



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Public Health
Health Determinants

EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM

14th Plenary Meeting

BRUSSELS, 9 APRIL 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

1. Opening by the Chair, John F. Ryan, Acting Director for Public Health, Directorate General for Health and Consumers

- John F. Ryan welcomed the participants. The agenda was approved without any modifications.
- Membership requests from four organizations were considered by the Forum:
 - Union des Métiers et des Industries de L'hôtellerie (UMIH)
 - Associazione Italiana Imprese Intrattenimento da Ballo e di Spettacolo (SILB-FIPE)
 - Alcohol Health Network (AHN)
 - NO EXCUSE SLOVENIA.
- The Chair informed that all applying organisations fulfil the criteria for membership set out in the Charter. Representatives of the organisations gave brief presentations on their activities envisaged as commitments for the Forum. Forum members agreed on their membership and welcomed them to the Forum. With the new organisations, the total number of Forum members will be 64.
- The request for membership of the European Liver Patients Association will be considered in the next Forum meeting when they will be able to present their organization and commitment.

2. Highlights by Commission Services

- DG SANCO gave an update on the work on the Action Plan on Youth and on Binge Drinking. The Action Plan will set out a list of concrete optional actions targeting youth and binge drinking within a two-year time frame. It will support areas of action of the EU Alcohol Strategy that Member States consider highly relevant.

- The areas for action preliminarily agreed by the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action (CNAPA) are the following:
 1. Reduce heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking)
 2. Reduce availability and accessibility of alcoholic beverages to youth
 3. Limit exposure of youth to marketing and advertising
 4. Protect the unborn child,
 5. Ensure a healthy and safe environment for children and young people,
 6. Monitor and increase research
- The Forum may suggest actions for these areas for action until 16 April 2014. It will be for CNAPA to consider and decide whether or not the suggested actions fit into the Action Plan. Action suggested after the date may not be considered, depending on how far the work has progressed.
- Some members raised the concern that as the areas for action and operational objectives are not yet completely finalized, this may give room for stakeholders for influencing the final structure of the Action Plan. DG SANCO indicated that CNAPA members are in the very last stage of finalizing the structure and that major changes are not expected. Forum members have been invited to suggest actions and not to comment on the structure and content.
- DG SANCO gave an update on the latest developments in the Joint Action.
 - The Joint Action to Reduce Alcohol Related Harm aims to mobilise countries to develop common approaches in line with the EU alcohol strategy, including developing methodologies to conduct alcohol surveys and pool data for comparative assessments, translating scientific evidence and knowledge into practical implications for good practice in alcohol-related interventions and producing a toolkit of potentially transferable interventions with evidence of effectiveness and cost estimates.
 - The kick-off meeting, held in Lisbon on 30-31 January 2014, was the first public presentation involving all partners, CNAPA members, national and international stakeholders and the press. The first meeting of the Advisory Group of the Joint Action took place on 4 March 2014. This group comprises CNAPA members and associated partners.
- GfK Belgium presented their study on “State of Play in the Use of Alcoholic Beverages Labels to Inform Consumers About Health Aspects”. The main conclusions of the study are that there is a limited presence of health messages on alcoholic beverages and that there is a wide divergence in type and form of messages. The Chair indicated that this report will be discussed at the next Forum meeting, when the study is published and Forum members had time to consider it in details.

3. Final results of the 2013 assessment of monitoring and evaluation approaches of Forum commitments

- Milieu Ltd presented the 2013 assessment of EAHF monitoring activities.
 - Only 41 % of the Forum Members submitted monitoring reports in 2013. Generally, these reports focus more on description of the evaluation method than on the outcomes. The quality of the members reports show no improvement compared to last year's reports.
 - Based on the results, DG SANCO suggested establishing an ad-hoc working group to consider and discuss the governance of the Forum and the reporting of the commitments by the members. The Chair highlighted that the governance of the Forum shall be in line with the Charter of the Forum. Forum members were invited to volunteer for this working group that will report back to the next Forum meeting.

4. Status report on the commitments

- DG SANCO presented a brief quantitative report showing that the number of active commitments in Forum is decreasing which is a worrying trend that needs remedy. Besides the concerns related to the quality and quantity of commitments, several other ideas were raised as topics for a working group discussion, e.g. renewal of expired commitments that are to be continued, situation of low-resource organisations with regards to the financial burden of commitments.

5. Pilot Community of Practice for Better Self- and Co-Regulation

- Robert Madalin, Director General of DG CNECT, updated the Forum members with the initiative on the Pilot Community of Practice for better self and co-regulation.
- He highlighted the added value of the initiative: to allow work out a more accurate estimation of the costs and benefits of self-regulatory initiatives.
- He reminded some of the benchmark principles across the sectors for initiatives on the field of “soft law”, which naturally has a common ground with the principles of the European Alcohol and Health Forum:
 - Stakeholders to define common goals and objectives
 - Active participation: reporting and evaluating activities, including finding ways to solve disagreements
 - Interactive process, with permanent room for improvement.
- He drew attention to the need to revisit the relationship between evidence and policy making and make it more “modest” as conclusions are frequently drawn on the basis of thin evidence. In his view, it is unrealistic to state that policy must be solely based on evidence, since political decisions depend also on subjectivity, judgement and values. Therefore, in order to interpret evidence in a manner acceptable to possibly all parties concerned, it is crucial to involve all parties before making a judgement on evidence. Avoiding extreme positions and instead seeking cooperation and consensual approaches are usually beneficial for the case.

- A discussion on the role of self-regulation versus regulation followed. It was stressed that in the current political socio-economic and cultural context the introduction of alcohol related regulation both at EU and national level (e.g. Minimum Unit Pricing in Scotland) is a challenging issue. In case of national measures, the compatibility with EU law has to be carefully considered.
- Forum members were invited to participate, to the greatest possible extent, in the next community meeting on 12 June 2014.

6. Issue in focus: Research and funding

- As a follow up of the last Forum meeting discussion on research, two presentations were given.
- Attila Balogh (SANCO) gave a presentation on the funding opportunities of activities under the recently adopted Health Programme 2014-2020. The call for application will be launched on the Commission's website soon with a deadline in September.
- Helmut Walerius (SANCO) gave information on DG SANCO's interface with DG Research and how the priorities for public health research are identified. The innovations of the Horizon-2020 were explained in comparison to the former 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7; 2007- 2013).
- Horizon 2020 is now a single programme, bringing together three separate programmes/initiatives (7th Research Framework Programme, innovation aspects of Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), EU contribution to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)). It couples research with innovation with a focus on societal challenges the EU society is facing, e.g. health, clean energy and transport. The Programme offers a simplified access for all companies, universities, institutes in all the EU countries and beyond.
- The priority areas where health research infrastructure is planned to be strengthened were highlighted from a public health perspective, including mainly research on health indicators and on rare diseases.
- Content and structure of the ongoing calls as well as the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) were also presented. (ERIC is the legal instrument (Council Regulation (EC) No 723/2009) at EU level to facilitate the joint establishment and operation of research infrastructure of European interest.)
- The discussion on the role of the EAHF Science Group was postponed as more in depth reflection on it was considered necessary within the Commission. Several options are envisaged at this stage, which include a possible horizontal approach for scientific advice directed not only for alcohol but also to other health determinants.

7. Drink driving

- DG MOVE gave a presentation on drink driving in Europe. The problem was quantified, some data on the social attitudes towards alcohol risks were addressed and examples of measures to prevent drink driving were presented.

- The [policy orientations on road safety \(2011-2020\)](#) were presented. These orientations integrate the relevant objectives of other public policies and take fully account of the results obtained during the 3rd road safety action programme 2001-2010. It was shown that in spite of important progress made on road safety, efforts need to be continued and further strengthened.
- Objective n° 2 referring to compliance with road traffic rules was highlighted as it foresees the obligatory introduction of alcohol interlocks in certain specific cases (vehicles compulsory, for example with respect to professional transport (e.g. school buses).
- The EU Policy concerning drink-driving behaviour was also addressed. The 2001 EU recommendation for maximum blood alcohol content (0,5g/l for general and 0,2g/l for novel drivers) and the cross-border enforcement directive for pursuing serious traffic offences e.g. drink driving was highlighted. Some examples of studies and funds, research and actions promoting road safety addressing drink-driving (such as PRAISE, SARTRE IV, DRUID, European Road safety Charter) were shared with the meeting.
- The outcomes of a study commissioned by DG MOVE on alcohol interlock devices were also presented, including stakeholder consultation, cost-benefit analyses and a set of recommendations as follows:
 - Exchange knowledge and best practices among Member States;
 - Harmonise technical requirements and cross border aspects of the use of alcohol interlocks;
 - Draft guidelines on alcohol interlocks for high Blood Alcohol Content offenders;
 - Stimulate the development of new generation alcohol interlocks with a view to future compulsory installation ex-factory in specific groups of vehicles, like commercial goods vehicles.
- The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) gave an update of their activities and mentioned the SMART project, supported by Brewers of Europe, already presented in the Forum meeting on 25 April 2013. ETSC's set of recommendations to Member States, including zero tolerance at least for commercial and novice drivers, national enforcement plans, systematic breath-testing, the use of alcohol interlocks for repeating offenders and in rehabilitation programmes was also shared with the meeting.

8. Conclusions by the Chair

- The Forum has now 64 members after four new members joined the Forum (Union des Metiers et des Industries de L'Hotellerie (UMIH); Associazione Italiana Imprese Intrattenimento da Ballo e di Spettacolo (SILB-FIPE); NO EXCUSE SLOVENIA; Alcohol Health Network (AHN))
- The European Liver Patients Association (ELPA) will introduce their organization and commitment for the Forum in the next Forum meeting.
- Forum members were invited to send their possible written contributions to be discussed by Forum meetings not later than two weeks in advance of the given meeting.

- CNAPA foresees to agree on the Action Plan on its next meeting on 17-18 June.
- Forum members are invited to suggest actions relevant for the Action Plan on Youth and on Binge Drinking until 16 April 2014.
- The recently started Joint Action on Reducing Alcohol Related Harm is a useful instrument to mobilise Member States to develop common approaches in line with the EU alcohol strategy. The interest of Forum members for participation in and input to the Joint Action was acknowledged. SANCO will duly inform of this interest the Joint Action leaders.
- The final report of the "Health related information on alcoholic beverage labels" study will be published in the coming weeks. It will be on the agenda for the next Forum Meeting for a more detailed discussion.
- The link to the 2013 monitoring progress report of the Forum commitments published on the SANCO website earlier this year will be circulated to the EAHF members.
- It is important that all members fulfil the requirements for membership set out in the Forum Charter and have at least one active commitment. Currently there are 29 without an active commitment (the four members joined the Forum at this meeting are not counted).
- A Working Group consisting of volunteering Forum members will be established, to look mainly at the following questions:
 - i. what can be appropriate input/output indicators, e.g. financial and human resources of commitments;
 - ii. how governance of the Forum in relation to the obligation of Forum members to introduce at least one active commitment can be improved
 - iii. how to meet the specific needs of the commitments of low-resource organisations
 - iv. how expired commitments can best be resubmitted or continuous commitments repeated in the database.
- The Working Group will report back to the Forum on the Group's discussions in the next Forum plenary meeting.
- Forum members are invited to join the Pilot Community of Practice for Better Self- and Co-Regulation in its next meeting on 12 June 2014.
- The upcoming opportunities of the Health Programme and of the research programme "Horizon 2020 for Research and Funding" were emphasised. Calls for proposals of the Health Programme will be launched early summer. Discussions on the future of the Science Group are postponed.
- The next plenary meeting of the Forum is foreseen for 6 November 2014.

30 April 2014, Luxembourg