

Country Report for Estonia, Annual Meeting, Brussels 2007

Changes in Estonian Alcohol Policy

The Estonian government plans to raise taxes on alcohol by 30% next year. On average each Estonian drinks 12 liters of pure alcohol each year - and every year they are drinking more. Experts say alcohol kills between 1,500 and 2,000 people a year - in one of the EU's smallest member states.

Changes in Estonian taxes influence also situation in neighboring country – Finland. Now, encouraged by the Estonian tax rise, the Finnish government has announced that taxes will go up there too - by 10% on beer and 15% on spirits.

In April 2007, the Estonian government relocated the Bronze Soldier and, after exhumation and identification, the remains of the Soviet soldiers to the Defense Forces Cemetery of Tallinn. In the early morning hours of April 27, 2007, after the first night's rioting, the Government of Estonia decided, at an emergency meeting, to dismantle the monument immediately, referring to security concerns. By the following afternoon the stone structure had been dismantled as well. Estonian government suspended all alcohol retail licenses inside the country borders for a week for a security reasons. According to the police and the medical professionals the period when alcohol sale was prohibited appeared to be extraordinarily calm with few alcohol-related crime and accidents.

Discussion about alcohol policy

Alcohol policy has been regularly discussed in Estonian Parliament. There have been proposals about Advertising Act. All the proposals have been voted down and the regulation about alcohol advertising hasn't changed.

Local municipalities have reinforced local restrictions on time of sale. While in most places alcohol can't be bought after 23.00, Tallinn banned retail sale from august 1. from 20.00 till 08.00. There are different reactions from praise to harsh criticism. There are couples of neighboring municipalities where there are no time restrictions and booze-tourism (that has been an issue between Estonia and Finland) is now also an internal problem. The Centrist Party have proposed a governmental regulation that would unify the situation everywhere but that have not been supported by the coalition parties.

Centrist Party, strong opposition party, have taken the alcohol problem as one of its main subjects but it seems that this has even a negative results, because almost all the other political parties are in opposition with the Centrists.

According to the Coalition Agreement the minister of Social Affairs has to introduce systematic principles of alcohol policy by the end of 2007.

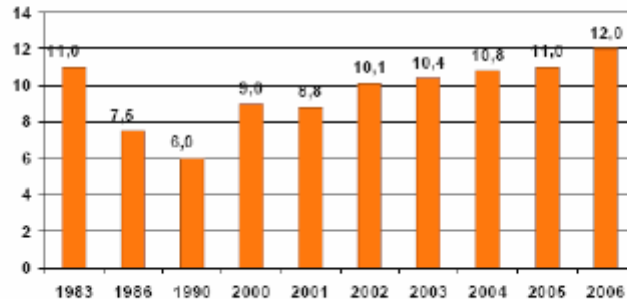
Consumption

According to the data by the Estonian Institute of Economic Research alcohol consumption in 2006 was 12 liters per capita. In 2005 it was 11 liters. This data includes the amount that tourists are consuming in HORECA system, but does not include what they buy here and ship abroad. Finns are still a significant market for alcohol industry. The above figure is showing the growth of consumption in recent years. (Source: Estonian Institute of Economic Research)



Alkoholi tarbimine Eestis

(liitrit 100% alkoholi elaniku kohta)



NB: arvestatud on nii legalset kui illegaalset nautikut, turistide kaasa osterud alkohol on maha arvestatud, kuid siin joodud alkohol sisaldub numbris

Estonian Temperance Union (ETU)

One of the biggest achievements has been the opening of the first alcohol-free café in the center of Tallinn in May 2007. Café has become a meeting place for different child protection and youth work organizations. More and more our main target group has been developed to be minors and through that alcohol problems that are connected to them. It seems that through children politicians are also more willing to deal with the alcohol subject.

In November 2006 ETU organized a conference "Child in a threat zone" which gathered most of the specialists in the field. Conference dealt with the threat that comes from alcohol consumption in the family and society. Conference declaration has gathered more than 3300 signatures (<http://www.ave.ee/laps/>). As a result of the conference Estonian Union for Child Welfare started a movement "For alcohol-free childhood" where ETU is a member.

FAS

Subject of the year has been FAS/FASD. Spring 2007 ETU published first ever booklet in Estonian about FASD. ETU opened also a special website - <http://www.ave.ee/fas/>

On the 17th of September ETU is launching a media campaign which involves TV, web and printmedia. There is a plan to hold a seminar about FASD for medical staff in November.

International work

ETU is a member of the Health and Alcohol Forum. ETU continues to be a partner in projects Building Capacity and PHEPA II.