

## **Alcohol sponsorship**

This is a snapshot of alcohol policies in twenty five member states<sup>1</sup> of the European Union as at 31 December 2007. The data were collected as a joint initiative between the World Health Organization and the European Union as part of the World Health Organization's global alcohol database. Further information was taken from and is available in two publications of the World Health Organization: Evidence for effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm [<http://www.euro.who.int/document/E92823.pdf>], and handbook for action to reduce alcohol-related harm [<http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E92820.pdf>].

The Alcohol Policy Series includes the following ten fact sheets documenting the state of the European Union's member state alcohol policy:

1. Infrastructures for alcohol policy
2. Price and tax measures
3. Awareness raising activities
4. Counselling and treatment
5. Availability regulations
6. Drink driving legislation
7. Health warning labels
8. Alcohol advertising
9. Alcohol sponsorship
10. Monitoring and evaluation.

The present fact sheet deals with alcohol sponsorship sales promotion and considers three issues:

1. The evidence for the impact of sponsorship and sales promotion
2. The current situation
3. Considerations and next steps

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<sup>1</sup> Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Malta; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; and United Kingdom

## **1. EVIDENCE BASE**

Systematic reviews of longitudinal studies have found that exposure to alcohol advertising and promotion was associated with the onset of adolescent alcohol consumption and with increased consumption amongst adolescents who were already drinking at baseline assessment. One systematic review presented evidence of a moderate but consistent association between point of purchase promotions and effects on alcohol consumption among underage drinkers, binge drinkers and regular drinkers.

Reviewed studies showed the high prevalence of ownership of alcohol-related merchandise among young people. Evidence from the USA has shown that ownership of an alcohol promotional item or branded merchandise is associated with increased initiation of drinking.

Evidence from longitudinal studies consistently demonstrate that exposure to television and other broadcast media is linked with onset of and levels of alcohol consumption. Further evidence has indicated that exposure to alcohol portrayals via television (including advertisements aired during sports programmes) and other broadcast media is linked with alcohol use among adolescents.

The content of alcohol advertising is reported to be attractive to young people, conveying desirable lifestyles and images of alcohol consumption. Younger age groups and 15 to 17 yr old girls are reported to be potentially experiencing the greatest impact of alcohol advertising. A further UK-specific report showed that, despite changes to the Advertising Code, whilst advertising recall fell (potentially due to reduced television advertising expenditure over the study period), there was an increased perception among young people that television alcohol advertisements were appealing and would encourage people to drink. A further report stated that there was no scientific evidence available to describe the effectiveness of self-regulation in alcohol advertising.

## **2. CURRENT SITUATION**

Ten countries (40%) had no regulations on industry sponsorship and 11 countries (44%) had no regulations on sales promotion. The regulations are summarized in Tables 1-3.

**Table 1 Restrictions on sponsorship and sales promotion BEER**

	<b>Total ban</b>	<b>Partial statutory restriction</b>	<b>Voluntary agreement / self-regulation</b>	<b>No restriction</b>
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of sporting events	3	8	3	10
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of youth events, e.g. concerts	4	7	5	9
<u>Sales promotion from producers</u> (e.g. parties and events)	2	9	5	9
<u>Sales promotion from retailers</u> (including supermarkets) in the form of <b>sales below cost</b> (two for one, happy hour, etc.)	1	7	1	16
<u>Sales promotion from owners of pubs and bars</u> in the form of serving alcohol for <b>free</b> (complying with existing age and other sales restrictions)	2	8	2	13

**Table 2 Restrictions on sponsorship and sales promotion WINE**

	<b>Total ban</b>	<b>Partial statutory restriction</b>	<b>Voluntary agreement / self-regulation</b>	<b>No restriction</b>
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of sporting events	4	7	3	10
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of youth events, e.g. concerts	3	8	4	10
<u>Sales promotion from producers</u> (e.g. parties and events)	3	8	4	10
<u>Sales promotion from retailers</u> (including supermarkets) in the form of <b>sales below cost</b> (two for one, happy hour, etc.)	3	5	1	16
<u>Sales promotion from owners of pubs and bars</u> in the form of serving alcohol for <b>free</b> (complying with existing age and other sales restrictions)	2	8	2	13

**Table 3 Restrictions on sponsorship and sales promotion SPIRITS**

	<b>Total ban</b>	<b>Partial statutory restriction</b>	<b>Voluntary agreement / self-regulation</b>	<b>No restriction</b>
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of sporting events	7	5	3	9
<u>Industry sponsorship</u> of youth events, e.g. concerts	5	6	4	10
<u>Sales promotion from producers</u> (e.g. parties and events)	4	7	4	10
<u>Sales promotion from retailers</u> (including supermarkets) in the form of <b>sales below cost</b> (two for one, happy hour, etc.)	3	5	1	16
<u>Sales promotion from owners of pubs and bars</u> in the form of serving alcohol for <b>free</b> (complying with existing age and other sales restrictions)	2	8	2	13

The mean (sem) level of enforcement on a scale of 0 (not enforced) to 10 (fully enforced) was estimated at 6.3 (0.6) for industry sponsorship and 5.9 (0.9) for product placement. In only one country were the estimates based on statistical information.

### 3. CONSIDERATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

It is clear that there is considerable room for strengthening across the countries of the European Union in terms of the structure and implementation of the regulations concerning sponsorship and sales promotions of alcoholic beverages.

1. ***Have there been any reviews or documentation of sponsorship and sales promotions?*** Such materials should address both the volume and breadth of these communications, including estimates of direct expenditure and estimates of the extent of commercial communications through for example the Internet and mobile communication devices. It is not easy to obtain such information, and some people have argued that the alcohol industry should make it publicly available. An overall picture of the alcohol marketing mix enables better regulation, as well as better monitoring of the impact of regulation.
2. ***Have existing regulations for sponsorship and sales promotions been thoroughly analysed for efficiency and effectiveness?*** Such an analysis should examine how the existing regulatory systems can be improved. There is an enormous array of applicable regulations and regulatory systems in the European Region, many of which have not been analysed or documented. There is a risk that some marketing practices may fall outside the various regulatory systems and thus effectively avoid being regulated or monitored.
3. ***Have any in-depth scientific studies examined the impact of existing regulatory systems for sponsorship and sales promotions?*** Regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, where they

exist, often produce reports, but they frequently describe only processes, rather than their ability to manage alcohol marketing and its effects on young people.

### **Options for action**

- **Maintain the status quo** and do not change the systems for regulating alcohol marketing. Note however that almost without exception, such systems can still be reviewed and made more efficient, to the benefit of public health.
- **Undertake a thorough review and analysis of existing systems to streamline them, to implement changes that make them more effective in controlling content and volume of exposure, and to strengthen monitoring and enforcement.** Such a review should also ensure that no alcohol marketing practices fall outside the control of regulatory systems and thus go unregulated.
- **Further restrict the content and volume of commercial alcohol communications**, for example by only allowing those that describe the product directly, or by banning all such communications in the primary media of television, radio, films and sports sponsorships. The latter path is what the French *Loi Évin* does, a law that the European Court of Justice supported when it was challenged.
- **Ban all forms of commercial alcohol communications**, with the exception of media such as trade journals. The EU has now taken this step for tobacco.

### **Stakeholders for action**

- The ministry of health is the most important government stakeholder, since it is responsible for ensuring that public health objectives are integrated into all efforts to regulate alcohol marketing.
- Its main partners are the ministries responsible for regulating commercial communications through broadcast media, non-broadcast media and telecommunications, including the Internet. In addition, the ministries responsible for culture, sports and children may need to be involved. To ensure that all forms of marketing are dealt with and that no marketing medium escapes regulation, it may be beneficial to convene a permanent task force to review and monitor the relevant regulations.
- Other stakeholders include any bodies that the government may have established to oversee and monitor advertising standards. Again, if different bodies oversee different media, an overall task force is needed.
- Alcohol producers, retailers and the marketing industry are normally consulted when the government makes changes in alcohol marketing regulations and practices. However, the published record indicates that these industries do not support tighter restrictions on marketing practices, at least not publicly.

### **Bibliography**

Anderson P (2009). *Evidence for the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

This report, a companion document to the present handbook, details the available evidence for the impact of alcohol marketing on alcohol consumption and related harm.

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European Centre for Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM) (2009). EUCAM [web page]. Utrecht, EUCAM (<http://eucam.info>, accessed 12 August 2009).

EUCAM regularly reports on trends in alcohol marketing in the European Region, as well as describing alcohol marketing regulations in the Region.

Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (2009). *Does marketing communication impact on the volume and patterns of consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially by young people? A review of longitudinal studies*. Luxembourg, European Communities ([http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol/Forum/docs/science\\_o01\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/Forum/docs/science_o01_en.pdf), accessed 12 July 2009).

The Science Group of the European Commission's Alcohol and Health Forum prepared this review of the impact of alcohol marketing.

WHO (2009). WHO-CHOICE interventions: hazardous alcohol use [web page]. Geneva, WHO ([http://www.who.int/choice/interventions/rf\\_alcohol](http://www.who.int/choice/interventions/rf_alcohol), accessed 11 August 2009).

The WHO-CHOICE project has modelled the cost, impact and cost-effectiveness of a range of alcohol policy measures in reducing alcohol-related harm, including alcohol advertising bans. Several publications discuss the results (see Anderson, 2009).

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