

No reason for optimism: the expected impact of commitments in the European Commission's Alcohol and Health Forum

Avalon de Bruijn (adebruijn@eucam.info)

European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM), Utrecht, the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Background Europe is the heaviest-drinking region in the world, more than 2.5 times the rest of the world's average.

The Commission's conclusion The cornerstone for the European Commission's action to decrease the alcohol-related harm of this consumption and the main emphasis for its work is the Alcohol and Health Forum, with its Task Forces on Marketing Communication and Youth-Specific Aspects of Alcohol. The Forum, which was launched in June 2007, aims to provide a common platform for all interested stakeholders. Forum members are invited to make commitments to reduce alcohol-related harm, in the form of a monitored and evaluated action plan. By 29 February 2008, 79 commitments have been provided by the members of the Forum.

Appraisal of the initiative Taking into account the limited information available, the proposed commitments indicate few evidence-based approaches. A large majority of the summaries do not, or only slightly, address the relevance of their commitment and give no evidence of why their proposed action is important in reducing alcohol-related harm. Even fewer commitments mention indicators of effectiveness of the proposed actions or propose to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed actions.

Conclusion While most economic operators in the Forum have resources to undertake actions which could be highly effective, they commit principally to educational programmes which have been found to be mainly ineffective. This, and the neglect of existing legislation, do not give reason for optimism on the impact of the proposed commitments.

Reference:

De Bruijn, A. (2008). No reason for optimism: the expected impact of commitments in the European Commission's Alcohol and Health Forum. *Addiction*, 103, 1588-1592.