

# **Alcohol, Harm and Young Europeans**

- a fact compilation



**ACTIVE**

**SOBRIETY**  
**FRIENDSHIP**  
**P E A C E**

Alcohol use has significant adverse effects on the physical, psychological and social health of individuals, families and communities throughout Europe. The direct and indirect effects are diffuse and costly; they are not confined to a minority of easily identified heavier drinkers, but extend across the whole population

- ▷ **23 Million** adults are alcohol addicted in the EU
- ▷ **195 000 people** in the EU die every year because of alcohol use
- ▷ **2/3** of all the reported **victims** of domestic violence had been attacked by a person who had used alcohol
- ▷ The tangible cost of crime associated with alcohol in the EU is **€33 Billion**.
- ▷ **More than 60%** of all violent acts are connected to alcohol use
- ▷ Alcohol is the **second largest risk factor** for disease burden in Europe It is the cause of more than 60 diseases and illnesses.
- ▷ Every year the costs of direct social harm of alcohol are **€125 Billion**
- ▷ Alcohol is socially the **most harmful drug**
- ▷ The intangible social costs of alcohol, which describe the value people put on suffering and lost life, in the EU alone are estimated to be **€270 Billion**.
- ▷ **9 million children** and young people in the EU are growing up with one or both parents addicted to alcohol
- ▷ **Under-age alcohol use is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined**

## Alcohol harm in **Children**

- ▷ **16%** of cases of child abuse and neglect involve alcohol
- ▷ Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is the **leading known cause of birth defects** and developmental disorders in the EU. It affects about 1% of people in the EU (i.e. nearly 5 million people)
- ▷ 43% of 15-16 year-old students in Europe report heavy episodic drinking during the past 30 days
- ▷ Ca. 15% of 15-16 year-old students report serious problems during the past 12 months due to alcohol use (with parents, performance at school, physical fights)
- ▷ Almost 90% of 15-16 year-old students have used alcohol at least once during their lifetime and 61% had used alcohol in the past 30 days
- ▷ Early alcohol use has long-lasting consequences. People who begin using alcohol before the age of 15 are 4 times more likely to develop alcohol addiction at some point in their lives compared to those who use alcohol for the first time at the age of 20 or older
- ▷ Under-age alcohol use is associated with academic failure, illicit drug use, tobacco use and a range of harmful physical effects from hangovers to poisoning

## Alcohol harm in **Youth**

- ▷ There is a relationship between alcohol use and mental health problems
- ▷ Alcohol related injuries and accidents are the **leading cause of death** among young people
- ▷ **5%** of 15-16 year old report regretted sex
- ▷ In 2000 for instance alcohol was the **number one killer of young men** in Europe
- ▷ Much of alcohol harm happens when they are in or on the way home from drinking environments
- ▷ **One in five** European night life users had been involved in violence in the last 12 months
- ▷ Over one fifth of the European population aged 15 years and above reporting heavy episodic drinking (five or more drinks on an occasion, or 50g alcohol) at least once a week. Not only among young people or those from northern Europe.
- ▷ In Germany for instance between 2000 and 2008 the number of alcohol intoxicated youngsters ending up in emergency rooms increased by 170%
- ▷ Alcohol intoxication predicts school dropout
- ▷ **50% of all teen automobile crashes** can be linked to alcohol

## Europeans' attitudes towards alcohol policies

- ▷ 95% of Europeans consider alcohol to be a **key factor behind violence** against women and children
- ▷ 89% of Europeans think that **selling and serving alcohol to young people under the age of 18 should be banned**
- ▷ 77% of Europeans support a **ban of alcohol advertising targeting young people**

## Prevention

- ▷ Two-thirds of European countries had a **minimum age limit** of 18 years and one-fifth had a minimum age limit of 16 years for on-premise sales of beer and wine. Three countries have no age limit for the on-premise sales of alcohol at all.
- ▷ Despite industry claims to the contrary, young people who are exposed to **alcohol marketing** start using alcohol earlier and use more alcohol if they are already users. Efforts to reduce youth exposure to alcohol ads enjoy strong public support.
- ▷ When **outlet density** increases, alcohol use increases and vice versa. Alcohol outlet density is the single greatest predictor of violent crime in neighborhoods, greater than other social and economic factors.
- ▷ **The price mechanism** is very effective in preventing alcohol use among young people. The higher the price of an alcoholic beverage, the lower its usage.



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