



Common myths regarding the STAD approach: a reality check



The STAD approach can help communities to reduce alcohol related problems by limiting the availability of alcohol within nightlife and other settings.

When presenting the STAD approach in your community you might be confronted with various misperceptions depending on the perspective of your audience. Usually these misperceptions are based on false beliefs regarding alcohol, nightlife and cooperation between partners like municipality, police and bar owners. In this brochure we list the most common myths in this area and give them a reality check. We hope this brochure can serve as a tool in creating support for the STAD approach in your community.

Myth 1

The STAD approach might be interesting for prevention but commercial parties like bars and discos will never be interested in working with it in my city.

The STAD programme began in Stockholm and is now firmly established there. The bar and restaurant association in Stockholm are strongly supportive of the cooperative STAD approach. Bar owners have discovered that the programme not only leads to health and safety benefits, but also creates a better nightlife environment for businesses and business people to operate in. STAD has a positive effect on controlling problems in and around establishments (e.g. fewer fights and threats towards bar staff, less damaged furniture etc.). As a result areas and the nightlife businesses in them can develop a better image. This also makes it easier for them to find and keep well educated and experienced staff. Results from STAD in Europe (SiE) showed that the positive attitude of bars and restaurant owners after implementation can be replicated in other countries like the Netherlands.

Reality

Myth 2

The STAD programme might work in Sweden, but that is a different alcohol culture than the one in our country/city.

It is right that alcohol cultures differ between EU countries. On the one hand the Nordic countries have a tradition in binge drinking, but average annual alcohol consumption and levels of youth drinking are relatively low in Sweden compared to many other EU countries. However, the STAD programme uses a cooperative model that takes into account the views of local agencies, businesses and other stakeholders. This should allow other cultures to adapt approaches and materials to complement their local environments. The early results from the Stad in Europe suggest such approaches mean STAD can be successfully transported between different settings and cultures.

Reality

Myth 3

The financial benefits of the STAD programme will go to others rather than the health department, like insurance companies, safety departments and the police.

The STAD evaluation in Stockholm showed a cost-saving ratio of 1:39 (Månsdotter, 2007); in other words for every Krona, Euro or Pound spent on STAD it saved 39. These benefits were realised across a variety of organisations and services. Most of the benefits are related to the judicial system (78%) and avoiding loss in productivity (15%). Health savings accounted for 5% of the return. These are only the direct costs saved. Many more savings may be realised in the longer run relating to impacts of long-term disabilities from nightlife incidents and violence, addiction and long-term mental health issues.

Reality

Myth 4

Things like mystery shopping to study compliance in bars and supermarkets is something that is not accepted in my country.

Some people see mystery shopping as an inflammatory activity trying to entrap bars and discos in illegal activities. However, mystery shoppers are not there to make it possible to hand out more fines but rather to help ensure alcohol retail establishments avoid them by ensuring their staff do not break laws that forbid them selling alcohol to drunk people. They are also there to monitor how successful interventions have already been; establishing levels of sales of alcohol to intoxicated people or underage guests. Experience in STAD in Europe was that when this is explained to premises operating in nightlife environments this helped address their fears with all countries eventually using the tools described in the manual.

Reality

Myth 5

The compulsory RBS-training of STAD is not feasible in my country/city.

In Stockholm RBS (Responsible Beverage Service) training is indeed compulsory for bars/clubs/restaurants that want to stay open after midnight. All the other points of sale for alcohol are not obliged to follow the training but, with good cooperation, STAD has helped ensure that most bars still participate in the programme. Even without legislation cooperative working can ensure businesses participate in the STAD programme. SiE also showed that without legislation – and even in a very short timeframe – implementation is possible. In some countries, like the Netherlands, 100% of bars participated.

Reality

Myth 6

People say they need to get drunk to have a good night out. Why is it not their own choice to do so and so why should a bartender not serve them alcohol when they are drunk?

Studies suggest that many people actually drink more than they think is the right amount for them to have a good night out. When people are drunk they can find it difficult to know when it is best for them to stop drinking. More importantly, people who get very drunk are not only at risk of hurting themselves but also those around them. This might be through accidents, violence or unwanted sexual advances on the people around them. Such harms to others can put people off revisiting bars, clubs or even entire nightlife areas damaging the nightlife economy in that area.

Reality

Myth 7

As a bar owner or manager, if I work with the local authorities and police on tackling drunkenness in my establishment people will go to another bar and get alcohol there.

The STAD approach is about the whole of the nightlife community cooperating. Sometimes there may be bars or clubs that do not want to participate and even seek to profit from very drunk individuals who have been refused service elsewhere coming to their establishments. Such bars are often already known to the police and local authorities as places which may attract trouble. Most nightlife patrons will not wish to visit bars with such reputations. Strong working relations with police and other authorities can be used to focus police activity in and around such establishments and ensure they are controlled or in extreme situations the case made for them to be closed.

Reality

Myth 8

There is no way that the police will cooperate, they have different priorities like dealing with aggression and vandalism in night life.

A key element of the STAD approach is ensuring the police and other authorities understand that STAD is about preventing many of the issues they routinely have to cope with. Aggression in particular is often the result of poorly managed alcohol sales. The STAD programme has been shown to reduce pressures on criminal justice services which are often already highly stretched. An important element in the STAD approach is explaining the benefits to all organisations involved so that it is seen as part of the solution to pressures on the services they provide and not just another thing they have to do.

Reality

References

Månsdotter, A.M., Rydberg, M.K., Wallin, E., Lindholm, L.A., and Andréasson, S. (2007). A cost-effectiveness analysis of alcohol prevention targeting licensed premises. *Eur J Public Health* 17, 618-623.

See for more references and background information STAD in Europe: a manual for communities preventing alcohol related harm at www.stadineurope.eu

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