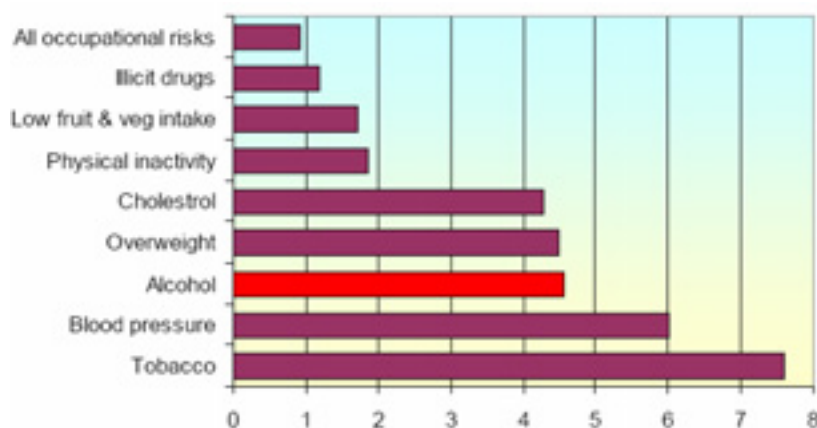


Brussels, 24 October 2006

## Alcohol-related harm in Europe – Key data

### Alcohol-related harm in the EU:

- **55 million adults** are estimated to drink at harmful levels in the EU (more than 40g of alcohol i.e. 4 drinks a day for men and over 20g i.e. 2 drinks a day by women). Drinking more than this is known to carry a **health risk**.<sup>1</sup>
- Harmful alcohol consumption is estimated to be responsible for approximately **195 000 deaths** a year in the EU<sup>2</sup>, due to e.g. accidents, liver disease, cancers etc.
- Harmful alcohol use is the **3<sup>rd</sup> biggest cause of early death and illness** in the EU, behind tobacco and high blood pressure<sup>3</sup>.



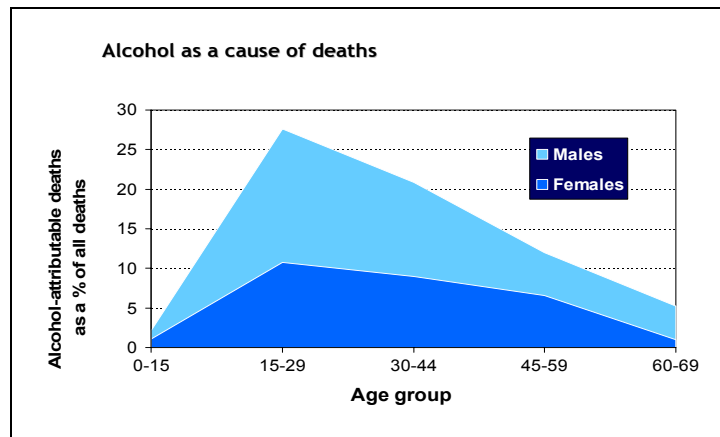
- **More than 1 in 4 traffic accident deaths** on EU roads is caused by **drink-driving** (approximately 10 000 per year).
- **More than 1 out of every 4 deaths among young men (aged 15-29 years) in the EU is due to alcohol** (often caused by road traffic accidents, homicide, violence etc) and 1 in every 10 deaths among young women<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Source: Global Burden of Disease Project (Rehm et al 2004) adopted for the report Alcohol in Europe, Anderson P, Baumberg B, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK June 2006

<sup>2</sup> Source: Adapted from WHO's Global Burden of Disease study (Rehm et al 2004), Alcohol in Europe Anderson P, Baumberg B, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK June 2006

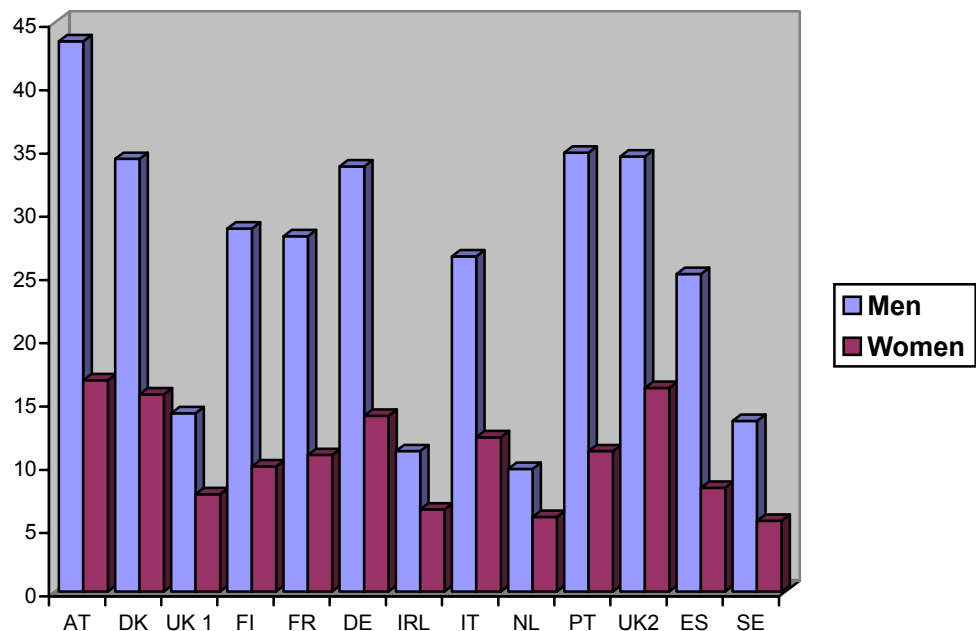
<sup>3</sup> Top 9 risk factors for ill-health in the EU, Adapted from WHO's Global Burden of Disease study (Rehm et al 2004) Alcohol in Europe Anderson P, Baumberg B, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK June 2006

<sup>4</sup> The share of deaths attributable to alcohol in the EU citizens younger than age 70 years (year 2000). Source: Global Burden of Disease data (Rehm 2005)



### Alcohol and disease:

- Harmful alcohol use is a **cause** of some **60 different diseases and conditions**, including lung diseases, breast cancer, mental and behavioural disorders, gastrointestinal conditions, cardiovascular problems, and foetal and reproductive disorders<sup>5</sup>.
- **Severe diseases, such as liver cirrhosis** are growing at an alarming rate and strike younger people than in the past. For instance, in England there has been a **10-fold increase** among women aged 35-44 dying from this disease over the last 30 years<sup>6</sup>.
- **Death rates from liver cirrhosis at all ages per 100,000. Data collected between 1997-2000, selected EU-15 Member States**<sup>7</sup>.

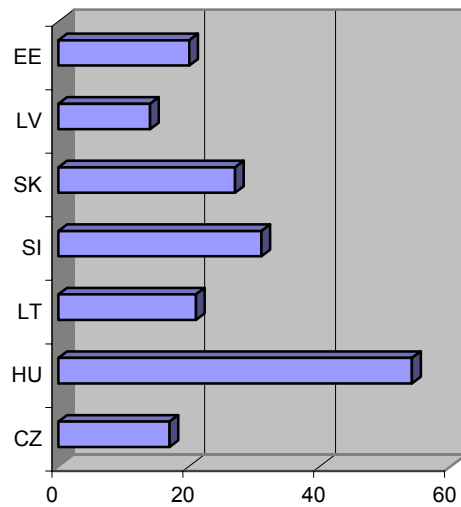


<sup>5</sup> Several sources: Gutjahr et al 2001, English et al. 1995; Ridolfo and Stevenson 2001; Room et al 2005). Alcohol in Europe Anderson P, Baumberg B, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK June 2006

<sup>6</sup> Institute of Alcohol Studies UK 'Alcohol Consumption and Harm in the UK and EU'.

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Alcohol Studies UK 'Alcohol Consumption and Harm in the UK and EU'. ('UK1' denotes England and Wales while 'UK2' denotes Scotland.)

**Death rates from liver cirrhosis at all ages per 100,000, 2003, selected EU-10 Member States, male and female combined<sup>8</sup>:**



- Liver cirrhosis is caused by **long-term excessive drinking** by individuals, regardless of their drinking patterns. The above graphs demonstrate that such harm is very significant all across Member states.
- Exposure to alcohol during pregnancy can **impair babies' brain development**. In France more than **700 children** were born with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome in 2001, and more than 60, 000 people are estimated to be living with this condition<sup>9</sup>

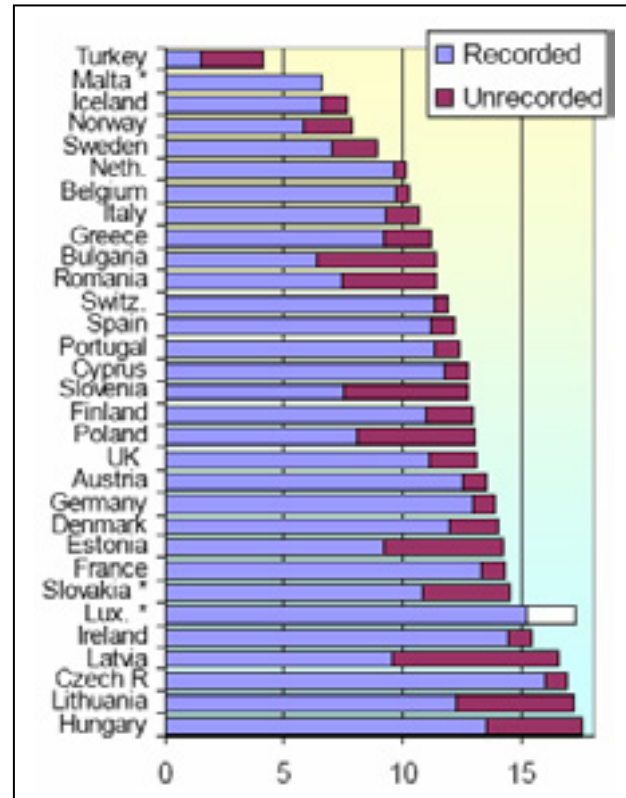
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<sup>8</sup> WHO's Global Burden of Disease study (Rehm et al 2004)

<sup>9</sup> (INSERM 2001).

**Alcohol consumption:**

- The EU is the **heaviest drinking region** of the world<sup>10</sup>. **Total alcohol consumption in the EU amounts to an average of 11 litres of pure alcohol drunk per adult each year<sup>11</sup>**. (11 litres = 1,400 small beers per person per year)
- **Total alcohol consumption per drinker in Europe in 2002<sup>12</sup>**



- The levels reached in the 1970s were even higher (15 litres per adult per year). This decline can be explained by a decline in wine consumption in France and southern Europe in recent decades, partly due to less alcohol being consumed during the working day.
- However, this decline is accompanied by a **rise in harmful drinking patterns** among some 15% of those who do consume alcohol<sup>13</sup>, such as binge drinking (5 or more drinks on an occasion) and under-age drinking.

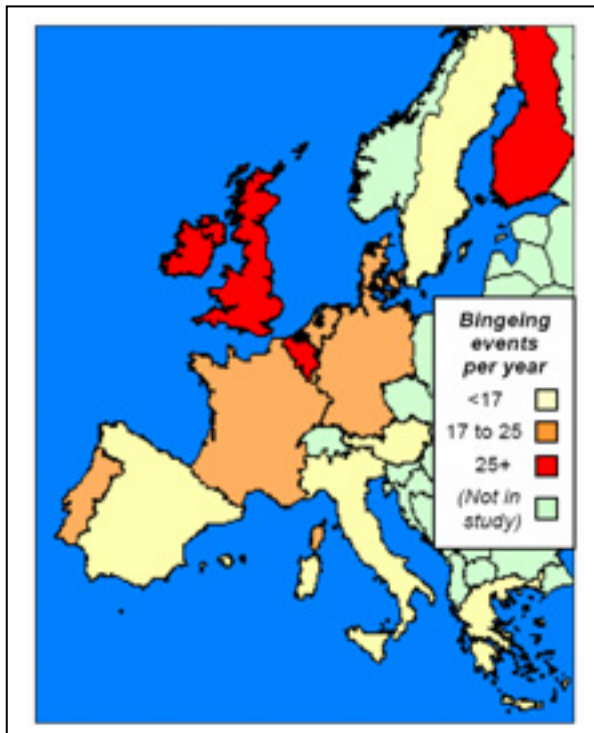
<sup>10</sup> Source: WHO, World drink trends

<sup>11</sup> Alcohol in Europe Anderson P, Baumberg B, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK June 2006  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/news\\_alcoholineurope\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/news_alcoholineurope_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> 'Recorded' = legal domestic sales. 'Unrecorded' = illegal domestic and private imported sales

<sup>13</sup> Alcohol in Europe A public health perspective, P Anderson and B Baumberg, Institute of Alcohol Studies, UK 2006

## Binge drinking in the adult population:<sup>14</sup>

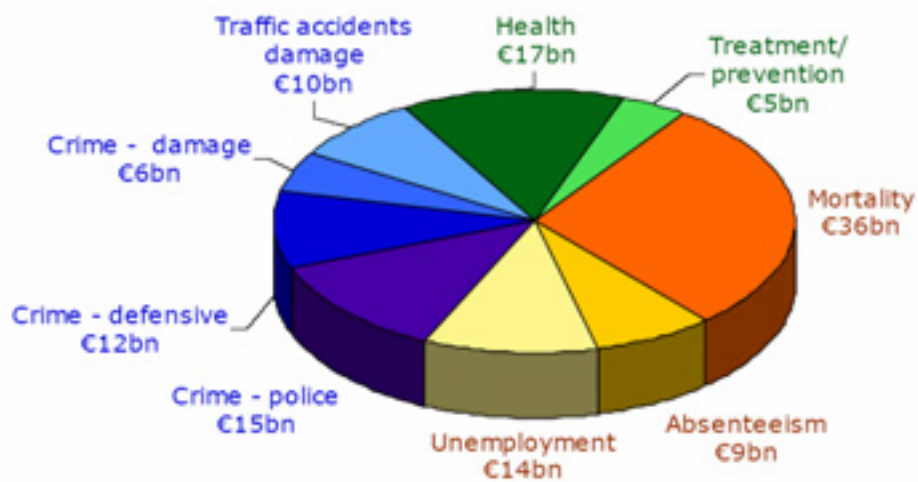


- **Binge drinking** has become more widespread throughout Europe, especially in the 10 new EU Member States. For instance, in a 2003 World Health Organisation survey, over 38% of male drinkers in Poland and 30% of male drinkers in Hungary described themselves as weekly binge drinkers. This compares to 24% in the UK and 8.5% in Spain.
- Concerning **under-age drinking**, according to the WHO Health Behaviour in School Aged Children study from 2003, 5% of 11-year olds across the EU, 12% of 13-year olds and **29% of 15-year olds report weekly drinking**.
- The average age of the first time youngsters describe getting **drunk** is **13.6 years** for boys and **13.9 years** for girls.
- **23% of 15–16 year old boys** in the EU reported **binge-drinking** at least 3 times in the previous 30 days in 2003, according to the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD).

<sup>14</sup> Eurobarometer Health, Food and Alcohol and Safety, 2003:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol/documents/ebs\\_186\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/ebs_186_en.pdf)

## Alcohol-related harm and the Economy:

- The **cost of alcohol-related harm** to the EU's economy has been estimated at **€125 billion** for 2003, equivalent to **1.3% of GDP**. This estimate includes, amongst others losses due to underperformance at work, work absenteeism, and premature death.<sup>15</sup>
- The actual **spending on alcohol-related problems** in the EU is estimated at about **€66 billion** e.g. on crime, traffic accidents, health, and disease treatment and prevention.<sup>16</sup>
- **The tangible cost of alcohol-related harm by component, 2003:**<sup>17</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Report on Alcohol in Europe (Anderson and Baumberg), June 2006

<sup>16</sup> An Ex Ante Assessment of the Economic Impacts of EU Alcohol Policies, (Rand Corporation), July 2006

<sup>17</sup> Report on Alcohol in Europe (Anderson and Baumberg), June 2006