

# EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM

## SCIENCE GROUP

*6th Meeting*  
*Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010*

**Rue Breydel 4**

**Room 08-120**

**B-1049 Brussels**

### SUMMARY REPORT

#### **1) Welcome and introduction by the Chair**

- The Chair welcomed participants (List in Annex 1).

#### **2) Quorum**

- With 10 members present the meeting was considered quorate. (RoP, Art. 1.1)

#### **3) Declarations of interests considered prejudicial to independence in relation to the items on the agenda**

- None declared. (RoP, Art. 3.4)

#### **4) Adoption of the agenda**

- Discussion on the use of the Science Group's scientific opinions outside the Group was proposed. In order for this topic to inform the discussion on the new task (item 8), the Chair decided to address the topic right away. It was noted that the only Scientific Opinion issued by the Science Group so far is occasionally quoted alongside peer reviewed studies, including in contexts more related to policy than to science. It was recognised that although the Science Group cannot control the weight given to its opinions outside the Group, the purpose of its work is to inform the development of action and policy. Reference was made to the Rules of Procedure (Art. 5) which state that the final opinions of the Science Group are published on the Commission's web site and that the Commission is responsible for determining the level of publicity given to them, with assistance from the Chair to

ensure the scientific validity of press releases or related actions. Text was proposed by one Member to revise the Group's Rules of Procedure but there was insufficient interest within the Group to make changes.

- It was noted that since the circulation of the draft agenda, the three project presentations mentioned as a possibility under item 7 had been confirmed.
- The draft agenda was adopted with no modifications. (Ro P, Art. 11.6)

**5) Adoption of the summary report of the Science group's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of 19 October 2009.**

- The draft summary report was formally adopted.

**6) Report from the EAHF plenary meeting on 11 March 2010 including task request for the Science Group**

- The Commission services summarised the steps in the formulation of the new task. After initial discussion in the Science Group's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in October 2009 on possible future topics, the two most promising ones, "alcohol accessibility and harm" and "alcohol and the workplace", were discussed in the EAHF plenary meeting in November 2009. Based on the broad interest shown by Forum members for the alcohol and workplace theme, terms of reference were drafted by the Commission services, circulated to Forum members and discussed in the plenary meeting in March 2010. Points raised in the discussion and in feedback emailed by Forum members were taken on board and the terms of reference were finalised by the EAHF Chair.
- According to the terms of reference, the EAHF requests the Science group to give scientific advice on: "Reducing the negative impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption on the workplace" (Annex 2). The task is divided into three sub-tasks:
  1. A quantification of the impact on alcohol on the workplace, and an evaluation of the effects on the productivity of the EU workforce.
  2. An overview of the state of play across Europe, highlighting key trends and/or variations between countries or sectors as well as between larger or smaller workplaces.
  3. Pointers towards: a) High value options for additional research or collection of additional data and indicators; b) Effective approaches to consider for wider deployment in workplace settings, including guidance as to the need for action targeting particular sector, professional or age specific groups.

**7) Presentation of EU-co-financed projects that provide background information relevant to the alcohol and workplace theme**

- Work done or planned in alcohol and workplace related projects was presented by invited experts. The purpose was to clarify what potentially relevant information is or will be made available, so as to identify potential for synergies and avoid duplication.

- Workplace Health Promotion (WHP), 2009-2012, presented by Zinta PODNIECE, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA).
- Focus on Alcohol Safe Environment (FASE), 2008-2010, presented by Wim VAN DALEN, Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP).
- European Workplace and Alcohol (EWA), 2010-2013, presented by Lidia SEGURA GARCIA, Department of Health of the Government of Catalonia.

**8) Discussion and agreeing on working methods and timetable for the alcohol and workplace task.**

- Aspects of the alcohol and workplace related task request and the three sub-tasks were broadly discussed. It was noted that recent updates relating to sub-task 1 are available but that sub-task 2 is more challenging as there is no obvious source that would be able to provide relevant information across the EU. Sub-task 3 would be the result of the work done by the Group to review available research, assessments and reviews.
- Additional points raised in the discussion included ethical aspects, for example willingness or consequences of participating in alcohol or drug screening in the workplace, and lack of comparable statistics across the EU on forms of harm such as alcohol-related workplace accidents.
- Prior to the meeting, some members of the Forum sent to Commission services documents relating to alcohol and the workplace to be forwarded to the Science Group. Nearly 20 separate documents were provided in the meeting's registration website for downloading or, upon request, sent to members as email attachments.
- The three project presentations under item 7 of the agenda will be circulated to Science Group members, along with an overview of workplace related commitments of EAHF members.
- As a step towards an overview of the state of play across Europe, members were invited to identify relevant research and country reports. The Commission services will explore the possibility of using a web page to make additional materials available for Group members for downloading.
- The need and possibility to carry out a literature search and review will be examined later. Based on information, materials and suggestions from Group members, sub-groups may be set up to carry out to work on parts of the task.
- The time span for completing the task is one year. The Commission services highlighted that the expectation from the last EAHF Chair was that the task should be completed in time for the Spring Plenary in March 2011. An interim report should be presented to the Forum plenary on 18 November 2010. The form of the final document/s will depend on the extent and nature of information available for formulating advice.

**9) Update on recent developments.**

- The Commission services gave a further brief update on recent developments. It was noted that the new Commissioner for health and consumers, John Dalli, emphasises

the importance of prevention to address health determinants including alcohol abuse, and that the Lisbon Treaty raises the EU's profile in this domain.

- The Science group was briefed on the publication of Special Eurobarometer 331 on EU citizen's attitudes toward alcohol and on the current state of development of the Clearing House initiative (RAYPRO) on youth and alcohol projects.

#### **10) Renewal of Science group membership.**

- According to the rules of procedure (Art. 7), beginning after the second year of its existence, one third of the members of the Group will be renewed yearly. Outgoing members will be selected by drawing lots and replaced by experts from the reserve list or on the basis of a fresh call. As the first meeting of the Science Group was held in June 2008, the renewal of members will take place in the fall of 2010.
- In order to map the resources available for carrying out the new task and to minimise disruption due to changes in membership, all members of the Science Group were contacted by phone by the Commission services prior to the meeting. The ability of members to contribute to the new task varies, and some members are considering stepping down. It was decided to ask all members about their plans to continue in the Group and how they would contribute to the new task. The number of people stepping down will reduce the number to be selected by drawing lots.
- Experts on the reserve list will be contacted by the Commission services about their preparedness to contribute to the alcohol and workplace task. Members of the Science Group are invited to propose people with expertise on this theme to participate in the Group. New members will be appointed by the Chair of the EAHF.

#### **11) Agreeing on date/s for next meetings**

- It was decided to set a date for the next meeting in October, before the next plenary meeting of the EAHF on 18 November 2010.

#### **12) Any other business**

- No other business was raised.

## Annex 1 – List of participants

| Name SURNAME                | INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Dr. Alberto BERTELLI        | University of Milan – Department of Human Morphology   |
| Prof. Ian GILMORE           | Royal College of Physicians, London  |
| Prof. Michael KLEIN         | Centre of Excellence on Applied Addictions Research at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences North Rhine-Westphalia) |
| Prof. Ronald KNIBBE         | Maastricht University – Department of Health Promotion and Health Education  |
| Dr. Katrin LANG             | Tartu University - Department of Public Health   |
| Dr. Jacek MOSKALEWICZ       | Institute of Psychiatry & Neurology, Warsaw  |
| Dr. Alojz NOCIAR            | Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology   |
| Dr. Dusan NOLIMAL           | National Institute Public Health, Ljubljana  |
| Dr. Alicia RODRIGUEZ-MARTOS | Public Health Agency, Barcelona  |
| Prof. Anders ROMELSJÖ       | Karolinska Institutet, Dept. of Public Health Sciences   |

| EUROPEAN COMMISSION |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Ceri THOMPSON       | DG SANCO C4 |
| Marjatta MONTONEN   | DG SANCO C4 |

| INVITED EXPERTS     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Zinta PODNIECE      | European Agency for Safety and Welfare at Work (OSHA) |
| Wim VAN DALEN       | Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP)             |
| Lidia SEGURA GARCIA | Department of Health, Government of Catalonia         |

**Absent with notice:** Peter Anderson, Roumen Balansky, Patrice Couzigou, Ludovic Drouet, Irmgard Eisenbach-Stangl, Bohumil Fišer, Morten Gronbaek, Eileen Kaner, Ulrich Keil, Marjana Martinic.

## Annex 2

### European Alcohol and Health Forum request to the EAHF Science Group for scientific advice on: Reducing the negative impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption on the workplace

#### 1 Background

##### 1.1 EU Strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm

In the *EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm*<sup>1</sup>, five priority themes are identified, which are relevant in all Member States and for which Community action to complement and coordinate national policies has added value:

- 1) protect young people, children and the unborn child;
- 2) reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road traffic accidents;
- 3) prevent alcohol-related harm among adults and reduce the negative impact on the workplace;
- 4) inform, educate and raise awareness on the impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption, and on appropriate consumption patterns;
- 5) develop, support and maintain a common evidence base.

The extent and nature of negative impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption on the workplace was addressed in background work carried out in the preparatory phase of the Strategy. Two pieces of work brought together new information: *An ex ante assessment on the economic impact of the different policy options*<sup>2</sup> carried out by RAND Europe and the report *Alcohol in Europe*,<sup>3</sup> produced by the Institute of Alcohol Studies. Some of the conclusions were summarised in the *Impact assessment report*<sup>4</sup> accompanying the Strategy:

- Harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption has a negative impact on working capacity and productivity.
- Consumption of alcohol at the workplace increases the likelihood of occupational accidents and also increases the rate of various types of occupational diseases.
- Alcohol dependence and heavy drinking tend to lower productivity and increase absenteeism, can lead to unemployment or early retirement, and increase the risk of social and economic harm.
- Absenteeism combines a loss of productivity with continued wage payments, thus raising the costs of production.
- Unemployment involves a social cost that is not balanced by an individual economic contribution, thus imposing a negative externality on (working) taxpayers.
- The links between productivity, earnings, and employment opportunities are obvious at an individual or microeconomic level. Macroeconomic analysis shows a weaker link as it deals with the marginal rather than the absolute or average effect.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission of 24 October 2006, "An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm", COM(2006) 625 final.

<sup>2</sup> Horlings E. & Scoggins A. An Ex Ante Assessment of the Economic Impacts of EU Alcohol Policies. RAND Europe, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson P. and Baumberg B. Alcohol in Europe. Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Impact assessment on a Commission communication on An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm (SEC/2006/1411).

The negative impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption on the workplace is a cross-cutting theme that has been addressed within all coordination structures set up by the Commission to support the implementation of the EU Alcohol Strategy.<sup>5</sup>

- A broad range of actions are being deployed in Member States to reduce alcohol-related harm among adults and in the workplace.
- Within the framework the Community strategy on health and safety at work, several projects have taken forward the need to reduce the impact of alcohol related harm on the workplace.
- The Committee on Data Collection, Indicators and Definitions has sought to identify possible indicators for assessing and monitoring workplace-related harm across the EU.
- Workplace aspects in the alcoholic beverage production and distribution sectors are addressed in some of the commitments for action to reduce alcohol-related harm by members of the European Alcohol and Health Forum.<sup>6</sup>

With reference to the current economic climate and to loss of productivity due to harmful use of alcohol, it is noted in the first progress report that a particular emphasis on the EU Alcohol Strategy's third priority should be given in the work ahead, and new ways to support people in the workplace should be developed.

## 2 Terms of Reference

The European Alcohol and Health Forum asks the Science Group to provide by [date] a summary of the evidence base and advice for possible actions by Forum members to address the Strategy's goals of preventing alcohol-related harm among adults and reducing the negative impact on the workplace.

As a starting point, Forum participants and national government representatives will by end April provide the Group with what they believe to be relevant input on their own activities and on the national policy, cultural and legal context for current programs and policies around alcohol and the workplace.

From those materials, the documents referenced here and any relevant studies since the publication of the Alcohol in Europe report in 2006, the Group is asked to provide:-

1. A quantification of the impact on alcohol on the workplace, and an evaluation of the effects of the productivity of the EU workforce.
2. A concise overview of the current state of play across Europe, highlighting key trends and/or any variations in national or sector experiences as well as between larger or smaller workplace settings.
3. Any pointers towards:
  - a. High value options for additional research or collection of additional data and indicators;
  - b. Effective approaches to consider for wider deployment in more workplace settings, including any guidance as to the need for prioritisation of action targeting particular sectoral, professional or age specific groups.

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<sup>5</sup> First progress report on the implementation of the EU Alcohol Strategy. Directorate-General for Health & Consumers, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eahf/index.jsp>