to develop a common, comprehensive and reliable evidence base on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related social and health harm, on the impact of alcohol policy measures and of alcohol consumption on productivity and economic development;
- (15) UNDERLINES the need to ensure that opportunities to prevent alcohol-related harm to public health and safety are addressed in a coherent manner in relevant policy areas and especially the areas already mentioned in the Council Conclusions of June 2001 on a Community strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- (16) INVITES the Commission
- to continue its systematic and sustainable approach to tackling alcohol-related harm at European level, including the use of health impact assessment of Community actions where health dimension is evident,
 - to provide continuing strong support for Member States' efforts to sustain, strengthen or develop national alcohol policies to reduce alcohol-related harm,
 - to consider and apply coherently the Treaty provisions concerning the protection of public health and the Internal Market,
 - to ensure balanced representation for the various stakeholders including the public health community, non-governmental organisations and the alcoholic beverages production, retailing and hospitality sectors, when setting up the Alcohol and Health Forum envisaged in the Communication,
 - to develop measurable core indicators so that progress in the reduction of alcohol-related harm at Community level especially for the priority areas for action can be monitored,
 - to report regularly, starting from the year 2008, on the progress of Commission activities to implement the EU alcohol strategy and on activities reported by Member States, as well as their impact at EU level and within Member States, including an assessment of the response from different stakeholders;

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(17) CALLS UPON the Member States

- to foster a multi-sectoral approach in the prevention of alcohol-related harm to ensure the contribution of all areas of public government at all national levels,
- to strengthen or develop, if they are not already in place, coordinated national strategies or action plans, including effective enforcement, to reduce alcohol-related harm, providing support for action at all national levels and for measures tailored to domestic circumstances,
- to give specific emphasis to the enforcement of national legislation that can contribute to reducing alcohol-related harm, such as legislation on drink-driving and on selling and serving alcoholic beverages,
- to collect relevant and comparable information on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm,
- to provide their full support for the strategy set out by the Commission and facilitate its implementation at national and Community level".

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