

Reducing underage access to alcohol in Italy

Reducing underage drinking in Milan, Italy

National legislation in Italy prevents the sale of alcohol to individuals who are under the age of 16 in pubs, bars and restaurants. However, to address concerns regarding teenage alcohol consumption, authorities in the city of Milan have used local legislation to strengthen restrictions against underage drinking, increase enforcement activity and impose a series of penalties on those who violate the law.^{1,2}



In 2009, a local order was introduced that banned any sale or provision of alcohol to those under the age of 16, and made it illegal for under-16s to consume alcohol in public places. Thus, adults are not allowed to purchase alcohol on behalf of those under the age of 16, and underage youth are not allowed to consume alcohol in public places (including pubs and bars) or purchase alcohol themselves from any outlet (including vending machines and supermarkets). Violation of the legislation is punished through fines that can be imposed on both those who sell alcohol to underage drinkers, and on the parents of the underage drinkers themselves. For example, the fine for parents is 500 Euros, with a reduced fine of 450 Euros if paid within five days.

The introduction of the local law was accompanied by increased police enforcement activity to check compliance and identify and punish violations. Responsibility for enforcement is shared between the local police, the state police, the carabinieri (a branch of the armed forces that protects both civil and military populations) and the Guardia di Finanza (Finance Guard). Enforcement is focused particularly in nightlife areas and at peak times for underage drinking, such as holiday periods.

In addition to age legislation, increased enforcement activity focuses on detecting and addressing violations of other alcohol-focused legislation such as that governing alcohol sales hours. Authorities in Milan are also working with alcohol retailers to develop a code of practice to encourage self-regulation and responsible retail practice. There is currently no information available on the impacts of the new legislation on underage drinking or alcohol-related harms in Milan. However, several other cities in Italy are adopting similar local orders to address concerns regarding increasing underage alcohol consumption and associated harms.

1. Municipality of Milan. Alcol vietato agli under 16. 2009. Available from: http://www.comune.milano.it/portale/wps/portal/CDM?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/ContentLibrary/giornale/giornale/tutte+le+notizie/sindaco/sindaco_ordinanza_contro_alcol.
2. Corriere della Sera. Alcolici vietati ai minori di 16 anni. (2009). Available from: http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/09_luglio_17/milano_divieto_vendita_alcolici_minori_sedici_anni-1601579157776.shtml