



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Public Health
Health Determinants

EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM (EAHF)
16th Plenary Meeting
Brussels, 18th May 2015
SUMMARY REPORT

1. Welcome and introduction by the Chair

- John F. Ryan, acting Director welcomed participants and opened the meeting.
- The agenda was approved without two suggestions for Any Other Business (AOB).
- The Chair gave a short update on the latest developments from the EC as follows:
 - The last Committee on National Alcohol Policy Actions (CNAPA) meeting was held on 28-29th April to discuss on the outcomes of the Informal Council Ministers of Health meeting in Riga on 20-21st April 2015 where the need for a framework for EU action was underlined. Thematic debates on fiscal and pricing policies as well as on preventive interventions for youth living in families with alcohol and substance abuse were also held. The European Commission (EC) confirmed that it will continue to support Member States (MS) in their efforts to reduce alcohol related harm, by building on the objectives and tools of the 2006 strategy.
 - On 29th April, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution, which among other things, calls for the EC to start working on a new Alcohol Strategy. The resolution also calls for an evaluation and possible reformation of the role and functioning of the Forum.
 - Information about studies of interest to Forum members: The study on minors' exposure to alcohol advertising was awarded to Ecorys Netherlands; results are expected in December 2015. Regarding the report on the application of the requirements to provide ingredients lists and nutrition information for alcoholic beverages, the Commission has started preparatory work and has initiated discussions with Member States. The OECD report "Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use" has been published of 12 May 2015.
 - Press release from Brewers of Europe: they announced their voluntary action to list ingredients and nutrition information on their brands. The Chair welcomed this initiative and hopes other industries would follow this example.
 - The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) had expressed interest to become regular member of the Forum by setting and submitting proposals for commitments.

2. Meeting with Commissioner Andriukaitis

- The Health Commissioner emphasized the need for broader action to reduce premature deaths in the EU and to include harmful alcohol consumption into a wider strategic approach to tackle chronic diseases as one of their leading risk factors. He stressed the Commission's intention to continue supporting Member States based on the objectives and tools of the 2006 EU strategy aiming at reducing alcohol related harm. He stated he appreciated the efforts done by the members and underlined the importance of the EAHF. However, he pointed out the important health problems related to alcohol consumption in the EU and expressed the need to do better and more. The Commissioner stressed that he expected the Forum to be strong and credible. He highlighted that NGOs and industries need to work together to succeed, and members should present outcome-oriented commitments, and where possible work in synergy and partnership.
- A number of organisations representing public health called for clarifications on whether the EC would follow up MS requests and the EP request for a new strategy and pointed out conflicts between industry and health interests in the field of alcohol policy.
- Members also stressed the importance of not addressing alcohol issues just in light of “non-communicable diseases” and enquired whether the Commission could ensure it not to neglect important aspects such as drink driving, domestic abuse or communicable diseases issues.
- A lack of data on harm indicators was raised by Forum members as an issue which the EC should look at in particular in view of improving the quality and frequency of data collection in a comparable way across the EU. The World Health Organisation and DG SANTE are discussing the issue on how to find and access the comparable data.

3. Preliminary results of the 2015 assessment of monitoring and evaluation of Forum commitment results

- ICF International (ICF) presented the preliminary results of the Annual Report on the monitoring and evaluation of Forum commitments. It was pointed out that the Forum continues to meet its founding objectives. ICF key points were:
 - Some priority areas and activity types are not taken into account strongly enough.
 - There are challenges to be addressed concerning design and intent (e.g. setting SMART objectives and using evidence).
 - More information is needed in the reports on indicators (inputs, outputs, outcomes). The ongoing user guide is intended to help Forum members to improve the quality of their commitments.
 - Discussion is needed concerning providing evidence in the design of commitments, the additionally and EU-added value of such commitments and overall improvement of monitoring.
 - Joint work between different Forum members should be promoted where possible and synergies should be made with other relevant entities.
- ICF will provide individual feedback to members from June 2015 onwards, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of their commitments. There will also be some group discussions foreseen during Forum meetings.

- The importance to tackle reducing health inequalities has been pointed out and Forum members are encouraged to take into account this objective in their commitment and thus set up concrete actions in this direction.
- The 2015 Report will be shared with Forum members before finalisation. The Report and the User guide are planned to be published in the first half of 2016.

4. Status report on Forum commitments and monitoring reports

- DG SANTE presented the status report on commitments and monitoring reports.

In the database, there are 330 commitments in total with 76 active commitments, including 24 that will expire by the 31st December 2015. There are currently 66 members:

- 49 with an active commitment
- 7 without an active commitment (including seven that are co-owners of active commitments, and three that have asked for membership withdrawal).
- There is a slightly improving trend in the number of active commitments and availability of monitoring reports (74% vs 61% of members with active commitment in November 2014).
- The Chair encouraged all Forum members to submit new commitments before the expiry date of their last active commitment (to ensure the continuity of having at least one active commitment per member) and to send regular - yearly - monitoring reports.
- A discussion was held on suspending non-active members as recommended by the Governance Working Group. DG SANTE will send reminders to the seven concerned members and proposes to suspend those that will not have an active commitment by 1st September 2015.
- The issue of co-owning a commitment will be discussed in details at the next plenary meeting.

5. Report on the work of the Governance Working Group

- DG SANTE reported back on the meeting of the Governance Working Group of 9th February 2015. The idea of the Working Group is to systematise the way commitments are analysed and looked at.
- The proposed mandate was presented (details in the PowerPoint of the presentation). The submission process for new commitments remains the same, and the EC will ensure a smooth transition to the Working Group.
- All members agreed with the mandate as presented and circulated.

The work plan was then presented, with five priorities for 2015-2017:

- June 2015: Underage drinking;
- November 2015: Heavy episodic drinking;
- Spring 2016: Labelling and Health information;
- Fall 2016: Drunk driving;
- Spring 2017: Workplace and alcohol.
- The Chair thanked the work of the Governance Working Group. The proposal for the work plan and the structure of the next meetings were adopted unanimously.

6. Discussions on Underage Drinking

There was a thematic discussion on "underage drinking". The discussion was facilitated by several presentations.

- **Actions and future orientations related to underage drinking**

- *Age limits state of play*

A presentation was given by Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) on the state of play on age limits in the EU. The establishment of age limits is important, but enforcement is seen as even more so. Cross-border discrepancies are undermining efforts to control underage drinking. The European Commission will enclose to this summary report the list of age limits per Member State for information purposes.

IAS mentioned new policy challenges with the development of new avenues of purchase such as online sales and vending machines that need to be subject to the same level of scrutiny as other channels. There is an interest from members for having data about proxy purchasing and its control.

The Portuguese representative at CNAPA has been invited to present the new Portuguese plan for the reduction of addictive behaviours and addictions 2013-2020. In particular, new rules were adopted about underage drinking (age limit raised to 18 for all alcoholic beverages).

The holistic approach of the Portuguese policy and should be an inspiration for the Forum.

DG SANTE will consider inviting representatives of Member States to present their existing initiatives to the Forum members.

- **Active commitments state of play**

ICF presented a short analysis of 16 active Forum commitments related to underage drinking. The presentation provided an overview of these commitments, and focused on three case studies showing the strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring reports.

Two members quoted in the presentation mentioned that further information on their commitments was available online.

- *Presentation and discussions on relevant commitments by consumers and health organisations*

Two of APYN's (Alcohol Policies Youth Network) recent commitments were presented: Let it hAPYN and the European Alcohol Policy Youth Conference series.

SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems) presented a recent report on "Alcohol and the developing adolescent brain: evidence review". It provided a set of recommendations to protect young people from brain damage caused by alcohol consumption. Members were encouraged to look into this report and the recommendations to see if any synergies could be made between this and the Forum.

Finally, Eurocare made a short presentation on underage drinking labels, highlighting its vision of "less is better" and calling for legislation in the field of labelling.

- *Presentation and discussions on relevant commitments by production and sales organisations*

Brewers of Europe stressed that economic operators are not in a position to police the law nor to speak to minors on the dangers of underage drinking. However, they do have a responsibility and a role to play working throughout the value chain.

Tesco presented an initiative entitled ‘Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAPs)’. CAPs are a way of uniting diverse actors such as police, trading standards, public health, youth services, education providers and retailers to tackle underage drinking and associated problems in local areas, with no costs associated and encouraging results. Since inception, over 80 Community Alcohol Partnerships have been rolled out in the UK. The presentation examined a couple of case studies and stated the objectives for the future: looking at the issue of street drinking and finding a way to tackle proxy sales.

The German Association of Spirits Producers and Importers (BSI) presented SchuJu an initiative on training staff and cashiers to serve and sell alcohol responsibly to young people. According to the evaluation the programme is highly appreciated by the partners trained. As a consequence of the training, SchuJu participants control age much more often than peers in the control group. So far, 145,000 people have passed the basic course, and BSI aims to have a full coverage by the end of its action.

SpiritsEUROPE reminded that numerous initiatives fostered by the economic operators across the EU confirm the private sector’s genuine and active commitment to bring their contribution to the reduction of underage drinking. The key to success is to reach a targeted, holistic approach in partnership with all relevant stakeholders in order to deliver relevant programs with proper scale to make a difference in reducing underage drinking.

- **Conclusions and orientations**

DG SANTE stressed the potential for EU-added value in terms of the fight against underage drinking. However, the difference of actions between countries is an issue. This overarching topic could be further analysed in future commitments

The Chair stated that a multi-stakeholder approach is needed to tackle underage drinking, including enforcement of rules on age limits as well as server and seller training, and mystery shopping. He insisted on the necessity to improve the quantity and quality of commitments related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking. Relevant commitments and best practices at national level should be identified and spread out at the EU level. DG SANTE is looking for value to be added by the EU to Member States actions. However, the main responsibility lays with Member States and, in what concerns voluntary actions, with Forum members.

7. Information on new commitments

No member presented a new commitment.

8. Any other business

ABInBev briefly presented their report related to their three years commitments expired in December 2014 that tackled drink driving. Out of eight commitments, two have not been fully achieved but A-InBev has learnt a lot from these commitments and has made considerable progress. ABInBev sees two opportunities for the future: to scale up and develop more consumer information projects with other members of the Brewers of Europe, and to create partnerships.

ESCP that had requested an AoB on the new EU driving licence code on alcohol interlocks was not present and therefore this agenda point was postponed to the next meeting.

A member commented that NGOs rely on the funding from the EC and that there would be no more commitments without grants. DG SANTE encouraged NGOs to actively explore alternative forms of funding, noting that there are many other programmes where funding can be made available.

9. Conclusions by the Chair

- The chair confirmed that the EC will continue its support to Member States in their efforts to reduce alcohol related harm. The Forum remains a key player in this approach.
- The next working group on governance is planned this fall. The mandate of this group and the work plan for the upcoming forum meetings are unanimously adopted and will be published in DG SANTE website.
- DG SANTE is looking forward to hearing recommendations on commitments on the basis of the Annual Report 2015.
- The Chair reminded members' responsibility to commit to actions. DG SANTE will proceed with the suspension of seven non-active members unless they submit a commitment by 1st September 2015. The issue of non-active members, who do, however, co-own active commitments will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Members who have a commitment ending this year should submit another new commitment as soon as possible.
- DG SANTE will continue to have thematic discussions according to the work plan, in order to share more on actions developed by different organisations which aim to stimulate exchange of opinions and bridge different views between stakeholders. In order to improve the format of future meetings, the Chair suggested for the next session to receive presentations based on maximum three questions related to the chosen theme before the meeting in order to prepare better for discussions and debates on the day.
- Thirteen public health/NGO organisations present at the Forum meeting expressed their disappointment and asked for an updated alcohol strategy to be clearly defined.
- The next Forum meeting will be held on 5th November 2015 in Brussels.