

European status report on alcohol and health 2014

Marketing of alcoholic beverages



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Background

The landscape of alcoholic beverage marketing is changing, with even more channels and tools available to encourage consumption. Alcoholic beverages are marketed not solely via traditional broadcast media (such as television (TV) and radio) and traditional non-broadcast media (such as print media, billboards and branded merchandise), but also through sponsorship and product placement, and by direct marketing using technologies such as the internet, podcasts and text messaging. Furthermore, by featuring alcohol in films, TV shows and songs, the entire entertainment sector plays a role in shaping the expectations of young people for the use of alcohol.¹

The extent and breadth of commercial communications on alcohol and their impact, particularly on young people's drinking, should not be underestimated. There are many ways to limit exposure to commercial communications, ranging from avoiding the use of humour and glamour and other aspects appealing to young people, to avoiding sponsorship and television and cinema advertising, all the way up to a complete ban.¹

Restricting exposure to marketing of alcoholic beverages through effective marketing regulations or comprehensive advertising bans is one of the three best buy interventions recommended by WHO to reduce harmful drinking and thereby the burden of noncommunicable diseases.²

Strategies

The *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020* outlines several policy options to manage the marketing of alcohol.¹ These include:

- the setting-up of regulatory or co-regulatory frameworks, preferably with a legislative basis and supported (when appropriate) by self-regulatory measures, for alcohol marketing by:
 - regulating the content and volume of marketing;
 - regulating sponsorship activities that promote alcoholic beverages;
 - restricting or banning promotions in connection with activities targeting young people;
 - regulating new forms of alcohol marketing techniques, such as social media;
- the development by public agencies or independent bodies of effective systems of surveillance of marketing of alcohol products;
- the setting-up of effective administrative and deterrence systems for infringements of marketing restrictions; and
- the regulation of direct or indirect marketing in some or all media.

¹ *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2012.

² *From burden to "best buys": reducing the economic impact of noncommunicable diseases in low- and middle-income countries*. Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2011.

Methods

This chapter presents the results from the WHO survey on alcohol and health, carried out during the period February–December 2012. Unless otherwise noted, the responses reflect the policy situation in each Member State as at 31 December 2011. The survey was sent to the WHO national focal points for alcohol policy in each Member State, to be completed in consultation with various national experts. All 53 Member States of the WHO European Region participated in the survey.

Results

In 47 Member States, legally binding restrictions on alcohol advertising are in place at the national level. Thirty-six Member States have legally binding restrictions on alcohol product placement at the national level. Product placement means that economic operators sponsor TV or film productions if their products are shown in these productions.

The most common type of control on the advertising of beer and wine is a partial statutory restriction (as opposed to bans) involving time/place and/or content (Table 1). A partial statutory restriction involving time/place and/or content and a ban are equally common types of control on the advertising of spirits (Table 1). Advertisements on TV and radio are more strictly regulated than other forms of media and, when bans are in place, they are more common for spirits than for wine or beer (Table 1).

Between 16 and 28 Member States reported that they had no restrictions on product placement, depending on the type of both beverage and media. When restrictions are in place, the most common type of control on beer and wine product placement is a partial statutory restriction involving time/place. As regards product placement of spirits, a ban is the most common type of restriction for films (13 Member States), while a ban and a partial statutory restriction involving time/place are almost equally common for TV (Table 2). Box 1 gives information on advertising restrictions in France, one of the Member States with a total ban on alcohol advertising on TV.

Table 1. Number of Member States with restrictions on advertising

BEVERAGES/MEDIA	BAN	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: TIME/PLACE	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: CONTENT	VOLUNTARY/ SELF- REGULATION	NO RESTRICTION
BEER					
Public service/national TV	10	24	16	3	12
Commercial/private TV	9	23	18	4	12
National radio	7	22	17	3	13
Local radio	8	22	16	3	13
Print media	6	17	16	7	11
Billboards	8	12	13	8	13
Points of sale	5	12	14	7	13

BEVERAGES/MEDIA	BAN	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: TIME/PLACE	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: CONTENT	VOLUNTARY/ SELF- REGULATION	NO RESTRICTION
Cinema	8	14	14	7	14
Internet	3	9	11	6	23
Social media	3	6	11	7	22
WINE					
Public service/national TV	14	25	16	3	9
Commercial/private TV	13	24	18	3	9
National radio	11	23	17	3	10
Local radio	12	23	16	3	10
Print media	9	19	17	7	9
Billboards	11	13	14	8	11
Points of sale	6	14	15	7	14
Cinema	11	17	15	7	12
Internet	6	8	12	6	23
Social media	4	6	12	7	22
SPIRITS					
Public service/national TV	23	22	13	3	6
Commercial/private TV	22	21	15	1	6
National radio	19	22	14	3	7
Local radio	20	23	13	3	7
Print media	14	18	14	7	8
Billboards	17	11	12	8	10
Points of sale	10	13	14	7	13
Cinema	17	15	12	7	11
Internet	12	8	9	6	21
Social media	9	6	9	7	21

Table 2. Number of Member States with restrictions on product placement

BEVERAGES/MEDIA	BAN	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: TIME/PLACE	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: CONTENT	VOLUNTARY/ SELF- REGULATION	NO RESTRICTION
BEER					
Public service/national TV	9	16	9	3	20
Commercial/private TV	9	15	9	3	21
Films	6	9	7	3	28

BEVERAGES/MEDIA	BAN	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: TIME/PLACE	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION: CONTENT	VOLUNTARY/ SELF- REGULATION	NO RESTRICTION
WINE					
Public service/national TV	12	18	9	3	17
Commercial/private TV	12	16	9	4	18
Films	9	9	7	4	26
SPIRITS					
Public service/national TV	16	16	8	3	16
Commercial/private TV	16	15	8	4	17
Films	13	7	6	4	25

Box 1. Alcohol advertising restrictions in France

France implemented important restrictions on advertising and sponsorship in favour of alcoholic beverages in accordance with the *Loi Evin [Evin Law]* of 1991. A total ban exists on TV and on sponsorship of any kind. In broadcasting, advertising is forbidden between 17:00 hours and 00:00 hours, and on Wednesdays (when schools are closed) from 07:00 hours to 00:00 hours. Advertising is forbidden in the print media and on internet websites dedicated to young people.

Advertising is still allowed on:

- billboards and convenience store brand premises;
- small posters or any item inside a specialized point of sale;
- catalogues or brochures sent by producers, importers, merchants, etc.;
- vehicles usually dedicated to the delivery of alcoholic beverages;
- promotional material for traditional feasts and fairs dedicated to local alcoholic beverages;
- promotional material for traditional museums, universities and courses on oenology;
- items specifically dedicated to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, marketed during the direct sale of alcoholic beverages by the producer or during tourist visits to the production site.

The content of advertisements is restricted to: the degree of alcohol, origin of the product (soil, characteristics), denomination, composition, details of the producer or sellers, development process, terms of sale, ways to consume the product and any objective reference to the characteristics of the product. The aim is to limit advertising to objective information about the product. A health warning message must be placed on every advertisement allowed.

Respect for the regulatory framework is assured by the advertising regulation authority and by surveillance of advertisements by nongovernmental organizations. Violations of the rules can be met with a fine of up to €75 000. The maximum fine can be increased to up to 50% of the budget for the illegal activity.

Source: Dr Pierre-Yves Bello, Bureau des pratiques addictives (MC2), Direction générale de la santé, Ministère du travail, de l'emploi et de la santé, Paris, France.

In 25 Member States, national legally binding restrictions on sponsorship in the alcoholic beverage industry are in place. Twenty-six Member States implement restrictions on sales promotion by producers, retailers and owners of pubs/bars. Total bans on sponsorship by the alcohol industry of events or on sales promotion are more common for spirits than for beer or wine (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Member States with restrictions on sponsorship and sales promotion

BEVERAGES/AREA RESTRICTED	BAN	PARTIAL STATUTORY RESTRICTION	VOLUNTARY/ SELF-REGULATION	NO RESTRICTION
BEER				
Industry sponsorship of sporting events	7	11	10	24
Industry sponsorship of events for young people	10	9	9	24
Sales promotion from producers	7	10	8	28
Below cost sales promotions from retailers	6	10	3	31
Free drinks sales promotions from owners of pubs and bars	12	7	4	29
WINE				
Industry sponsorship of sporting events	8	12	9	23
Industry sponsorship of events for young people	11	10	8	23
Sales promotion from producers	9	10	7	27
Below cost sales promotions from retailers	7	10	3	30
Free drinks sales promotions from owners of pubs and bars	12	8	4	28
SPIRITS				
Industry sponsorship of sporting events	13	10	9	21
Industry sponsorship of events for young people	14	9	6	23
Sales promotion from producers	12	9	6	26
Below cost sales promotions from retailers	11	9	1	29
Free drinks sales promotions from owners of pubs and bars	14	8	3	27

Respondents were asked to specify the ways in which infringements of marketing restrictions are detected. A complaints system (reported in 33 Member States) was the most often cited method of detection for advertising, product placement, industry sponsorship, sales promotion and other violations of restrictions on marketing communication. Active surveillance by governmental or nongovernmental organizations or other independent bodies was almost equally common, reported by 31 Member States. Case by case reporting was cited by 16 Member States.

Conclusion

The *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020* proposes a portfolio of policy options and strategies to prevent inappropriate and irresponsible alcohol advertising and marketing that targets children and young people. These options for action include: regulating the content and volume of marketing; regulating sponsorship activities that promote alcoholic beverages; restricting or banning promotions in connection with

activities targeting young people; and regulating new forms of alcohol marketing techniques, such as social media.¹

Results from the 2012 WHO survey on alcohol and health show that national legally binding restrictions on alcohol advertising and product placement are in place in 89% and 68% of the Member States, respectively. The stringency of regulations varies between Member States, however, from total bans to partial statutory restrictions on content and/or volume for some types of both beverage and media. In general, advertisements on TV and radio are more strictly regulated than those on newer forms of media.

National legally binding restrictions on sponsorship activities by the alcoholic beverage industry and sales promotions by producers, retailers and owners of pubs and bars were reported by 47% and 49% of the Member States, respectively. Between 10 and 14 Member States implement a ban on industry sponsorship of events for young people, depending on the beverage type (Table 3).

Between 1 and 10 Member States, depending on type of both beverage and media or area, reported that alcohol marketing is controlled by a voluntary agreement/self-regulation (Tables 1, 2 and 3). In some jurisdictions, this means that local governments and municipalities have their own regulations, while in others, it means that the alcoholic beverage industry follows its internal voluntary rules. For systems involving co-regulation and self-regulation by economic operators to be effective, however, there must be a clear framework and sufficient incentives to succeed.¹

As noted in the action plan, monitoring of alcohol marketing practices is best done when it is the responsibility of an independent body or a government agency, and when it is performed systematically and routinely.¹ Results from the 2012 WHO survey on alcohol and health show that a complaints system is the most common method of detecting infringements (reported by 62% of the Member States), while active surveillance by governmental or nongovernmental organizations or other independent bodies was reported by 58% of the Member States.