

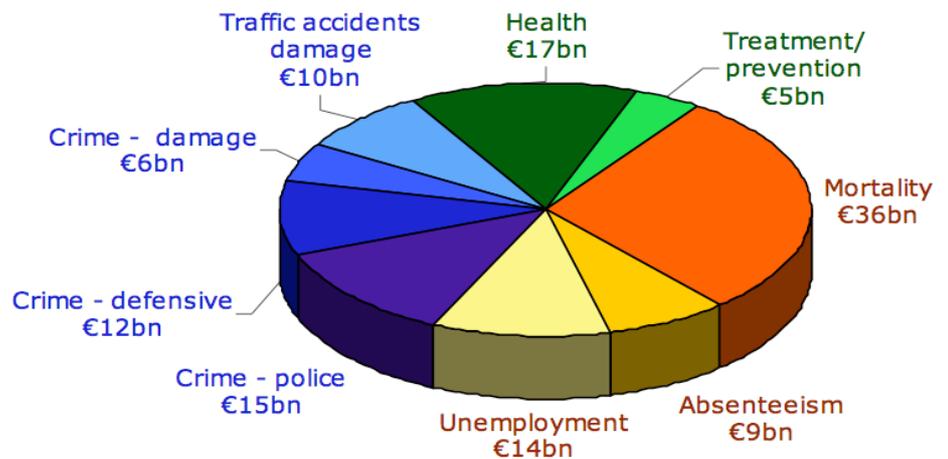
What is Alcohol Doing To Your Citizens and Your Economy? **FACT SHEET**

This fact sheet arises from the project Building Capacity, which has received funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Public Health Programme. Sole responsibility for the contents of this publication lies with the author. The Executive Agency is not responsible for any use of the information that may be contained herein.



The Social Cost of Alcohol

According to the Alcohol in Europe Report (2006), the problems attributable to alcohol represent an economic burden to society were to reach a **total tangible cost** of €125 bn corresponding to €650/ house/ year estimated in 2003. This amount represents 1.3% of the GDP (which is of similar magnitude to the total tangible cost of tobacco).



The tangible cost of alcohol in Europe
 Alcohol in Europe Report (2006)

- Healthcare amounted to €22 bn for the treatment of alcohol-related ill-health and for treatment and prevention of harmful alcohol use and dependence.
- Approximately a quarter (€33 bn) of the costs were attributed to the police, courts and prisons, crime prevention expenditure (burglar alarms) and insurance administration, as well as to property damage.
- Almost half of the total costs (€59 bn) resulted from the sole lost productivity (absenteeism, unemployment and lost working years through premature mortality).

The **intangible cost of alcohol** takes into consideration areas of human life where alcohol produces suffering/ loss (like the suffering of crime victims or the loss of healthy life years).

It was estimated to €270bn in 2003, but other ways of putting value on the same harms produce estimates ranging from €150bn to €760bn.

Problems caused by alcohol

Alcohol consumption leads to a wide palette of social and psychological problems, as well as around 60 different diseases and other physical conditions. The higher the level of alcohol consumption, the more complex alcohol-related individual and societal problems tend to be.

Problems caused by different patterns of alcohol consumption

Social problems	Psychological problems	Physical problems
Domestic violence	Changes in personality	Gastritis
Child neglect/ abuse	Delirium tremens	Gout
Domestic accidents	Hallucinosi	Cardiac arrhythmia
Absenteeism from work	Dementia	Trauma
Inefficient work	Gambling	Strokes
Public drunkenness	Misuse of other drugs	Failure to take prescribed medicine
Football hooliganism	Insomnia	Impotence
Criminal damage	Depression	Liver cancer
Theft	Anxiety	Gastritis
Burglary	Attempted suicide	Cirrhosis
Assaults	Suicide	Cancer of the mouth, larynx, oesophagus
Homicide	Amnesia	Breast cancer
Drink-driving		Nutritional deficiencies
Road traffic accidents		Obesity
Sexually deviant acts		Diabetes
Unwanted pregnancy		Cardiomyopathy
Divorce		Raised blood pressure
Homelessness		Strokes
Work difficulties		Brain damage
Unemployment		Neuropathy
Financial difficulties		Myopathy
Fraud		Sexual dysfunction
Debt		Infertility
Vagrancy		Fatty liver
Habitual convictions for drunkenness		Hemopoietic toxicity
Family problems/ arguments		Reactions with other drugs
		Foetal harm
		Hepatitis
		Pancreatitis

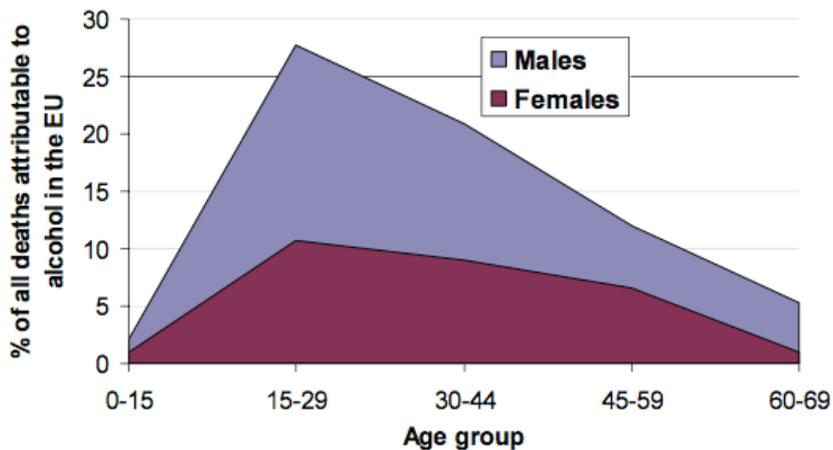
	Problems related to intoxication
	Problems related to regular heavy drinking
	Problems related to intoxication or regular heavy drinking

Source: WHO Alcohol in the European Region Report (2001), p. 22-23

Alcohol-Related Harm: Facts & Figures

According to the Alcohol in Europe Report (2006):

- 58 million adults in the EU (15%) are estimated to be hard drinkers, meaning that they exceed harmful levels of 40g (men) or 20g of alcohol (women) per day.



- 23 million Europeans (5% of men, 1% of women) are dependent on alcohol.
- Being responsible for 7,4% of all ill-death/early death, harmful alcohol consumption is the third main cause of early death and illness in the EU after tobacco and high blood pressure. It is

estimated to be responsible for about 195,000 deaths each year, through accidents or related diseases.

- At least 1 in 4 deaths among young men and 1 in 10 among young women aged 15-29 years in the EU are caused by alcohol.
- In more details, alcohol was blamed to be responsible for:
 - 17,000 deaths every year in road traffic accidents (1 in 4 accidents), out of which 10,000 are due to someone other than the drink driver,
 - 27,000 deaths resulting from other alcohol related accidents,
 - 2,000 homicides (4 in 10) and 10,000 suicides (1 in 6),
 - 45,000 deaths due to liver cirrhosis,
 - 50,000 cancer deaths (11,000 representing female breast cancer deaths),
 - 17,000 deaths caused by neuro-psychiatric conditions,
 - 60,000 underweight births
 - 40% of all domestic violence
 - 16% of all child abuse and neglect; 5 to 9 million children are living in negatively affected familial environments
 - A connection was also established between alcohol and depression, with 200,000 episodes that account for 2.5 million life-years lost to death and disability.

- **Binge drinking** represents the consumption of 60g alcohol (men) and 40g alcohol (women) in a period of two hours. It is currently done by one fifth of the adult population in the EU (80 million people).
- Binge drinking is associated with “automobile crash injury and death, suicide and depression, missed classes and decreased academic performance, loss of memory, blackouts, fighting, property damage, peer criticism and broken friendships, date rape, unprotected sexual intercourse that places people at risk for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy” (DHS, 2008, p.5).

Bibliography, References & Links

- Anderson, P. & Baumberg, B. (2006) Alcohol in Europe. London: Institute of Alcohol Studies.
- Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtfragen e.V. (DHS) (2008). Binge Drinking and Europe. Hamm: DHS
- WHO Regional Office for Europe (2001): Alcohol in the European Region <http://www.euro.who.int/document/E67946.pdf> accessed 25 March 2010
- Further information on the AER Alcohol Peer Reviews is available at: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/health/alcohol-prevention/aer-alcohol-peer-reviews.html>

AER, April 2010