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Eurocare stresses the importance of minimum pricing on alcohol beverages

The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) fully supports the planned introduction of minimum pricing in Scotland and similar plans by other governments within the United Kingdom. *“Price is one of the most effective mechanisms to address alcohol consumption; Scotland and United Kingdom are showing willingness to address the harm caused by alcohol, and should be seen as an example for other Members States as well as the European Commission”*, says Mariann Skar, Secretary General at Eurocare.

The European Union (EU) is the region with highest alcohol consumption in the world (12.5litres of pure alcohol per average adult)ⁱ. Alarmingly 43% of 15-16 year old European students report heavy binge drinking (ESPAD 2007ⁱⁱ) and alcohol is the single biggest cause of death among young men aged 16 to 24. Alcohol related harm is one of the 4 risk factors for developing NCDs such as cancer (which affects 1 in 3 Europeans) and cardiovascular disease.

A number of studies have found that increasing the price of alcohol reduces immediate and chronic harm related to drinking among people of all ages. Canada is one of a handful of countries that have implemented a form of minimum alcohol price policies over the last 20 years. Estimates suggest that a 10% increase in the minimum price of an alcoholic beverage reduced its consumption relative to other beverages by 16,1%. Increases in minimum prices of an alcoholic beverage can substantially reduce alcohol consumption.

“We are firmly convinced that addressing the price of cheap alcohol would assist in reduction of alcohol related harm and Member States should be supported by the European Commission to take such actions” says Mariann Skar.

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EUROCARE (The European Alcohol Policy Alliance) is an alliance of 50 organizations working on the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in research and advocacy, as well as in the provision of counselling services and residential support for problem drinkers, the provision of workplace and school based programmes and the provision of information to the public.

Eurocare advocates the prevention of alcohol related harm in Europe through effective evidence based alcohol policy. www.eurocare.org

FACTS AND FIGURES ON ALCOHOL

- Europe has the highest drinking levels in the world, the highest alcohol per capita consumption and the highest alcohol- related harm problems.
- Chronic diseases, to which alcohol is the 3rd main contributory factor, are in the top of global risks next to such threats like fiscal crises and are expected to cost global economy over 30 trillion USD over the next two decades.
- Across the EU some €125bn a year (equivalent to 1.3% GDP). This is figure for 2004 likely to be higher by now
- Alcohol is a major contributory factor in accidents; 1 in 3 of all road traffic deaths are caused by alcohol
- 1 in 4 of male deaths between 15-29 years are due to alcohol
- Alcohol is a risk factor in some 60 diseases such as cancer, liver cirrhosis etc.
- Taking all diseases and injuries at global level into account, the negative health impact of alcohol consumption is 31.6 times higher than benefit

ⁱ Alcohol in the European Union (2012) WHO Europe

ⁱⁱ The 2007 ESPAD Report; retrieved from <http://www.espad.org/espad-reports>