

Celebrating World Cancer Day 2017 - but not with alcohol

Still 1 in 4 deaths in the EU are caused by cancer¹. Fortunately, cancer is in many cases avoidable, and early detection increases the chance of cure substantially. Enough is already known about the causes to prevent at least one third of all cancers².

Regrettably, the link between alcohol and cancer is often forgotten. Ethanol found in all alcoholic beverages is classified as group 1 carcinogen, alcohol can cause cancers of the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, colorectum and breast³.

First conclusive links between alcohol and cancer were established back in 1987, yet 25 years later only 36% of EU citizens are aware of it⁴.

Wendy Yared, Director of the European Cancer Leagues, reminds us that on this World Cancer Day, everyone is encouraged to reflect on what we can do to prevent cancer. She urges all to heed the message that “not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention”, as well as other evidence-based advice in the European Code Against Cancer (www.cancercode.eu).

The message in relation to alcohol consumption in the new European Code Against Cancer⁵ is: **If you drink alcohol of any type, limit your intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention.**

Europe is the world’s heaviest drinking region, with some European countries ranking around 2 times above the global average⁶. Awareness about the link between alcohol and cancer is of crucial importance for effective prevention efforts.

There is no level of alcohol consumption that is safe as far as cancer is concerned.

Mariann Skar, Secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance, said: *‘We would like to call on all actors, to help raise awareness about the fact that alcohol contributes to cancer*

¹ Source: Eurostat press release 3 October 2016, as retrieved:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7149996/3-03022016-BP-EN.pdf/0bbc3389-8c0d-44a0-9b0c-2a0bff49f466>

² Source WHO Europe: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/cancer/cancer>

³ IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans IARC Monographs, Volume 96 <http://apps.who.int/bookorders/anglais/detart1.jsp?sesslan=1&codlan=1&codcol=72&codcch=96>

⁴ Eurobarometer, 2010, retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_331_en.pdf

⁵ The 4th edition of the European Code Against Cancer released by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the European Commission

⁶ World Health Organisation (2014) Global status report on alcohol and health



development. It is our right as consumers to know about the side effects that alcohol can cause to our health'

The contribution of alcohol to a range of cancers needs to be better recognized. There needs to be better public information, more awareness among health professionals and effective public health measures to highlight the link and promote action to reduce avoidable illnesses and deaths.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

To find out more please visit: www.alcoholandcancer.eu
www.cancercode.eu

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European Association of Cancer Leagues (ECL) is a pan-European umbrella organisation of national and regional cancer leagues. For over 30 years, we have been providing a unique and important platform for cancer societies. From Iceland to Turkey, ECL is represented by leagues in the extended Europe. Together, we are "making a Difference in Cancer Prevention and Control!"

www.europeancancerleagues.org

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The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 60 member organisations across 24 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