

EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2013

PRESS RELEASE

ALCOHOL CAUSES CANCER- HEALTH EXPERTS CALL ON INCREASED ACTIONS

Brussels, Belgium May 29, 2013

Dublin, Ireland May 29, 2013

Today in Dublin health experts from across Europe have gathered at the Conference for the European Week against Cancer.

10% of cancers in men and 3% in women can be attributed to drinking alcohol, highlighted the health experts. Europe is the world's heaviest drinking region, with some European countries ranking around 2.5 times above the global average¹.

Health experts highlighted the need for immediate action as alcoholic beverages are group 1 carcinogenic; the cancer they impact on are cancer of oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, colorectum and breast.

"On average, European consumers drink 30g of alcohol a day which is 600 times the recommended exposure level set by the European Food Safety Authority for cancer causing agents in food and drinks", said Professor Anderson from Newcastle University. "Given that there is no level of consumption that is safe as far as cancer is concerned, surely this calls for mandatory warning labels on all cans and bottles stating that alcohol causes fatal cancer".

Dr Peter Rice, Chair of the Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems said: *"Some of the most worrying trends in alcohol related harm are on the long term health of middle aged and older people, including increased rates of alcohol related cancers. This is often overlooked because of a focus on youth drinking and public disorder. The contribution of alcohol to a range of cancers needs to be better recognized. There needs to be better public information, more awareness among cancer professionals and effective public health measures to highlight the link and promote action to reduce avoidable illnesses and deaths".*

Mariann Skar, Eurocare Secretary General, commented: *"We would like to call on all actors, public and private, to inform consumers about the link between alcohol and cancer through ingredient listing and health warning labels. We all have the right to know not only what is in our drinks but also what side effects they cause to our health".*

The European Week Against Cancer (25 to 31 May), has been re- launched under the leadership of the [Association of European Cancer Leagues](#) as one of the activities in the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer. Each year, EWAC will promote the [European Code Against Cancer](#) and this year is highlighting the crucial role healthy lifestyles can play in preventing cancer.

Alcohol is one of the world's leading health concerns; it is one of the 4 major risk factors for developing non communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cancer (which affects 1 in 3 Europeans) and cardiovascular disease. First conclusive links between alcohol and cancer were established back in 1987 yet 25 years later only 36% of EU citizens are sure of this link. The 2010 Eurobarometer report¹¹ found that 1 in 5 European citizens do not believe that there is a connection between alcohol and cancer.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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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

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) SHAAP was established in 2006 by the Scottish Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties to raise awareness about alcohol-related harm and to promote solutions based on the best available evidence. It operates as an Advocacy Body to provide a coordinated, coherent and authoritative medical voice on reducing the impact of alcohol-related harm on the health and well-being of the people of Scotland. www.shaap.org.uk

European Association of Cancer Leagues (ECL) ECL is a pan-European umbrella organisation of national and regional cancer leagues. For over 30 years, we have been providing a unique and important platform for cancer societies. From Iceland to Turkey, ECL is represented by leagues in the extended Europe. Together, we are "making a Difference in Cancer Prevention and Control!" www.europeancancerleagues.org and www.alcoholandcancer.eu

The Irish Cancer Society is Ireland's National Cancer Charity (ICS). For the last fifty years, the Irish Cancer Society has worked for and on behalf of everyone in Ireland who is affected by cancer. Since we began our work in 1963, we have strived to ensure that fewer people in Ireland get cancer and that those that do get the best care, treatment, information and support. We listen, we support, we provide care and financial help, we create awareness, we provide information, we fund research and we influence decisions about cancer. We are an independent voice for cancer patients and their families.

Each year approximately 30,000 people in Ireland will be told they have cancer. Cancer is a disease that knows no boundaries, does not distinguish between sex, race or class, and has or will affect us all either directly or indirectly during our lifetime.

Our vision and our ambition is nothing less than a future without cancer. Our mission is to eliminate cancer. www.cancer.ie

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.
- €155.8 billion is the social costs attributable to alcohol in the EU on a yearly basis
- 1 in 4 of male deaths between 15-29 years are due to alcohol
- Alcohol is a major contributory factor in accidents; 1 in 4 of all road traffic deaths are caused by 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 WHO, *Global Health Risks 2009*, retrieved from:

http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/global_health_risks/en/index.html

ⁱⁱ Eurobarometer, 2010, retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/ebs_331_en.pdf?