



LESS ALCOHOL WEBINAR SERIES

PROTECTING ALCOHOL CONTROL POLICIES FROM VESTED INTERESTS

3 SEPTEMBER 2021 – 14:00–16:00 CET

Why is this webinar series needed?

There is overwhelming evidence that the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies worldwide have been defeated, delayed, or weakened by economic corporations dealing with unhealthy commodities (1–3). Most of these corporation strategies and tactics are well-known. They include (i) corporate political interference, e.g. draft of national alcohol policies in four African countries; pressure to change a Brazilian national law forbidding alcohol consumption in sports stadiums (4); (ii) litigation, e.g. the alcohol industry's use of legal action to oppose minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland (5), (iii) coalition-building through front groups, e.g. alliances formed with interest groups in Finland to influence the reform of the alcohol law and the formation of front groups, as the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking-IARD (6,7); (iv) misuse of knowledge, e.g. co-opting public health researchers and universities to collaborate with alcohol industry-funded organisations and moderate

drinking research project supported by the alcohol industry in cooperation with the United States National Institute of Health (8–12).

In addition, the alcohol industry has utilised corporate practice as a strategy to legitimate its participation in the public health agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, it financed the International Federation of Red Cross and donated hand sanitisers while, at the same time, ran pandemic-tailored marketing campaigns to increase the sales of its products (13). Other examples include the alcohol industry participation in the development of the Brussel's Declaration (14); the Anheuser-Busch InBev's partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to develop a global coalition regarding road safety (15); the alcohol industry submissions to the consultation related to Australia's free trade agreement (16).

The underpinning narrative consists of presenting the industry as a reliable public health ally, implying that the consumption of

alcohol and its related harms are the result of an individual choice. Consequently, the distinction of roles and responsibilities in the policy sphere has blurred, creating the belief that alcohol corporations are legitimate stakeholders in public policy development. This narrative disguise the fundamental conflict of interest between economic actors seeking to increase profit and governments pursuing societal well-being and sustainable development. There are irreconcilable differences between public health and economic interests. Evidence from other unhealthy commodities shows that protecting policy development from conflicts of interest is essential to decrease the burden of diseases (5,17).

What do we aim to achieve?

The webinar aims at (i) raising awareness about the potential conflict of interests in developing public health policies; (ii)

showcase public governance mechanisms that could help countries to protect health and wellbeing goals from vested interests; and (iii) reflect on possible ways to strengthening global governance for alcohol control policies. This event is co-organised by the Italian National Institute of Health, Movendi International, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization and the Less Alcohol Unit of the Health Promotion Department at the World Health Organization headquarters.

Who should participate?

Government officials, civil society associations, researchers, local authorities, consumer associations, general public. Participation in this event is by invitation. If you have not received one, you can still register; your application will be considered.

For more information, contact us:

lessalcohol@who.int

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