

## 9th Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH)

**“LET’S MAKE OUR LIVES SAFER AND STICK THE MESSAGE ON THE BOTTLE”**

**Photo opportunity: MEPs, AWARH partners and supporters will meet around a giant banner in the European Parliament on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 in the Mickey Mouse Bar**

Alcohol causes more than 200 diseases, health conditions and injuries. In Europe, one in every 10 deaths is caused by alcohol consumption with the proportion of deaths highest in young people. However, in comparison to tobacco, people are still unaware of many of the risks caused by alcohol consumption, in particular the increased risk of several major cancers.

In 2018, the WHO launched the “[SAFER](#)” initiative (an acronym for the 5 most effective and cost-effective interventions) to help countries to respond to the magnitude of alcohol related problems in their population and this year, the WHO Regional Office for Europe launched its own version of “SAFER” to overcome obstacles to implementation of effective policy and to support a civil society movement advocating for more progress. This is why AWARH [partners](#) chose the SAFER initiative as its main theme for this year’s Awareness Week on Alcohol Related harm.

*“Alcohol is a psychoactive drug causing harm to many organs while it passes through the body so it should make perfect sense to policy makers to adopt effective and cost-effective alcohol policies such as SAFER. However, low awareness of alcohol-caused harms, a situation perpetuated by the lack of labelling and health warnings on alcoholic beverages prevents policymakers from paying enough attention”* said Florence Berteletti, Secretary General of Eurocare.

At EU level, the road to labelling alcoholic drinks has been a long and fraught one. First attempts were made in the late 1970s, resulting in a deadlock at Council level. In 2011, [Regulation \(EU\) No 1169/2011](#) was adopted, guaranteeing that food and beverage products across the EU would be provided with a list of ingredients and a nutrition declaration in the form of a label. However, alcoholic beverages containing more than 1.2% by volume of alcohol were exempted from this obligation. This is why, unlike other products, there is no consistent labelling on ingredients, allergens and calories on alcoholic products. With alcohol’s current exemption, how can consumers make an informed choice? In 2017, the European Commission adopted a report concluding that there were no objective grounds for this exemption. Last but not least, in February 2021, the Commission published the [Beating Cancer Plan](#), which proposes limiting the online advertising and promotion of alcoholic beverages, including health warnings on labels, and finally the mandatory labelling of ingredients and nutrient content on all alcoholic beverages. Eurocare regrets that, once again, Big Alcohol has responded with a raft of complex pledges and proposals but has opposed the straightforward system which applies to other products. In our view the solution is simple. Alcohol should be treated like other products on the shelf.

Eurocare calls on all policy makers to cut through the industry smokescreen and meet consumer’s concerns and demands. Essential information (such as calories or allergens) as well as health warnings should be provided in the easiest way for consumers to see it and understand it. All surveys and EC consultations confirm this. Here’s hoping that in 2022, EU regulators start to listen to EU citizens so that, at long last, we can choose either not to drink or to drink in the safest and most informed way possible.

### **About AWARH**

The European Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) was initiated in 2013 by a group of likeminded organisations. AWARH aims to raise awareness on the negative effects of alcohol and

call for greater policy action to address the problems it can cause. The Week's ultimate aim is to highlight the need to tackle the significant barriers to a comprehensive and cost-effective policy intervention.

The Partners of AWARH are the European Association for the Study of the Liver (**EASL**), the European Brain Council (**EBC**), the European Liver Patients Association (**ELPA**), the European Federation of Addiction Societies (**EUFAS**), the European Alcohol Policy Alliance (**Eurocare**) and the United European Gastroenterology (**UEG**).

In 2021 AWARH is held between 15th and 19th November 2021, with theme of "SAFER". The Secretariat for AWARH is held by the European Alcohol Policy Alliance. Information about AWARH, the AWARH partners, and the different activities which will take place during AWARH21 can be found at [www.awarh.eu](http://www.awarh.eu)