

EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM

4th Plenary Meeting

BRUSSELS, 11th March 2009

Summary Report

The meeting was chaired by Robert Madelin, Director General, DG Health and Consumers.

1. Welcome

- The Chair welcomed all participants (*see list in Annex 1*) noting that the forthcoming transition period, due to the election of a new European Parliament and the nomination of a new Commission, will provide an opportunity to summarise and highlight what has been achieved within the Forum. In the present meeting and in the Open Forum on 30th April 2009 focus should be on taking stock of the situation.
- The agenda was approved with a minor modification in the order of items.
- The Chair set the scene for the meeting, explaining that the aim was to firm up what will happen at the Open Forum by establishing a clear story today regarding the contribution of the Forum.

2. Reporting from the Task Force on Youth-specific aspects of alcohol

- The Chair of the Task Force, Michael Hübel, presented the work of the Task Force, referring to the written report previously circulated. The Task Force recommends creative approaches for ensuring youth involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of activities around alcohol and youth; action at MS level to protect young people from the consequences of irresponsible alcohol use of others; and the establishment of a Clearing House which would enable the collection and sharing of information on activities and projects on alcohol and youth health. A proposal regarding the Clearing House had been circulated for formal adoption by the Forum. The Task Force felt that it had gone as far as required and may therefore not need to continue.
- The Chair underlined that the suggested closing of the task force would not mean that youth-related aspects have now become a minor issue but that they need to come back to and remain as part of the mainstream work, in line with the Health Commissioner's view that a more comprehensive, overarching approach needs to be taken to youth health issues.
- Points raised in comments from the floor included: general support for establishing the Clearing House, as well as approval of the Commission's leadership during the initial phase of the Clearing House; a wish to see long-

term commitment from the Commission; the need to formulate clear quality criteria for inclusion of projects and other activities in the database (though some expressed a preference for not being too strict on this), possibly different criteria for different types of initiatives; concern over the time and resources required for writing and translating descriptive summaries of initiatives for the Clearing House; and the need to change the name from Clearing House to one that better reflects what the initiative will do and therefore be better understood by a wider audience. The Chair asserted that the Clearing House would be a way of encouraging learning and reducing costs for new initiatives and stressed that it would be the European Clearing House, with sharing beyond the Forum among policy makers, education authorities and regional authorities, among others.

- The Chair concluded that the Clearing House proposal was adopted, and that there was agreement on the closure of the Task Force. The Chair congratulated Mr Hübel for the successful conclusion of the Task Force and thanked the Task Force for going beyond their brief. The Chair concluded that the first step for taking forward the Clearing House was the set-up of an advisory board composed of a small number of representatives drawn from the Forum, the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action and the Forum's Science Group. Those interested in participating in the advisory board should express their interest to the Commission services. The Alcohol Policy Youth Network (APYN) and the European Forum for Responsible Drinking (EFRD) expressed interest during the meeting. The aim is for the Commission to announce the composition of the advisory board, as well as a new name, at the Open Forum on 30th April.

3. Reporting from the Task Force on Marketing Communication

- The Chair of the Task Force, Robert Madelin, reported on the three mapping exercises under way. Mapping of regulation and self-regulation is still incomplete and further data gathering is needed to form an overall view of the situation across Europe, in the different sectors and in relation to the benchmarks defined in the Advertising Round Table-report of 2006. More work is also required for mapping industry procedures aimed at ensuring non-targeting of minors. Main lessons so far include that there are differences between sectors in the level and nature of action, and that the roll out in the field of European level recommendations needs to be ensured. Mapping of social marketing activities should also continue. Examples include the Choices campaign presented by Diageo in the meeting of the Task Force on the previous day, which aims to discourage young people from harmful drinking. The Chair's view is that if social marketing is effective at changing attitudes, then it should be implemented more widely. This would be an important area of work due to the size of the population that would need to be targeted, but a challenge due to the difficulty of achieving impact. The Chair highlighted that the self-regulation of commercial communication and social marketing activities is but one piece of the jigsaw puzzle.
- Forum members were invited to immediately send in any additional information they wished to be considered for the mapping exercise reports. Final versions of the reports are expected to be available some days in advance of the Open Forum on 30th April, except for the report on social marketing that will be further discussed in the Task Force's next meeting.

- A lively discussion ensued around the topic of social marketing. Alternatives to responsible drinking as a theme for social marketing were presented, such as support to the large number of non-drinkers especially among young people and a focus on risk-taking behaviour more broadly. Points raised also included the need to adjust social marketing or other such initiatives to the local context and culture in question as well as other influences – positive or negative – on young people's attitudes, such as the treatment of alcohol issues in the mass media. Discussion also arose on concepts that may or may not have some overlap, such as social marketing and social norming.
- Another meeting of the Task Force on Marketing Communication is planned for 9th June 2009. Issues to be addressed include alcohol sponsorship, advertising in cinemas, and identification of next steps regarding commercial communication, to be presented in the next Forum Plenary on the 12th November 2009. The Chair concluded that the Forum may want to close the Task Force on Marketing Communication in November but that another six months is presently needed for its work.

4. Future work of Task Forces

- Attention was drawn to a recent letter to Mr Madelin, which reiterated industry stakeholders' suggestion that a Task Force on Consumer Education be set up to discuss and develop strategies to educate citizens on alcohol misuse. The view was expressed by industry actors, that they can commit themselves to abide by ethical principles in marketing and consumer awareness raising activities but that it is not their role to "educate". They therefore suggested that the Commission invite public and private bodies in charge of education to the Alcohol Forum and to the EU Platform on Nutrition to share good practice and guidance in this area, preferably in a dedicated working group.
- Comments from the floor included: Education is not an end in itself but a means and should therefore not be examined as a separate issue but as one tool within a broader policy context. Alcohol-related problems among young people cannot be solved by education alone. Initiatives should not be targeted to young people alone: instead the role and position of the whole family should be addressed. The effectiveness of school-based education on alcohol, recently reviewed in some European countries, has not shown an impressive track record. Results suggest that the greatest potential lies in school-parent interaction, in ensuring a supportive study environment and extra-curricular activities, and in the provision of school health services and swift response to young people's problems. It was suggested that: issues around home and school-based alcohol education be given a closer look before further discussion within the Forum; that education experts and stakeholders be involved in the discussion, since most Forum Members lack expertise in this area; that, instead of discussion, descriptions of the few school-based initiatives that have been demonstrated to work be sent to the forthcoming Clearing House.
- The Chair concluded that school-based education on alcohol is not likely to be the magic bullet and that school-based education more generally falls under the subsidiarity principle. Nevertheless, some time could be spent in the Forum's Plenary in November on discussing the broader theme of alcohol education.

- It was suggested that the work of a future Task Force be focussed on product labelling as a means for imparting information to consumers. This would be an area where economic operators could quickly make a difference through voluntary action, as exemplified by Pernod-Ricard's commitment to use the French pregnancy warning logo on the company's alcoholic beverages irrespective of the market in which they are distributed.
- The Chair reiterated that the mandate of the Task Force on Marketing Communication would be closed or reformulated in November and noted that a new Task Force is not necessarily needed, at least so long as its basic idea remains unclear. He announced that the Commission services will prepare for the November Plenary short papers on the current situation regarding the two topics proposed for future work, namely school-based alcohol education and product labelling.

5. Reporting from the Committee on Data Collection, Indicators and Definitions

- The Commission services reported on the work of the Committee on Data Collection, Indicators and Definitions which convened for the first time on 4 December 2008. A summary report of this meeting is available on the Commission's public health website. In order to gather data to underpin action around alcohol, a set of common European indicators needs to be defined. The Committee has agreed upon key indicators for monitoring the volume of alcohol consumption, drinking patterns and alcohol-related (health) harm. The Committee will continue its work by discussing core indicators for monitoring progress in the five priority areas identified in the EU Strategy for alcohol.
- The Chair pointed out that the Committee is not part of the Forum structure, but there is a relationship to the work done in the Forum's framework. A range of quite specific comments and questions relating to the key indicators were presented from the floor. The Chair interpreted this as an acknowledgement of the importance accorded to reliable and comparable data and invited Forum Members to offer experts to participate in the work, preferably with mandate to share relevant data gathered by economic operators. Broader discussion may be needed, such as on data gaps. The Chair concluded that on some topics the absence of a clear working definition across Europe – e.g. what counts as "binge drinking" – is an obstacle to bringing non-experts into the debate and to developing further work.

6. The affordability of alcoholic beverages in the European Union: presentation by RAND, followed by discussion

- RAND Europe presented the main findings from their study on the affordability of alcoholic beverages in the EU, commissioned by DG SANCO. The Chair concluded from the presentation that affordability is not irrelevant as a factor contributing to the volume and pattern of alcohol consumption. More clarity is still needed on certain questions, for instance regarding the compatibility of certain price policies, such as setting minimum prices, with competition or single market regulations.
- The report was welcomed by members of the Forum, although some emphasised again that it had not been a Forum initiative. Opposing views were presented on the quality of the analysis and report. Some economic operators asked if written comments, including those based on a third-party

review, would be accepted. Policy implications were also touched upon, and members of the Forum expressed an interest in continuing the policy discussion.

- The Chair invited Forum members to send written comments relating to the method and analysis to the Commission services by Friday 20th March, to be forwarded to the Forum's Science Group for consideration and for giving feedback to the Forum. Policy-related comments should be sent by the same date, to be considered as basis for discussion in the Forum Plenary in November. The Chair pointed out that arguments around this issue should be intellectually coherent: for instance, affordability as a factor cannot be rejected simply because its impact is supposed to be small, if at the same time self-regulation (in the area of marketing communication) is promoted based on the small contribution it can make to the overall situation.
- The Chair thanked RAND for the report stating that he was pleased with it.

7. Reporting from the Science Group and presentation of the scientific opinion on the impact of marketing communication on the volume (and patterns) of consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially by young people

- The Chair of the Science Group, Ian Gilmore, reported on the work of the group so far, with a focus on the process of formulating upon request from the Forum a scientific opinion on the impact of marketing communication on alcohol consumption among young people. The scientific opinion was adopted unanimously by the Science Group. Peter Anderson, chair of the process, presented the scientific opinion. From a review of the literature, the Science Group concluded that marketing increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol, and drink more if they are already using alcohol. The review took into account a range of factors inter alia (i) the consistency of findings across studies, (ii) the confounders controlled for, (iii) the dose-response relationships, (iv) scientific plausibility.
- In the following discussion, a range of points and questions were raised relating to the scope of existing research, to methodology, to the role of confounders (i.e. other positive or negative influences on young people's alcohol use), to parallels with tobacco advertising, and to reasons behind young people's high sensitivity to advertising appeals. Dr. Anderson informed participants that the Amphora project, under the 7th Framework Programme, will include further European studies on the long term impact of alcohol advertising on young people. As regards methodology and confounders, he noted that there will always be some methodological shortcomings in this type of study and that most potentially relevant confounders have been addressed in some of the studies. Existing research has addressed only part of the total marketing strategy to promote alcoholic beverages. In this light, the Science Group considered it all the more striking that there is consistent, statistically significant evidence of the impact of alcohol advertising on young people's alcohol use.
- Thanking the Science Group for its first scientific opinion the Chair stated that the Forum takes note of their conclusions. He noted that the Science Group's consensual opinion confirms DG SANCO's working hypothesis that alcohol advertising has an effect on young people. Pointing out that decisions about action often need to be taken on the basis of imperfect evidence, he

described the Science Group's opinion as one building block for conclusions to be made in the Forum Plenary in November.

8. Exchange of information regarding the commitments

- The Commission services reported that the commitments reporting and monitoring template had been simplified and a final format had been circulated on March 2nd. The web reporting tool was now on-line and members would receive an email by Friday 13th March with a user guide and access code. Future developments would enable annexes to be added but members were advised to link to any necessary documents on their own web sites for now.
- Members of the Forum were informed that the final deadline for commitment updates to be made is March 27th. New commitments may be added up until midnight on March 30th if extra time is required. The forthcoming evaluation of the monitoring of the implementation of commitments by Forum members will be based on the information inserted in the database as of the dates mentioned before. As a general principle, Members can table new commitments or update existing ones at any moment, but deadlines will be set in relation to the compilation of specific reports.
- The Chair urged members to ensure that a style of intelligent journalism is required to convey a real sense of what has been done. Links could be made to websites for further information but with hyperlinks fully written so as to ensure usability in hard copies printed out from the database.

9. Preparation of the 2nd Open Forum on 30th April

- The Chair stated that the objective of the Open Forum would be to find a sense of the political context and of the contents of the commitments to date. Discussion would centre on issues of implementation and good practice.
- From a practical point of view:
- There will be limited exhibition space available, probably within the meeting room, for posters, photographs and computers. Members were invited to inform the Commission services about their wishes for exposing materials related to their activities to reduce alcohol related harm;
- Members of the Forum were invited to consider volunteering themselves and their colleagues for the three round tables: youth, marketing, consumer information and education. The Commission would arrange membership of the 4th round table on inter-governmental policy.

10. Membership requests

- The European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) had made a formal request for membership of the European Alcohol and Health Forum. As a European network of youth work and youth club organisations ECYC fulfils the criteria for membership set out in the Forum Charter and was accepted as a new member.
- Alcohol Concern, based in the UK, has applied for membership in Eurocare and, pending positive decision, would also apply to be admitted as Forum member. Being under the Eurocare umbrella Alcohol Concern would meet the Forum criteria. It was decided that pending Eurocare's decision on membership, Alcohol Concern would be accepted as an observer in the Forum and included in the mailing list.

- Participants were informed that the International Confederation of Medical Students has decided to apply for membership in the Forum. It was decided that pending submission of a formal request, the Confederation would be accepted, like Alcohol Concern, as an observer.

11. Forum timeline, next meetings

- Members of the Forum were reminded of the dates for upcoming meetings:
- Open Forum: 30th April 2009;
- Science Group: 29th June and 19th October 2009;
- Task Force on Marketing Communication: 9th June 2009;
- Forum Plenary: 12th November 2009.

12. Any other business

- The Chair clarified the procedure with regard to the submission of written comments to the Science Group on the RAND report. The Science Group would examine the report and comments and, according to its rules, involve further experts when deemed necessary, starting with the reserve list drawn up in conjunction with the nomination of the Group.

13. Concluding remarks

- The Chair reminded members of the Forum that even though the independent impact of separate factors and policies may not be impressive, each factor will account for part of the total effect. He noted that no individual study is going to give a final answer on actions and policies to be taken in Europe to reduce alcohol-related harm. Individual research reports should instead be regarded as building blocks of the knowledge base for decision making.
- The Chair pointed out that the plenary meeting of the Forum in November will focus on examining the added value, if any, of the kind of deliberative approach such as the Alcohol and Health Forum process so far. Agreement should be reached on the next steps leading to the second phase of the work around key issues.
- The Chair concluded by thanking members of the Forum for their contributions and for the quality of the discussion.

Annex 1: Participants List

ORGANISATION	SURNAME	NAME
Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI)	GARTH	Rosemary
	PELOZA	Jan
Alcohol Policy Youth Network (APYN)	SALVIANO CARMO	João
Association des Télévisions Commerciales Européennes	HAUK	Maxime
Association of Television and Radio Sales Houses (Egta)	SBOARINA	Laura
	FERNANDEZ	José Ramón
Comité Européen des Entreprises Vin (CEEV)	SANDEMAN	George
Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the EU – General Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the EU (COPA-COGECA)	CORRAL	Eva
	RAPLEY	Emilie
EUROCARE	SKAR	Mariann
	MURPHY	Cliona
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcohol Action Ireland 	RYAN	Fiona
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association Nationale de Prévention en Alcoologie et Addictologie (ANPPA) 	CRAPLET	Michel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estonian Temperance Union 	BEEKMANN	Lauri
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German Centre for Addiction Issues (DHS) 	BARTSCH	Gabriele
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) 	OWEN	Aneurin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IOGT-NTO 	ODIN	Susanna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN) 	ROMANUS	Gabriel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Foundation for Alcohol Prevention (STAP) 	VAN DALEN	Wim
EUROCOMMERCE	VALVERDE LOPEZ	Marina
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delhaize Group 	BORGERHOFF	Katja
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Ahold 	BYRNES	Hugo
European Cider and Fruit Wine Association (AICV)	TRBOJEVIC	Milica
European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)	HIRVONEN	Annina
European Association of Communication Agencies (EACA)	LYLE	Dominic
European Federation of Magazine Publishers (FAEP)	MAHON	David
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)	DEL ZOTTO	Stefania

European Forum for Responsible Drinking (EFRD)	BRIGAUDEAU ZWIRN	Carole Gregor
European Mutual Health Network for Individuals and Families with Alcohol-related Problems (EMNA)	PALMESINO	Ennio
European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)	KOSINSKA	Monika
• Royal College of Physicians London	GILMORE	Ian
• Royal College of Physicians London	BELCHER	Paul
• Royal College of Physicians London	SHERON	Nick
European Publishers Council (EPC)	CHRYSOPOULOU	Sophia
European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP-REIF)	GOUËLLO	Martine
The European Spirits Organisation (CEPS)	FORTESCUE	Jamie
• Bacardi-Martini	SEARLE	Chris
• Brown-Forman	CROSSICK	Elizabeth
	LUPPINO	Joseph
• Diageo	SCOTT-WILSON	Chris
• Moët Hennessy	DE GUITAUT	Guillaume
• Moët Hennessy	VAES	Eric
• Pernod-Ricard S.A.	CONNOR	Rick
• The Scotch Whisky Association	HEWITT	Gavin
• V&S Group	LUKSEP	Peeter
European Sponsorship Association (ESA)	DAY	Helen
European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)	EKSLER	Vojtech
European Youth Forum	TENG	Julie
	SEQUARIS	Marguerite
HOTREC	VALLINI	Marco
• British Beer and Pub Association	KING	Rita
International Centre for Alcohol Policies (ICAP)	GRANT	Marcus
Institut de Recherches Scientifique sur les boissons alcoolisées (IREB)	LEYMARIE	Nicole
The Brewers of Europe	BERGERON HEDEAGER NIELSEN	Pierre-Olivier Knud
• Heineken (International)	GOETHART	Rutger

• InBev	VAN REETH	Catherine
• SABMiller	GARAMSZEGI	Gabor

OBSERVERS (MEMBER STATES)		
Netherlands (Ministry of Health)	VAN DER VELDEN	Karin
Portugal	CARDOSO	Manuel
Portugal (Health Ministry)	RIBEIRO	Cristina
Sweden	JOHANSSON	Isara
UK	NICOL	Jean

OBSERVERS		
Carrefour	DESMALIERES	Ferdinand
EASA	ALEXANDRE	Laure
Landmark Europe	RENALDI	Rocco
	GORDON	Ross
Open University	WILKS	Linda
Public Health Consultant	ANDERSON	Peter
	DE VRIES	Han
RAND	RABINOVICH	Lila
WHO	ARNAUDOVA	Albena

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