

## Slovenian Youth Manifesto on Alcohol

In 2017 the Alcohol Policy Youth Network - APYN (Slovenia) and National Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition - NTAKK (Lithuania) started a project "Towards Slovenian and Lithuanian Youth Manifesto on Alcohol". After two international gatherings, 5 regional consultations with young people in Slovenia, 5 in Lithuania and an online voting campaign, we are happy to present the final outcome of the project - Slovenian Youth Manifesto on Alcohol.

A - The hazardous and harmful use of alcohol is one of the four shared risk factors on the non-communicable diseases and thus a significant contributor to global burden of disease as well as social and economic burden to the society. Its contribution to death, disease and injury is double-edged. On one side, it is harmful for the consumer through the impact of alcohol on consumer's health, such as alcohol dependence, alcohol-caused diseases and injuries, while on the other side towards the drinker's surroundings through dangerous actions of intoxicated individuals that impact their immediate environment, such as violence, drunk-driving, property and material damage. These effects are especially experienced by young people.

B - Publicly accessible data from the Slovenian Ministry of Health shows that two thirds of all participants in traffic accidents that were driving under the influence of alcohol are aged 15 to 34 years old.

C - Having examined the WHO's Global Status Report on Alcohol 2018 and the Alcohol Policy in Slovenia publication by NIPH (National Institute of Public Health) from 2016, we are noting with deep concern that the per capita consumption of alcohol in Slovenia has increased for 1,1 litres of pure alcohol since 2011<sup>1</sup>, reaching 12,6 litres of pure alcohol per person in 2016<sup>2</sup>. In the same period the alcohol consumption in WHO European Region decreased to 9,8 litres per capita of pure alcohol in 2016, presenting a 1,4 litres difference since 2011. On the other hand, we only need to look across the national border to see a good example of Italy, where a total per capita consumption is well below the European average - 7,5 litres of pure alcohol.

<sup>1</sup>Three-year averages of recorded and unrecorded for 2009–2011 and 2015–2017.

<sup>2</sup>Based on the calculations of NIPH and considering only population older than 15, the average registered consumption of pure alcohol per capita in 2016 in Slovenia was 10,5 litres.



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Furthermore, the percentage of young drinkers (15 - 19 years) engaged in heavy episodic drinking was 65,2 % (in 2016), which represents 38,8 % of the whole population, aged between 15 and 19 years.

D - Since the data gathered by WHO originates from national institutions, whose results are based on population's self-reporting, these data cannot be considered entirely reliable and the numbers can be underestimated. It is difficult to collect accurate data on alcohol consumption, the WHO report which the above data is taken from recognizes, however, it is accepted by public health experts that the data is a good measure for trends in consumption so it is very likely that there is increasing consumption in Slovenia.

E - The health effects of alcohol in youth are immense. A research performed in 2006 by Hingson, Heren and Winter showcased that the age at drinking onset is directly related to alcohol dependence - people who start consuming alcohol at a younger age are under a higher risk of developing alcohol problems later in life. Therefore, a need to delay alcohol consumption by different means (such as but not limited to screening and counselling adolescents, ensuring age ID checks, making sure the alcohol is not widely available and affordable, etc.) is outlined. This shows that the drafting, adoption, implementation and monitoring of effective, inclusive and comprehensive policies is imperative.

F - In Slovenia health costs related to alcohol use on the average amount to €153 million per year. With additional costs coming from the harmful outcomes of alcohol use, such as but not limited to traffic accidents, crime, domestic violence and theft, the estimated amount is brought up to €234 million per year.

G - The annual revenue from excise duties on alcohol and alcoholic beverages is approximated to only about €90 million per year, thus resulting in a large gap between alcohol-induced costs and income from the taxes on alcohol.

H - To conclude with, it is alarming that Slovenia is lagging behind other European countries when it comes to introducing effective measures of alcohol policy. The results of youth consultations and the project are in line with the survey performed by NIPH which showed that the general population strongly supports introducing measures to limit alcohol use, such as alcohol licensing (79%), minimum prices for alcohol (62%) and banning alcohol advertising (57%). The APYN and its member organizations from Slovenia affirm that urgent action is needed.

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As an active advocate for effective alcohol policy the Alcohol Policy Youth Network believes that all European countries should do everything in their power to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm and calls upon the governments to implement measures, which will be in line with WHO's alcohol policy best buys.

The APYN feels that when implementing new legislative actions, a dialogue with civil society is crucial for an effective process. It also encourages all stakeholders to include young people and youth organizations in a structured dialogue in order to transmit governmental directives into the language of young people.

The Alcohol Policy Youth Network calls upon the Ministry of Health of Republic of Slovenia to establish joint actions with other governmental departments in order to implement and enforce the following amendments to national laws:

## In the field of legislation

- It is necessary to tighten up controls for the consistent implementation of the legislation in force (the ban on the sale of alcohol to minors and to the already intoxicated persons).

## In the field of excise duties and taxes

- A minimum price for one unit of alcohol ("minimum unit pricing") should be introduced. This makes it easier to prevent non-alcoholic beverages from being more expensive than alcoholic beverages.
- It is necessary to raise excise duties on all alcoholic beverages, including wine.
- One part of the collected excise duties (paid by alcohol sellers to the state) should be partly intended for the implementation of effective preventive programs (it can be through a separate system – Alcoholic Euro, which is similar to the excise duties' system) and partly for providing treatment and help to people who suffer from alcohol-induced illnesses.

## In the field of advertising

- It is necessary to gradually limit and then ban the advertising of alcoholic beverages and of the alcohol industry through sponsorship and in all media (including social media; this can be reached by 2026). The steps taken to first successfully limit, and later ban, the advertising should include: decreasing sports sponsorships and the

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funding of cultural events such as concerts, restricting TV marketing and online advertising, all the while making sure to restrict the marketing that is especially relevant to young people.

## In the field of prevention

- Systemic education in the field of substances that cause addiction should be introduced (financed by the alcoholic euro). These educational activities would be a part of full-time education (at least 12 periods per year/grade), and specialized staff employed in the school would be in charge of the execution. The content should be adjusted to each age-group and to the local environment. Mandatory interviews and audits of these educators should be carried out on a regular basis.
- Social and health care systems need to be improved (introducing a unified national prevention program with specific programs for risk groups, additional education programs for health professionals, more effective screening programs and with facilitated access to psychosocial counselling and assistance).

## In the field of road safety

- Higher penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol should be implemented and the control on the roads to detect inebriated drivers should be intensified (some concrete proposals by young people: penalties proportional to wages or assets, withdrawal of driving license and lifetime ban on re-examination, reward system for sober drivers - e.g. bonus points that can be claimed at the time of car insurance).
- The blood alcohol content limit of drivers should be reduced from 0,25 ‰ to 0,0 ‰.
- It is necessary to gradually introduce alcohol ignition interlock devices for all cars, starting with those drivers who have already been penalized for driving under the influence of alcohol.
- It is necessary to establish an alternative transport system to prevent the inebriated person from driving (some concrete proposals by young people: regular night buses are introduced, the possibility of subsidized or free public transport to their homes, introduction of taxi vouchers accessible in bars and pubs, for a safe journey back home). A part of excise duties would go towards alternative transportation as social responsibilities fees.

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## In the field of packaging and labelling

- All alcoholic beverages should have declarations with all the ingredients stated and a nutrition facts label with energy values. Declarations should cover a minimum of 1/3 of the packaging.
- All alcoholic beverages should have graphic warnings about pregnancy and drinking.

## In the field of limiting the availability

- It is necessary to introduce licenses for the sale of alcohol. The license is payable and needs to be renewed annually. By introducing licenses, the state would monitor the geographical dispersion of alcohol shops, thereby reducing its accessibility. All employees who work in bars, shops or other establishments that serve or sell alcohol, need to be trained for quality implementation of alcohol policies.
- It is necessary to ban the sale of alcohol at petrol stations and in the case of motorways also in bars located at petrol stations.
- All dietary products containing alcohol should be properly labelled and should be subject to the same age-based restrictions for purchase as for alcoholic beverages.

The Slovenian Youth Manifesto on Alcohol is also available online at [www.apyn.org](http://www.apyn.org).