

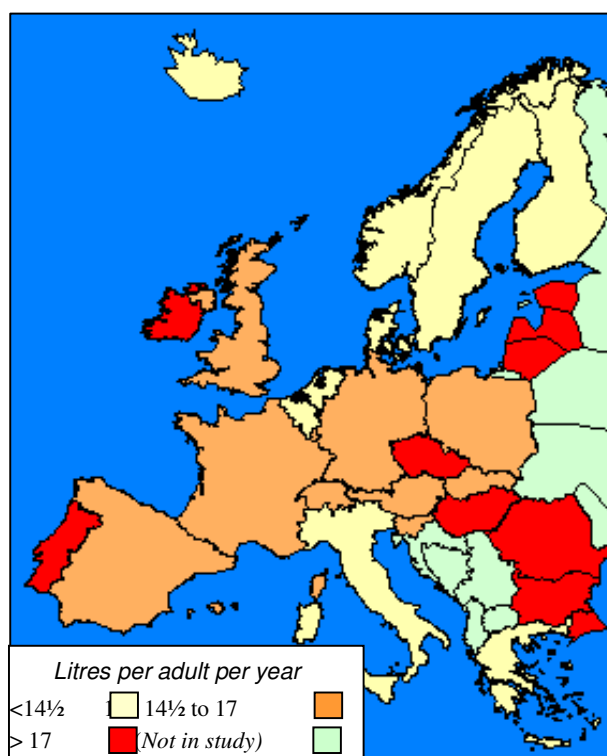
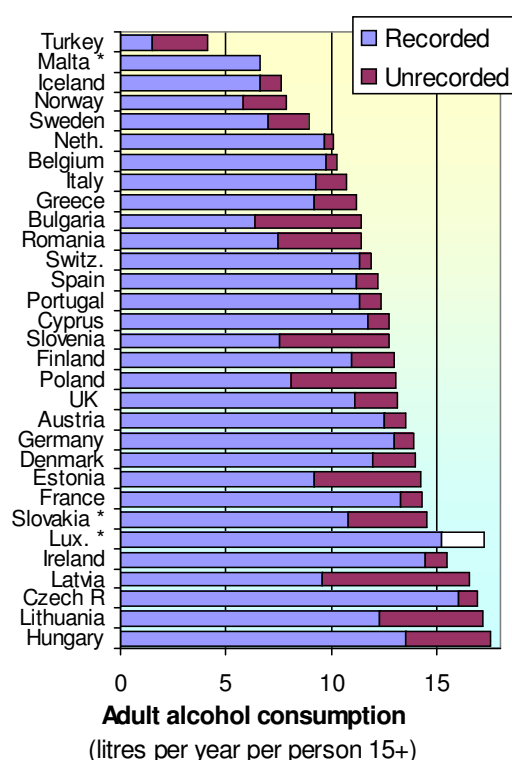
## ALCOHOL IN EUROPE: KEY FACTS

The European Union has the **highest rate of alcohol consumption** in the world (11 litres of pure alcohol<sup>1</sup> drunk per adult each year).

55 million European adults drink to dangerous levels and some 23 million are dependent on alcohol in any year.

While **drinking patters** vary widely between countries, the last decade has seen a homogenisation of attitudes to alcohol and drinking habits among young people in the recorded consumption, beverage preferences and the increasing trend towards **binge-drinking**; 80 million European aged 15 years reported binge drinking at least once a week in 2006.

### Alcohol Consumption in Europe (2002)



Source: Anderson, P & Baumberg, B (2005) *Alcohol in Europe*

## HARM TO THE INDIVIDUAL DRINKER

Alcohol is responsible for 7.4 % of all **ill-health and premature death** in the EU. This makes alcohol the **3<sup>rd</sup> leading risk factor**, only behind tobacco and high blood pressure.

Alcohol is a drug that can lead to dependence. It is also a toxic substance in terms of its direct and indirect effects on a wide range of body organs and systems and a cause of some 60 diseases and conditions, including; cancers, liver cirrhosis, mental and behavioural disorders, injuries, gastrointestinal conditions, cardiovascular diseases, immunological and reproductive disorders etc.

Alcohol is estimated to be responsible for approximately 195 000 **deaths** each year in the EU.

<sup>1</sup> 11 litres of pure alcohol = 1,400 small beers

**Young people** shoulder a disproportionate amount of these deaths; 1 in every 4 deaths among young men (aged 15-29 years) in the EU is due to alcohol (often caused by road traffic accidents, homicide, violence, etc) and 1 in every 10 deaths among young females.

### HARM TO THIRD PARTIES

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is the leading known cause of mental disorders and birth defects in the EU. It affects about 1% of people in the EU27 (i.e. nearly 5 million people). The range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy are described by the umbrella term, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), and can include physical, mental, behavioural and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications.

Alcohol is a significant contributory factor in the incidence of **abuse and violence**: 1 in 6 cases of child abuse is related to alcohol; there are between 7 - 9 million children living in families adversely affected by alcohol; alcohol also plays a role in up to 2 in 5 cases of domestic violence inflicted on women, and is thought to be involved in 4 of every 10 **homicides** in the EU.

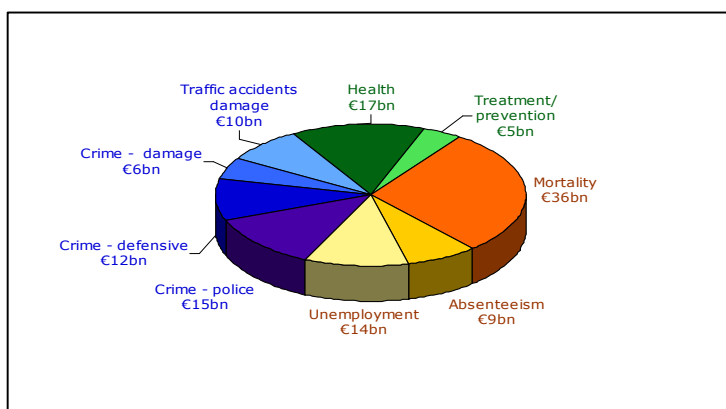
Alcohol is a major contributory factor in accidents: over 1 in 3 of all **road traffic fatalities** are caused by alcohol (approx 17,000/ year of which 10,000 are deaths to people other than the drunk driver).

### HARM TO THE EU ECONOMY

Europe is the region with the **highest production and export of alcohol in the world**.

Notwithstanding the positive contribution made by the production and sale of alcoholic beverages to the economy in the EU in terms of revenue and employment, alcohol-attributable disease, injury and violence also drain the health, welfare, employment and criminal justice sectors.

The **cost of alcohol related harm** to the EU's economy was estimated to be €125 billion in 2003 (i.e. 1.3 % of GDP).



Source: Anderson, P & Baumberg, B (2005) *Alcohol in Europe: A Public Health Perspective*