

**IOGT International Official Statement to
WHO EURO 67 Regional Committee Meeting**

31.08.17

Theme:

Progress report on implementation of the European Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2012 – 2020

Distinguished delegates,

It's an honor and privilege to address you today on behalf of IOGT International.

With our 143 Member Organizations from 58 countries, **IOGT International is the premier global network for evidence-based policy solutions and community-based interventions** to prevent and reduce harmful use of alcohol. Our members work from a Human Rights-based approach with all aspects of alcohol-related harm: protecting the rights of children from families with alcohol problems; preventing early onset of alcohol use in adolescence; treatment, rehabilitation and social inclusion programs for anyone struggling with alcohol use disorders, exposing the unethical practices of the alcohol industry, as well as advocacy work to mainstream alcohol policy considerations into all relevant policy areas.

All this is relevant for our discussion about the European Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol. IOGT International members in the European region know the realities of when governments succeed or fail in addressing alcohol-related harm.

Analysis of the implementation of the WHO Global Alcohol Strategy indicates that the European region had the highest level of activity to increase scope and intensity of government policies to curb alcohol harm. For instance since 2010, **27 countries of the region have increased alcohol excise taxes.**

Unfortunately, even in the WHO region with the highest activity, to date only 20 countries have enacted evidence-based alcohol policies. Troubling is also that among the 8 countries worldwide that have increased subsidies for the alcohol industry, five are from this region.

In this context, we are deeply concerned about the fact that Member States are **far off track to achieve the global target to reduce per capita alcohol consumption by 10%** by 2025, and thus will fail to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by 25% until 2025.

Harmful use of alcohol is not only a major risk factor for NCDs, infectious diseases, violence, or road traffic fatalities; it's also a major obstacle to development **adversely affecting 13 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals** in all three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

Many Member States want more action. For example at the World Health Assembly this May, **Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania called for WHO to consider the impact of the 2010 Global Alcohol Strategy and ways forward**, and together with Norway, supported a call by the South East Asian Region and Botswana,

requesting the Director General to initiate and resource an Expert Committee to report on the alcohol control situation and progress prior to the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in 2018.

At the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July in New York, Iceland co-hosted a side event on evidence-based community responses to protect children and youth from harmful use of alcohol.

At the World Health Assembly in 2016, Estonia, together with Botswana, Ecuador, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, organized a side event on alcohol marketing – addressing the global and regional needs for more action on the best buy alcohol policy measures.

Nevertheless **implementation of cost-effective, high-impact and evidence-based policy best buys is still inadequate**. And for that people, families, communities, societies are paying a high price.

Therefore, we call for renewed commitment to tackle harmful use of alcohol in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

IOGT International strongly supports Member States that have repeatedly called for more action on population-level responses to curb alcohol harm.

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To:
**67 Regional Committee Meeting
WHO EURO**

**September 11 to 14, 2017
Budapest, Hungary**

We urge you to lead on **making harmful use of alcohol a priority topic** at the forthcoming WHO Executive Board meeting in January 2018.

In these joint and hopefully long-term efforts, IOGT International and our members will remain committed to support, encourage, raise awareness and drive public discourse.

Yours sincerely,



**Kristina Sperkova,
International President**

**IOGT International,
Kralova nad Vahom, Slovakia
August 31, 2017**