

**EUROCARE submission to the consultation from the Working Group on  
Regulating Sponsorship by Alcohol Companies of Major Sporting Events,  
Department of the Taoiseach**



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## The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (EUROCARE)

The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (EUROCARE) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 57 member organisations across 25 European countries advocating the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in advocacy and research, as well as in the provision of information to the public; education and training; the provision of workplace programmes; counselling services and residential support.

The mission of Eurocare is to promote policies to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm, through advocacy in Europe. The message, in regard to alcohol consumption is “less is better”.

**Q2. What is the evidence of the specific impact of sponsorship on its own?**

In 2009, global sponsorship spending was estimated for 44.8 billion USD; compared to 5.6 billion in 1987<sup>i</sup>. The money spent on sponsoring is in itself showing that sponsorship must be working and paying off in terms of increase sales. This would be same for alcoholic beverages as for any other kind of commodity. Football and alcohol should not be partners, and Eurocare support stronger regulation on alcohol marketing and sponsorship.

Furthermore, sports sponsorship at both elite and club levels has been found to influence children's attitudes to unhealthy products<sup>ii</sup>. Other studies have found that substantial numbers of children are routinely exposed to sponsorship messages, that they can readily nominate sponsors of particular sporting groups and that they typically view sponsoring organizations favourably<sup>iii</sup>. Most recently Pettigrew et al.<sup>iv</sup> found that three-quarters (76%) of a sample of 164 children aged 5-12 years connected at least one correct sponsor to the relevant sport and just over half (54 %) correctly matched the most popular sport (an Australian Football League team) with its relevant sponsor (a fast-food chain)<sup>v</sup>.

**Q3. What evidence is available on the impact of sports sponsorship as part of integrated marketing tool to promote alcohol consumption?**

Sport sponsorship is one of the elements in marketing of any product. Eurocare defines marketing as a mix of sophisticated, integrated strategies, grouped around four main elements: the product, its price, its place (distribution) and its promotion. All four elements have ways of doing marketing, such as product design and brand name (product), pricing strategy and wholesale (pricing), distribution channels and placing within retail establishments (place) and promotional strategy, advertising, sponsorship, sales promotion and public relations (promotion).

Alcohol is a heavy marketed commodity. EGTA estimated a total alcohol advertising spending of the alcoholic sector in Europe of €1755.56 million in 2005, €1677.19 million in 2006 and €1458.39 million in 2007, where TV advertising representing the major share, close to 50% in all years<sup>vi</sup>. The alcohol market has showed tendency of a concentration of international corporations, where the market is dominated by a few big companies. A concentrated industry results in higher levels of advertising<sup>vii</sup>.

Up to this point, at least three scientific studies have included alcohol sports sponsorship in studies on alcohol exposure in general<sup>viii</sup>. The Ellickson et al study<sup>ix</sup> shows that for seventh-grade drinkers, exposure to beer concession stands at sports or music events predicted frequency of grade 9 drinking<sup>x</sup>. The 2007 US study by Collins et al<sup>xi</sup>, included exposure to concession stands at sports events in a cumulative exposure measure. Analyses suggest that the effect of this cumulative exposure measure at grade 6 was strongly predictive of grade 7 drinking and grade 7 intentions to drink. The 2011 cross-sectional study by Gordon et al<sup>xii</sup> shows that Scottish adolescents who had had a proper alcoholic drink were significantly more aware of sponsorship of sports or sport teams by alcohol brands.

**Q4. What evidence is available on the causal relationship between sports sponsorship on alcohol consumption, including by young people?**

Considering the effects of sponsorship on alcohol consumption, the impact study by Collins et al.<sup>xiii</sup> finds evidence that watching sports programs with many alcohol advertisements, raises the chances of the viewer drinking alcohol. Another study<sup>xiv</sup> found that the frequency of drinking amongst drinkers during the previous 12 months can be extrapolated by exposure to beer vendors at sports and music events. Furthermore, two studies from Australia and New Zealand show that sportspeople who are sponsored by alcohol-related industries drink in a more hazardous way than those not sponsored by alcohol industries, and those who have non-alcoholic sponsors<sup>xv</sup>. These studies use the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) to measure drinking behaviour.

**Q6. What evidence is available on the impact of a ban/restriction on sports sponsorship by alcohol companies in other countries?**

Several European countries have a ban or regulation of alcohol sport sponsorship. France, Norway and Portugal have a total ban, and Finland has a ban on products stronger than 21% alcohol volume.

The regulation of sport sponsorship is one element of a package when it comes to regulation of alcohol marketing, and theories on effects from alcohol marketing should be regarded as evidence also for alcohol sport sponsorship.

**Q9: What evidence is available on alternative sources of sponsorship for the sports sector?**

Alcohol is not the only sector sponsoring the sports sector in the countries where alcohol sponsorship is allowed today. That is in itself evidence that there are plenty of opportunities for alternative sources for sponsoring the sports sector. Other evidence is the example of France, which introduced the ban and alcohol sponsorship was replaced by other products.

**Q10. What other funding supports could be used to help sporting organisations instead of sponsorship?**

The Australian government was recently successful in encouraging sporting organizations to agree to abandon all alcohol sponsorship before they received federal funding<sup>xvi</sup>. Furthermore, O'Brien et al<sup>xvii</sup>, hypothesize that hypothecated taxes on tobacco have been used successfully for replacing tobacco sponsorship of sport in some countries, and may show equal utility for the alcohol industry's funding of sport.

**Q13. Are there ways to make the existing voluntary Code of Practice more effective?**

The current self-regulatory system that's in place in Ireland also regulates audience thresholds (less than 25% of the audience should be under 18 if alcohol advertising is allowed). However, this percentile is not representative of the age structure of the Irish population, consequently leading to unneeded exposure of a large number of minors. With a threshold like this in a population with few young people compared to the total population, very few occasions would come in the category of 25% of the audience less than 18 years, and all the attractive marketing space with most exposure would be with an audience less than 25% of the audiences under 18. The threshold policy does therefore not fulfil their aim to restrict marketing towards young people.

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