The need of effective alcohol product labelling in alcohol control policy

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Alcohol and health

3 million deaths every year from harmful use of alcohol every year

1 million deaths every year
Leading causes of death are diseases of circulatory system (accounting for 45.3% of deaths).

Cancer:
Neoplasms the second main cause of death, accounting for 14%.

Liver cirrhosis:
Accounting for 11.7%.

Communicable diseases:
Communicable diseases account for 4.1%.

Early-onset dementia:
Alcohol use disorders were a major risk factor for onset of all types of dementia.

 Violence Suicides:
Accounting for 7.2% of alcohol attributable deaths, and for 39% of all deaths from violence.

Unintentional deaths:
Like falls, drownings, road traffic accidents, accounting for 12% of alcohol attributable deaths, and for 30% of all injury deaths.

WHO Europe
1 million deaths / year
WHO recommended interventions

- Regulate alcohol distribution
- Restrict or ban advertising
- Increase prices

More key interventions:
- Raise awareness of alcohol-attributable health burden
- Prevent and treat alcohol use disorders
- Implement drink-driving policies
- Support community action to prevent and reduce the harmful use of alcohol
- Develop surveillance systems for alcohol consumption, health consequences and policy
- Provide consumer information on alcohol containers
- Regulate informally produced alcohol
WHO recommended interventions

Europe has been at the forefront of action to reduce the harm done by alcohol

Measures could be taken to introduce a series of warning or information labels on all alcoholic beverage containers and on all commercial communication materials for alcoholic beverages. The content of the messages can usefully be advised by public health bodies. The focus of such messages might be to address issues of immediate concern such as drinking during pregnancy or while driving, or to cover the long-term risks of alcohol use, such as high blood pressure and cancer.

Product labelling similar to that used for foodstuffs, including alcohol and calorie content, additives, allergens etc, can be introduced where possible.
# Recommendations of WHO High level Commission on NCDs

1. WHO should encourage Heads of State and Government to fulfil their commitment to provide strategic leadership for NCD responses, by promoting policy coherence and coordination for the development of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, including by establishing national multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder mechanisms (NCM).

2. WHO should support countries in their efforts to empower individuals to make the healthiest choice, the easiest choice, including through the creation of enabling environments and the promotion of health literacy.

3. WHO should encourage countries to invest in the prevention and control of NCDs and mental health conditions as a key opportunity to enhance human capital and accelerate economic growth.

4. WHO must advise countries to make NCDs and mental health conditions essential components of UHC, PHC, and affordable health services for all.

5. WHO should encourage governments to promote meaningful engagement with civil society for the prevention and control of NCDs and the promotion of mental health.

6. WHO should increase its engagement with the private sector to promote their effective and meaningful contribution to NCDs targets and goals.

7. WHO should promote social protection as a mechanism for financing the prevention and control of NCDs, especially the care aspect of NCDs.

8. WHO should advocate for the establishment of a Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the prevention and control of NCDs based on public health needs.

[https://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/](https://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/)
WHO Health Promotion and Health Literacy

More recently, the Shanghai Declaration on promoting health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (17) highlighted health literacy as a global pillar of health promotion and health equity. In the declaration, Member States committed themselves to prioritize the empowerment of their citizens by promoting health literacy and to:

- ensure that consumer environments support healthy choices through pricing policies, transparent information and clear labeling (17).
Creating awareness and interventions harnessing community health literacy

Alcohol labelling provides consumer information on the ingredients, nutritional values, and harms of a product

→ WHO-recommended practice, in line with:
  → Principles of consumer protection
  → WHO Global Strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol
  → WHO Regional Action Plan
  → Independent HL Commission on NCDs
  → …. 
Alcohol labelling in the WHO EURO Region

• In most European countries effective alcohol labeling is **not in place**

• The availability of **easily understood consumer information on the containers** to protect health of consumers and facilitate informed choices needs to be ensured

• Existing research shows that:
  – Alcohol warning labels, when implemented in a clear and visible way, can not only communicate important health information to consumers but also discourage them from purchasing alcohol.
  
  – Enhanced alcohol labels are noticed and may be an effective population-level strategy for increasing awareness and knowledge of health risks and national drinking guidelines, where they exist.
Alcohol labelling in the WHO EURO Region

• In the framework of the efforts for achieving the SDGS, more efforts are needed to ensure that recommendations are implemented
  – Effective and meaningful actions are needed from all stakeholders in their specific roles (EAPA, 2012).

• Deliver!
  – And do not undermine community concern, debates and evidence of alcohol labelling

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT ONLY TO GAIN POLITICAL SUPPORT, BUT ALSO TO GUARANTEE IMPLEMENTATION, WHETHER THROUGH LEGISLATION, NORMS AND STANDARDS SETTING, OR INVESTMENT.

“Time to Deliver”, Report of the WHO Independent High-Level Commission on Noncommunicable Diseases
Alcohol labelling in the WHO EURO Region

“It’s time to walk the talk”

“Time to Deliver”, Report of the WHO Independent High-Level Commission on Noncommunicable Diseases
More information on the WHO website

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http://www.euro.who.int/alcohol