

eurocare
European Alcohol Policy Alliance



**Royal College
of Physicians**



Brussels 2nd June 2015

Dear Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Dr. Andriukaitis,

We write to you as a group of public health organisations to express our deep concerns that there are no plans to develop a comprehensive EU Alcohol Strategy and to tender our collective resignations from the EU Alcohol and Health Forum for the following reasons:

- 1) The Forum was established as a tool to support the implementation of the EU Alcohol Strategy, which expired in 2012. Given the absence of plans to develop a new Alcohol Strategy, our participation in the EU Alcohol and Health Forum can no longer be justified.
- 2) The European Parliament recently demanded a comprehensive and focused EU Alcohol Strategy¹. The Commission's decision ignores this and also contradicts the requests from Member States via letters from 17 Health Ministers and the Committee of National Alcohol Policy Action².
- 3) This decision also ignores repeated calls from public health bodies and NGOs for a renewed Strategy³.

¹ European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on Alcohol Strategy ([2015/2543\(RSP\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0174&language=EN&ring=B8-2015-0357))
Reference: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0174&language=EN&ring=B8-2015-0357>

² Member States call on the European Commission for a new and comprehensive strategy to tackle harmful use of alcohol and alcohol related harm, Committee for national alcohol policy and action – scoping paper 2014

³ Call for a Comprehensive Alcohol Policy Strategy in the European Union
http://eurocare.org/media_centre/previous_eurocare_events/6th_european_alcohol_policy_conference_27_28_11_2014_brussels/call_for_a_comprehensive_alcohol_policy_strategy_in_the_european_union

Eurocare recommendations for a future EU Alcohol Strategy, November 2014

We also wish to make the following points:

The incorporation of EU alcohol policy into a broad framework for the prevention of non-communicable diseases will not sufficiently address the burden of alcohol harm in Europe. Crime, violence, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and road traffic accidents are just some of the many externalities associated with alcohol harm that would be neglected through this approach.

Several of the signatories to this letter were founding members of the Forum, but since its inception have raised concerns about its efficacy. Concerns have been raised about the lack of evidence to indicate that voluntary commitments from the alcohol industry lead to reductions in alcohol harm. We have also raised objections, including to yourself at the Forum meeting on 18/05/15, about the lack of formal structure available to public health bodies to discuss evidence for effective alcohol policy in the absence of vested interest groups.

Until now, we have remained members of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, acting in good faith that participation and cooperation would allow us to achieve progress on reducing alcohol harm. However, to date, there have been no evaluation studies of Forum commitments which demonstrate any impact on public health.

Moving forward, we will focus our efforts on working together to pursue public health goals, free from conflicts of interests, and would welcome your suggestions on how this might be achieved.

Yours sincerely,

Mariann Skar, Secretary General, European Alcohol Policy alliance (Eurocare)
Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
Katrín Fjeldsted, President, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
Wendy Yared, Director, European Cancer Leagues (ECL)
Laurent Castera, Secretary-General, European Association of the Study of the Liver (EASL)
Jan Pelóza, President, Alcohol Policy Youth Network (APYN)
Ennio Palmesino, Delegate for European Affairs, European Mutual Help Network for Alcohol related problem (EMNA)
Prof Thierry Ponchon, Chair of Public Affairs Committee, United European Gastroenterology (UEG)
Mervi Jokinen, President, European Midwives Association (EMA)
Peter Allebeck, President, Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN)
Kristina Mickevičiūtė, Vice-President on External Affairs, European Medical Students' Association (EMSA)
Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair of EAHF Science Group
Katherine Brown, Director, Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS), UK
Eric Carlin, Director, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)
Professor Nick Sheron, Representative to the EU Alcohol and Health Forum,
Royal College of Physicians London, UK (RCP)
Claude Riviere, Association Nationale de Prévention en Alcoologie et Addictologie (ANPAA)
Adisa Dizdarević, Secretary General, No Excuse Slovenia
Tiziana Codenotti, Eurocare Italy
Lauri Beekmann, President, Estonian Temperance Union
Suzanne Costello, CEO, Alcohol Action Ireland
Gabriele Bartsch, German Centre for Addiction (DHS)