

Statement at 67th WHO EURO Regional Committee Meeting
Agenda Item 5hi: Implementation of the European Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2012–2020 (resolution EUR/RC61/R4)

Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the IFMSA, IOGT International, EPHA, Studiorum and civil society colleagues addressing NCDs and alcohol control.

We commend the actions of European countries to strengthen alcohol policies in line with the European Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2012–2020.

Yet, in Europe recorded alcohol consumption remains above the global average, with the regional annual average over 10 litres of pure alcohol per adult, and consumption in some countries up to 18 litres per year.

We are thus concerned that Member States are off track to achieve global targets to reduce harmful alcohol use and premature mortality from NCDs by 2025.

Harmful use of alcohol is a known risk factor for NCDs. Youth, in particular, are vulnerable to alcohol-related harm, and there is a formidable body of evidence, which illustrates the connection between the age of onset of alcohol consumption and alcohol use disorders. Furthermore, alcohol is the world's number one risk factor for ill-health and premature death for the core of the working age population. Therefore, addressing population-wide alcohol use through implementation of evidence based 'best buys' contained in WHO's Appendix III is a key prevention strategy to reducing preventable disability, suffering and premature death.

At the 70th World Health Assembly, **Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania** called for WHO to *consider the impact of the 2010 Global Alcohol Strategy and ways forward*, and together with **Norway**, supported a call by the South East Asian Region and Botswana, *requesting the Director General to initiate and resource an Expert Committee to report on the alcohol control situation and progress prior to the UN High Level Meeting in 2018*.

In light of the discussions here this week about the need for more prevention, and the focus on the 2030 Agenda, tackling alcohol as an obstacle to sustainable development within this region is essential.

We urge European Member States to lead on taking forward the WHA calls for more attention to alcohol control, and to lead on elevating the harmful use of alcohol as a global priority at the forthcoming Executive Board meeting in January 2018. Thank you.

Statement supported by:

IOGT International - *With 143 Member Organization from 58 countries and more than 165 years of work, IOGT International is the premier global network for evidence-based policy measures and community-based interventions to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.*

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations - *The International Federation of Medical Students Associations represents, connects and engages with a network of 1.3 million medical students from 130 national members organizations in 122 countries around the globe.*

European Public Health Alliance - *EPHA's vision is of a Europe with universal good health and well-being, where all have access to a sustainable and high quality health system: A Europe whose policies and practices contribute to health, both within and beyond its borders.*

Studiorum – *Studiorum is a research think-tank working on health and wellbeing policies in South-eastern Europe, and partner to the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).*