



Alcohol Policy Youth Network



pobuda  
Brez izgovora

# Bled Youth Paper on Alcohol

A product of the First European  
Alcohol Policy Youth Conference  
8th - 14th November 2012





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# Introduction

*Dear reader,*

*We are pleased to present the handbook with the conclusions from the First European Alcohol Policy Youth Conference (EAPYC) that took place in Bled, Slovenia, from the 8th to the 14th November 2012.*

*As a youth organization, we are proud of having gathered more than 80 young leaders from 26 European countries who are willing to work towards the prevention and reduction of harm caused by alcohol. They were offered the opportunity to develop skills in three different areas related to alcohol (Project Management, Advocacy/Lobbying and Research) and to express their views on the issue of alcohol consumption among young people. Some results are featured in this publication under the section: Bled Youth Paper on Alcohol.*

*The Conference had several high-level speakers coming from reputed national and international institutions such as the Netherlands' Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP), the Institute of Alcohol Studies, the European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare), the World Health Organization, the European Commission's DG SANCO and the Slovenian Ministry of Health. These speakers, together with the great help of young facilitators, guided the participants through a powerful mind shift, as many participants, had never seen alcohol as a problem before joining the EAPYC.*

*We would like to thank the European Commission's Youth in Action Programme, the Slovenian Ministry of Health and the Slovenian Governmental Office for Youth for believing in this initiative and supporting us.*

*EAPYC Organizers*





# Why is alcohol a problem?

The harmful use of alcohol has a serious effect on public health and is considered to be one of the main risk factors for poor health globally. It is a significant contributor to the global burden of disease [1] and is listed as the third leading risk factor for premature deaths and disabilities in the world. The harmful use of alcohol is one of the four most common, modifiable and preventable risk factors for major non-communicable diseases.

The burden alcohol poses to European society in terms of mortality, morbidity and disability is enormous, as shown by the more than four million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) attributable to alcohol in 2004 (15% of all DALYs in men and 4% in women) [2]

It is estimated that 2.5 million people worldwide die of alcohol-related causes, including 320.000 young people between 15 and 29 years of age, which represents 9% of all people in that group [1].

Europe is the region with the highest alcohol consumption in the world: in 2009, an average adult's (aged 15 years or more) alcohol consumption in Europe was 12.5 litres of pure alcohol – 27g of pure alcohol or nearly three drinks a day, more than double the world average [3]. Alcohol was ranked as the most harmful of all drugs when combining its effects on the individual and on society, followed by heroin and crack cocaine, and far more important than tobacco [4].





## Alcohol and health

Alcohol is a causal factor in 60 types of diseases and injuries and a component cause in 200 others, including injuries, mental and behavioural disorders, gastrointestinal conditions, cancers, cardiovascular diseases, immunological disorders, lung diseases, skeletal and muscular diseases, reproductive disorders and pre-natal harm, including an increased risk of prematurity and low birth weight. Almost 4% of all deaths worldwide are attributed to alcohol, greater than deaths caused by HIV/AIDS, violence or tuberculosis [1]. Based on the latest scientific evidence, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organization has classified alcohol as ‘carcinogenic to humans’ [5]. Alcohol can cause seven types of cancer: mouth, upper throat, voice box, food pipe, bowel, breast and liver cancer and there is no level of drinking than can be considered “safe” from risk of cancer (6).

In European countries, about 10% of total cancer in men and 3% in women could be attributed to current and former alcohol consumption [7]

## Social harm of alcohol

The harmful use of alcohol compromises both individual and social development: drinking causes detrimental health and social consequences for the drinker, the people around the drinker and society at large. Patterns of drinking are also associated with increased risk of adverse health outcomes. A wide variety of alcohol-related problems can have devastating impacts on individuals and their families and can seriously affect community life [3].

Alcohol is also associated with many serious social issues, including violence, child neglect and abuse, absenteeism in the workplace or simply using government resources, notably through the costs of providing health care, unemployment and incapacity benefits, and dealing with crime and disorder [1, 3]. Alcohol is shown to be a significant contributory factor in the occurrence of: road traffic accidents (car occupants, cyclists, pedestrians), but also in accidents at home (falls and fires), accidents at work, recreational and sports injuries (due to drowning for instance), violence and suicide.





The presence of alcohol in the body has also been shown to increase the severity of injuries from accidents. In Europe, Alcohol is annually responsible for at least:

- 10 800 road traffic accident deaths;
- 27 000 other accidental deaths;
- 2 000 interpersonal violence situations;
- 10 000 suicides [8].

In 2010, nearly 31 000 people were killed in European Union as a consequence of road collisions [9]. Drink driving is one of the three main killers in Europe. According to the European Commission's estimates, 25% of all road deaths across the EU are alcohol related. Therefore, the European Transport Safety Council estimates that 6 500 deaths could have been prevented in 2010 if all drivers had obeyed the law on drink driving [10].

Effects on the human body and behaviour range from anaesthesia after large amounts of alcohol to impairment of behavioural and cognitive capabilities after small doses. Alcohol may also decrease motivation to comply with safety standards, which may result in an active search for dangerous situations (such as competitive behaviour, or excessive speed). In general, all functions that are important in the safe operation of a motor vehicle can be affected by levels of alcohol well below the current legal limits operating in EU countries [11].

When measuring the cost of alcohol abuse, such things as health services and medical expenses, premature death, loss of productivity, and alcohol related crimes have to be considered. Without a doubt the deleterious effects of alcohol consumption on health and safety constitute a substantial economic burden, reducing our overall standard of living.





# Definition of the Youth Sector

The youth sector comprises several types of organizations and forms of association. Broadly speaking, organizations can be divided into youth organizations and organizations for youth.

## Youth organizations

We identify the following to be the basic characteristics of youth organizations:

- 1.** The age of members is mostly within the interval defined as youth. Usually the appropriate age structure is determined in the statutes or in other rules of the organization. For example, up to 35 years according to the European Youth Forum.
- 2.** The membership is voluntary. Every individual becomes a member voluntarily and is free to terminate her/his membership.
- 3.** The structure is democratic. The organization functions through democratic mechanisms, which ensure the inclusion of the entire membership. Structures and procedures are usually set down in the organization's rules of procedure.
- 4.** It works for the benefit of young people. Areas covered by the youth organization correspond to the areas of interest for youth. This can include general youth interests, such as education, employment, etc., or specific interests, which are the basis for the organization's existence.





## **Membership Youth Organizations**

Membership Youth Organizations allow individual and collective membership; e.g. associations have individual membership, but several associations can join to form unions, federations or networks – in this case we talk about collective membership.

Youth Organizations are mostly defined as autonomous, democratic and voluntary associations of young people, which work to enable young people to experience planned and unplanned learning and which enables them to form and express opinions, and to implement activities in line with their interests, culture, world view or political opinion.

Legally speaking, a youth organization is an association, federation of associations or an autonomous youth organization in a larger organization, and has at least 90 percent of members up to the age of 29, and at least 70 percent of the leadership between 15 and 29 years of age.

According to their level of action, youth organizations can be national (those with units in the majority of regions of the country) and local (those working mainly at the local level).

## **Youth Councils**

Organizations with collective membership, especially youth councils, are often not seen as proper organizations, but as “structures”, because the individuals, active in them, represent an organization rather than “themselves”.

Youth Council is an umbrella association of youth organizations and represents the interests of young people and youth organizations. A youth council can work at the national level (the National Youth Council of Slovenia) or at the local level – as the youth council of a local community.





The difference between Youth Council and Collective Youth Organizations is in its public interest – while Collective Youth Organizations work towards their mission (let it be any type of activity, representation or collective action), Youth Councils mostly work for the broader benefit of young people – national or local.

## Organizations for youth

Organizations for youth differ from other membership-based organizations with regard to age limitations and/or the programmatic focus on youth, but can also differ regarding the (non) voluntary character of membership. Other forms of organizations exist in the field of youth work and we can find several organizations that have a sector that is youth driven or works with young people; a special example are youth centres.

### Youth Centres

Youth Centres are different from Youth Organizations in the first three criteria above (youth, voluntary, democratic), but both have one thing in common: working for the benefit of young people. They have no membership and their decision-making structures mostly do not need to be democratic.

A youth centre is, as most generally defined, a regularly organized functional centre, with a basic activity of managing the infrastructure designed for youth. It also ensures adequate space and equipment for youth work and adequately trained staff to support youth work. [15]





# Bled Youth Paper on Alcohol

*(Adopted in Bled, Slovenia, on 12th November 2012)*

## Background

According to The European Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs' (ESPAD) 2011 Report [12], on average, nearly half of the students (45%) aged 15-16 had consumed alcohol on-premise during the past 30 days. In all ESPAD countries but Iceland, 70% or more of the students have tried alcohol at least once during their lifetime. On average, 87% have used alcohol during their lifetime, 79% have done so in the past 12 months and 57% in the past 30 days. Though boys have used alcohol more often than girls, this difference is slowly declining year by year.

What is even more important, nearly half of the students (47%) have been intoxicated at least once during their lifetime, to the point of staggering when walking, having slurred speech or throwing up. 37% reported intoxication in the past 12 months and 17% in the past 30 days. The intimidating fact is that nearly six in ten students had consumed at least one glass of alcohol at the age of 13 or younger and 12% had been drunk at that age. Five successive data-collection waves of the ESPAD showed that young people are starting to drink alcohol at an earlier age.

International research confirms that heavy and frequent drinking when young can lead to a greater onset of alcohol dependence [12]: evidence indicates that an earlier age of initiation is associated with heavier consumption and increased risk of physical, social and mental health problems later in life [13]. In addition to these direct risks, young people are also often the victims of the secondary effects of alcohol abuse – i.e. harm caused through the misuse of alcohol by parents/legal guardians, young peers as well as others (e.g. (domestic) violence, drink driving, broken families).





## Rationale

It is very important to make constant efforts to reduce all types of health-damaging behaviours and to empower young people to make responsible and healthier choices, especially when it comes to the use of alcohol. In order to make these choices, among others, young people need to be well informed, have strong self-esteem, and the possibility of alternative ways of spending their leisure time and having fun. Public policies should be geared towards supporting youth in this regard while striving for the emergence of a culture where young peoples' right to choose not to use alcohol or to use alcohol moderately is respected.

Youth are often depicted as simply a social group abusing alcohol rather than individuals capable of making conscious choices and often, even victims of alcohol-related harm. But it is very important to realize that young people could also be potential actors who could contribute to address alcohol-related issues. In this regard, youth itself can play an important role through raising awareness, by providing alternative leisure time activities, as well as by providing the space where young people can develop their social and personal skills. Alcohol control policies on a national and European level affect young people, therefore young people should also be more involved and have their say in policy-making.

## Introduction

Between 8th and 14th November 2012, a group of young people aged 18 to 30 met at the First European Alcohol Policy Youth Conference in Bled, Slovenia. The conference brought together more than 80 young people from 26 European countries to build capacity in order for them to become advocates of a more effective and comprehensive alcohol policy in Europe.





The 1st European Alcohol Policy Youth Conference aimed to:

- Raise interest among young people and youth organizations in Europe about alcohol policy and other alcohol-related issues;
- Empower the participants with the necessary skills and capacities in order to actively promote their views on alcohol consumption;
- Engage these views in policy-making, by empowering them to influence institutions and authorities, as well as raise awareness among their constituencies and partners at the local, national or European level;
- Provide the necessary tools and training for participants to be able to conduct community based projects to prevent and reduce the alcohol related harm in youth;
- Bring their own expertise and best practice and exchange them with the rest of the participants, as well as gain more skills on advocacy and policy-making.

The conference was organized by: the Alcohol Policy Youth Network and No Excuse Slovenia in collaboration with experts from European Commission (EC), Netherlands' Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP), Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS), Eurocare and the Ministry of Health of Slovenia. The conference was funded by the European Commission's Youth in Action Programme and financial contribution from the Slovenian Ministry of Health and Slovenian Governmental Office.





## Opening

We, the youth participating in the 1st European Alcohol Policy Youth Conference (EAPYC), organized by the Alcohol Policy Youth Network and No Excuse Slovenia in cooperation with European alcohol policy experts, gathered in Bled, Slovenia, from 8th to 14th November 2012, and have adopted this paper in order to:

- Raise awareness among young people in Europe about the global problem of alcohol consumption;
- Show our commitment to address the problem and
- Urge various youth stakeholders to take action to prevent alcohol-related harm on them, others and society.

By this paper, we, participants of the 1st EAPYC, call on all European Youth Organizations, movements, young individuals and other interested parties, to advocate for and invest in the health and well-being of young people. We highlight that alcohol policies directed at young people should be part of a broader societal response, since drinking among young people reflects the attitudes and practices of the wider adult society to a large extent.

We, young Europeans, consider ourselves as a resource that can contribute actively and positively to resolving alcohol-related problems in the WHO European Region. Therefore, we dedicate this Youth Paper to suggest how young stakeholders can work towards the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm.

## Youth Input

Organizations in the Youth Sector are an important platform in which young people learn about their responsibilities, develop and enhance personal skills and self-confidence. They play an important role in building capacity, raising awareness, and influencing young people's lifestyle choices. Moreover, youth organizations have a role to play in the formulation of public policies at both European and national levels.





## Our suggestion is that...

### **All organizations in the youth sector can:**

- Build a new or join an existing coalition that works towards the reduction of alcohol-related harm and advocates for the introduction of effective alcohol control policies;
- Start or support campaigns that address alcohol-related issues like underage selling/buying, illegal alcohol use, advertisements for alcoholic beverages targeted at youth etc.;
- Encourage collaboration among all types of organizations in the youth sector;
- Not accept donations or sponsorships from alcohol, tobacco industry or other related institutions;
- Be critical to the evidence provided by the organizations associated with the alcohol industry or by the industry itself;
- Support actions that raise awareness among young people of why it is not good to work with the alcohol and tobacco industry and denormalize collaboration with these two industries.

### **Membership Youth Organizations can:**

- Provide alternative leisure time activities for young people by creating alcohol free environments for young people (especially the ones that are underage);
- Stimulate older members to become role models during organizational gatherings or other public events by not drinking alcohol;
- Start and sustain projects that work towards the prevention or reduction of alcohol-related harm;
- Start or join an advocacy campaign to ban different types of alcohol marketing and raise awareness about the issue;
- Collaborate with media and use digital media in order to promote healthy lifestyles among youth.





Membership Youth Organizations provide a very important space in which young people can develop their social, personal and occupational skills. Young people are more open to learning experiences when a skill or knowledge is provided by their peers rather than books and teachers.

A special focus is given to scientific Youth Organizations that should encourage young researchers to join and lead research in the alcohol field, while constantly providing and translating recent scientific information about alcohol-related harm to a language that is understood by young people, media and politicians. Moreover, they should help train medical and public health students on how to use research as an advocacy tool and raise awareness among grown-up scientists about the use of youth friendly research methodologies and techniques.

**Youth Councils can:**

- Educate Youth Organizations about the effective alcohol policy measures and their role in advocating for them;
- Be advocates and stimulate Youth Organizations to become advocates of effective alcohol policy on the local or national level;
- Partner up with research institutions to (conduct) further research in the Youth Sector;
- Represent their members' opinions on alcohol and alcohol consumption;
- Build bridges between young people and decision-makers about alcohol policy through structured dialogue ;
- Make sure that these alcohol policies are included as good practices in Council Members' Youth Organizations;





**Organizations for young people (especially youth centres) can:**

- Stop serving alcohol if they serve it;
- Organize non-formal education programs on their premises about the harm caused by alcohol;
- Partner up with organizations providing alcohol harm-reduction programs;

**Young parents can:**

- Provide an alcohol-free environment at home. Alcohol is usually related to special occasions – holidays, celebrations and other family gatherings and many times is displayed at home in visible places;
- Be a role model for their children and avoid alcohol use or at least being drunk in front of them;
- Provide healthy leisure-time activities in open spaces when possible;
- Improve their knowledge on alcohol related harm;
- Share the knowledge about alcohol (have “the talk”) at the start of the child’s adolescence;
- Support children that decide not to drink alcohol.





### ***Young celebrities can:***

- Become role models for their followers and avoid drinking alcohol in public and shows;
- Avoid giving their brand/image/name/face to advertise alcohol products or “responsible” alcohol consumption carried out by alcohol companies;
- Avoid or not participate in public events that are mainly sponsored by the alcohol industry;
- Have a public stand to end sponsorship of events by alcohol companies.

### ***Young Journalists can:***

- Raise awareness specifically in youth magazines about alcohol-related harm - especially by featuring negative stories of alcohol and not just connect it with parties;
- Promote events that do not have a “let’s get drunk” approach to advertising or have a positive approach towards prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm;
- Collaborate with different organizations that work with young people in order to promote positive practices of youth organization that avoid alcohol in their activities and provide healthier choices for their members.





# About the organizers

**NO EXCUSE**

Mladinska zveza Brez izgovora

## Youth Network No Excuse Slovenia

No Excuse Slovenia strives for positive social change and personal growth of young people. It fosters their social participation and activation of their peers. By peer-to-peer and intergenerational dialogue it raises awareness about current topics and encourages their critical thinking.

Through various projects the organization promotes and advocates for sustainable development, tolerance, healthy lifestyle and active citizenship

Its vision is a world where young people think critically, suggest changes and act.

No Excuse Slovenia is apolitical and a non-profit making organization, working independently from any private source of funding.

More about the organization can be found on:

**W:** [www.noexcuse.si](http://www.noexcuse.si)

**FB:** [www.facebook.com/noexcuseslovenia](http://www.facebook.com/noexcuseslovenia)

**TW:** [www.twitter.com/noexcuseslo](http://www.twitter.com/noexcuseslo)





## Alcohol Policy Youth Network

The Alcohol Policy Youth Network is a network of youth organizations that work towards the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm.

APYN develops and supports effective alcohol policy to assure healthy lifestyles and environments for young people. We do this through capacity building of youth organizations in:

- research on young people and alcohol,
- advocacy of alcohol policy and
- maintenance or change of attitudes and behaviours that will improve young people's well-being.

APYN is non-partisan and independent from any source of alcohol or tobacco industry funding.

More about the organization can be found on:

**W:** [www.apyn.org](http://www.apyn.org)

**FB:** [www.facebook.com/apyn.org](https://www.facebook.com/apyn.org)

**TW:** [www.twitter.com/apynetwork](https://www.twitter.com/apynetwork)





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