



Labelling initiatives

A brief summary of health warning labels on alcoholic beverages

Compiled by Eurocare, August 2009



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EUROCARE is a network of public health organizations. It advocates the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm in Europe through effective and evidence based alcohol policy. www.eurocare.org

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is the heaviest drinking region of the world (11 litres of pure alcohol drunk per adult each year). This is over 2,5 times the rest of the world average.

Alcohol is a **key health determinant**, responsible for 7.4% of all ill-health and premature death in the EU, which makes it the 3rd leading risk factor, after high blood pressure and tobacco.¹

It is estimated that 1 in 3 of all road traffic deaths (17,000 deaths per year) are caused by alcohol. For every person who dies an estimated 20 more people require hospital admission for serious injuries, 70 more people require hospital outpatient treatment and many are permanently disabled.²

Alcohol is a cause from some 60 diseases and conditions like cancers, mental and behavioural disorders. To protect the consumers even the small risk of cancer at low levels of consumption is worth advising consumers about.

Promoting consumers rights, prosperity and wellbeing are core values of the European Union (EU) and this is reflected in its laws. Consequently, the Directive on General Product Safety obliges producers *‘to provide consumers with relevant information to enable them to assess the risks inherent in a product (...) where such risks are not immediately obvious without adequate warnings’*.³

Labelling is an important tool in order to raise awareness of the risks associated with alcohol consumption. Labels are an integral part of the communication and are a mean of constantly delivering a clear message to consumers. Nutrition labelling is currently not compulsory unless a nutrition claim is made. However, the European Parliament is currently debating the proposal from the Commission on the “Provision of Food Information to Consumers”⁴; wine and spirits have been exempted from the obligation to list ingredients and provide nutritional information, as is the case with soft drinks and other food stuffs.

This document is a brief summary of information around the subject of health warning labels on alcoholic beverages. It is by no means a comprehensive academic overview however it aims at being an accessible introduction into the subject and encourage a wider debate.

¹ Anderson P.& Baumber B. (2006) *Alcohol in Europe*. London: Institute of Alcohol Studies

² Gill et al, Changes in safety on England’s roads; analysis of hospital statistics. *British medical Journal*, 333:73-75 2006 and Roberts Death on the road to international development. *British Medical Journal* 330:972-073, 2005

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:011:0004:0017:EN:PDF>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/proposed_legislation_en.htm

Overview of health warning labels worldwide

While searching for information it appeared clear that one of the most widely utilised sources is a review produced by International Centre for Alcohol Policies⁵. However, since it was from 1997 we have updated this information to the best of our knowledge through the information available on the Internet and relevant literature. If you are aware of more information on this subject, we would highly appreciate your input as we will be constantly updating the tables presented below.

Country	Content
Argentina	<i>Drink with moderation Prohibited for people under 18 years old</i>
Australia	Since 1995 all alcoholic beverages are required to have their alcohol content expressed in terms of numbers of 'standard drinks' ⁶
Brazil	<i>Avoid the risks of excessive alcohol consumption</i>
Canada	Health advisory or warning labels are not required however since February 2005, licensed establishments in Ontario have been required to display specific warning signs about the risk of alcohol use in pregnancy ⁷ The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that women who are trying to get pregnant or are pregnant already, stop drinking. It states that there is no safe amount ⁸
Colombia	<i>Excess alcohol is damaging to your health This product is harmful to the health of children and pregnant women Prohibited for sale to minors</i>
Costa Rica	One of the two following messages must be placed on bottles: (a) <i>Drinking liquor is harmful to health.</i> OR (b) <i>The abuse of liquor is harmful to health</i>
Ecuador	<i>Warning: The excessive consumption of alcohol causes serious harm to your health and endangers your family</i> <i>Warning: The excessive consumption of alcohol restricts your capacity to drive and operate machinery, may cause damage to your health, and adversely affects your family. Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador. Sale prohibited to minors under 18 years of age</i> The label must in an easily readable form, use colours that distinguish the text from the background, and occupy 10% of the label surface
Guatemala	<i>Excessive consumption of this product is dangerous to the health of the consumer</i>

⁵ International Centre for Alcohol Policies, September 1997, *Health Warning Labels*
<http://www.icap.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zxcwvRbfS%2bI%3d&tabid=75>

⁶ Stockwell (2006) A Review of Research into Impacts of alcohol Warning Labels On Attitudes And Behaviour. Centre for addictions Research of BC Canada

⁷ Dell, C.A. and Roberts, G. (2005) Research Update: Alcohol use and pregnancy: An important Canadian public health and social issue. Public Health Agency of Canada.

⁸ Public Health Agency of Canada (2005) *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)*.
http://www.phacaspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/fag_e.html#1.

	<p><i>The consumption of this product causes serious harm to your health</i></p> <p>The Label must be written in Arial black size 12 in capital letters; be clearly legible, and occupy 25% of the front of the label</p>
Honduras	<p>The law states that: <i>Preventative legends must be displayed on all alcoholic beverage packaging</i></p>
India (State of Assam)	<p><i>Consumption of liquor is injurious to health</i></p>
Mexico	<p><i>Excessive consumption of this product is hazardous to health</i></p> <p>The labels must be in contrasting colours</p>
South Africa	<p>New regulations have recently been introduced requiring the packages of alcohol beverages to have message mentioning the negative effects of alcohol consumption. There is a number of messages required for instance <i>'drinking during pregnancy can be harmful to your baby'</i></p>
South Korea	<p>One of the three following messages must be placed on alcohol beverage containers:</p> <p>(a) <i>Warning: Excessive consumption of alcohol may cause liver cirrhosis or liver cancer and is especially detrimental to the mental and physical health of minors.</i> OR</p> <p>(b) <i>Warning: Excessive consumption of alcohol may cause liver cirrhosis or liver cancer, and especially, women who drink while they are pregnant increase the risk of congenital anomalies.</i> OR</p> <p>(c) <i>Excessive consumption of alcohol may cause liver cirrhosis or liver cancer, and consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery and may increase the likelihood of car accidents or accidents during work.</i></p> <p>On all spirits containers:</p> <p><i>Excessive drinking may cause cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer and increase the probability of accidents while driving or working.</i></p>
Taiwan	<p><i>Excessive consumption of alcohol is harmful to health</i></p> <p><i>To be safe, don't drink and drive</i></p> <p><i>Excessive drinking is harmful to you and others</i></p> <p><i>Please do not drink if you are a minor</i></p> <p>Labels must be in a conspicuous place on the container's largest external surface</p>
Thailand	<p><i>Warning: Drinking Liquor Reduces Driving Ability</i></p> <p><i>Forbidden to be sold to children under 18 years old</i></p> <p>The label must be printed in bold characters at least 2 mm high</p>
United States	<p>GOVERNMENT WARNING:</p> <p><i>(1) According to the Surgeon General, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Consumption of alcohol impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems.</i></p>
Venezuela	<p>One of the following warning statements or similar text is required:</p>

	(a) <i>The abuse of alcoholic beverages can damage the health.</i> OR (b) <i>Excessive consumption can be harmful to health.</i>
Zimbabwe	(1) <i>Alcohol may be hazardous to health if consumed to excess.</i> (2) <i>Operation of machinery or driving after the consumption of alcohol is not advisable.</i>

Health warnings on advertisements

Argentina	
Armenia	
Azerbaijan	
Belize	
Benin	
Colombia	
Costa Rica	
Cape Verde	
Cambodia	
Dominican Republic	
Ecuador	
el Salvador	Excessive consumption of this product is harmful to health, it is prohibited to be sold to people under 18
Gambia	
Gabon	
Guatemala	<i>Consumption of this product cause serious damage to health</i> must be minimum two seconds in broadcast media or 10% of the ad size
Honduras	
Kazakhstan	
India (Southern states)	
Indonesia	
Japan	
Mexico	
Malawi	
Mauritius	
Mongolia	
Nicaragua	
Panamá	
Paraguay	
Philippines	
Thailand	
Venezuela	

Overview of health warning labels in the EU

The table below lists health warning on labels of beverage container as well as on advertisements (both regulation and non-regulation) in Europe.

Country	Content
Austria	
Belgium	
Bulgaria	The law provide notes about risks for the health on the labels of alcoholic beverages
Cyprus	Yes
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Estonia	Legislation introduced in March 2008 requires health warnings on all alcoholic beverages advertising
Finland	<p>No</p> <p>NB: The already adopted law on regulatory health warning label: 1) on drinking during pregnancy and 2) a general health warning to be placed on containers was withdrawn due to the Commission negative opinion during the notification procedure and internal political changes in Finland.</p> <p>It was proposed for the containers of all alcoholic beverages to have a general warning in relation to the harmful effects of alcohol on health and a special warning regarding the threat to the foetal damage. The rationale for requiring warning about both the general hazards of alcohol and the risk of foetal damage was that if the warning label is restricted to the risk of alcohol during pregnancy, it might direct attention to use of alcohol by women in a way which could increase the feeling of shame or increase the threshold for seeking help. It was therefore considered that warning labelling and supporting information should pay attention to the risks specific to both women and men.⁹</p>
France	<p>Alcoholic containers should have at least one of two health messages, a statement indicating that consuming alcoholic beverages during pregnancy even in small quantities, can have serious effects on the health of the child and logo</p> <p><i>Consumption of alcoholic beverages during pregnancy even in small amounts can seriously damage the child's health</i></p> <p>Message on advertisements and packaging: <i>Alcohol abuse is dangerous for the health</i> <i>Drink with moderation</i></p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

⁹ Food Standards Australia New Zealand, December 2007, Initial Assessment Report *Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages with a Pregnancy Health Advisory Label*
http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/srcfiles/A576_IAR_Alcohol_labelling_FINAL.pdf#search=%22alcohol%20warning%20labels%22

Germany	
Greece	
Hungary	
Ireland	
Italy	Health warnings are not legally required on alcohol advertisements but sometimes they are introduced on a voluntary basis
Latvia	Yes (on advertisements) No (on containers)
Lithuania	Yes Warnings on out door advertising (on billboards)
Luxembourg	
Malta	
The Netherlands	
Norway	
Poland	Yes, state law requires to have health warnings on advertisements (billboards) Some of the messages used in awareness raising campaigns: <i>Pregnancy with not alcohol</i> <i>Drunk drivers carry death</i> <i>I drive (I am) sober</i> <i>Turn your thinking on</i> <i>Have you drunk? Don't drive</i> <i>Alcohol- minors not allowed</i> <i>Do no poison yourself</i> <i>Alcohol steals freedom</i> <i>Joy without alcohol- Holidays without Risk</i> <i>Let's Protect Youth</i> <i>I don't drink just because</i> <i>Find Out if Your Drinking is Safe</i> <i>Stop in time</i> <i>Alcohol in harmful to health</i> <i>Stop Domestic Violence</i> <i>Childhood without Violence</i>
Portugal	Drink alcohol in moderation
Romania	
Slovak Republic	
Slovenia	Yes National regulation: warning " <i>not suitable for children</i> " on containers/ packages of all foodstuffs, which contain alcohol
Spain	There is no compulsory labelling but there is a voluntary warning. The Spanish producers of distilled drinks decided to add the sentence " <i>Drink moderately. It's your responsibility</i> " to their advertisements
Sweden	Yes, on advertisements
Switzerland	
United Kingdom	There is agreement in principal with the industry as to messages and format (consumer information rather than health warnings). The Drinkaware Trust website address is usually found on alcohol adverts. In its latest consultation Government plans on introducing a

	<p>code of practice for retailers which would require them to display health warnings at the point of sale: ‘Under the Food and Safety Act 1990 to require licensed premises to display information about the alcohol unit content of a representative sample of drinks offered for sale. In addition, off-trade premises would be required to display health guidelines about regular consumption and information about the health risks of regular excessive drinking and binge drinking and the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy’ Furthermore: ‘Off trade premises would also need to provide information about the current guidelines on regular daily unit consumption and prescribed messages about the health risks of excessive alcohol consumption and drinking alcohol during pregnancy(...)’ ¹⁰</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The proposed wording: Alcohol: Know Your Limits <i>Do not regularly exceed 3-4 units daily (for men) and 2-3 units daily (for women)</i> For advice contact Drinkline, the national 24-hour helpline, on 0800 917 82 82 or visit Drinkaware at www.drinkaware.co.uk.</p>
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Self-regulation a basic overview

This part of the document was produced based on information provided by the European Spirits Organisation (CEPS) on their website¹¹

CEPS members agreed to promote the responsible consumption of spirit drinks. By 2010, where permitted under national law, 75% of advertising (print including billboards, TV/ cinemas and website) undertaken by members will include responsible drinking messages.

Status in July 2008

Countries where the 75% target is achieved:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Belgium | Message for beer products: <i>“Une biere brassée avec savoir se deguste avec sagesse”</i> (“Taste our carefully brewed beer wisely”). Message for other products: <i>“Notre savoir-faire se deguste avec sagesse”</i> (“Taste our know-how wisely”). |
| France | <i>“L’abus d’alcool est dangereux pour la sante”</i> (“The abuse of alcohol is dangerous for health”). |
| Greece | “Enjoy responsibly” message |
| Hungary | <i>“Minőseget, mertekkel”</i> (“Quality not quantity”). |

¹⁰ Home Office Government (May 2009) *Safe. Sensible. Social. Selling alcohol responsibly: A new consultation on the new code of practice for alcohol retailers*
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2009-alcohol/cons-2009-alcohol-doc?view=Binary>

¹¹ Source: http://www.europeanspirits.org/documents/ceps_charter_report_2008_final1.pdf

Ireland	“Enjoy [brand name] <i>sensibly</i> ”.
Portugal	“ <i>Be responsible. Drink moderately</i> ”
Spain	“Disfruta de un consumo responsable” (“ <i>Enjoy a responsible drinking</i> ”).
United Kingdom	please see previous sections

Countries where Responsible Drinking Messages (RDMs) exist but 75% target has not been reached

Austria	
Bulgaria	
Cyprus	
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Germany	
Italy	
Luxembourg	
Malta	
Poland	under the law, only point of sale promotions and advertisements in professional are allowed for spirit drinks
Romania	
Slovak Republic	
The Netherlands	<i>Geniet, maar drink met mate</i> (“ <i>Enjoy, but in moderation</i> ”) message for people under 16 years old to encourage them not to drink “ www.alcoholonderde16natuurlijkniel.nl ” (“ <i>alcohol below 16, certainly not</i> ”)

Lessons from the UK- assessment of the 2007 self- regulation agreement

Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association (CCFRA) has published in June last year (2008) a report regarding the self regulation in the UK- ‘*Monitoring Implementation of Alcohol Labelling Regime*’. CCFRA was commissioned by The Department of Health to conduct a large-scale independent survey to examine the extent to which the Government’s alcohol labelling agreement with the industry has been implemented.

In May 2007 UK Government has entered a voluntary agreement with the alcohol industry which was designed to introduce health warning labels on alcoholic drink containers by the end of 2008.

Such labels were required to include:

- the drink’s unit content
- the recommended Government sensible drinking guidelines ‘*UK Chief Medical Officers recommend men do not regularly exceed 3-4 units daily and women, 2-3 units daily*’
- the website address of the independent charity, the Drinkaware Trust- www.drinkaware.co.uk
- one of the three following messages as a heading:
 - Know your Limits
 - Enjoy Responsibly
 - Drink Responsibly
- Alcohol in pregnancy message as agreed by the UK Chief Medical Officers ‘*Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive*’; the preference was for this

text to be used rather than an alternative circular logo (diagonal line being superimposed on an image of a pregnant woman holding a glass)

During the last two weeks in March 2008; 458 samples were purchased from 60 major supermarkets, convenience stores and off licenses. This study looked into 62 separate features which then were diagnosed to determine to what extent the voluntary agreement has been followed.

A UK unit per container information was the most frequently implemented element with 43% of samples including this information. When it comes to the units per glass/serving 19.2% of samples had this information with spirits and wines appearing to include it more frequently than the other product groups.

The second most frequent health warning element (32.5% of samples) was a reference to the website address of the Drink Aware Trust (www.drinkaware.co.uk). However, occasionally this was typed as D-rinkaware.co.uk which was not directly linking users to the website.

In terms of the responsible drinking message, it often failed to comply with the voluntary labelling agreement (Know Your Limits- 3.1% of the samples used it, Enjoy Responsibly- 10%, Drink Responsibly- 8.5%)

All drinks types incorporated an element of the Drink Responsible message however neither wines nor flavoured alcoholic beverages had it as a heading.

On a number of occasions (22.5%) alternative wording was employed, often the word 'please' and the brand's name were added. Examples of some alternative messages included:

- Always enjoy *brand name* wines in moderation
- Drink *brand name* Responsibly
- Best Enjoyed Responsibly
- Member of the *brand name* Group promoting sensible drinking
- Please drink *brand name* responsibly
- Please take as much care enjoying our beers as we do brewing them. Drink sensibly
- Remember, you can have too much of a good thing
- Respect alcohol. Respect yourself

The sensible drinking guidelines information '*UK Chief Medical Officers recommend men do not regularly exceed 3-4 units daily and women, 2-3 units daily*' has been implemented in the agreed format only in 2.4% of the samples. Alternative sensible drinking guidelines have been employed in 11.8% of products sampled. The main discrepancies were around the source of advice information:

- UK Government
- Official figures
- UK Health Departments
- Guideline Daily Amounts
- UK guidelines
- Responsible drinkers

Occasionally the whole message took a different format:

- Observe daily guidelines
- UK guidelines recommend that men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units and women 2 to 3 units a day

Despite the fact that the Department of Health had indicated a preference for the health warning in the form of the short textual message the pregnancy logo was used more frequently (14.4%)

- 2.0% of samples contained the agreed wording (*'Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive'*)
- 2.2% of samples employed alternative pregnancy advice i.e. *'Before/during pregnancy. Most studies show that 1-2 units of alcohol once or twice a week do not cause harm in pregnancy'*

In terms of graphics and visual presentation of health warnings they took on average only 1.2% of the total printable area. The survey also found out that there appeared to be little consistency on to the presentation, content and format of health warnings. Furthermore, poor tonal contrast was believed to affect legibility i.e. shiny or metallic backgrounds. It was also reported that in some cases health information was in a smaller font or different orientation to other information on the package. However, if the unit and health information was present it was usually deemed to be easily visible, clearly legible and permanent.

In brief, partial unit and health information and guidelines are currently available on the labels of alcoholic drinks with some instances of good practices being employed. However, generally there is a great number of inconsistencies in the content, format and location of units and health information.

Furthermore, a considerable number of samples contained no unit or health information at all- 32.2%

Full report available:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Healthimprovement/Alcoholmisuse/DH_085390

Effectiveness of the health warning labels

The highest number of researches examining the effectiveness of health warning labels were carried out in the US where health warning labels were introduced in 1989.

Some of these findings are summarised in the table below:

<p>CSPI Alcohol Beverage Health Warning Statement Study¹²</p> <p>August 2001</p> <p>This summary focuses on 'drinkers'- Americans who say they consume alcohol beverages</p>	<p>The major barrier to the effectiveness of health warning statements is that they are not noticeable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - too small - not prominently located on containers - do not stand out on a bottle or can
	<p>Results suggest that drinkers think that the difficulty in noticing health warning statements negatively affects the perceived level of risk from alcohol.</p>
	<p>The readability and legibility of the words contained in the health warning statement is still a serious barrier to its overall effectiveness.</p>
	<p>Americans who consume alcohol believe that specific changes to health warning statements that would make them more noticeable would also make them much more effective.</p>
<p>A Review of Research Into the Impacts of Alcohol Warning Labels On Attitudes And Behaviour¹³</p> <p>February 2006</p> <p>Centre for Addiction Research of BC University of Victoria</p>	<p>Babor et al (2003) found some evidence of change in some intervening variables such as prompting target groups to discuss the health effects of drinking. The group commented that, given the relatively small size, the obscurity and lack of variation in the labels, it is remarkable that any effects at all were demonstrated. They also noted that cost to implement this strategy was low</p>
	<p>Agostinelli and Grube (2002) concluded that warning labels have the potential to influence behavior but this depends on their design, the content of the messages, and how well they are targeted at their intended audience.</p>
	<p>Greenfield (1997) noted evidence of warning labels prompting discussions about the dangers of drinking, steadily increased awareness of the labels, and evidence of increased public support for alcohol labeling by the US public following its introduction.</p>

¹²Centre for Science in Public Interest: http://www.cspinet.org/booze/batf_labels2001_poll.htm

¹³ Stockwell T. (2006) *A Review of Research Into The Impacts of Alcohol warning Labels On Attitudes And Behaviour*. University of Victoria, Canada.

	<p>Hankin et al (1993) study of pregnant women; evidence of awareness and recall of the messages was found.</p> <p>The ARG and ARF surveys of the general populations of US and Ontario, 1989 to 1994; respondents reporting having taken part in conversations about risks of alcohol consumption from before the introduction of the labels to the year afterwards (Kaskutas and Greenfield 1992).</p> <p>Kaskutas et al (1998) reported that pregnant women who saw the labels were more likely to discuss the issue; in addition a 'dose-response' effect was found such that the more types of warnings the respondents had seen (on adverts at point-of-sale, in magazines and on containers) the more likely they were to have discussed the issue.</p> <p>MacKinnon et al (1994) there were no beneficial changes that could be attributed to the warning labels concerning the level of belief in the messages (which was very high to begin with) in drinking behavior or in relation to drinking and driving.</p> <p>Australia 2005 In December 2005 the Commonwealth State and Territory health ministers agreed with a proposal put to the National Food Authority that labels be required on all alcohol containers expressing their alcohol content in terms of 10-gram unit. An evidence of increasing awareness of the concept of a 'standard drink' since the label's introduction was found. Without standard drink labels, drinkers often underestimated alcohol content and were usually inaccurate in their estimates.</p>
<p>Alcohol health information labels¹⁴</p> <p>Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)</p> <p>August 2009</p>	<p>This qualitative research was conducted for VicHealth to canvas perception about health advisory labels on alcoholic beverages amongst teenagers, young adults and parents of teenagers.</p> <p>The objectives of the research were to ascertain which of 12 proposed labels would most likely have an impact on participants' personal behavior and to gain better understanding of participants' drinking practices and their approach to responsible drinking.</p> <p>The results of the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a high level of support for health advisory labels on alcoholic beverage containers. ▪ messages on labels should aim at increasing awareness amongst the general population of the range of health consequences of alcohol rather than attempting to direct specific messages to specific groups.

¹⁴ Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (2009) *Alcohol health information labels: Report of qualitative research into health information labels on alcoholic beverages*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton South (Australia)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of such labels would be seen over time rather than affecting immediate behavioral change ▪ At the beginning health warnings should be factual and informative ▪ Labels most likely to be effective were those linked with existing media campaigns. ▪ If images are included these would be most effective if they are linked with other elements of a social marketing campaigns. ▪ Participants did not appreciate being told what to do, especially when they were yet to personally experience any detrimental consequences as a result of their drinking behaviors ▪ Humor is unlikely to be the most effective mechanism for portraying information about the risks of alcohol consumption ▪ Participants were surprised by the link between alcohol and breast cancer and some were curious about the link with brain damage ▪ The main perceived values of providing nutritional information appeared to be in relation to the calorie content ▪ There is was tendency for participants to calculate their consumption based on the number of drinks they consumed (i.e. glasses, shots, bottles) rather than the number of 'standard drinks'. ▪ 'Health Warning' was the preferred wording to use rather than 'Government Health Warning' or 'Warning'
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Health warning labels have the potential to positively contribute to positive outcomes as part of a larger range of strategies, and especially if they are noticeable, impactful and varied.

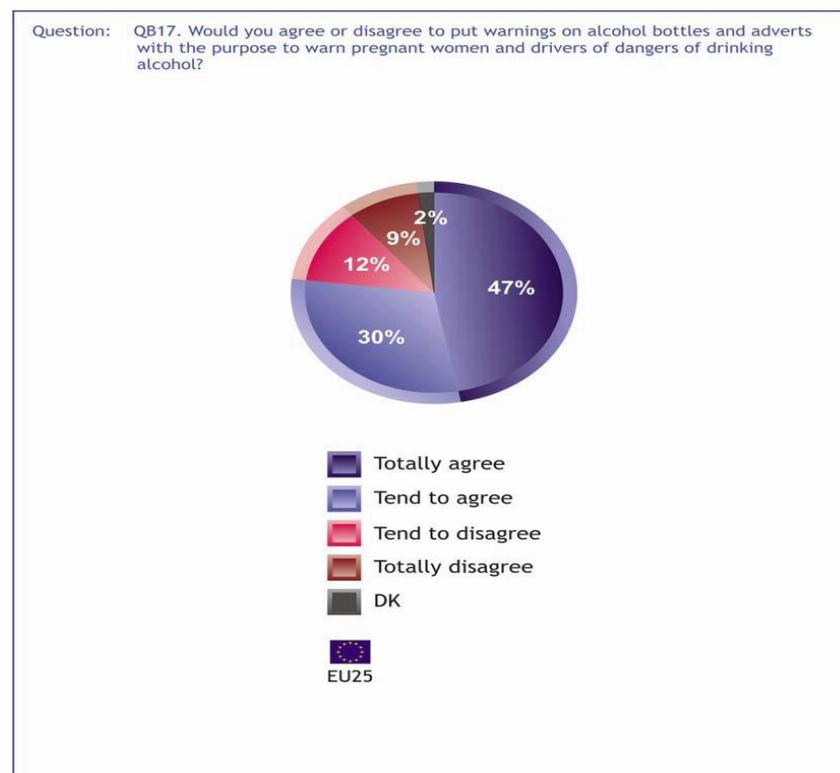
To conclude some researches highlight that there is increasing level of public support for alcohol health warning labels, secondly high risk groups of drinkers are especially likely to recall the messages. It is also evident that after the introduction of labels drinkers and high risk drinkers are prompted to discuss risk of associated with alcohol consumption and their drinking behavior. Furthermore, it is noted that recall of warning labels was associate with being less likely to report having engaged in drunk driving.

What does the public say?

Across the Union there appears to be a broad support for warning pregnant women and drivers of the dangers of drinking alcohol.

Three quarters of the European Union population (77%) would agree with putting warnings on alcohol bottles, and adverts, in order to warn pregnant women and drivers of the dangers of drinking alcohol.¹⁵

In all countries surveyed, the majority of respondents would support such a concept. The most sizable opposition to warnings has been measured in Finland (45%), Denmark (41%) and the Netherlands (38%).



Eurocare's position on health warning messages

Eurocare regrets that the European Commission proposal on the provision of information to consumers¹⁶ does not contain an obligation to mention any health warning messages. This is a missed opportunity for a more comprehensive approach to the reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe.

Eurocare believes labelling should be part of integrated strategy to provide information and educate consumers about alcohol and should be part of integrated policies and programmes to reduce the harm done by alcohol.

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_272b_en.pdf

¹⁶ 2008/0028 (COD) Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the provision of food information

It is the consumers right to know the ingredient contained in their beverages. Certain ingredients or other substance used in the production of alcohol beverages can cause allergies or intolerance in consumers.

Alcohol producers should provide information about the ingredients as well as information on the risks associated with alcohol consumption: damages to health (liver cirrhosis, cancers) risk of dependence, dangers associated with drinking alcohol during pregnancy, when driving, operating machinery and when taking certain medication.

Warning labels can increase knowledge and encourage change in perception of risks associated with alcohol consumption. Studies show that warning labels are noticed by most drinkers, especially by young and high risk drinkers and prompt target groups to discuss health effects of drinking (especially early after their introduction)¹⁷. Evidence also suggests that the recall of warning labels was associated with being less likely to report having engaged in drunk driving¹⁸

Beer, wine and spirit should be included into the European Commission's proposal (Provision of Food Information to Consumers) so that consumers in Europe are informed of the ingredients and nutritional values of alcohol beverages, as well as the health risks associated with drinking alcohol.

Health warnings on alcoholic beverages should:

Have a standard format and design irrelevant of the mark of the alcohol beverage, so that they do not become a part of the specific beverage design, this will ensure better visibility of such warnings

Placed in a standard location on the container

Be parallel of the base of the container, be in a box

Appear on a contrasting background (black on white)

Sizing be determined by the minimum percentage of the size of the container

Rotating with sufficient vividness and strength to attract consumers attention

Determined by the European Institutions/ Agency or Ministers of Health (public body not private agency)

Non promotional- there should be a clear distinction between product information and the marketing of the product

Use images that are informational in style and taken from other ongoing education campaigns, this would enhance their effectiveness

Understandable (should be in the official language of the country in which the product is sold)

¹⁷ Babor, T. et al (2003) *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity-research and public policy* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ Greenfield, T. (1997) warning Labels: Evidence on harm reduction from long-term American surveys. In Plant, M et al *Alcohol: Minimizing the harm*. London: Free Association Books

Separate from other information of the label

Provide factual information

Aim to educate and inform rather than be authoritarian and prescriptive of behaviour

