

Report on ECL's Commitment into the Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF) 2015

Background Document

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL) is a founding member of the European Alcohol and Health Forum.

This is the commitment that was submitted October 2014, and reviewed first half of 2015. The commitment has not been updated since due to ECL's joining the other health NGO's in resigning from the Forum. *The Press Release on 3 June from Eurocare summarizing the resignation is at the end of this document.*

This is a report on the commitment that was submitted on 2 October 2014, originally planned to run until October 2016.

Title of the commitment into EAHF: Collaborative awareness raising on Alcohol Consumption and Cancer Control

Commitment summary: Eurocare together with The Association of European Cancer Leagues wish to increase awareness about the link between drinking alcohol and risk of getting cancer. This information is not only little known among the general public, but also more awareness of the salience of the problem needs to be established among policy making stakeholders (Member States, European Institutions, NGOs, economic operators).

Introduction: One in four EU citizens will be diagnosed with cancer, however only a few are aware of the link between drinking alcohol and cancer.

The Eurobarometer survey (April 2010) has indicated that 1 in 5 European citizens do not believe that there is a connection between alcohol and cancer and 1 in 10 do not know about the link.

Eurocare together with ECL will link their respective expertise in the fields of alcohol and cancer, with the aim of producing informative material.

This material will be distributed as widely as possible and will also support the cancer prevention and health promotion streams of Cancon, as well as the European Code against Cancer.

This commitment aligns with priority areas of the EU Alcohol Strategy, namely-

Inform, educate and raise awareness on the impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption, and on appropriate consumption patterns' with an informative website www.alcoholandcancer.eu



Link to further information relating to the commitment www.europeancancerleagues.org and www.eurocare.org.

The forum members associated with the commitment are EURO CARE and ECL.

Background to the commitment: Cancer is the second most common cause of death in Europe, nearly around 2.5 million EU citizens are diagnosed with cancer yearly. As many as 30% of cancers can be prevented if we make healthier choices.

10% of cancers in men and 3% in women can be attributed to drinking alcohol. The first conclusive links between alcohol and cancer were established back in 1987, yet 25 years later only 36% of EU citizens are sure of this link. The 2010 Eurobarometer report found that 1 in 5 European citizens do not believe that there is a connection between alcohol and cancer and 1 in 10 do not know about the link.

ECL facilitates collaboration between cancer leagues throughout Europe and influences EU and pan-European policies. ECL identifies and promotes common strategies in cancer control in order to achieve health equity in cancer prevention, treatment and services.

Eurocare aim to raise awareness among European, national and regional decision makers of the harms caused by alcohol (social, health and economic burden) ensuring that these are taken into consideration in all relevant EU policy discussions and promote the development and implementation of evidence-based policies aimed at effectively preventing and reducing this burden

Priority area: Develop efficient common approaches to provide adequate consumer information

Start date - Oct-2014, End date -Oct-2016

Objectives: Raise awareness among decision-makers, member organisations and the public at large on the risk between alcohol consumption and cancer.

Increase information impact with updated and relevant news.



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www.europeancancerleagues.org, www.alcoholandcancer.eu

Make scientifically sound and attractively presented information on alcohol and cancer easily accessible to key audiences.

Increase awareness among health professionals and investigate possibilities for joint commitments in the future.

Relevance Increasing knowledge of risks associated with drinking alcohol and developing cancer is in line with the priority areas of the EU Alcohol Strategy to Inform, educate and raise awareness on the impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption, and on appropriate consumption patterns'

Short term outcome and impact: Awareness raising among Policy Makers

Medium Term: Awareness raising among policy makers & general public

Long Term: Awareness raising among policy makers & general public

Press Release 3 June 2015: NGOS RESIGN FROM HEALTH FORUM AS COMMISSION IGNORES MEMBER STATE AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR ALCOHOL STRATEGY

Public Health NGOs have today resigned from the EU Alcohol and Health Forum, following the announcement by Commissioner Andriukaitis that he has no plans to establish a new EU Alcohol Strategy[1]. The Commissioner's decision goes against demands from Member States and the European Parliament for a new comprehensive Strategy to tackle alcohol harm in Europe.

Membership of the Forum, which is chaired by DG Sante, includes drinks industry representatives and public health NGOs. More than 20 health bodies, including Eurocare (European Alcohol Policy Alliance), EPHA (European Public Health Alliance) and the CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors) today tendered their collective resignation in an open letter to Commissioner Andriukaitis.

Signatories to the letter outline their "deep concerns" about the neglect of public health and the prioritisation of alcohol industry interests. These include:

- The Commission is ignoring calls from the European Parliament and Member States to develop a new EU Alcohol Strategy
- The Commission plans to include alcohol within a wider framework for tackling chronic disease, which would fail to address many harms caused by alcohol to those other than the drinker, such as drink driving, domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation
- There is no evidence to show that the EU Alcohol and Health Forum has had any impact on public health
- The Forum was established to support the implementation of the previous EU Alcohol Strategy, which ended in 2012. With no new Strategy planned, membership of the Forum cannot be justified.

Signatories also expressed disappointment that the Commissioner had rejected requests for public health experts to have a formal structure to meet with Commission officials to discuss alcohol policy, free from vested interest groups.

Mariann Skar, Secretary General of Eurocare, said: "The Commissioner himself stated drinking behaviours in Europe are good for the Alcohol Industry but not good for Health. Eurocare represents 58 organisations in 25 countries and we deeply regret the Commission's decision not to establish a new EU Alcohol Strategy. This flies in the face of persistent demands from Member States, the European Parliament and NGOs. The EU is the heaviest drinking region in the world and with



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120,000 premature deaths related to alcohol each year, we absolutely must have a comprehensive strategy to tackle alcohol harm.”

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair of the EU Alcohol and Health Forum’s Science Group said, “This is a sad day for those who care about health in Europe. The Commission’s prioritisation of alcohol industry interests over public health has been laid bare. Many NGOs have participated actively and in good faith in the EU Alcohol and Health Forum, in the hope of making progress and reducing alcohol harm. However, with no evidence to indicate the Forum has achieved any meaningful results, and no promise of a new Alcohol Strategy, we see no alternative to walking away from this failing organization.”

Nina Renshaw, Secretary General of EPHA, said, "The alcohol industry must have raised a few glasses to DG SANTE after their admission at the last Forum meeting that they don't even aim to improve health. The Commission has finally admitted what the health community has long suspected - that they have abandoned alcohol policy altogether. The Forum has proved worse than useless, a free PR front for the industry. The Commission even endorses the industry introducing drinking culture to young kids by promoting "responsible" drinking in primary schools. The health community had to call time on this charade."

- ENDS -

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