

Eurocare Report 2001/2002

Introduction

A watershed in the development of alcohol policy in the EU was the opening line of last year's Eurocare report. During the year under review we have equipped ourselves to aid the promotion of the alcohol agenda which has been set by both the WHO Second European Alcohol Action Plan and the Council of Ministers Community Strategy to Reduce Alcohol Related Harm. The setting up of the Alcohol Policy Working Group, the appointment of appropriate staff, and the preparation of policy papers are key ingredients for future success.

1. Norwegian Temperance Alliance

The formal relationship between Eurocare and the Norwegian Temperance Alliance came to an end during the year. Bernt Bull and Derek Rutherford met early in the year and agreed that accommodation arrangements should remain as at present and cooperation would be explored on mutually agreed projects.

2. Appointments

With the resignation of Helen Donohoe as Policy Officer, a review of the staffing needs of Eurocare was undertaken. The result of which was the appointment of Mrs Florence Berteletti Kemp to the post of Communications Officer. The Communications Officer's responsibilities are:

- Responsibility for the management of the Eurocare office in Brussels
- Maintain day to day relation with European institutions
- Alert the Secretariat and members to important announcements/activities/ meetings within EU
- Arrange Eurocare deputations to EU institutions, officials and parliamentarians;
- Support national member organisations:
 - i) requiring EU information
 - ii) arranging introduction and meetings with appropriate EU officials on matters which particularly affect their member state
 - iii) liaising with MEPs from their country and arranging meetings
- Maintain Eurocare database and directory
- Regular update to members of European activity
- Produce bi-monthly newsletters containing information on Eurocare activities in relation to local/national policy change
- Provide telephone/email enquiry service for members of the public, media, researchers, etc
- Alert Eurocare to activities of the drinks industry and its allies which cause concern
- Act as Press Officer

Dr Peter Anderson, a Public Health Consultant and formerly a WHO Europe Officer, was engaged on a consultancy basis to advise on alcohol policy. The Alcohol Policy Consultant's role is to:

- to advise the Alcohol Policy Group
- monitor activities of the Amsterdam Group and other drink industry social aspect groups
- help in the preparation of material for policy advocates
- support the Eurocare Secretariat in its alcohol policy activities

3. Eurocare Policy Group

The need for a small focus group on alcohol policy became apparent after the EU Alcohol and Health Working Group meeting.

The members of the group are as follows:

Sven Olov Carlsson (Sweden), Wim van Dalen (Netherlands), Rolf Hullinghorst (Germany), Andrew McNeill (United Kingdom), Alicia Rodriguez Martos (Spain) Ennio Palmesino (Italy), Claude Riviere (France), Dr Michel Craplet (Chairman, Eurocare) and Derek Rutherford (Secretary, Eurocare), Florence Berteletti-Kemp (Communications Officer, Eurocare).

The engagement of Dr Peter Anderson as Consultant on alcohol policy in April 2002 provided the advisory support that such a group requires.

The first meeting of the Working Group took place in Brussels on the 28th June 2002.

Dr Anderson had prepared for the meeting draft papers on the alcohol industry's social aspect groups and drinking and driving.

The group agreed that the paper on social aspect groups should be published to coincide with the meeting of the International Centre for Alcohol Policy (ICAP) in Dublin in October 2002.

With the support of the new Irish National Alliance for Alcohol Policy the paper 'The Beverage Alcohol Industry's Social Aspects Organizations: A Public Health Warning' was circulated to the Irish media on the opening day of the ICAP conference. Dr Michael Loftus gave several interviews on radio and television. Subsequently the paper was published in a special edition of 'The Globe'.

The draft paper on Drink and Driving will be further reviewed at the next meeting of the Policy Group prior to the Annual Meeting.

The recommendations of the Council of Ministers regarding the monitoring of the industry's marketing and promotion strategies, particularly in relation to young people needed adequate funding. Enquiries needed to be made to DG SANCO regarding their approach to the Council's recommendation.

4. EU Health Policy Forum

The Health Forum was set up in 2001 on the basis of a wide-ranging consultation exercise launched by the Commission services.

The Forum consists of three tiers:

- an open forum, which will meet once a year from 2003 and will cover one or two important health topics, open for a large attendance from NGOs and other stakeholders;
- a Health Policy Forum, which has met twice so far, consisting of broad-based European umbrella organisations representing key players in the health field. It is by invitation only;
- a 'virtual forum' which is being developed on the basis of the Forum's current internet site.

Having reviewed the membership of the Health Policy Forum, D G SANCO invited Eurocare in October 2002 to become a member.

5. Communications

One of the main tasks in the re-organisation of the office was to improve communications both within and outside the organisation. Mrs Berteletti Kemp has meticulously undertaken this aspect of her work.

- Two newsletters have been produced
- 60 'Alcohol Alert' email messages have been sent
- Almost 1,000 emails have been sent out
- Two conferences arranged by the drinks industry and monitored
- Good relations with EPHA have been maintained and regular attendance at their meetings
- Presentations made at the IOGT World Congress in Eastbourne and at the Social Policy and Civil Society Conference in Oslo
- Day to day relations with European Institutions
- Attending relevant debates and public hearings in the EU Parliament and its committees

6. Sales Promotion

A great deal of time has been given to the proposed directive on Sales Promotion involving much lobbying between the Brussels office, member organisations and the European Parliament and relevant committees – Internal Affairs, Health and Education.

At the end of this report the European Parliament and Council Regulation together with the evidence, which was submitted to the Department of Trade and Industry UK, is attached.

7. Television Without Frontiers

The Television Without Frontiers Directive is in the process of revision. Again Mrs Berteletti-Kemp has been active in promoting Eurocare's concerns. A meeting with Aviva Siliver (DG Education and Culture) took place in order to underline Eurocare's support for the existing provisions on the content of the advertising of alcoholic beverages (Article 15 of Directive 89/552) and to establish positive participation on the revision process by signalling our concerns.

The provisions of Article 15 are as follows:

- Advertising may not be specifically aimed at minors and in particular portray minors consuming alcoholic beverages
- Alcohol consumption may not be associated with an improvement of physical performance or the driving of a motor car
- Alcohol advertising may not give the impression that the consumption of alcohol favours social or sexual success
- Alcohol advertising may not suggest that alcoholic beverages have therapeutic properties or have a stimulating, sedative or anti-conflictual effect
- Alcohol advertising may not encourage immoderate consumption of alcoholic beverages or give a negative image of abstinence or sobriety
- Alcohol advertising may not underline as a positive quality the fact that such beverages have strong alcohol content

Eurocare has followed the revision and its implication with regards to advertising and the new advertising techniques. We are concerned about the latter since they could have a negative impact on the prevention of alcohol related harm.

- Interactive advertising enables viewers to control what they wish to see and how long they are exposed to advertising
- Interactive advertising is set to expand not only with digital television but also with the Internet and mobile phones
- Of particular concerns are advertising techniques such as split screens and virtual advertising. The former enables editorial content and commercial information to be presented simultaneously on the same screen and can invite

viewers to “enter” into an interactive advertising environment. The latter enables advertising messages or the name of a sponsor to be inserted into a programme. This technique is primarily used in sports programmes enabling broadcaster to change an advertisement from one moment to the next or choose the advertisement shown on the screen depending on where the target audience is.

The provisions of the Television Without Frontiers Directive on advertising are intended to protect viewers by various means including restricting the advertising of alcoholic beverages, banning any advertising likely to cause moral or physical detriment to minors and protect people’s health. However, the Bird & Bird reports seems to reject the notion of an extension of the provision of the TWF Directive to other media despite the new technological developments. They also argue that the introduction of a new horizontal regulation applicable to all media would be premature as the broadcast of television programmes on the Internet is still at an early stage. The Internet is regarded as a distinct media offering different services to television. However, advertising packages do not make any secret of the fact the two media (television and the internet) compliment each other, particularly with regards to sports sponsorship – an issue that needs to be addressed with regard to alcoholic beverages.

The Bird & Bird study also seems to endorse voluntary market self-regulation. It is Eurocare’s view that the marketing of alcoholic beverages regulated by the industry itself is inherently unlikely to work, since the essence of self-regulation is voluntary in most countries and in most media. It is also subject to changes and revision by the beverage alcohol industry. Moreover, most self-regulatory codes do not take account in their content of the way successful advertising actually works.

The Commission is currently holding back on its position over the Bird & Bird conclusions regarding the compatibility of new advertising techniques with existing regulations.

Labelling: Alcoholic beverages were previously exempt from ingredient labelling. The new rules will require all ingredients that are on the list of allergens to be declared – so that for example sulphite present in wines will have to be indicated. Sulphites are additives used as preservatives in many foodstuffs, including wines, beer and cider. Many people suffer from intolerance to sulphites with symptoms such as asthma attacks, which may have serious consequences.

8. Counterpart Meeting, Bratislava

The European Alcohol Action Plan was held in Bratislava in March 2002. One of the main purposes of the meeting was to discuss the proposed content of an alcohol database which had been funded by the Norwegian and French Governments. WHO Geneva was undertaking a similar project to cover other continents.

9. Amsterdam Group

Eurocare had received a request to meet representatives of the Amsterdam Group. The meeting was held in London in October and a report will be given at the annual meeting. An agreed statement has yet to be issued.

10. DG SANCO Meeting

A meeting took place in Luxembourg in November with Mr John Ryan, Head of Health Promotion, and Gottfried Thesen of SANCO with Dr Michel Craplet, Derek Rutherford, Dr Peter Anderson and Florence Berteletti Kemp. A report is being prepared for the annual meeting.

11. Advocacy School

Adequate resourcing of the proposed Eurocare Advocacy School is still being explored.

12. Family Report

Further developments in this field continue to be under review.

13. EU Project: Integrating health promotion intervention for hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption into primary health care professionals' daily work

Eurocare was invited by the organisers of the above project to be a member and their application for funding has been agreed by DG SANCO.

The partners of this EU funded project are:

Scientific Society of General Practitioners, Belgium

National Centre for Addictions, Bulgaria

National Institute of Public Health, Czech Republic

Centre Research Unit of General Practice, Denmark

University of Tampere, Finland

Programme "Boire Moins C'est Mieux", France

University of Heidelberg, Central Institute of Mental Health, Germany

Irish College of General Practitioners, Ireland

Istituto Superiore di Sanita, Italy

National Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Netherlands

State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol Related Problems, Poland

Dept of Family Medicine, Ljubljana University, Slovenia

Centre for Social and Alcohol Resources, Sweden

Centre for Alcohol & Drug Studies, Newcastle, UK
Eurocare
WHO Europe

14. WHO Geneva: Marketing and Promotion of Alcohol to Young People, Valencia, Spain, 7th – 9th May 2002

Eurocare was invited to be present at this meeting and was represented by Andrew McNeill. Other members of Eurocare were present in their organisation and country capacities. The conference statement is appended to the report.

15s. New Members – National Alliance for Alcohol Policy, Ireland

As a result of Eurocare's meeting in Dublin in April 2001, a representative group of concerned individuals and organisations in Ireland to investigate the possibility of establishing an organisation to focus on the advocacy of appropriate alcohol policies to reduce alcohol-related harm was established. Derek Rutherford has attended two meetings of the group.

The group has launched the National Alliance for Alcohol Policy; approved a constitution; and is in the process of seeking a grant from the Department of Health. Eurocare offers its congratulations to all members of the Alliance.