
Unlocking the power of alcohol control policies: bridging the gap between research and policy action

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European Region



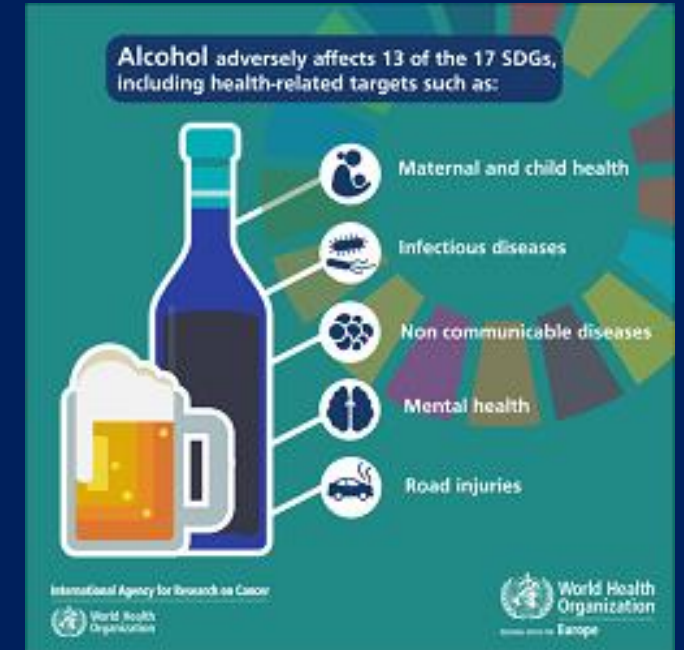
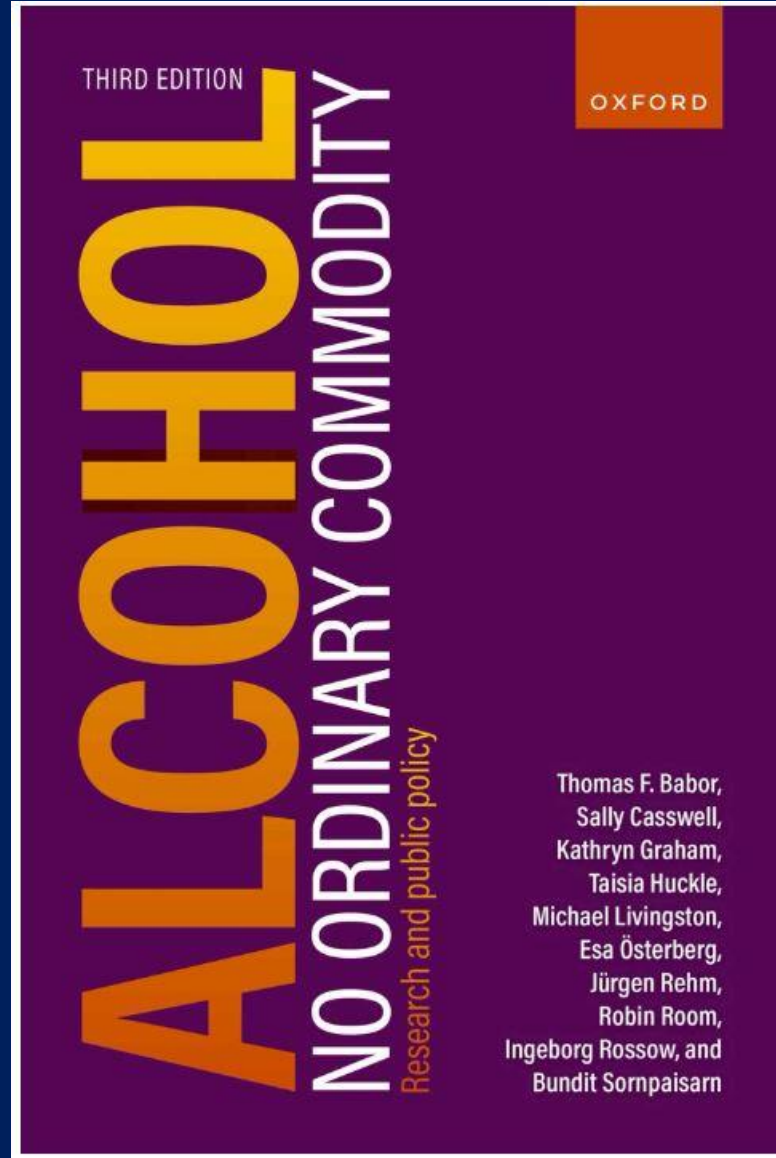
Agenda

1. Is alcohol an ordinary commodity?
2. Why do we need to decrease alcohol consumption to decrease harms?
3. What are WHO 'Best Buys' and how do they work?
4. How can we bring evidence into action?
5. Can we change the culture around alcohol consumption?

Alcohol is NOT an ordinary commodity



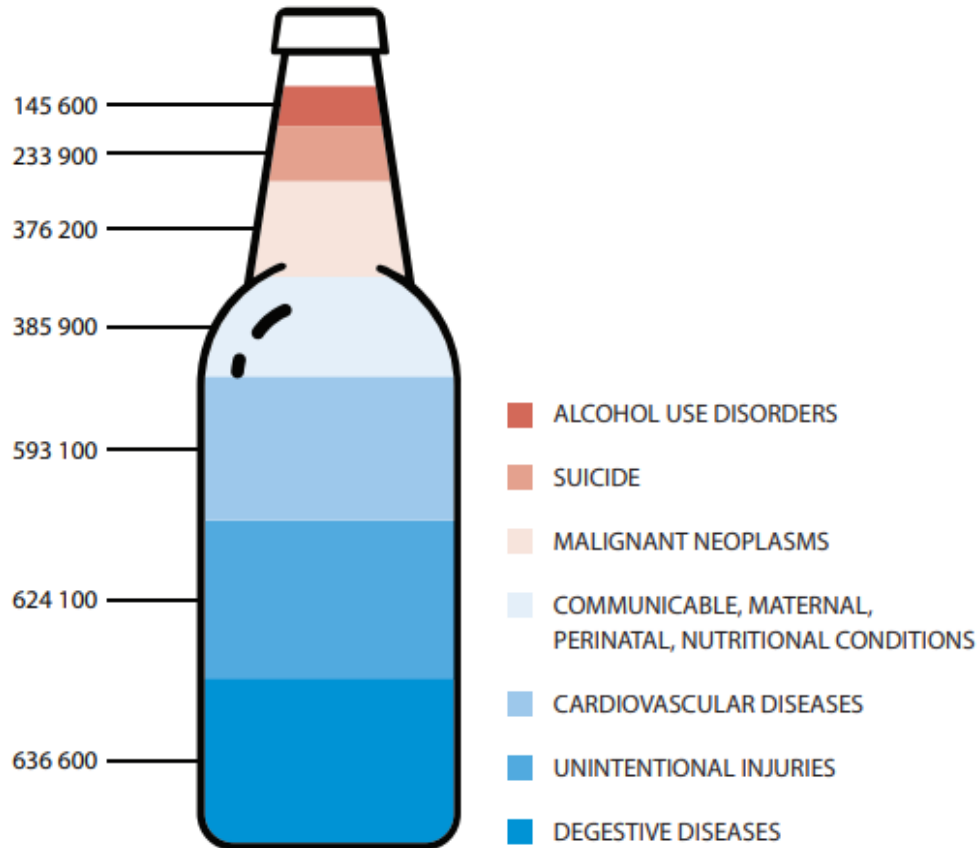
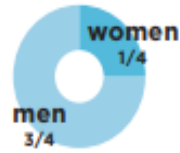
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Alcohol and health



3 million deaths every year
6 deaths every minute
from harmful use of alcohol

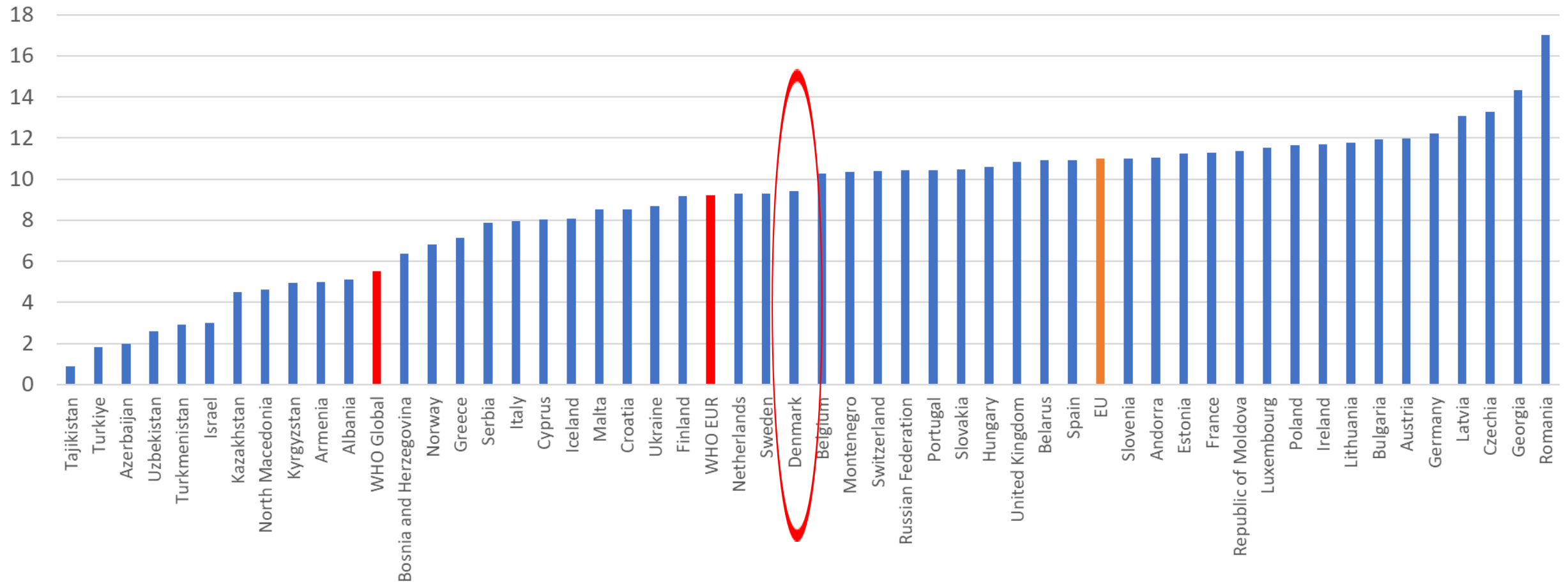


Almost 1 million
deaths in the WHO
European Region
(every year)

<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/340727>

Out of top 10 countries with highest drinking levels: 8 were in EU in 2019

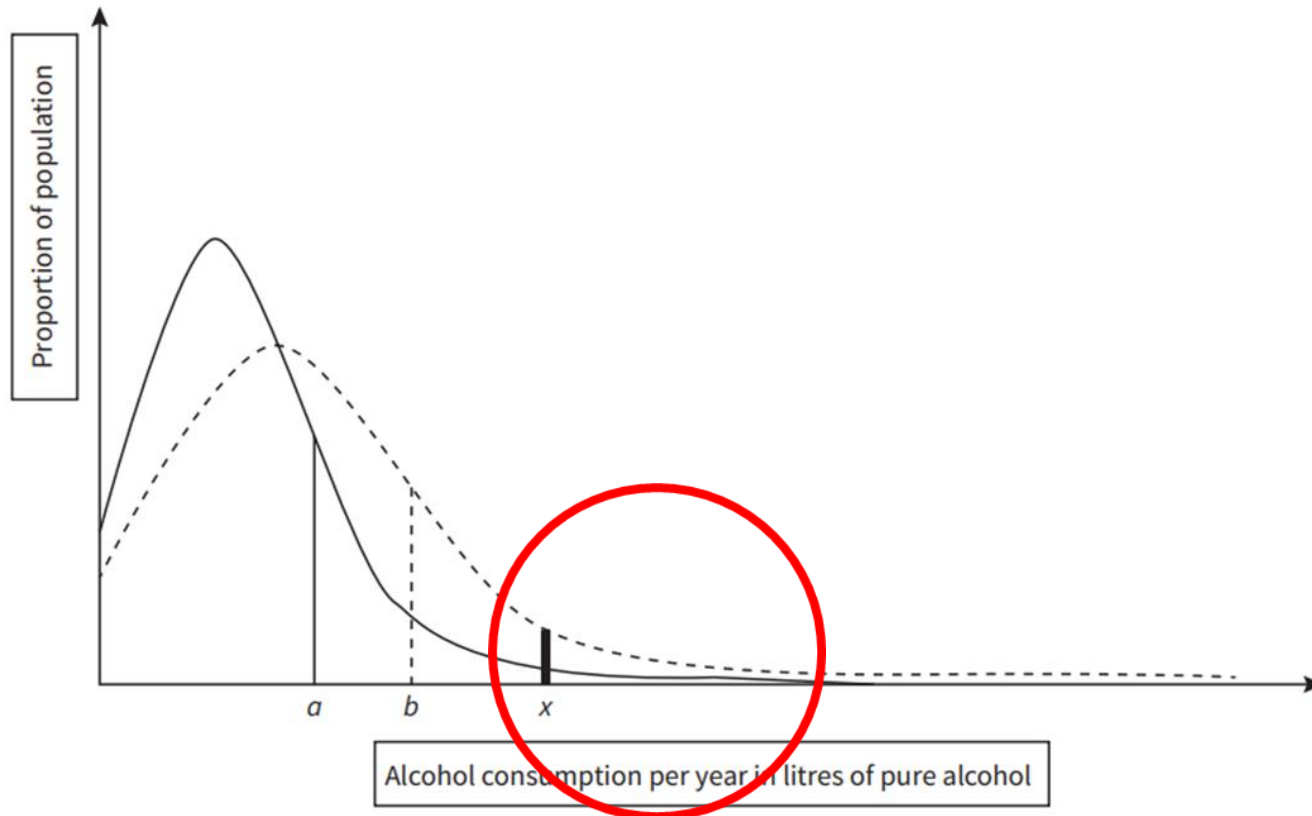
Alcohol, total per capita (15+) consumption (in litres of pure alcohol) (SDG Indicator 3.5.2) 2019



Total alcohol per capita consumption (15+ years) in litres of pure alcohol in the EU, by country (2019).

Source: [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/total-\(recorded-unrecorded\)-alcohol-per-capita-\(15-\)-consumption](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/total-(recorded-unrecorded)-alcohol-per-capita-(15-)-consumption)

Why is alcohol per capita important? Because it influences everything else...



a = consumption mean for population a

b = consumption mean for population b

x = lower limit for 'heavy drinking': area under distribution curve and above x illustrates the proportion of population that are 'heavy drinkers'

Alcohol per capita consumption and heavy episodic drinking are interrelated!

Classical example from "Alcohol No Ordinary Commodity":

The consumption mean is higher for population b than for population a → **therefore, proportion of heavy drinkers is higher in population b** than in population a (area under the curve around x)

Decreasing alcohol per capita consumption means decreasing proportion of heavy drinkers



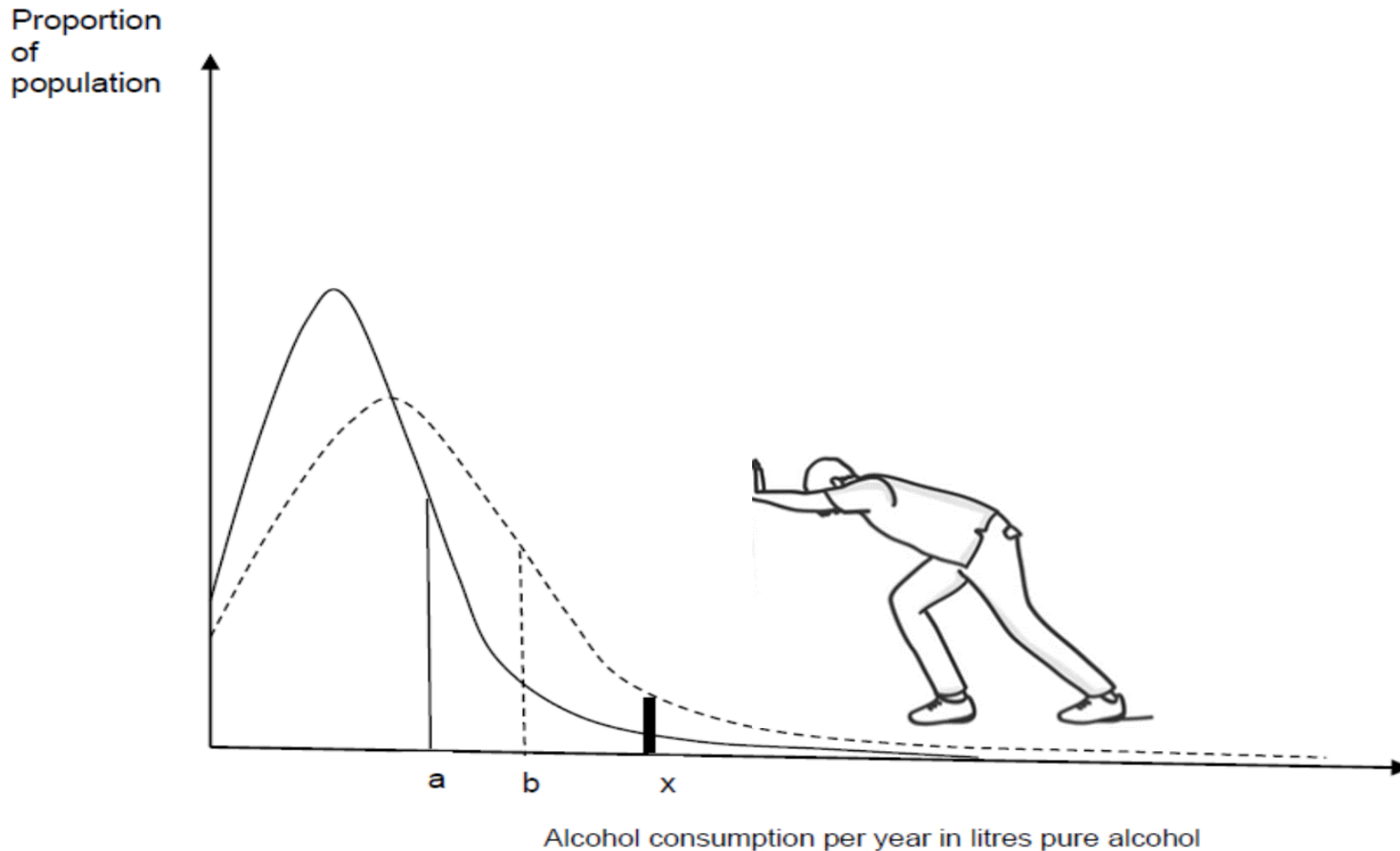
Alcoogenic environments increase alcohol consumption

- environments in which alcohol "*is everywhere*": too cheap, too available, too heavily promoted (**normalizes alcohol**, including among young people)
- environments that make it difficult for people to recognize and admit that they are experiencing harms from drinking alcohol (**stigma**)
- environments that **make it difficult to reach out for help and to recover** because they individualize problems instead of addressing structural factors

'It's everywhere' – alcohol's public face and private harm

The report of the
Commission on Alcohol Harm

What can decrease alcohol per capita consumption and heavy drinking?



Alcohol policies that effectively reduce total consumption by affecting the whole distribution, will reduce harm risks among heavy drinkers and other drinkers.

The goal is to push the curve to the left!

How?
Through population-level policies! (taxation, availability and marketing)

WHO Best Buy policies on alcohol

1

Increase taxes



2

Restrict
availability



3

Restrict or ban
marketing of
alcohol



Turning down the alcohol flow

Background document on the European framework for action on alcohol, 2022–2025



- Focus on reducing alcohol consumption and harms (NOT “harmful use”!)
- Includes 10% APC reduction by 2025, with at least 35 Member States being below baseline of 2010

<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/361975>

Focus area 1. Alcohol pricing



Focus area 2. Alcohol availability



Focus area 3. Alcohol marketing



Focus area 4. Health information, with a specific focus on alcohol labelling



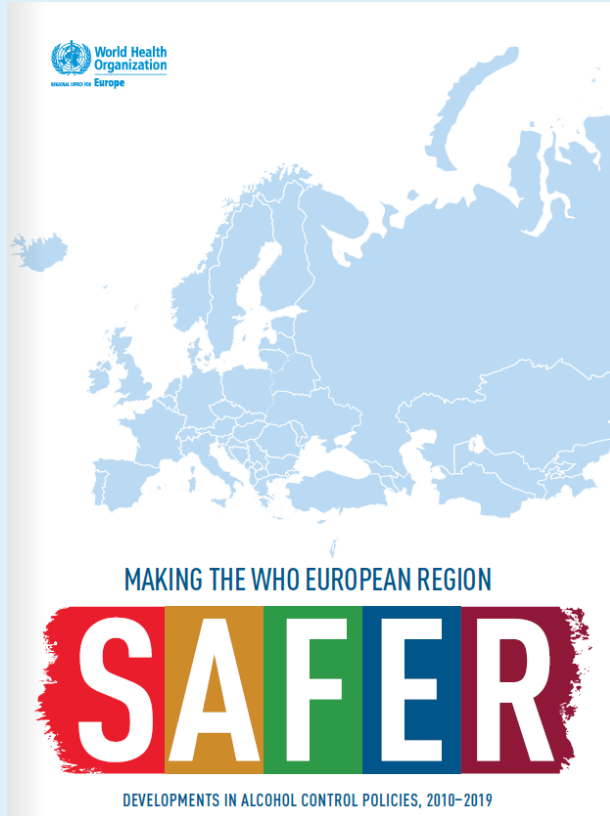
Focus area 5. Health services' response



Focus area 6. Community action



Leveraging evidence, data and partnerships



European Region



ALCOHOL POLICIES 2016

Country score in the 10 action areas of the *European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020* (maximum of 100 points)

EU+*

1. Leadership, awareness and commitments on drinking and alcohol intoxication



2. Health services' response

N/A



3. Community and workplace action



4. Drink-driving policies and countermeasures



5. Availability of alcohol



6. Marketing of alcoholic beverages



7. Pricing policies



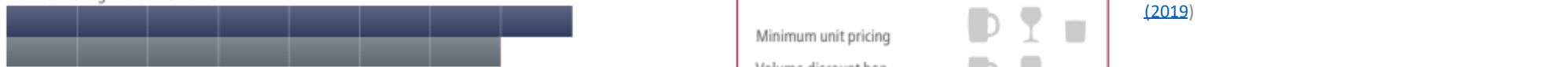
8. Reducing the negative consequences of drinking and alcohol intoxication



9. Reducing the public health impact of illicit alcohol and informally produced alcohol



10. Monitoring and surveillance



Note: N/A indicates scores could not be calculated due to missing data.

WHO "Best Buys"



- Yes
- No
- At the subnational level

AVAILABILITY

	Beer	Wine	Spirits
Minimum selling age	16	16	18
Retail monopoly	No	No	No
Licensing for retail sales	No	No	No
Restrictions OFF premise hours	No	No	No
Restrictions OFF premise density	No	No	No
Restrictions ON premise hours	No	No	No
Restrictions ON premise density	No	No	No

MARKETING

Ban on Internet/social media	No	No	No
Ban on below-cost promotion	No	No	No
Ban on sponsorship of sports events	No	No	No
Ban on sponsorship of youth events	Yes	Yes	No

PRICING

Excise tax adjusted for inflation	No	No	No
Minimum unit pricing	No	No	No
Volume discount ban (applies to all beverages)	No	No	No

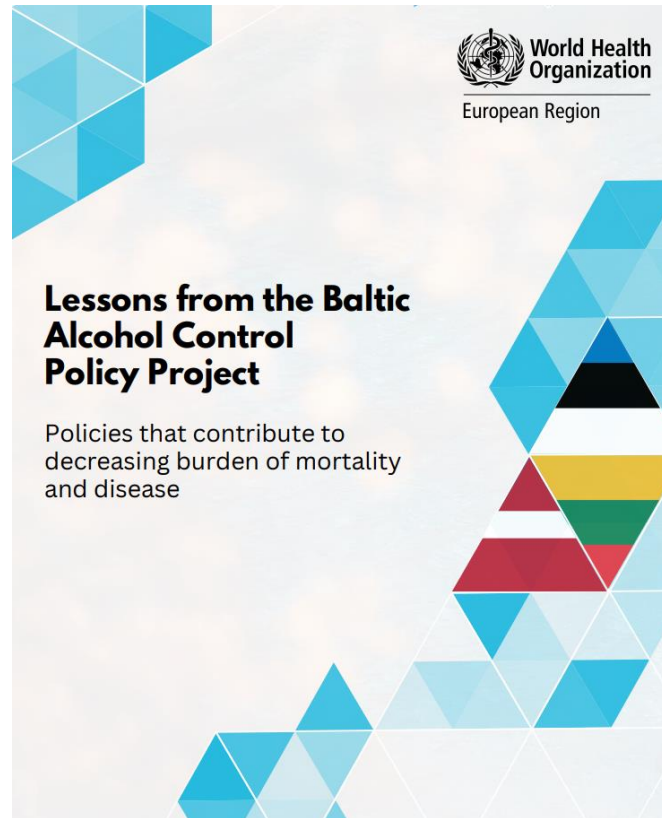
How is Denmark implementing the Best Buys as compared to the rest of the EU?

Last comparable WHO data in policy implementation collected in 2016

Alcohol country fact sheet - Denmark (2019)

[https://www.who.int/europe/publications/m/item/alcohol-country-fact-sheet--denmark-\(2019\)](https://www.who.int/europe/publications/m/item/alcohol-country-fact-sheet--denmark-(2019))

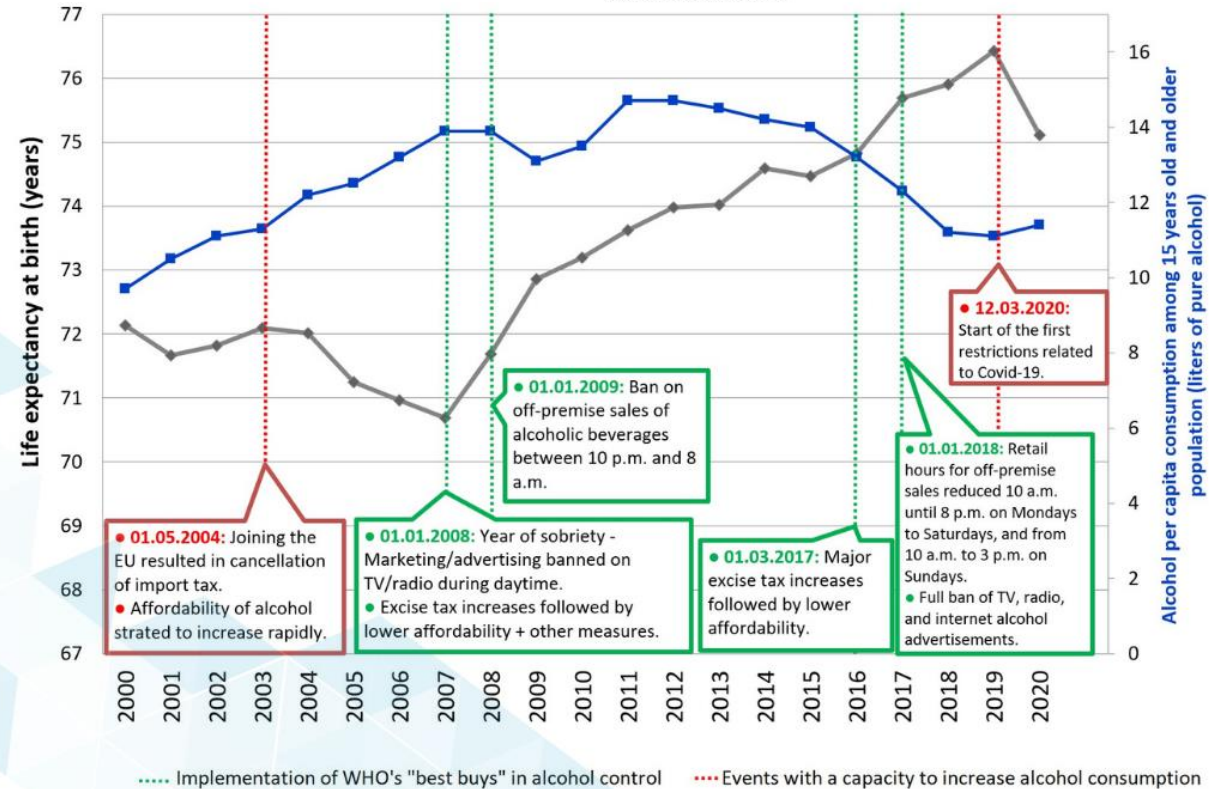
Case study: More life with less alcohol consumption



<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-7517-47284-69366>

Lessons from the Baltic Alcohol Control Policy Project*

Reflection of WHO's "best buys" alcohol control policy measures on life expectancy at birth and alcohol consumption in Lithuania (2000–2020)





Policy making does not take place in a vacuum.
Civil society and communities are crucial in
developing, implementing and monitoring the
Best Buys



Using clear messages

Recent examples of Canada's
Guidance on Alcohol and Health

A simple message: **less is better**
(being clear that risks from
alcohol start with small
amounts)

Alcohol consumption per week

Drinking alcohol has negative consequences. The more alcohol you drink per week, the more the consequences add up.

0 drinks per week

Not drinking has benefits, such as better health, and better sleep.

No risk



1 to 2 standard drinks per week

You will likely avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself and others.

Low risk



Drinking less is better

We now know that even a small amount of alcohol can be damaging to health.

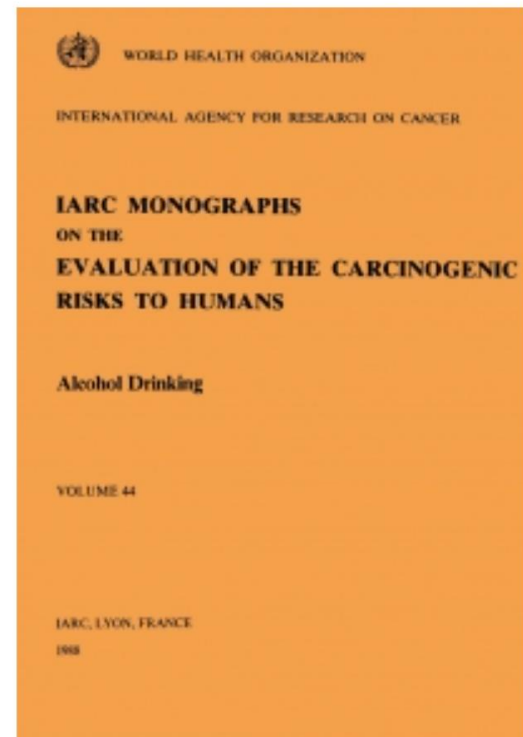
Science is evolving, and the recommendations about alcohol use need to change.

Research shows that no amount or kind of alcohol is good for your health. It doesn't matter what kind of alcohol it is—wine, beer, cider or spirits.

Drinking alcohol, even a small amount, is damaging to everyone, regardless of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, tolerance for alcohol or lifestyle.

That's why if you drink, it's better to drink less.

On the link between alcohol and cancer the evidence is not new...



Alcohol Drinking IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of the Carcinogenic Risks to Humans Volume 44

IARC

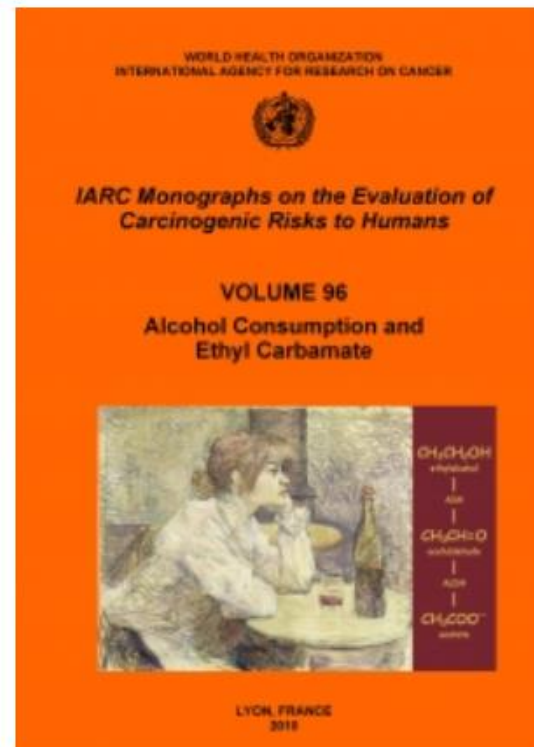
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ISBN-13

978-92-832-1244-7

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978-92-832-1244-7



Alcohol Consumption and Ethyl Carbamate IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans Volume 96

IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans
Volume 96

IARC

2010

ISBN-13

978-92-832-1296-6

ISBN-13

978-92-832-1596-7

What might be new is how we communicate it

Breast cancer is the cancer type most frequently caused by **alcohol consumption** among women worldwide.

Even **1 drink per day** increases the risk of breast cancer.



International Agency for Research on Cancer



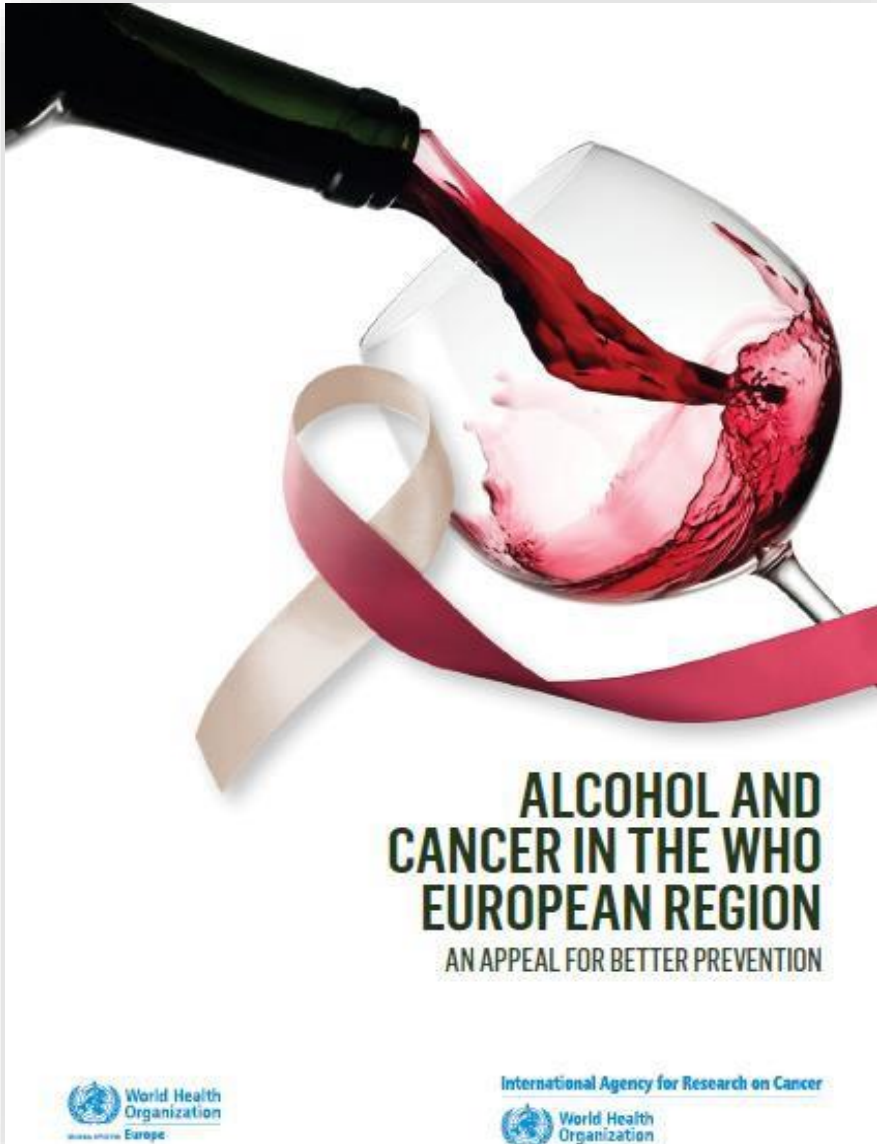
World Health Organization




World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe




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**ALCOHOL AND
CANCER IN THE WHO
EUROPEAN REGION**
AN APPEAL FOR BETTER PREVENTION



World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe



International Agency for Research on Cancer
World Health Organization

https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/alcohol#tab=tab_1

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Thank you

For more information, please contact:
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