



WP 5: Economic and physical availability of alcohol





Work package partners

- National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Helsinki, Finland (WP coordinator)
- Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs (SoRAD), Stockholm, Sweden
- Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology (IPiN), Warsaw, Poland





What do we already know (1/2)

- Alcohol control measures regulating alcohol availability for social or public health purposes have a long history. In 1975 Kettil Bruun and his colleagues summarized the relationship of alcohol control, alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm in the so called the purple book in the following manner: "changes in the overall consumption of alcoholic beverages have a bearing on the health of the people in any society. Alcohol control measures can be used to limit consumption: thus, control of alcohol availability becomes a public health issue" (Bruun et al. 1995, 12-13).





What do we already know (2/2)

- The purple book tradition has been followed first in the International Study on Alcohol Control Experiences (ISACE) and later by the Alcohol and Public Policy Group (APPG) in their monographs Alcohol Policy and the Public Good in 1994 and Alcohol - No Ordinary Commodity in 2003.
- According to Babor et al. "effectiveness is strong for regulation of physical availability and the use of alcohol taxes. Given the broad reach of these strategies, and the relatively low expense of implementing them, the expected impact of these measures on public health is relatively high" (Babor et al. 2003, 270).





What more we would like to know

- Doubts have been expressed on the effectiveness of alcohol availability controls both by the great public and some actors in the alcohol field.
- Therefore, it is a timely task to analyze the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol taxing and pricing as well as restrictions on physical alcohol availability and access, and their synergic impact to reduce the harm caused by alcohol in a range of European countries.





Methodologies to be adopted (1/2)

- The basic list of studies on the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of measures affecting alcohol availability will be created by literature review. This search deals with case studies including published monographs, articles or reports as well as grey literature like unpublished reports, doctoral thesis and the like.
- Studies on the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of alcohol control measures affecting alcohol availability will be organised topically and country wise. Country wise lists are important when experts in different countries are contacted.
- Finally, alcohol availability controls that may have affected alcohol-related harms but have not been studied thus far are looked at.





Methodologies to be adopted (2/2)

- This process includes searching of important changes in measures affecting alcohol availability like important changes in alcohol taxes, changes in licensing practices of on- and off-premise outlets for alcoholic beverages, changes in legal age limits and the like. The search will be conducted in three different ways:
 - Search on important changes in alcohol control measures affecting alcohol availability,
 - Search on major changes in alcohol consumption levels or drinking habits,
 - Search on major changes in alcohol related harms, and
 - Asking assistance from national experts.
- Changes in previously unstudied alcohol availability controls that may have affected alcohol related harms will be analysed.





Strengths of the proposed methodology

- Gives us a concise overview of the existence of studied and unstudied major changes in measures affecting economic and physical alcohol availability in European countries.
- Allows us to review and study and update how changes in control measures affecting economic and physical availability have affected alcohol consumption and related problems in different European countries.





Weaknesses of the proposed methodology

- Case studies are natural experiments. Therefore, effects of changes in alcohol control measures can only be studied in countries where such changes have taken place.
- Because of lots of different languages in Europe literature search may fail to locate all relevant cases.
- Changes in alcohol control most often takes place on national level so there is not much to say on the effects of availability changes on local level.





Expected results

- New cases of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of changes in alcohol taxing and pricing as well as changes in restrictions on physical alcohol availability and access, and their synergic impact to reduce the harm caused by alcohol will be found in many European countries.
- Summarizing the old and new studies on the effects of alcohol availability will strengthen the knowledge base of the possibilities of alcohol controls to affect alcohol related harm.





Message of today

- We are asking colleagues across Europe to suggest case studies from their countries of changes in recent years and also details of any planned changes in the near future. We hope that by examining these changes and their impact we can add to the evidence base of effective measures to reduce alcohol related harm within different countries' cultural context and infrastructures.





Measures which affect economic availability

- Taxation of alcoholic beverages
- Regulations on special price reductions on retail sales designated to attract customers in general
- Price reductions through events such as “happy hours”
- Regulating minimum and maximum prices
- Rules on profit margins on the sale of alcoholic beverages





Measures which affect physical availability

- Measures that affect the number, types, quality and location of on- and off-premise alcohol outlets
- Days and hours of retail sales
- Modes of retail sales, e.g. selling alcohol on credit
- Bans or restrictions on retail sales in certain places e.g. Opera or movie theatres or sport stadiums
- Forbidding retail sales during special events e.g. general elections, important sport event or during political unrest
- Legal age limits for purchase or consumption on alcoholic beverages
- Regulations forbidding sales to intoxicated customers
- Regulations forbidding sales to those suspected of making purchases on behalf of intoxicated persons or those below the legal age limit
- Controlling individual consumers through measures such as rationing





What information are asking for?

- We are asking information about any changes in alcohol control measures affecting physical or economic availability of alcohol that have occurred since mid-1980s, or planned changes which will be implemented before the end of the year 2010.
- If there are published or unpublished reports of these changes, please give us the reference
- If the changes are not analyzed we are not asking you to analyse them or describe them in great detail but only to provide information about
 - What the change was
 - When it was implemented

Information should be sent to Esa Österberg by the end of August 2009.
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