



Alcohol marketing influences youth drinking, warn public health experts

Leading public health experts warn that youth around the world are exposed to extensive alcohol marketing, and that current legislation appears ineffective in blocking the association between youth exposure and drinking.

Europe is the heaviest drinking region of the world with 10,9 liters of pure alcohol per person (+15 years). This is nearly twice the world average and drinking patterns vary considerably across the region.

Alcohol use among adolescents in Europe is still rather high. On average four in five students (15-16 years) report lifetime alcohol experience and every second student reported alcohol use in the last 30 days (ESPAD study 2015).

Publication of a series of reports in a supplement to the scientific journal *Addiction* that presents the latest evidence on alcohol marketing and its impact on children. The *Addiction* supplement comprises 14 papers, with research presented from around the world. Key findings from the collection of peer-reviewed manuscripts include:

- Exposure to alcohol marketing is associated with youth alcohol consumption
- Analysis of alcohol promotion during the 2014 FIFA World Cup indicates alcohol marketing practices frequently appeared to breach industry voluntary codes of practice'
- Alcohol industry self-regulatory codes do not sufficiently protect children and adolescents from exposure to alcohol promotions, especially through social media

The experts call for governments around the world to renew their efforts to address the problem by strengthening the rules governing alcohol marketing with more effective independent statutory regulations

Lead editor Professor Thomas Babor, of the University of Connecticut, says: *"Governments are responsible for the health of their citizens. No other legal product with such potential for harm is as widely promoted and advertised in the world as alcohol. These papers provide a wealth of information to support governments in their efforts to protect children and other vulnerable populations from exposure to alcohol marketing."*

Mariann Skar, Secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance, says *"We welcome the findings which confirm the knowledge gathered over the years that restricting alcohol advertising is one of the crucial steps we can take to protect children and youngsters. We sincerely hope the Members of the European Parliament and Member States will take this scientific evidence into account while revising the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) in the coming weeks"*.

European Alcohol Policy Alliance is a proud partner of a coalition of over 40 European and national health organisations and NGOs that has joined forces in a campaign to protect children from commercial communications for alcohol and unhealthy food, mobilising around the ongoing revision of the AVMSD.



Members of the European Parliament and national governments should grasp this occasion to amend the Directive by taking 3 steps to a better future for the younger generation:

1. Minimise young people's exposure to marketing of health-harmful products

No more TV adverts for alcohol, sugar sweetened beverages and sodas or foods high in fat, salt and sugar between 6am and 11pm. Self-regulation has been shown not to work and mandatory measures are needed to minimise the exposure of children and adolescents to health-harmful marketing, regardless of whether the advertising is directly aimed at them or not. Measures should cover television, on-demand services and online video-sharing platforms and include an EU-wide watershed that adequately captures children's and adolescents' viewing times.

2. Exclude alcohol and HFSS food from product placement and sponsorship

Product placement and sponsorship of alcoholic beverages and HFSS food are effective marketing techniques, and should be prohibited alongside those for tobacco and medicinal products.

3. Ensure that Member States can effectively limit broadcasts from other countries on public health grounds

The efforts of governments to reduce the negative health effects of alcohol and HFSS foods marketing should not be undermined by broadcasters established in other countries. The European Commission proposal to this effect should be supported.

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For editors:

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

For more information please contact: Mariann Skar – mariann.skar@eurocare.org Tel +32 474830041

The *Addiction* supplement, *Alcohol marketing regulation: From research to public policy*, is free to download from the Wiley Online Library: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.v112.S1/issuetoc>

Media seeking interviews with lead author Prof. Thomas Babor, Chair, Department of Community Medicine and Health Care, University of Connecticut, can contact him by telephone (+1 860 679 5459) or email (babor@nso.uhc.edu).

Addiction is a monthly international scientific journal publishing peer-reviewed research reports on alcohol, illicit drugs, tobacco, and gambling as well as editorials and other debate pieces. Owned by the Society for the Study of Addiction, it has been in continuous publication since 1884. *Addiction* is the number one journal in the 2016 ISI Journal Citation Reports ranking in the substance abuse category for both science and social science editions. www.addictionjournal.org