

# EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM

## SCIENCE GROUP

*3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting*  
*Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009*

**Rue Froissart 101**  
**B-1049 Brussels**

## SUMMARY REPORT

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all participants (see list in Annex 1).

### **2. Quorum**

With 12 members of the Science Group being present the quorum for a valid meeting was met (Article 1.1 of the Rules of Procedure, hereafter indicated as RoP).

### **3. Declaration of interests**

In response to the Chair's request, none of the present members of the Science Group declared any interests which may be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to the items on the agenda for this meeting (Article 3.4 of the RoP).

### **4. Adoption of the agenda**

It was suggested that it would be helpful to include discussion of the document 'Affordability and consumption'. This was circulated to members of the Group by email on 19.2.09 by Professor Fišer at a later date in relation to his presentation at the previous meeting.

The Chair decided that the document could be considered under Item 8 of this meeting but would be discussed in more substance at a later date.

The agenda was therefore adopted without modification (Article 11.6 of the RoP).

### **5. Formal adoption of the draft Summary Report of the Science Group's meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

It was suggested that an alteration was needed to Item 8, second bullet point, third line, in the Summary Report. The suggestion was that Professor Fišer's phrase 'broader context' should be changed to something which captured his presentation more accurately, such as: 'including the possible beneficial effects of moderate amounts of alcohol'.

It was commented that Professor Fišer needed to be present to confirm whether alteration of the Summary Report was necessary. Professor Fišer had not asked for the circulated Summary Report to be changed.

The Chair decided that the Summary Report would not be changed but that the suggested change should be raised at a future meeting.

The Summary Report was therefore formally adopted.

## **6. Report on the latest developments regarding the work of the Forum and the Task Force on marketing communication and youth**

The Commission Services representative reported on three recent meetings<sup>1</sup>.

### **Report on Task Force on Marketing Communication, 12.11.2008**

This meeting took the form of a workshop on social marketing. Various presentations had covered the principles and tools of social marketing as well as private and government initiatives. Three reports had been commissioned by the Marketing Task Force, covering self-regulation, social marketing, and the targeting of youth. The Forum will discuss these at the next meeting.

In response to a request for clarity on what will happen as a result of the three commissioned reports, Commission Services explained that there would be two follow-up strands:

The evidence within the documents would be used to inform decisions by Forum members on concrete actions and commitments, such as relating to alcohol price promotions and advertising/marketing.

The evidence may be used to inform the further development of Member States' alcohol policies.

The Chair informed the Science Group that members would be able to comment back to the Forum on the reports.

### **Report on European Alcohol and Health Forum, 13.11.2008**

At the Forum, the Science Group had been thanked for the speed at which they provided scientific opinion.

The Forum had stated that they would welcome the presence of the Chair of the Science Group at the plenary meetings of the Forum; further members may attend if required.

In response to a query about how soon the reports of the Science Group would be made public, Commission Services stated that the reports would be made available immediately after adoption.

It was commented that the Forum of 30<sup>th</sup> April could be a place to showcase the work of the Science Group.

### **Report on Task Force on Youth-Specific Aspects of Alcohol, 20.1.09**

Science Group members commented on the conclusion from the Task Force that young people should be involved in the design of youth-related target work.

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<sup>1</sup> the summary reports on these meetings are available at

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol/Forum/alcohol\\_forum\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/Forum/alcohol_forum_en.htm).

There was questioning on whether young people would want to be involved as they may not be keen to reduce alcohol consumption or to be agents of change for alcohol-related problems. Others thought that it could be a good idea to involve young people, to check things with them for appropriateness. Further comments were made that many young people are interested in reducing the harm which may be caused by alcohol, and that many young people themselves drink responsibly. A suggestion was made that a study of the effect of young people on each other's alcohol consumption may be interesting.

The Chair directed that the Science Group's interest in studying young people's involvement should be noted.

Science Group members commented on the suggestion by the Task Force that a 'Clearing House' of projects and schemes relating to youth-specific aspects of alcohol should be set up. It was noted as a good idea but could be difficult to maintain and that the criteria on what should go in need to be defined.

#### **7. Adoption of the draft scientific advice on the impact of marketing communication on the volume (and patterns) of consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially by young people.**

Dr. Peter Anderson, on behalf of the Working Group, presented the key points from the submitted report: 'Does marketing communication impact on the volume and patterns of consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially by young people – a review of longitudinal studies'. The large amount of work involved in preparing this report, even taking into account that there were two recent extensive reviews drawn upon, underlined that the Science Group would have practical difficulties in undertaking detailed pieces of work without more support being provided.

There was general discussion and requests for clarification of the content of the report. Some suggestions for minor redrafting were made. However there was strong overall support for the report.

Under the RoP, Articles 1.3, 15 and 16, the Science Group adopted the report.

The Science Group noted their grateful thanks to the Working Group for their excellent work.

#### **8. Study on the affordability of alcoholic beverages (update)**

The study by RAND Europe on 'The affordability of alcoholic beverages in the EU' is due to be transmitted to Forum members, the Science Group and the Committee for National Alcohol Policy and Action on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February. It will be presented and discussed at the Forum plenary meeting of 11 March. Any necessary factual adjustments will be made. The Science Group will finalise their position on the report at their June meeting.

The Chair suggested that comments from members of the Science Group may be made to him after the circulation of the report for presentation to the Forum on March 11th. It was noted that any representations made through this channel would be from individuals and not denoted as ratified Science Group opinion.

Dr. Marjana Martinic presented a summary note on recent progress on the study to the Science Group meeting, highlighting the 3 key findings.

Comments were made by members of the Science Group:

The definition of alcohol-related road accidents differs across countries so it is best to stick to the overall road accident rates as the study did.

It was suggested that the age factor should be included when looking at accident data or liver cirrhosis data, for example.

Minimum excise tax rates for alcohol are set by the EU, yet Member States can go above these.

It is difficult to find statistics on legal non-commercial alcohol consumption, such as that by small producers which is sold and consumed locally. In Slovenia and other Mediterranean countries this can be around 50% of consumption.

The RAND study took place before the current economic crisis; the new economic realities may alter the situation.

It was suggested that it may have been helpful to RAND if input from the Science Group, into methodology for example, had been possible. The Chair commented that the RAND study probably pre-dates the setting up of the Science Group.

Brief discussion on Professor Fišer's report on affordability was also included under Item 8, as decided in Item 4. It was noted that this document will be discussed more fully at the next meeting of the Science Group.

The Chair accepted a comment by a member that it should be made clear that no doctrinal line favouring alcohol abstinence is taken by the Science Group.

## **9. Alcohol Measures for Public health Research Alliance (AMPHORA)**

Dr. Peter Anderson presented an overview of the Alcohol Measures for Public Health Research Alliance (AMPHORA) project. This project was launched in January 2009 with funding of €4m by the European Commission, DG Research. Decisions are currently being taken about activities.

It was noted that European focus of this project ties in with the discussion under Item 7. The Chair welcomed this exciting project and hoped it would be a catalyst for further research investment in this area.

## **10. Suggestions by Science Group members for future agenda items**

The Chair noted that this agenda item provides the Group with the chance to be proactive about what the Group should be tackling. However it was also noted that any suggestions would need to be put forward to the Forum for ratification.

Several strands were suggested:

The issues surrounding alcohol-related road accidents, especially amongst young adults.

The effects of the economic crisis on alcoholic consumption. This is something which AMPHORA may be looking at.

The effects of demographic changes of society, for example consumption by older people, gender issues, people living alone.

Social inequalities and alcohol. This may also tie in with economic crisis effects.

Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder – not just foetal alcohol syndrome.

Effectiveness of youth involvement in youth targeting.

The Chair identified the economic crisis and social inequalities as probably top issues. It was also noted that other work may come via the Forum. It was noted that if work is identified as

necessary it may have to be commissioned from additional resources and paid for in view of the time commitments necessary.

### **11. Participation of Science Group members in the Forum plenary meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

The Science Group is to be represented by the Chair, Professor Ian Gilmore, at the Forum Plenary on 11<sup>th</sup> March; in addition, Dr. Peter Anderson will be attending on 11<sup>th</sup> March to present the report adopted under Item 7.

The Open Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> April is open to all Science Group members who wished to attend, including the Chair or their representative. Travel expenses can be reimbursed by the Commission in line with the normal procedure and rules.

### **12. Conclusions and way forward**

Item 7 will be presented at the Plenary Forum on 11<sup>th</sup> March.

It will be noted if other relevant items emerge at the Plenary. If the pieces of work are very large, external funding will be considered.

It was decided that a summary of the AMPHORA project would be more appropriate for the Open Forum agenda rather than for the Forum Plenary.

### **13. Next meeting and any other business**

Professor Fišer's report will be an agenda item next time. A letter sent by Dr Balansky, commenting upon Professor Fiser's presentation circulated by email, was distributed to members.

It was requested that the Science Group's meeting locations should be kept consistent if possible for practical purposes. It was also suggested that a round/square arrangement may be more appropriate to aid communication if possible.

The next meeting dates for the Science Group will be 29<sup>th</sup> June and 19<sup>th</sup> October, both Mondays, and both to start at 11am.

Annex 1: List of participants

<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>FIRST NAME</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION</b>
<b>ANDERSON</b>	<b>Peter</b>	<b>Public Health Consultant</b>
<b>BERTELLI</b>	<b>Alberto</b>	<b>University of Milan</b>
<b>DROUET</b>	<b>Ludovic</b>	<b>Groupe hospitalier LARIBOISIERE FERNAND WIDAL</b>
<b>GILMORE</b>	<b>Ian</b>	<b>Royal College of Physicians, London</b>
<b>KANER</b>	<b>Eileen Frances Sheridan</b>	<b>Newcastle University Institute of Health and Society</b>
<b>KLEIN</b>	<b>Michael</b>	<b>Centre of excellence on Applied Addictions Research at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences North Rhine-Westphalia</b>
<b>KNIBBE</b>	<b>Roland</b>	<b>Maastricht University - Department of Health Promotion and Health Education</b>
<b>MARTINIC</b>	<b>Marjana</b>	<b>International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), Washington DC</b>
<b>MOSKALEWICZ</b>	<b>Jacek</b>	<b>Institute of Psychiatry &amp; Neurology, Warsaw</b>
<b>NOLIMAL</b>	<b>Dusan</b>	<b>National Institute Public Health, Ljubljana</b>
<b>RODRÍGUEZ- MARTOS</b>	<b>Alicia</b>	<b>Public Health Agency, Barcelona</b>
<b>ROMELSJÖ</b>	<b>Anders</b>	<b>Stockholm University - Centre for Social Research</b>
<b>KAMPHAUSEN</b>	<b>Wilfried</b>	<b>European Commission</b>
<b>MONTONEN</b>	<b>Marjatta</b>	<b>European Commission</b>
<b>WILKS (observer )</b>	<b>Linda</b>	<b>Open University</b>