



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : General Secretariat

to: Council

Subject : EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
COUNCIL MEETING ON 9 AND 10 JUNE 2008

EU Strategy to Support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm
- Information from the Commission
(Other business item)

With a view to the Council meeting (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer affairs) on 9 and 10 June 2008, Delegations will find in the annex a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject.

EU STRATEGY TO SUPPORT MEMBER STATES IN REDUCING ALCOHOL RELATED HARM
INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION

In October 2006, the Commission adopted the Communication "An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm".

The implementation of this European Strategy is based on the following approach:

I. Working with Member States (policy coordination and further policy development):

The main channel for policy coordination and development is the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action, which is the successor of the Working Group on Alcohol and Health. It comprises Member States' experts nominated by the national Governments, as well as observers from candidate and EFTA/EEA countries and from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Whereas the main focus of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (*see below*) is to get concrete action quickly on the ground, the Commission will within the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action foster policy coordination between, and policy development by, Member States.

The Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action met for the first time on 5 November 2007. The second meeting was held on 2 April 2008 back-to-back with the third European Alcohol Policy conference in Barcelona. Main issues for the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled for 13-14 October 2008, include the relation between price/availability of alcohol and alcohol consumption by young people, and a discussion on the varying national and international recommendations about drinking amounts considered to be 'safe'. The Committee regularly reviews alcohol policy developments in individual Member States, and gives rise to structured discussion on good practice.

Based on information received from Committee members, the Commission has published on the Europa web site an overview of Member States policies aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm, reflecting the situation on 1 January 2007, i.e. immediately after the adoption of the Communication. This exercise will be repeated regularly, and thus contribute to reporting on the implementation of the strategy.

II. Working with stakeholders ("getting concrete action on the ground quickly"):

Together with the relevant stakeholders the Commission is developing, within the framework of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, concrete actions at all levels, from European to local level, aimed at protecting European citizens from the harmful use of alcohol. The members of the Forum – health and consumer NGOs, medical and youth associations, the alcohol industry, advertisers, wholesalers, retailers, caterers, the media etc. – are willing to devote increasing levels of time and resources to adopt meaningful actions to prevent alcohol-related harm. Their commitments to action are made public, and the implementation of these actions will be closely monitored.

The Forum had its second plenary meeting on 16 April 2008. 79 commitments for action have been received from Forum members since the first meeting in October 2007. An initial analysis of the commitments is available at the Europa web site, where all commitments can also be consulted in detail. A more detailed, qualitative analysis of the commitments and their impact is due early 2009.

The Forum currently runs two Task Forces (on *Youth-specific Aspects on Alcohol*, and on *Marketing Communication*) that work towards recommendations for action by Forum members.

Moreover, a Science Group has been established after a public call for expression of interest; the Group is to advise the Forum on specific questions related to actions by Forum members, and to give guidance on monitoring and evaluation issues; it will meet for the first time on 30 June.

Observers from Member States are systematically invited to participate in the meetings of the Forum and its Task Forces, and reporting on the Forum process is an integral part of all meetings of the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action.

III. Working across EU policies (mainstreaming the reduction of alcohol-related harm into other policies):

Reducing alcohol-related harm touches upon a range of policies beyond health policy (including Transport, Education/Youth, Agriculture, RTD, Taxation). It is essential to integrate the reduction of alcohol-related harm into the definition and implementation of these policies. The European Commission is therefore intensifying efforts aimed at a closer coordination of policies which have a potential to reduce alcohol harm.

IV. Cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO is an important partner in the fight to reduce alcohol-related harm, and is closely involved in many aspects of the implementation of the EU strategy.

The WHO is an active observer in both the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action and the European Alcohol and Health Forum, and will furthermore be involved in the Committee on Data Collection, Indicators and Definitions; the Commission will establish this Committee in order to make sure that policy development is based on reliable, comparable and regularly updated data on alcohol consumption, drinking patterns and alcohol-related harm, as well as on common indicators and definitions. As a first step, a common survey of alcohol policies within the EU and WHO's European Region will be carried out.

Moreover, particular attention is given to the coordination of measures under the WHO (European Region) Framework for Alcohol Policy and the Commission's Communication on the EU strategy.

The Swedish Presidency's announced focus on alcohol policy in the second half of 2009 will be an opportunity to review progress on the implementation of the EU strategy.
