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Østfold (N) Public Health Programme



Map of Østfold County (Norway)

Østfold (N) at a glance:

- 4184 km²
- 265 450 inhabitants
- 18 municipalities
- 5 towns, 13 villages
- WHO Healthy Cities member

Facts & Figures – Alcohol Consumption in Norway

Norway has seen a dramatic increase in alcohol consumption in the past years.

- Dramatic increase in consumption
 - 1990: 3 litres per person
 - 2007: 4,8 litres per person
- In the last 10 years: 30% general, 60 % youth
- In recent years (2006-2008), girls consume more alcohol than boys
- Average age for starting to drink is 15 years

[Figures from SIRUS (Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research)- Report on the use of alcohol and drugs among young people (2009)]

In 2006 Østfold-N conducted a survey of high school students in the town of Sarpsborg. Results showed that:

- The majority of students have never tried alcohol or have tried it a few times only

- 7% of the students surveyed drink 1-3 times per month
- 2% of the students survey drink on a weekly basis
- Availability is high
- Most effective measures for preventing alcohol use cited by surveyed students were:
 - Parents were present
 - Students are picked up by parents after a night out
 - Parents wait up for students to return or wake up when they return

In 2008 a repeat survey of 32 schools was underway, targeting 1500 students aged 15-16 and looking into their alcohol, drugs and smoking habits.

Regional competences in preventing alcohol-related harm in Norway

County Councils in Norway do not have direct competences in the field of public health – competences in this area lie with local authorities. Yet, regional politicians in Norway have understood the need to work on public health policy in their territories and have developed an **innovative partnership approach** to public health policy in their regions.

Østfold-N has developed a public health programme that is grounded in the principle of partnership and aims to develop a holistic approach to public health policy, with all actors in the public health chain involved. The region has decided to act as a platform where various stakeholders and decision-makers can meet, debate, learn from each other and develop common policy initiatives. The advantages of this approach are that it allows for cross-sectoral collaboration and enables actors involved to develop and test practical methods for promoting public health. The role of the region is to mobilise action among the various stakeholders, build capacity and document the effect of tested policies, in order to facilitate an evidence-based approach to policy-making and implementation.

The Youth Patrol Programme

The municipality of Askim has implemented the **‘Youth Patrol’ programme**. This programme targets young people aged 13-18 and especially people in risk groups. It aims to prevent alcohol and drug use among young people, as well as related crime, by informing young people of the risks linked to alcohol and drugs consumption and empowering them to make choices.

The programme adopts a multi-stakeholder, inter-institutional approach. On Friday nights, police, parents, healthcare professionals and child welfare officers actively seek out and meet young people in risk groups where they are: out in the streets, in clubs, at parties.

A preliminary evaluation of the programme (*reported at the occasion of the 3rd AER Alcohol Peer Review in Valencia-E on 17 September 2008*) has shown the programme to be successful, with up to 50% less violence in one year of implementation! Participants to the programme have given positive feedback,

indicating they appreciate the cooperation between different institutions and stakeholders. The increased visibility of and contact with the police were cited as especially beneficial.

Valencia (E) Parents' Right to Speak Campaign

The Autonomous Community of Valencia (E) has decision-making powers in the field of health. The Region's Health Minister thus has the power to formulate and implement policies for the prevention of alcohol-related harm.

The region developed a long-term education campaign targeting parents and aiming at providing them with the tools to educate their children about making responsible choices in relation to alcohol consumption.

The region distributed over 10 000 copies of an information guide aimed at reinforcing parents' skills for talking with their children about this issue.

The programme was implemented in cooperation with the 2 main parent associations in Spain and also included giving talks for parents, communicating through the media (printed stories, broadcasts of interviews), in order to be able to reach out to as many parents as possible.



Further information on this campaign is available at: www.cerveceros.org

Bibliography, References & Links

- ESPAD – The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs: www.espad.org
- Hibell B. et al (February 2009), “The 2007 ESPAD Report-Substance Abuse Among Students in 35 European Countries”, available to download at: <http://www.espad.org/espad-reports> [accessed 1/3/2010]
- SIRUS – The Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research: <http://www.sirus.no/internet/OmSirus?language=en>
- SIRUS (2009), “The use of alcohol and drugs among youth - results from the surveys 1968 - 2008” – English Summary – available at: <http://www.sirus.no/internet/ungdom/publication/500.html> [accessed April 2010]
- Valencia-E Parents Right to Speak Campaign www.cerveceros.org
- 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>
- Further information on the AER's work on youth issues and the AER Youth Regional Network is available at: <http://www.aer.eu/events/committee-3-culture-education-interregional-cooperation/2010/the-4th-meeting-of-the-aer-youth-regional-network.html>