

CONCLUSIONS

Alcohol and the Economy of Europe

Conclusion 1

The trade in alcohol contributes around €9 billion to the **goods account balance** for the European Union as a whole, with such trade not necessarily affected by European and domestic policy to reduce the harm done by alcohol.

Conclusion 2

Alcohol tax revenues, an important source of government revenue (€25bn in 2001 in the older EU15 countries), are more closely related to tax rates than to the overall level of alcohol consumption.

Conclusion 3

Declining consumption will not necessarily lead to **job losses** in the economy as a whole, and may not even lead to large changes in employment in some **sectors linked to alcohol** such as restaurants and bars.

The social costs of alcohol

Conclusion 4

The tangible **costs of alcohol** to the European Union were estimated to be €125bn in 2003, including €59bn worth of **lost productivity** through absenteeism, unemployment and lost working years through premature death.

Conclusion 5

The intangible **costs of alcohol** (which describe the value people place on suffering and lost life) to the European Union were estimated to be €270bn in 2003.

The use of alcohol in Europe

Conclusion 6

While **differences** between countries in the levels and patterns of drinking are still evident, they are smaller than they were 40 years ago, and many aspects of drinking are much more similar across Europe than commonly believed. **Adolescent binge drinking** has increased in most countries in the 1990s, followed by mixed trends in the past few years.

Conclusion 7

Drunkness is an important cause of **injuries** – including violent injuries – across all of Europe, including in southern Europe.

Conclusion 8

Where you live in Europe remains a major determinant of the harm done by alcohol.

Alcohol and Health

Conclusion 9

Alcohol is a health determinant, responsible for 7.4% of all disability and premature death in the European Union.

Conclusion 10

Alcohol is a cause of harm to **others than the drinker**, including some 60,000 underweight births, 5-9 million children living in families adversely affected by alcohol and 10,000 traffic

Conclusions

deaths to people other than the driver in the European Union each year.

Conclusion 11

Alcohol is a cause of **health inequalities** both between and within Member States, causing an estimated 90 extra deaths per 100,000 men and 60 extra deaths per 100,000 women in the newer EU10 countries, compared to the older EU15 countries.

Alcohol and government policy

Conclusion 12

Governments have a **responsibility** to intervene in the market, and **benefit** from doing so. For example, a 10% increase in the price of alcohol across the older EU15 Member States estimated to bring in approximately €13bn in extra alcohol taxes in the first year.

Conclusion 13

Educational interventions, which show little effectiveness in reducing the harm done by alcohol, are not an alternative to **measures that regulate the alcohol market**, which have the greatest impact in reducing harm, including amongst heavier and younger drinkers.

Alcohol and European policy

Conclusion 14

Continuing differences in alcohol policy across Europe, such as tax rates, impair the ability of countries to implement effective policies.

Conclusion 15

Different policies between Member States are sometimes ruled as legitimate to **protect public health**, such as the European Court's 2004 ruling in favour of the French advertising law.