



European  
Commission

Health & Consumer Protection  
Directorate-General

# Alcohol: The European Dimension

*Royal College of Physicians*

**London, 13 November 2007**

***Robert Madelin***

***Director General***

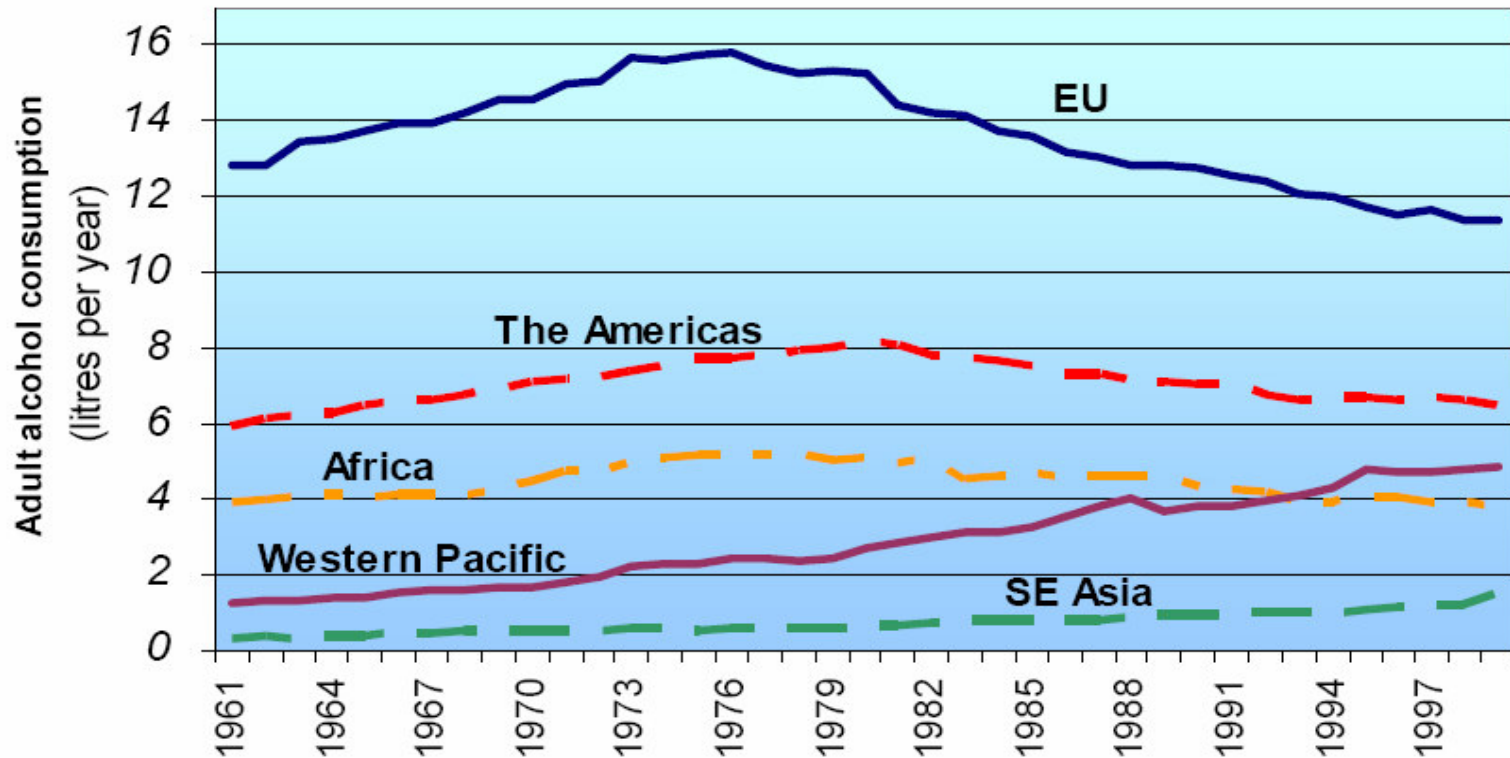
***Health and Consumer Protection***

***European Commission***

# a European issue

- **consumption levels going down across Europe  
- but Europe still is region with highest alcohol  
consumption in the world**

# a European issue



**Figure 4.1** Europe and the world's drinking Sources: *Global Status Report on Alcohol* (WHO 2004); EU figures are taken from *WHO Health for All Database* and *WHO Global Alcohol Database* (as below). Averages are population-weighted.

# a European issue

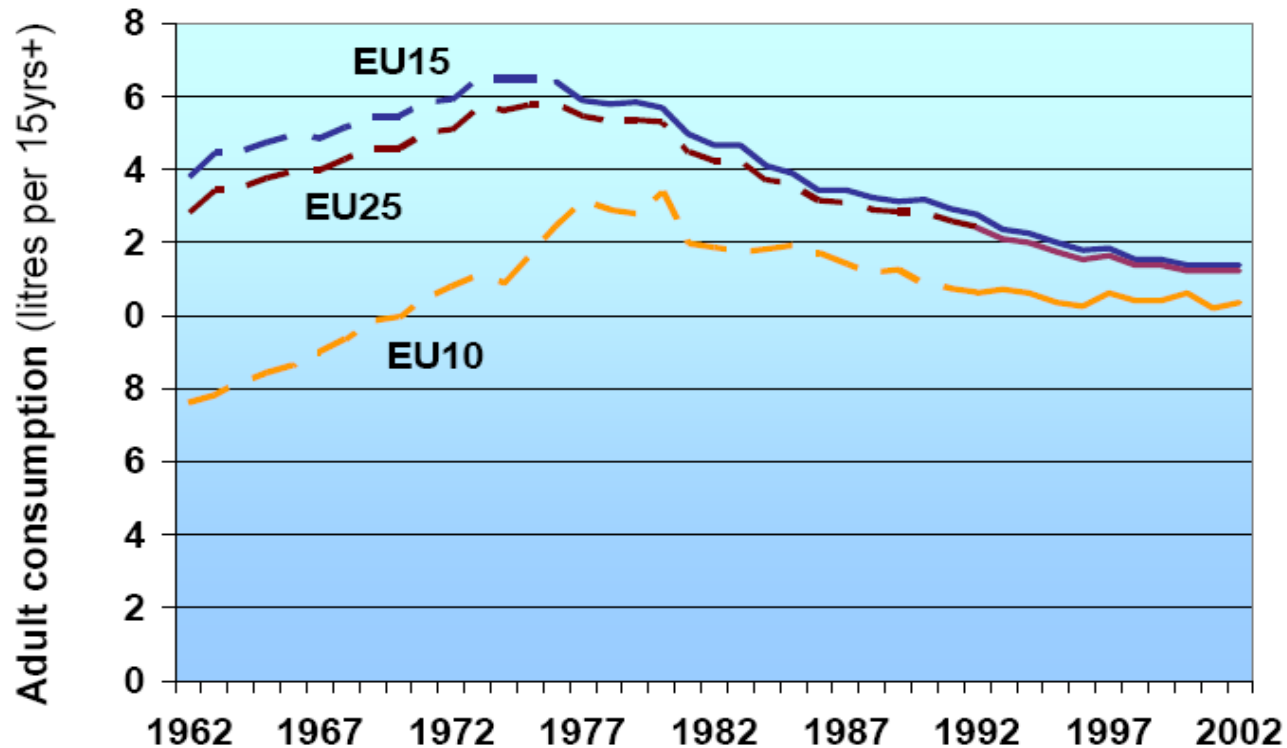
- consumption levels going down across Europe  
- but Europe still is region with highest alcohol consumption in the world
- **moreover, decrease in consumption is levelling off**



European  
Commission

Health & Consumer Protection  
Directorate-General

# a European issue



**Figure 4.5** Trends in European recorded alcohol consumption  
*Data were not available for all countries for the full 40-year period – dashed lines have been used to indicate the trend in the smaller number of countries with data.<sup>7</sup> Source: WHO Health for All Database (1961-9 trend from WHO Global Alcohol Database).*

from: P. Anderson, B. Baumberg: *Alcohol in Europe*, 2006

# a European issue

- consumption levels going down across Europe  
- but Europe still is region with highest alcohol consumption in the world
  - moreover, decrease in consumption is levelling off
  - **drinking cultures do vary across Europe**
  - **however, traditional divisions of drinking cultures between**
    - **'North' vs 'South'**
    - **'wet' vs 'dry'**
    - **'drinking with meals only' vs 'drinking outside meals'**
- are becoming fuzzy**

## a European issue *(contd.)*

- **certain North-South gradient still exists - but many trends are converging:**
  - consumption levels
  - beverage preferences
  - increased binge drinking by young people in countries not used to these problems (*«el botellón»* in Spain ...)
- **most countries in EU face similar problems (*“convergence of harm”*):**
  - under-age drinking
  - binge drinking
  - drink-driving...
- **need for action at European level confirmed by Council/Member States, EP, EESC**

# a time for action

- **environment for action to reduce alcohol-related harm seems to be evolving:**
  - **EU: alcohol high on agenda (*Commission Communication; Council Conclusions; Reports by EP, ECOSOC; European Alcohol & Health Forum...*)**
  - **MS: encouraging developments (*lower BACs, random testing, pregnancy or drink-driving warnings, enforcement...*)**
  - **media: greater attention to harm caused by alcohol (*binge drinking by young people, flat rate parties...*)**
  - **economic operators: social responsibility**
  - **citizens: support action to address alcohol harm (*Eurobarometer: strong support for pregnancy and drink-driving warnings*). High public expectation to take action on youth.**



# the way forward

- **strong push for action needed to take advantage of improving environment:**
  - **action in broad range of areas**
  - **action by great variety of stakeholders**
  - **action at all levels, from local to global**
  - **partnerships**
- **EU approach – two main alleys:**
  - **cooperation with Member States:**
    - **coordination of government-driven policies**
    - **review national and regional alcohol policy development – dissemination of best practice**
  - **stakeholder partnership approach:**
    - **multi-stakeholder platform “European Alcohol and Health Forum”**



European  
Commission

Health & Consumer Protection  
Directorate-General

# European Alcohol and Health Forum

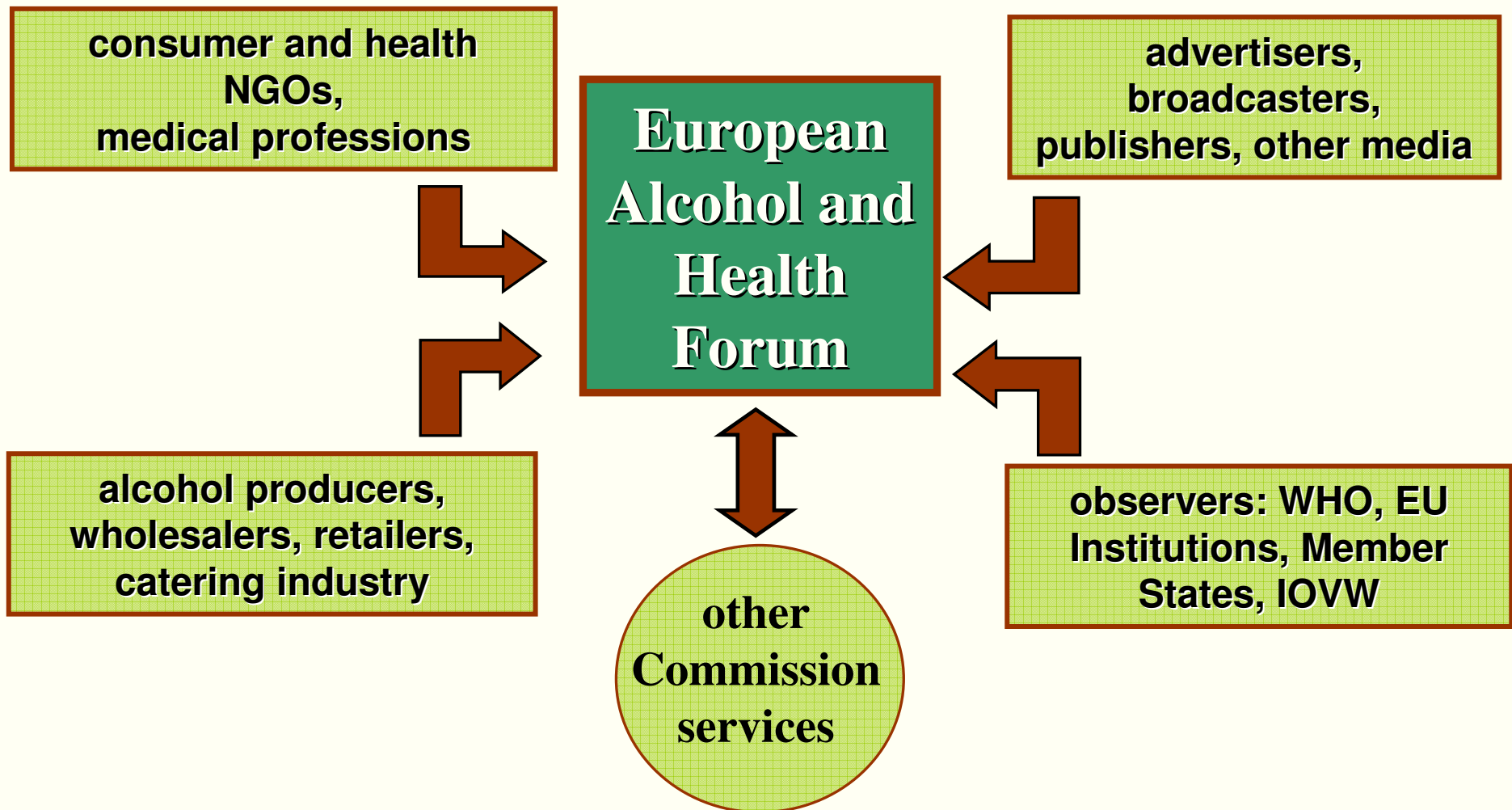


European Commission

# European Alcohol and Health Forum

- **overall objective:**
  - **provide common platform for all interested stakeholders at EU level willing to step up actions aimed at reducing alcohol harm**
- **main areas to be addressed:**
  - **under age drinking**
  - **information on effect of harmful drinking**
  - **responsible drinking/promote behavioural changes**
  - **consumer information**
  - **commercial communication**

# European Alcohol and Health Forum: participants



# European Alcohol and Health Forum: eligibility

- **umbrella organisations operating at a European level**
  - **capable of playing active role in reducing alcohol-related harm in EU**
  - **willing to engage in concrete and verifiable commitments**
- **organisations operating at national or sub-national level, or individual companies**
  - **willing to engage in concrete and verifiable commitments**
  - **European-level umbrella organisation or federation needs to be Forum member**
- **50 Founding Members at Forum launch**



European  
Commission

Health & Consumer Protection  
Directorate-General

# European Alcohol and Health Forum: commitments

- **members formally and publicly commit to concrete action**
- **commitments to reflect Forum members' objectives and resources**
- **commitments to indicate level of relevant current activities as baseline**
- **members to devote increasing level of effort beyond baseline to commitments**
- **commitments to indicate measurable objectives**
- **all commitments feed into public data base**

# European Alcohol and Health Forum: monitoring, evaluation

- **commitments monitored + evaluated in transparent, participative and accountable way**
- **outside involvement in reviewing progress and outcomes (to create trust in process)**
- **monitoring and evaluation plan for each commitment**
  - **in line with agreed monitoring guide**
  - **reports on input, output and outcomes of commitments (publicly available)**
- **periodic Commission reports on Forum progress**

# European Alcohol and Health Forum: structure







European  
Commission

Health & Consumer Protection  
Directorate-General

# putting EU Strategy into practice

## Implementing the Commission Communication

### European Alcohol and Health Forum

Science  
Group

Plenary  
Session

Open  
Forum

Task Force on  
Marketing  
Communication

Task Force on  
youth-specific aspects  
of alcohol

Committee on  
National Policy  
and Action

Committee on  
Data  
Collection,  
Indicators and  
Definitions

# medical professions' contribution

- **Royal College of Physicians (under European Public Health Alliance umbrella), Standing Committee of European Doctors and European Midwives Association are Forum members**
- **concrete commitments to action could be in fields such as:**
  - **alcohol and pregnancy**
  - **general attitudes to alcohol**
  - **identifying people with particular risks**
  - **particular attention for**
    - **children living in families with alcohol problems**
    - **young people**
    - **alcohol at the workplace**
    - **elderly...**

- **long-term objective:**
  - **change attitudes towards irresponsible drinking across societies:**
    - being drunk should no longer be socially acceptable**
    - (similar to tobacco, where smoking seems to be less and less socially accepted)***