

Brewers of Europe acknowledge that consumers have the right to know what is in their drink

European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) welcomes the initiative from the Brewers of Europe to provide ingredients and nutritional information for their products. Eurocare has been calling for this since 2008.

“It is really good news and about time! Consumers have had the right to know what they eat and drink since 2011 – however alcohol was unfortunately exempted. In this respect the step taken today by the beer industry is welcomed. We are all still awaiting the European Commission report that it was obliged to produce on alcohol labelling by December last year. We continue to call on the European Commission to produce the required report and bring alcohol packaging consistently across all brands” said Mariann Skar, Secretary General, European Alcohol Policy Alliance.

In 2011 the European institutions passed legislation that requires food and soft drinks, including fruit juice and milk, to label nutritional information and ingredients. However, alcoholic beverages were exempted from this obligation. Currently, when a consumer drinks alcohol it is highly unlikely that they know exactly what they are drinking, unless they are determined enough to search on the company’s website.

Finally, the situation seems to be improving due to the actions taken by some economic operators. Today Brewers of Europe have announced their commitment towards voluntary labelling to list ingredients and nutrition information on their brands per 100ml. The information will progressively be provided across Europe by companies on pack and/or online, utilising an expanding range of consumer communication platforms.

European Alcohol Policy Alliance is looking forward to seeing the ingredients and nutritional labels on alcohol bottles across Europe.

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The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 57 member organisations across 25 European countries advocating prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in advocacy and research, as well as in the provision of information and training on alcohol issues and the service for people whose lives are affected by alcohol problems.

www.eurocare.org

Facts and figures about alcohol

- Alcohol is the 3rd top risk factor in Europe for ill health and NCDs such as cancer and cardiovascular disease¹
- Alcohol is a toxic substance in terms of its direct and indirect effects on a wide range of body organs and a cause of some 60 diseases. Taking all diseases and injuries at global level into account, the negative health impact of alcohol consumption is 31.6 times higher than benefit
- 12 million people in the EU are dependent on alcohol²
- Around 9 million children in the EU are living with one parent addicted to alcohol³
- 1 of 4 road fatalities in EU are due to alcohol; in 2010 nearly 31,000 Europeans were killed on the roads of which 25% were related to alcohol⁴
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can lead to birth defects and developmental disorders. It may cause the unborn child physical, behavioural and learning disabilities
- The social cost attributable to alcohol is 155,8 billion Euro yearly (was third is now first bullet point)⁵
- Alcohol is the leading risk for ill-health and premature death for the core of the working age population (25-59 year) (was first is now second bullet point)⁶
- Alcohol is responsible 1 in 7 male deaths and 1 in 13 female deaths in the group aged 15–64 years, resulting in approximately 120 000 premature deaths⁷

¹ World Health Organisation (2014) *Global status report on alcohol and health*

² Rhem J, Shield D (2012) *Interventions for alcohol dependence in Europe: a missed opportunity to improve public health*

³ Anderson P, Baumberg (2006) *Alcohol in Europe: a public health perspective*

⁴ European Transport Safety Council (2011) 5th Road Safety PIN Report

⁵ Rehm, J. et al (2012) *Interventions for alcohol dependence in Europe: A missed opportunity to improve public health*

⁶ Scientific Opinion of the Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (2011) *Alcohol, Work and Productivity*

⁷ WHO (2013) *Status report on alcohol and health in 35 European countries*