



FOCUS ON YOUTH
FOOTBALL & ALCOHOL

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Interview report

Deliverable D7.2

Work Package 7

Main Partners

European Alcohol Policy Alliance



Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems



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Polish State Agency for Prevention of Alcohol-related Problems (PARPA), Poland



Fundatia Romtens



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Abstract

Purpose: To find out young people's opinions on alcohol-related issues and sports.

Participants: Interviews with 65 young people (ages between 13-18) engaged in sports in six countries (Belgium, Finland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and UK/Scotland).

Findings: Drinking alcohol is common among young people, but it is not consumed at sports clubs. Interviewees felt that having sports as a hobby is a factor reducing alcohol consumption for young people.

The majority felt that discussing alcohol issues with their coaches is appropriate. Young people see a lot of alcohol advertisements but they don't believe that advertising has any effect on their own drinking. Interviewees were critical of alcohol advertising in the context of sport and the sale of alcohol in football stands.

Conclusion: Sports club activities can act as a source of substance prevention. On the other hand sports can offer risk factors in relation to alcohol if peers have positive attitudes towards alcohol. It is advised that sports clubs focus on offering coaches support, to teach and reinforce life skills, club rules and strategies, discuss alcohol harms with young people, create alcohol-free branding for the club, setting adults (and also parents) a good example.

Decision-makers in policy and those who are responsible for events should take better account of children's perspectives when operating in the field of sport and alcohol. Young people should be better educated about the media so they are better equipped to be deterred from the influence of alcohol.

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Keywords: Young people, alcohol, sports, football, sports clubs, alcohol marketing



Introduction

Focus on Youth, Football and Alcohol (F.Y.F.A) is a project aiming to gather knowledge and to exchange best practices on measures to reduce underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking.

EHYT is responsible for work package 7 which focuses on young people's opinions on alcohol-related issues and sports. The purpose of the WP7 is to carry out *"research with eight young people (four young men and four young women), aged 13-15 (total – 48 young people) in each of six Member States -Belgium, Finland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, UK -to map their exposure to alcohol marketing, their attitudes and behaviours in relation to alcohol and to explore what they would consider to be effective practice to prevent and reduce harm"*.

The study focused on several topics regarding alcohol and sports relating to young people. In particular, we explored in depth the following aspects:

- Their attitudes about and exposure to alcohol and alcohol marketing
- Their own use of alcohol
- What impact their sporting activities have on their alcohol-related attitudes and behaviour
- What they think other young people think about alcohol and what they do
- Their ideas about young people's exposure to alcohol promotion
- What strategies they have experienced in relation to reducing alcohol-related risks and harms for young people
- What strategies they believe would be most effective in relation to reducing alcohol-related risks and harms for young people
- Where they would get support and advice for themselves or a friend in relation to alcohol issues

This report (D7.2) will present the findings of the interviews conducted with young people and complements the previous document (D7.1) by describing the data collection in more detail.



1 Methodology

The protocol providing the description of the study was designed by EHYT and finalized in FYFA management meeting. The WP7 protocol included, among other things practical instructions and tips for the interviews.

WP7 uses a qualitative approach to deepen understanding, and for this Work Package, to capture young person's views about alcohol in the context of their everyday life, and how this intersects with their participation in sports as a hobby and within society.

The method used was to conduct semi-structured interviews among young people doing sports. EHYT prepared the questionnaire (Annex 2) for collecting data and to cover the given topics. Questions were based on the expertise of EHYT working with young people conducting school surveys and academic knowledge. Standardised, open-ended questions were used to facilitate longer and descriptive answers when possible. Flexibility with questions was encouraged. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has prepared questions but has the freedom to ask additional follow up questions as he or she sees fit. There were no simple 'yes' or 'no' questions, or "two-in-one"-questions (for example, Do you like XX or XX?). In the end of



the form participants were asked whether they agree or disagree to ten statements. Statements were included to summarize and to make the data more consistent and allow for comparisons through percentages.

According to form pre-testing the target time for the interview was 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewees.

There was some co operation with FYFA workpackages 6 (interviews of club stakeholders) and workpackage 7 (interviews of young people). Criteria for selecting the sports clubs were created together and interviews were carried out at the same sports clubs that were involved in the other workpackages. Criteria for selecting the sports club were that they should be:

- Low/middle competitive sports clubs
- Sports club where youth teams for boys and girls exist.
- Sports club with a first team which is attractive enough for sponsors

There are also some identical questions addressed to adults in WP6 and to young people in WP7, and this means that data can be compared.

Coaches, team leaders or other stake holders made the final choices about which young people should participate in the interviews for WP7. Written permission from parents were always was asked for. Interviews were conducted in group interviews with two young people (pair interviews) to create a relax atmosphere and to stimulate discussion about potentially sensitive topic.

Interviews were recorded to facilitate the dynamics during interviews and to facilitate the analysis of the transcripts

1.1 Participants

WP7 aims to capture opinions about alcohol issues from eight young people, ages 13-15, four young men and four young women, from six member states, so in total 48 interviewees.

A protocol included detailed instructions for recruiting interviews for the study. Recruiting participants was carried out in partnership with the local football clubs. The selection of the participants was completed by the coach, team leader or other stake holder from the club.

The participation criteria was that interviewees should be attending football training on a regular basis and their involvement with the research is voluntary, with parents' consent given.



Table 1. Plan for achieving interviewees for FYFA work package 7.

	GIRLS	BOYS	INTERVIEWEES TOTAL
Belgium	4	4	8
Finland	4	4	8
Italy	4	4	8
Poland	4	4	8
Slovenia	4	4	8
UK	4	4	8
TOTAL	24	24	48 PERSONS

1.2 Ethics approval and consent to participate

For this Work Package, the interviewees were minors, and therefore it is essential to strictly respect member states regulations and to follow ethical guidelines. To do so, we initially informed parents and got written permission from them. Participants and their parents were informed about the purpose of the research process, the method and type of interviews conducted (e.g. topics/questions, recording the interviews), their role in the investigation (what is expected of interviewees) and use of the data collected. Participation was voluntary.

Alcohol is a sensitive topic to discuss with legal, cultural, and even moral implications involved. In our opinion this is even more sensitive for young people who have not yet reached the legal drinking age. It was decided that asking about alcohol consumption should be a general rather than directed towards the individual so that their own behaviour would not be exposed (e.g.: *How common is alcohol use at your age group?*). Our key principle is that the interviewees should in no way be at risk of harm as a result of participating.

The team ensured that during the whole process confidentiality of data was guaranteed. Data was gathered and analyzed with full anonymity given and used for these research purposes



only. Data will be destroyed after finishing the project. No identifying information is in the published report.

1.3 Description of the data by country

This section describes in more detail how the method was applied in each of the six different countries.

Interviews in Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia, and UK

In Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia, and UK the data were collected according to the original research plan presented above.

- **Belgium**

The Belgian research team conducted four in-depth semi-structured interviews between August and September 2019 by VAAD. Interviews were organised among junior players of the RWD Molenbeek Girls (girls) and Verbroedering Beersel-Drogen_VBV (boys) team. The data included four male and four females aged between 14-15 years old.

- **Finland**

The Finnish research team (EHYT) conducted four semi-structured interviews between January and August 2019. Interviews were organised among junior players of Honka FC. The data included four men and four females between 13-15 years old.

- **Poland**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June and August 2019 by PARPA, among junior players of MUKS – Inter-School Student Sports Club Prague Warsaw (girls) and POLONIA City Sports Club Warsaw. The data included four men and four females aged between 14-15 years old.



- **Slovenia**

The Slovenian research team conducted four semi-structured interviews between August and September 2019 with junior players of the Football Club Olimpija Ljubljana (boys) and the Women's Football Club Olimpija Ljubljana (girls). The data included four men and four female participants. The age range of Slovenian interviewees was from 13 to 15.

- **UK**

The Scottish partner SHAAP conducted four semi-structured interviews conducted between January and February 2019. Interviews were conducted among junior players of the Spartans FC team. The data from UK included five men and three women aged between 15-17.

The clubs and their policies are described in more detail in the WP6 report.

Interviews in Italy

The data was collected differently by Italy and integrated a quantitative approach.

Young athletes were interviewed during the European Sports Week at the Olympic stadium in Rome last September (2019). Particularly, the event involved the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), as the main public health institute in Italy, with planned prevention activities which involved nearly 5000 students of different ages. Between these, a sample of 25 students, up to 18 years old, compiled the questionnaire on a voluntary basis, and the results are reported below. The anonymity of the students, being minors, has been guaranteed; the interviews were only possible for the classes where the teachers of the schools obtained permission to interview the students by all parents. For the description of the methodology used in Italy see the Deliverable D7.1.

The results obtained by mean the interview's grid questionnaire resulted fully consistent and homogeneous with the final data obtained by mean the qualitative approach acknowledging and confirming the validity of the overall capacity to reach the same objectives, adding value by mean the two different approaches, as usually experienced also in other previous similar experiences. Just in terms of compliance with the need to keep qualitative and quantitative approaches well identifiable and to recognize possible different output anyway integrated in the discussion, it was agreed during FYFA management group that the final WP7 report would present the Italian results separately from the other countries.

ISS produced this report of the Italian findings chapter and the results are presented as frequency tables and graphs.



Total data collected

Table 2. Number of interviewees achieved in FYFA work package 7

	GIRLS	BOYS	INTERVIEWEES TOTAL
Belgium	4	4	8
Finland	4	4	8
Italy	12	13	25
Poland	4	4	8
Slovenia	4	4	8
UK	3	5	8
TOTAL	31	34	65 PERSONS

1.4 Data analysis

This section will present the two different approaches qualitative and quantitative -used to analyse the data.

Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia, and UK

VAD, EHYT, the International Youth Health Organization, PARPA and SHAAP transcribed individually the interviews conducted and translated their transcriptions into English. The whole data was sent to EHYT for analysis and reporting. The transcribed material from five countries came to a total of 222889 characters, that is 111 sheets of written text (standard used 2000 characters per page).

WP7 is mainly based on qualitative data. The analysis was performed using both content analysis and thematic content analysis (Alasuutari, 1994 ; Ruusuvaori et al., 2019 ; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). Coding the data lead to identifying themes, patterns and relationships, and



finally summarizing the data. Both content analysis and thematic analysis were used. Some reduction of expressions was also carried out to understand how commonly certain views were held.

Italy

ISS produced the report of Italian findings by using a quantitative approach and analysis performed led to a description of frequencies.

2 Results

2.1 Results from Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and from the UK

This section will present the results obtained after data coding, bringing the findings from Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia, and the UK together.

Alcohol Use among young people

How Common is drinking among young people? Description of the phenomenon

Underage drinking was a well known phenomenon among young people. All interviewees reported alcohol consumption among their peers. 64% noted that most people in their age group drink alcohol every now and then (statement 1: Most people of my age drink alcohol every now and then). Regardless of age, gender, or nationality everybody knew peers (school mates, relatives) who drink alcohol. A large majority (type A) thought that alcohol consumption in their

age group is occasional and experimental, taking place during holidays, carnivals, parties and weekends.

A small group of respondents (type B) reported regular binge drinking in their age group. They considered underage drinking and binge drinking common among their peers and felt it to be “the norm”. 26% of all respondents thought that most people in their age group binge drink (more than three drinks at time) at least once a month (statement 2: Most people of my age have binged on drink -more than three drinks at the time- at least once a month).



I know some of my age group (school mates, relatives) who drink alcohol. Their drinking is occasional (parties, weekends) and experimental.



Drinking is common and normal in my age group. Binge drinking does exist. Drinking can start at age 11 or 12.

As already explained, alcohol is a sensitive topic to discuss, having legal, cultural and even moral implication, and even more sensitive for young people who have not yet reached the legal drinking age.

Data collection was a confidential process and questions around consumption were posed as general rather than individual. (*How common is alcohol use in your age group?*) instead of personal questions. Surprisingly, many older interviewees (15+ years old) wanted to talk about their own alcohol consumption voluntarily. Most pointed out that they are not drinking alcohol by themselves and neither do their closest friends. Most of those younger (13-14 years old) said they are too young to drink alcohol.

*How do you
get your
hands on
alcohol?*

*- I have a
beard.*



The following presents some of the views expressed by participants about alcohol use:

Reasons for drinking ("*No one drinks just for the taste.*")

- Social factors (being excluded from school, unemployed, no place to study)
- Experimenting curiosity
- Attention seeking
- Showing off in order to be involved in the group
- To have fun
- To get drunk
- Social pressure
- Bad company
- Stores selling alcohol to minors (easy availability)
- Role of parents and the principles of upbringing
- Avoiding depression

Where do young people drink alcohol?

- *In the streets, outside. Parks. Anywhere, elsewhere.*
- *At home? -No, you would be grounded.*
- *Most youths like us would go to the environments where we don't want the police to get involved, so in forest and sitting outside.*
- *Some stores are selling to minors. They just care about profit.*

What do young people drink?

- Alcopop, Vodka, Mad dog 20 20, Strongbow Dark Fruits, Dragon Sloop
- Beer? "I don't see any point of that, unless it is a pre drink or something like that you know you are going to drink more."

I could drink an entire can in 10 seconds and then another straight after in 10 sips. You need 10 cans to get drunk. If I went out for a good night I would take a litre bottle of vodka and wee bottle of glens Vodka. That would probably do me.

I would be dead.

Where do they get it?

- They get older people to buy it for them. "You get junkies or alcoholics to get it for you in the morning"



From experience I can look you straight in the eyes that 90% of 14 years old are drinking.

They are older than me. My friends never drink.

Young people of my age want to feel what does it feel to be drunk.

Some people are just into studying and that and other people are into drinking at our age.

It's not every week.



Depends on what people you are with.

It is normal. Like a Friday or Saturday night you are out with your pals and having a wee bevvie, that's normal. It is what happens.

I don't drink alcohol. Neither do my friends. I have never even tried.

Some don't drink much but pretend to be drunk.

I tell myself when you are old enough and you are at a party that you drink in moderation.



If you are a bunch of school drop outs you will be out drinking and stuff.

They don't want to be tough, but have fun.

I have seen many times in the internet right, those two or three years older drinking alcohol.

If your parents admit drinking then you may do that.

Yeah, I would be kicked off.



Is underage drinking a big problem?

There was a high level of consensus in the data that underage drinking is a problem.

To illustrate drinking as being a problem, participants pointed out some specific harms, such as:



Alcohol-related harms mentioned:

- Lack of safety (violence, arguing, fighting)
- Passivity (makes you “lazy” to do anything in life)
- Acts that were not intended (doing stupid stuff, things you did not aim to do)
- Issues in the social relations and situations (e.g. girls fighting over boys)
- Mood (feeling bad, crying, aggression)
- Long-term effects (health, patterns of alcohol use as an adult, addiction, prematurely death)
- Self-protection (brains are still developing)
- Social media (drunk videos and pictures loaded to social media by peers)
- Impaired sport activity
- Expulsion from a sport club

Not in my neighborhood, not among my friends

The interviewees, especially those younger, gave the impression that although recognising that alcohol exists, they lived in “a bubble” where they personally do not drink. Underage drinking was regarded as a problem, but not in their social or physical environment, which they considered to be safe.

It depends on the people you are with and what they are drinking.

You feel you can do whatever you want, so you just go and cause an arse of yourself and then the consequences are in the morning.

One of my pals had an axe put into him from drinking. It is horrible.

Drugs are definitely more of a problem.

If you drink as a young person, you will drink as an adult too.



Reactions to the peers' drinking

87% of respondents felt that it is not weird if someone of one's own age group has not yet tried alcohol (statement 9: It is weird if someone of my age has not yet tried alcohol.).

There were different attitudes towards peer's drinking, and these are described by the following themes:

Not my life

Many interviewees wanted to distance themselves. They said that because their friends don't use alcohol, they seldom face these situations.

Private matter

There was solidarity with most interviewees not wanting to criticize or judge their alcohol-using peers. It was highlighted that drinking is everyone's own decision.

Many stressed that no one should be defined by their alcohol use. They did not mind if their friends drink alcohol if it does not put any pressure on others to drink. They also felt that it mattered how much someone was drinking, with small amounts acceptable.

It's normal

As mentioned earlier there was a group of interviewees who reported that drinking is popular and a normal thing to do at their age.

I hate it

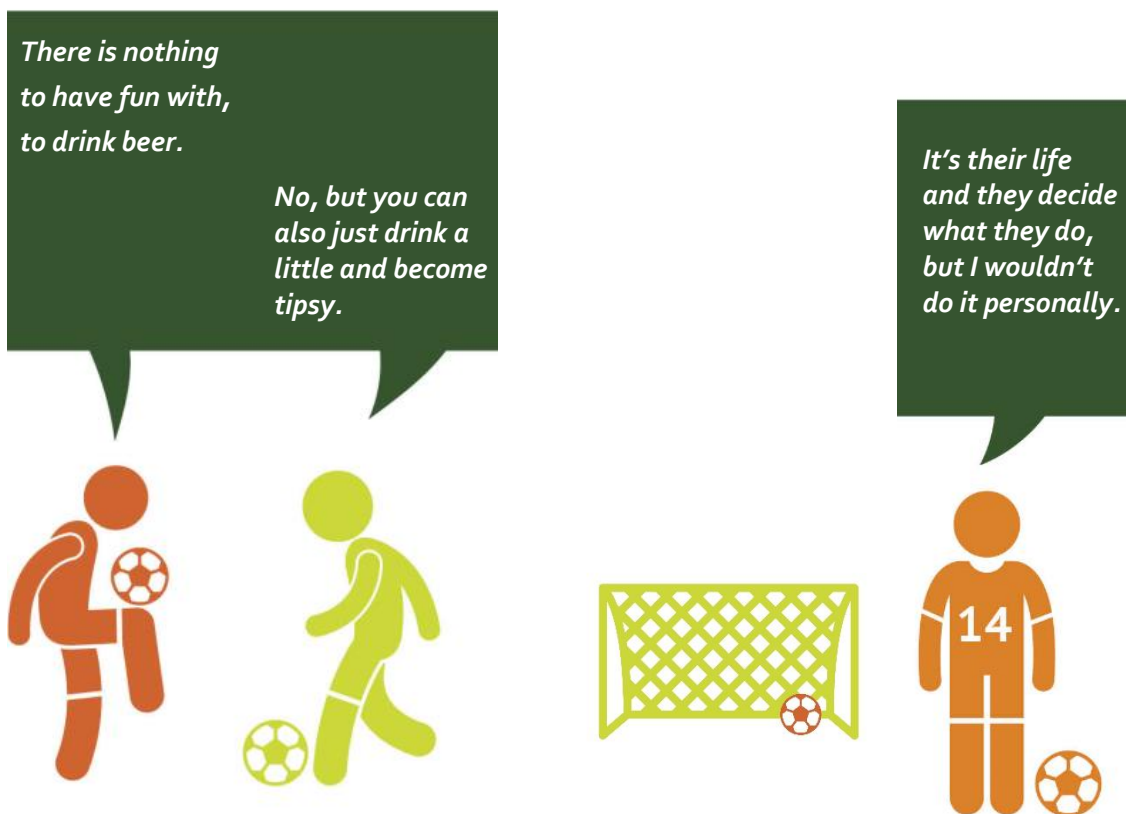
There was also a group of interviewees who had very negative attitude towards their peers alcohol use. They did not want to be friends with those who drink alcohol. Some had even asked their peers to stop drinking.

I am worried

Some worried about their friends and peers. Concern was expressed most often about "first time drinkers" and the risks associated with drinking. Drinking alone and families with high alcohol consumption were also regarded as a matter for concern. *"I have seen 11- and 12-years olds drinking and they should not be drinking. They were 10, 2 years ago and now they are pished in the street, what happened? They went from being an innocent wee lassie to a proper alcoholic".*

No thank you

"Older friends have offered me alcohol several times. Logical that I say no. Because it is not healthy for the body, but they can drink, because they were of legal age."



It's not my job to criticize, but I wouldn't like to be their friend.

It's your own decision whether you drink alcohol or not.

If someone would drink rather small amount, that's ok.

I hate people of our age being drunk.



Has your friends' drinking affected you?

Most interviewees felt that their friends and peers drinking has no effect on their own attitudes or behaviour towards alcohol. Few interviewees pointed out that social pressure for drinking does exist.

Who drinks more, those that do sports or those who don't?

Almost all interviewees (97%) thought that young people participating in sports drink less alcohol than others in their age group (statement 4).



Those who do sports drink less alcohol than other young people do.



There is no difference.
Both athletes and non-athletes drink alcohol.

Why do people who do sport drink less alcohol?

Interviewees cited the following reasons why young people doing sports drink less alcohol than their peers:

- Athletes do not have time for drinking (rehearsals, games, established routines)
- Guided rehearsal and membership of the sports club
- Athletes know that drinking ruins their sports performance (like fitness)
- Athletes with big goals do not drink
- People doing sports know what is healthy
- They want to do things professionally
- Alcohol has a negative effect on mental skills such as understanding the game

Most interviewees pointed out that ambition and high goal setting for a sports career are significant motivations for sobriety. The more serious and more target-oriented one is about their sports hobby and the higher level it is played, the less room there is for alcohol.

There are also views pointing out that people doing sports drink alcohol for example, celebrations after a successful game were mentioned a few times.

When it comes to personal life, most interviewees said that there was no impact because they would not use alcohol anyway. Some felt that it is more a question about how to reconcile sports (training schedule, matches) with spare time.

Overall young people considered sports a protective factor in relation to alcohol consumption and alcohol harms.



Best legal drinking age?

What was considered the 'best legal drinking age' varied from 15 to 26 years old. Most interviewees believed that the best legal age for drinking alcohol would be 18 years old. The breakdown of responses is given below:

<18 years	30%
18 years	38%
>18 years	32%

16 years, because...

- You can work at that age; you can scratch cards and they are drinking anyway.
- I think whoever set the rules, they would know how responsible 16 olds can be.
- If you were legal age then you wouldn't need to go to sketchy places.



- *A little earlier (than 18) you could already begin, practice. If you want to try.*
- *Then you are already a bit mature and you know what you can and cannot do.*
- *At the age of 16 a lot of people have already been drinking a lot, so I think it is the right age.*

18 years, because....

- *At 16 you still act stupid. At 16 you can work, but you are not mature to be going to a pub and that.*
- *When you are 18 you are more mature, you can keep your own house.*
- *The law must be respected.*
- *16 is the age that you go out a lot and you don't really know what you are doing.*
- *Alcohol is not healthy for anyone, right...doesn't matter how old you are, but if you set a boundary, it would be at 18 somewhere -that under 18 it absolutely must not be.*
- *It is good for development, right, that you start drinking alcohol later when, for example, the brain is mature enough and body ready for it.*

21 years, because....

- *It's legal drinking age in Unites States. In my opinion this is a very reasonable age, because you can do your driving license earlier, and this is something you really need. And alcohol -for what?*
- *I would not start drinking at the age of 18. Maybe I don't start at all. You can try alcohol when you know what you are doing. The age limit could be increased to 20 or 21 years old. Not lower anyway.*

Alcohol marketing

What do you think of alcohol marketing?

Almost every participant confirmed having seen lot of alcohol marketing. 65% of respondents reported having seen alcohol marketing every day (statement 6). Alcohol advertisements were seen on TV, the internet (Istagram, YouTube, Facebook, Netflix), mobile phones, vehicles, shops and billboards.

Attitudes towards alcohol marketing:

It's ok...

- *Of course, you can advertise your product. I don't see anything wrong with it.*
- *I don't mind ads if this warning (for >18year old only) is there, because as it should be followed. Producers do not want young people to drink their products.*

It doesn't matter to me at all...

- *I see advertisement on TV. I can't really remember any.*
- *I don't care about those. - Me neither. I skip them.*
- *I don't really notice them.*

It's not ok...

- *They actually make alcohol less expensive than regular drinks. And if it is less expensive, then young people will buy more, and it will end badly.*
- *When there is advertising between programs, two of them are about alcohol. Why advertise something that harms people so much?*
- *Between movies that I had (Internet), I already had two ads for some beer and stronger alcohol, e.g. whisky. I'm 15 years old and I already have ads about alcohol. I can't buy it, so why do I need such advertisement? That would be tempted and try to buy it illegally?*
- *I honestly don't think it's ok, because I also noticed that there is more advertising on all sprints and alcohol than on regular soft drinks*



Does marketing have any influence on young people's alcohol use?

95% of interviewees felt that alcohol advertisements don't have any impact on them (statement 7: Alcohol advertisements influence me and make me want to drink.). When it comes

to the impact on young people in general though, approximately a third thought that advertising has or might have some impact.

Yes

- If they are showing it on telly and making it out to be fun.
- Price influences. If it is cheap.
- Sometimes, yes.
- Yes definitely, yes.
- If there weren't any advertisements, maybe less young people would drink. There is some influence at least.
- It depends on the person. Maybe there is influence on somebody.
- That maybe true for other young people, but not me.

No

- People don't watch adverts really anymore. People block them out. Why do they use it? Because it used to work so they think it will still work.
- I don't notice them.
- I think it could be different for different people but for me it makes no difference.
- Young people don't care about advertisements on TV. Maybe it affects adults more.
- There is not such a young person who would begin to drink because of the advertisement.
- It has an opposite effect on me, it makes me want to stay out of alcohol.

I don't think it means anything. I drink, but it is not because of the advertising.

Friends have greater influence.

-Yeah, if they offer you.



Many interviewees reported that seeing other people (friend, peers in social media) drinking alcohol affects them more than advertising.

Alcohol marketing and sports

Seeing alcohol marketing in sports was common. Most interviewees had seen alcohol advertisements on TV but also on players' shirts, fan seats, flags, in the name of the stadium, social media, football strips, billboards and outside shops.



Besides football, ice hockey and Formula 1 were mentioned as sports with a lot of alcohol marketing.

Most interviewees were critical of the marketing alliance of sports and alcohol. Almost 60% of respondents expressed a wish for banning alcohol advertisements in sports (statement 8: Alcohol marketing should be forbidden in sports (covering media, events, products, etc.).

Some participants accepted alcohol marketing within the sports context because they saw that money from sponsor contracts was important to the club's finances.



Sport events and alcohol

Many interviewees watched adult football matches at the local stadiums. All had seen beer being sold and almost everybody had seen fans being drunk. One interviewee mentioned that he has noticed drunk fans often on TV too.

The majority felt that selling a beer at stadiums is a bad idea.

Disadvantages of beer sales:

- Creates a negative atmosphere
- Threat of violence
- Violence, fighting happenings
- Negative communication between fans, shouting, swearing
- Bottles, lighters etc. are thrown at players

Benefits of beer sales:

- Creates a positive atmosphere.
- People are more relaxed and happier
- Some people (elderly people) would probably stop going to the games if there weren't any selling.

There are people who go and buy drink and there are swearing at the ref and it ruins the atmosphere for everyone.



Young people's perceptions of the impact on the atmosphere was interesting, recognizing that selling beer at stadiums could cut both ways, contributing to both a bad and good atmosphere in the stadium. They also felt it is a question of the amount of alcohol consumed, whereby the drunker fans get, the more quickly good moods can turn into aggression.

Some interviewees did not see any problem with selling beer, whereas some had reservations:

- *Selling is ok, if there is a stand for beer drinkers and children are not allowed to visit.*
- *If there is enough security in a case if things get out of hand*
- *One can sell a bit alcohol, but not too much.*
- *One can drink, but not too much.*



Experiences as a football junior player

Alcohol at the club

All interviewees reported that there have not been any problems with alcohol at their sports club in general.

Nevertheless, it emerged that at least in four countries out of five, parents drink alcohol at sport clubs. Coaches, other stakeholders at the clubs or young players themselves were not mentioned in this connection. Typical situations for parental drinking happened after winning a match, after training, by the end of the week, during celebrations at the end of the season and during the tournaments abroad.

Young players accepted their parents' behavior and did not think it was problematic.

Usually it is when parents of the team drink together that the atmosphere goes up, they start laughing more.

On Fridays there is usually a party with snacks and then the parents also drink.

Parents of different teams who are drunk and who have different opinions, that can cause opinions.



Tackling alcohol harm

Where does the information and support in alcohol issues come from?

According to interviewees the four most important sources of information and support on alcohol issues in order of importance were:



1. School
2. Parents
3. Friends
4. Internet

Answers as illustrated by words clouds looks like this:



Two interviewees reported that they would not turn to their parents for information and/or support concerning alcohol.

Most participants stated that they did not need any further information related to alcohol issues but may do later in life. Some stressed, however, that although they themselves do not need more information, many other young people probably do need it.

<p><i>My dad is a swimming teacher. He says that I should not do it, because there will be worse results.</i></p>	<p><i>Young people don't get help. They are only young.</i></p>	<p><i>It wouldn't hurt if there would be more awareness activities of these matters, right.</i></p>	<p><i>I don't live in a cave or something. I go to school and I see everything on Instagram.</i></p>	<p><i>I know a lot already because of past experiences. I know what's fine and what is not.</i></p>
				



Experiences of preventive actions to reduce alcohol harm

Schools

Participants in each country mentioned alcohol and drug education in schools. The scope and level of teaching varied. For example, in Finland interviewees reported having two years of health education as a subject on a regular basis, whereas in other countries teaching was limited to few occasional expert visits (police) or lessons in a year. Young people preferred teaching based on discussion rather than being given warnings. They found health education interesting when different type of tasks and approaches were used.

Spots clubs

There were ten participants who reported having recognised preventive actions in their sports club carried out to minimize young people's alcohol use. Four reported discussing exercises and four others alcohol use being related to the rules of the team. Two interviewees did not remember what action they were involved in. Actions taken by the sports clubs were considered to be useful.

Some young people welcome alcohol preventive actions in sports clubs. But most of the interviewees felt that there was no need for preventative work because there were no problems in the club and no drinking culture in the team. Again, they felt that although support may not be needed now it may be later in life. It was also mentioned that actions should be targeted to those who have problems and who are drinking, not to young people doing sports. Some of the interviewees felt that there was not enough time for alcohol education within training programs of sports clubs. Nevertheless 65% of respondents felt that it would be appropriate for their coach to discuss alcohol issues with the team (statement 5; It is appropriate that my coach discusses alcohol issues with the team).

I have an impression that the trainer trusts us, that we are responsible enough and we know what we can do and what we shouldn't do.

It would be good to talk with the team now, before anyone drinks, so that no one would fool around later.

If necessary, yes. If someone is drinking.



We are not here to know what everybody thinks of beer. We are here to play soccer and relax. We didn't come to have any lessons. I don't think that interests many here.



Statements

When designing the study, EHYT wanted to include in the interviews a small structured section. It was used to supplement the information received, to enable the collection of numerical data and to harmonize the data collated between countries.

At the end of the interview participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed or not with the ten given statements. The following table shows the answers in percentages:

		I agree (%)	I don't agree (%)	n
1.	Most people of my age drink alcohol every now and then.	64%	36%	33
2.	Most people of my age have binged on drinking (more than three drinks at the time) at least once a month.	26%	74%	38
3.	Boys drink more than girls.	53%	47%	34
4.	Young people participating in sports drink less alcohol than others at the same age group.	97%	3%	33
5.	It is appropriate that my coach discusses alcohol issues with the team.	65%	35%	37
6.	I see alcohol marketing around me every day.	65%	35%	38
7.	Alcohol advertisements influence me and make me want to drink.	5%	95%	38
8.	Alcohol marketing should be forbidden in sports (covering media, events, products, etc.)	58%	42%	33
9.	It is weird if someone of my age has not yet tried alcohol.	13%	87%	30
10.	Sports are an important factor for me not drinking.	76%	24%	37

2.2 Results from Italy

Author (s): Claudia Gandin, Alice Matone, Silvia Ghirini and Emanuele Scafato, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Italy

Participants by gender, sport level and disciplines

Of the 25 participants (13 males, 12 females), 12 (8 males and 4 females) are engaged in competitive sport activities, 8 (3 males and 5 females) in amateur sport activities, 3 (1 male and 2 females) in occasional sport activities, and 2 (1 male and 1 female) do not practice sports but wanted to be involved in the activity regardless (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Distribution of young participants by gender, sports level and disciplines

The participants' sports disciplines are:

- Football (7)
- Volleyball (5)
- Athletics (1)



- Other sports (10: basket, dance, swimming, rhythmic gymnastics, kick boxing, tennis, muay thay)
- Missing data (2).

Alcohol use by young people

Alcohol consumption of participants

Alcohol is consumed by most young participants: 14 occasionally and 6 on a regular basis. Five participants do not drink (Figure 2).

Do you drink?

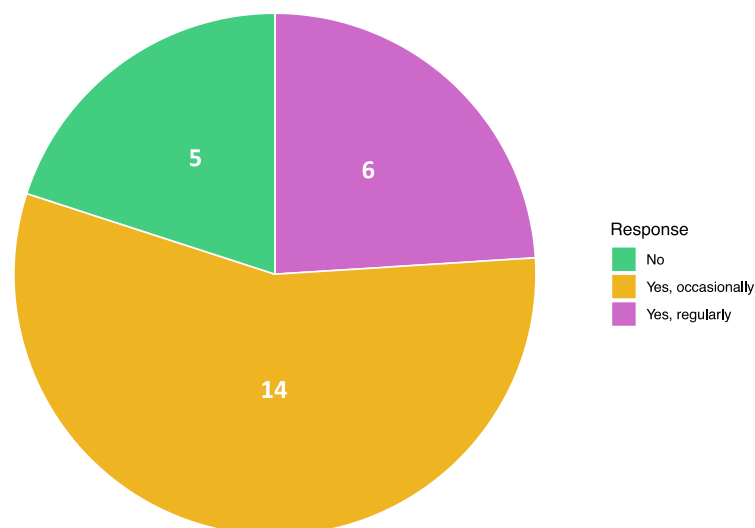


Figure 2. Alcohol consumption of interviewed subjects

Perception on alcohol consumption among young people

A great majority of the participants thinks that alcohol consumption is common among young people (all except 4 agreed or strongly agreed) while there is less agreement and less consensus regarding alcohol consumption as an important issue among young people (10 disagree, 11 agree, the rest with an intermediate level of agreement) (Figure 3).

<i>“Is alcohol consumption common among young people?”</i>	<i>“Do you think alcohol consumption among young people is an issue?”</i>
4	3
3	4
4	2
5	1
4	5
4	3
5	4
5	3
4	4
4	2
5	2
4	2
5	4
4	3
3	2
4	5
4	4
5	4
4	2
3	1
4	2
4	2
4	4
3	4
5	4

1,2: “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”
 3: “An intermediate level of agreement”
 4,5: “Agree”, “Strongly agree”

Figure 3. Perception on alcohol consumption among young people by 25 interviewed students

Legal age for drinking knowledge of young people

Almost all participants know that the legal age for drinking in Italy is 18 years old, besides one that thinks 16, one 21 and one that does not know. However, 4 think that the legal age for drinking should be 16 and 2 think it should be 21 (Figure 4).

The influence of alcohol consumption on sport activity in young athletes

According to the personal opinion of the young participants, who practices sports do not drink more than people of the same age that do not practice sports, however 10 out of 25 answered that they don't know (Figure 5).



<i>What is the legal age for drinking alcohol?</i>	<i>What should the legal age for drinking alcohol be?</i>
18	18
18	18
18	18
16	16
21	Never
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	18
I don't know	18
18	16
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	21
18	18
18	16
18	16
18	18
18	18
18	18
18	21

Figure 4. Young athletes' knowledge on legal age for drinking

Do you think who practices sports drinks more than other people of the same age that do not practice sports?

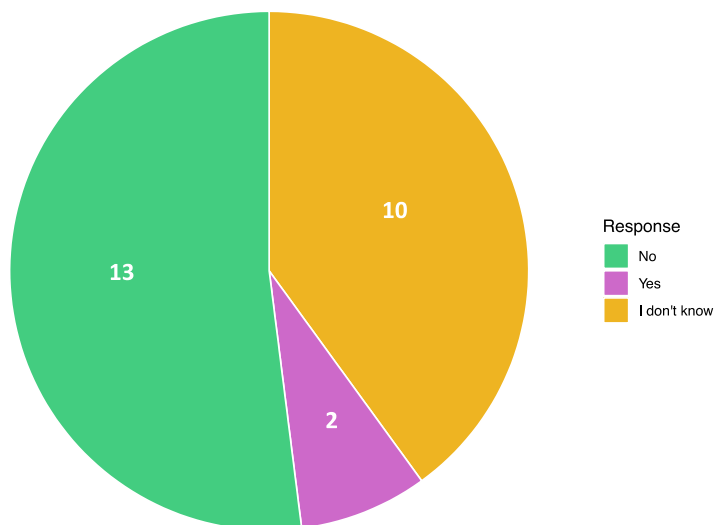


Figure 5. Alcohol consumption and practicing sports



Participants that drink regularly (6) do not agree (5 out of 6) that drinking alcohol can alter their sport activity, the same for who drinks occasionally (14) except 2. Within who does not drink (5), 2 participants think that drinking alcohol can alter sport activity (2), the remaining did not respond (Figure 6).

"Do you drink?"	"Can this alter your sport activity?"
2	4
2	2
2	3
1	1
3	
3	
2	2
2	
2	5
1	1
1	3
2	1
3	5
2	
2	1
2	3
2	2
3	5
1	1
1	1
1	2
2	2
2	
2	2
3	
1: Yes, regularly	1,2: "strongly disagree", "disagree"
2: Yes, occasionally	3: "an intermediate level of agreement"
3: No	4,5: "agree", "strongly agree"

Figure 6. Participants' alcohol consumption and their perception of alcohol effect on sport activity

Of the 12 competitive athletes, 2 drink regularly, 6 drink occasionally and 4 do not drink; of the 8 amateur athletes 2 drink regularly, 5 drink occasionally and 2 do not drink. The 3 participants that do practice sports occasionally drink regularly (2) or occasionally (1) and the 2 that do not practice sports drink occasionally (Figure 7).

Alcohol consumption in participants' sports clubs/associations

Alcoholic beverages are not used within participants' association, except for three (Figure 8): for these 3 cases alcohol is consumed in the clubs either by minor athletes and supporters and by adult supporters, before or after training, in the bar/restaurant of the club (or, for adults, in the changing room).

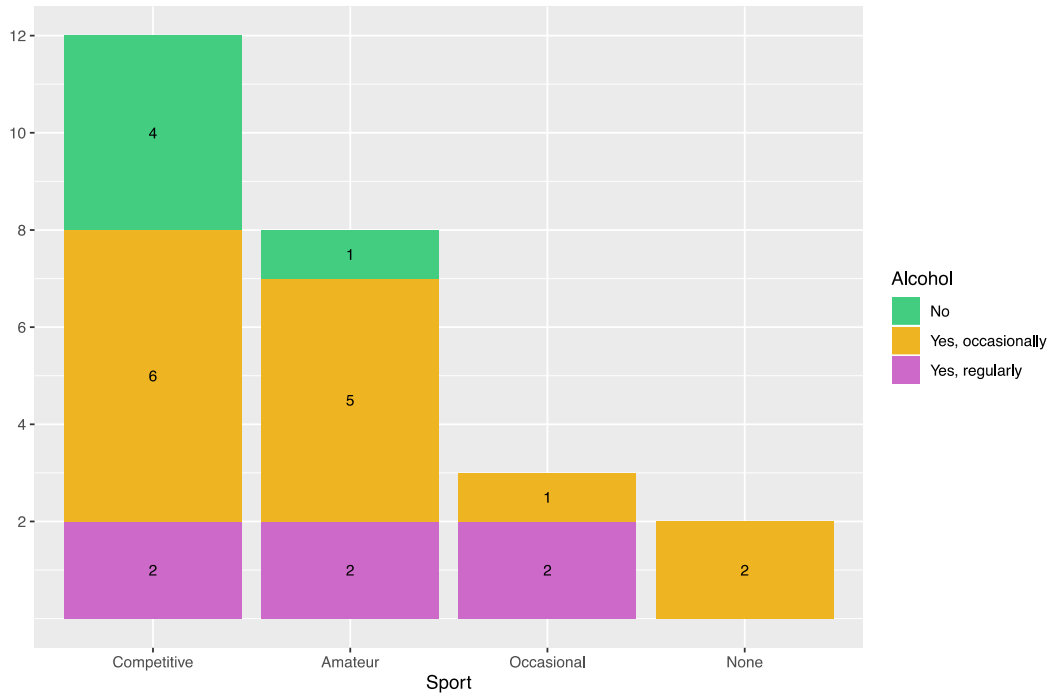


Figure 7. Young athletes' alcohol consumption and sports activity level

Are alcoholic beverages used within your sports club/association?

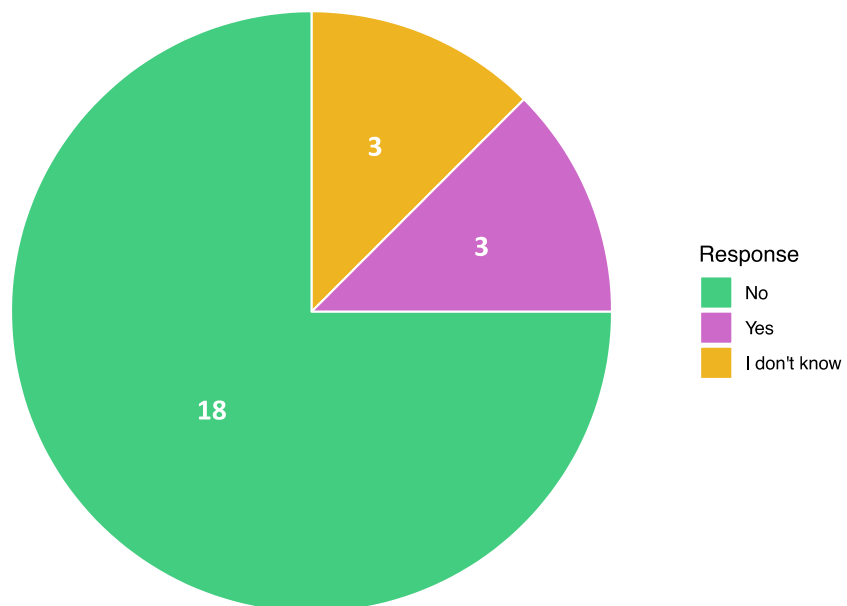


Figure 8. Alcoholic beverages consumption within sports clubs/associations?



Alcohol marketing

Young opinion on alcohol marketing in sports settings

All participants except 3 participants did not see alcohol advertising in their sport setting (Figure 9); only one club/association is sponsored by the alcohol industry (Figure 10).

Did you ever see alcohol advertising in sports setting?

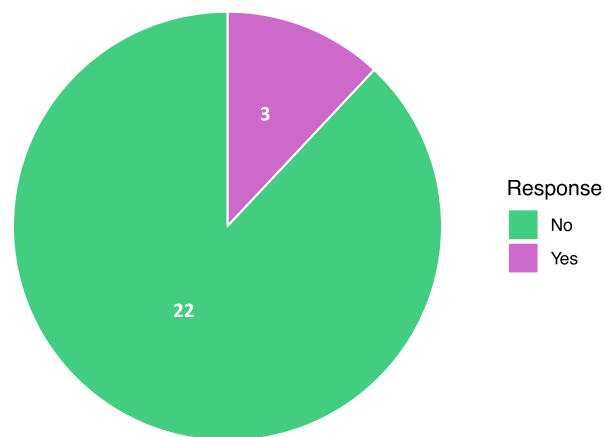


Figure 9. Alcohol advertising in sports setting

Is your association sponsored by the alcohol industry?

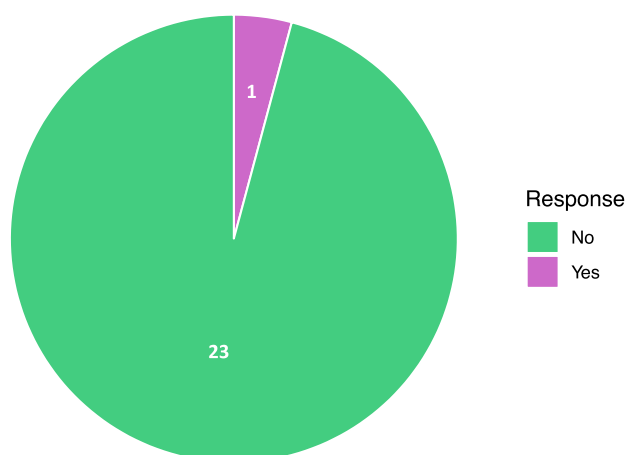


Figure 10. Alcohol sponsorship in participants' sports club/association



The majority of young participants (15) do not think alcohol advertising influences alcohol consumption by young people, while 3 agree (Figure 11).

Sports events

The majority of participants (15) disagree on selling alcoholic beverages during sport events (only 2 agree). Less consensus has been reached asking if selling alcoholic beverages during a sport event influences the event and supporters/fans attitude: nearly half of the participants agree (11), 8 disagree, and there is an intermediate level of agreement for 6 (Figure 12).

Tackling alcohol related behaviour

Information and support on alcohol issues by young participants

All young participants have received information and support on alcohol issues, mainly by their parents, followed by teachers, coaches and friends (Figure 13).

Does alcohol advertising influence alcohol consumption by young people?

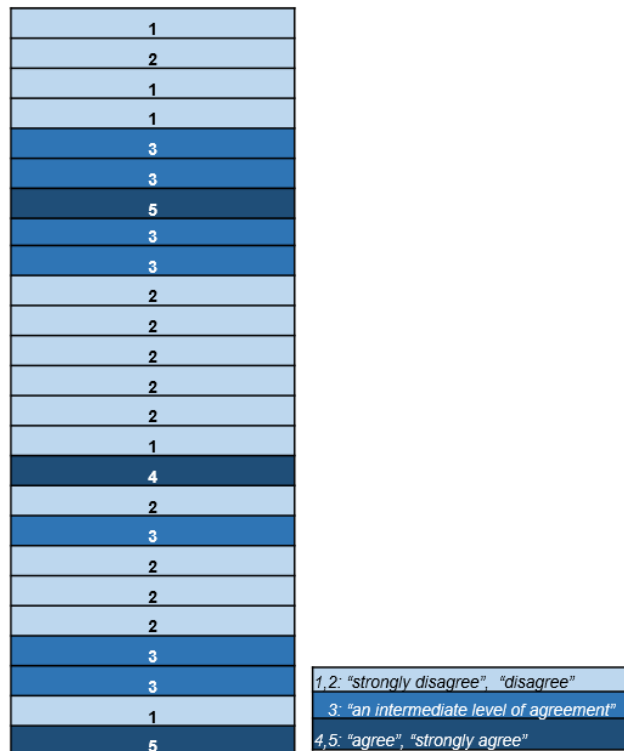




Figure 11. Young participants' opinion on alcohol advertising and its influence on young people

<i>Do you agree on selling alcoholic beverages during sport events?</i>	<i>Do you think selling alcoholic beverages during a sport event influences the event and supporters/fans attitude?</i>
3	4
3	3
2	3
1	1
2	4
1	2
1	4
2	4
2	5
5	1
3	2
1	4
1	4
3	3
3	3
1	4
1	2
1	4
3	2
3	2
4	2
1	4
2	3
3	3
2	5

1,2: "strongly disagree", "disagree"

3: "an intermediate level of agreement"

4,5: "agree", "strongly agree"

Figure 12. Young athletes' opinion on alcohol selling and serving during sports events

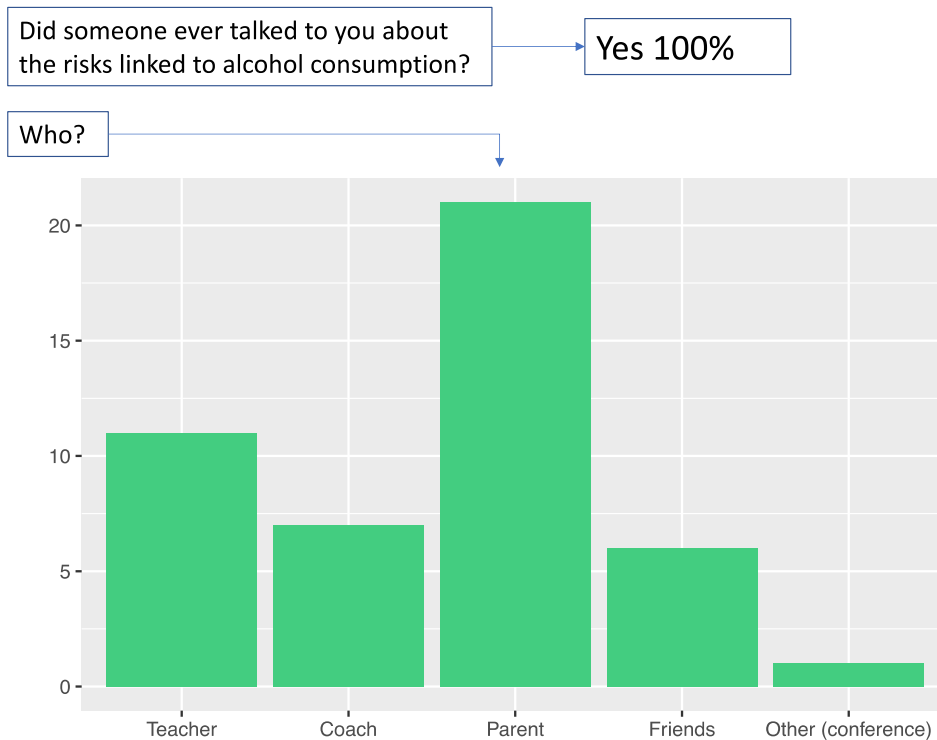


Figure 13. Sources of information and support on alcohol issues by young participants

Involvement of young participants in alcohol prevention initiatives

Between participants, 17 never took part of an alcohol prevention initiative, while 7 did without entering into details (Figure 14); only 9 out of 24 participants are interested in receiving more information or support about alcohol (Figure 15).

Did you ever participate in a project for reducing alcohol related harm?

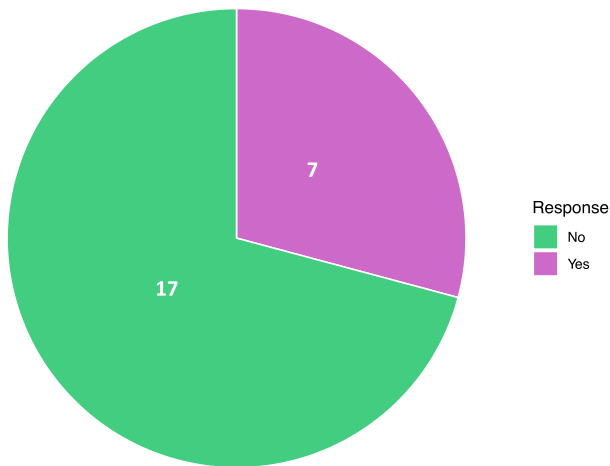


Figure 14. Participation in alcohol related harm reduction projects

Are you interested in receiving more information or support about alcohol?

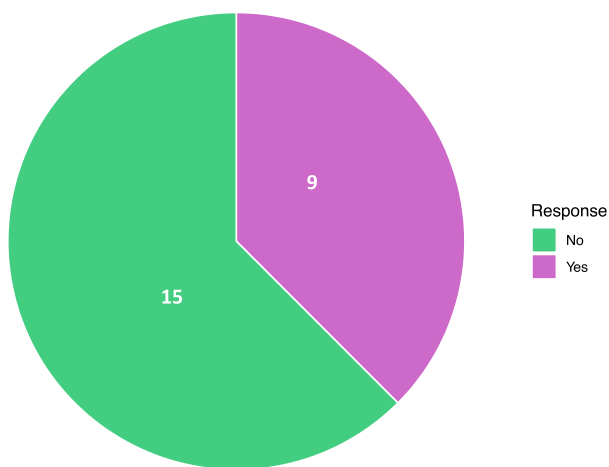


Figure 15. Interest in receiving more information about alcohol

Statements

The interview ended with the following 10 statements regarding alcohol, young people and sports.

According to the young participants a lot of people of their age drinks alcoholic beverages once in a while (11 strongly agree, 14 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 1) and they occasionally get drunk (14 strongly agree, 7 with an intermediate level of agreement, 4 disagree (statement 2) (Figure 16).

No consensus has been reached regarding the fact that males drink more than females (7 agree, 9 disagree and the remaining 9 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 3). A little bit higher consensus, even if without a strong agreement, asking if young athletes drink less compared to other people of their age (9 agree, 6 disagree, 9 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 4).

A consensus has been obtained between participants, as a good practice, concerning alcohol related issues discussion between the coach and the team (16 agree, 6 with an intermediate level of agreement, 3 disagree) (statement 5).

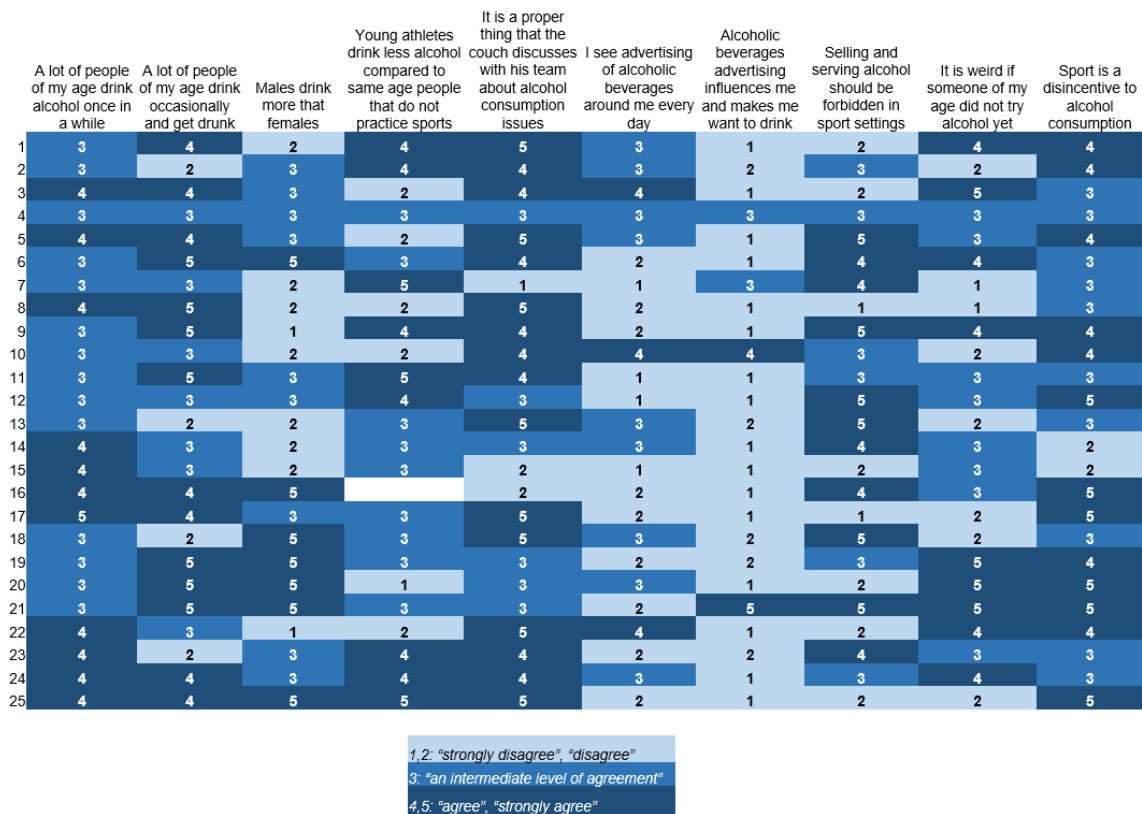


Figure 16. Overall opinion on Alcohol consumption, youth, sports and marketing

Only 3 participants agree that alcohol advertising is around participants every day (13 disagree, 9 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 6). Furthermore, a strong agreement has been obtained against the fact that alcohol advertising influences and makes them want to drink (only 2 agree) (statement 7).

No consensus has been reached in prohibiting selling and serving alcohol in sport settings (11 agree, 8 disagree, 6 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 8). No consensus as well when asked if they think it is weird if someone of their age did not try alcohol yet (9 agree, 8 disagree, 8 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 9). Finally, the majority of



participants think that sport is a disincentive to alcohol consumption (13 agree, 2 disagree, 10 with an intermediate level of agreement) (statement 10) (Figure 16).

2.3 Summary of Findings

A concise summary of the findings (both qualitative and quantitative) are presented in the sections below.

Key Findings from Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and the UK

- Underage drinking is a well-known phenomenon among young people but most of the interviewees reported that alcohol is not part of their lifestyle. Nevertheless, there was a group of interviewees where underage drinking was very common and normalized.
- There were different attitudes among interviewees about alcohol use among peers. Most felt that it's a personal decision and private matter whether to drink alcohol or not. Some interviewees strongly disapproved of their peers drinking.
- Most young people reported that their peers doing sports drink less alcohol than those who are not doing sports.
- 70% of respondents believed that the best legal age for drinking is 18 years or over.
- Young people see a lot of alcohol marketing. For most, this gives rise to wondering, questions and criticism.
- Most interviewees felt that alcohol marketing doesn't affect them.
- Young people see a lot of alcohol advertising in sports and most do not approve of it. 58% wanted a ban on alcohol advertisement in sports. Some recognize that alcohol marketing is because of the sponsorship money generated.
- Young people see a lot of alcohol use resulting in negative consequences (like violence) in football events. It was also observed that alcohol use in moderation can also create a good atmosphere among fans.



- It was reported that there are parents who use alcohol at events related to their children's soccer hobby.
- School, parents, friends and the internet are the most important sources of information and support for young people on alcohol issues. Most interviewees felt that they did not need more information about alcohol.
- Most interviewees didn't remember any actions at the club to minimize young people's alcohol use. Many felt that it was not necessary either. Nevertheless, 65% said that it would be appropriate for their coach to discuss alcohol issues with the team.
- It was reported that there are parents who use alcohol at events related to their children's soccer hobby.
- School, parents, friends and the internet are the most important sources of information and support for young people on alcohol issues. Most interviewees felt that they did not need more information about alcohol.
- Most interviewees didn't remember any actions at the club to minimize young people's alcohol use. Many felt that it was not necessary either. Nevertheless, 65% said that it would be appropriate for their coach to discuss alcohol issues with the team.

Key Findings from Italy

- Alcohol is consumed occasionally by most participants. According to the young participants, a lot of people of their age drinks alcoholic beverages once in a while and they occasionally get drunk; only for few of them it is weird if someone of their age did not try alcohol yet.
- A great majority of participants thinks that alcohol consumption is common among young people and, with less agreement and less consensus, that alcohol is an important issue among young people.
- Almost all participants know that the legal age for drinking in Italy is 18 years old, but 4 think that it should be 16 and 2 that it should be 21.
- According to the personal opinion of the young participants, who practices sports does not drink more than people of the same age that do not practice sports, and the majority think that sports are a disincentive to alcohol consumption.
- Participants that drink alcohol (regularly and occasionally) do not agree that drinking alcohol can alter their sport activity. However, a consensus, even if without a strong agreement, has been reached regarding the fact that young athletes drink less alcohol compared to other people of their age.
- Alcohol beverages are not used within participants' association/club; when consumed, mainly by adults and supporters, before or after training, in the bar/restaurant or in the changing room.



- Alcohol advertising is not present in their sport settings and their clubs/associations are not sponsored by the alcohol industry. The majority of young participants think that alcohol advertising does not influence alcohol consumption by young people.
- Most participants do not agree on selling and serving alcohol during sport events but without consensus / awareness that selling alcoholic beverages during sport events influences the event and supporters/fans attitudes.
- All young participants have received information and support on alcohol issues mainly by their parents, followed by teachers, coaches and peers. However, when asked to specify the details of the information and support received, nobody specified it. A consensus has been obtained between participants, and considered as a good practice, the discussion on alcohol related issues between the coaches and their teams.
- Usually young people involved in sport activities are not involved in alcohol prevention initiatives, but one out of three are interested in receiving more information or support about alcohol.
- Alcohol advertising is not around participants every day and a strong agreement has been obtained against the fact that alcohol advertising influences and makes them want to drink.
- No consensus has been reached to prohibit selling and serving alcohol in sport settings during a sport event.

3 Discussion

This section will discuss the different aspects of our study. The results will be interpreted and compared in some respects with previous research and the results from FYFA WP6.

Study Design

In Belgium, Finland, Slovenia, and Poland the data was collected in a very similar way following the protocol. In Scotland, the interviewees were slightly older (one at age 16, two at age of 17). The data from these five countries were analysed together. Age variables are considered when interpreting the results. In Italy, the data was collected using a quantitative approach, and analysed separately. ISS designed a questionnaire tool (Appendix 3). Despite the differences in data collection, the results were very similar in all data.



Alcohol consumption among young people

One of the WP7 objectives was to study the young people's perception of prevalence of alcohol use among young people. For ethical reasons, the theme was approached with the question asking young people to estimate how common alcohol use is among their peers. The results showed that use of alcohol was very common across all the project countries. Almost all interviewees personally knew peers that drink alcohol occasionally, and these perceptions align well with the actual alcohol use rates in the studied countries. All the findings are in line with the ESPAD-study (the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, 2015¹). It shows that on average 80% of 15-year-olds (turning 16 during the calendar year) had used alcohol (even once during their lifetime) in the FYFA-countries (ranging from 74 to 89 percent; UK missing from ESPAD data). Nearly half of the youth (47%) reported alcohol use at the age of 13 or younger in the ESPAD study. In the FYFA-study the interviewees did not find any significant difference in drinking habits between gender, and this also fits with findings from ESPAD, whereby the prevalence of lifetime use of alcohol is 81% for boys and 79% for girls.

¹ Currently only the reports 2015 is available, though 2019 data has already been collected.

Alcohol use among youth engaged in sports

A systematic literature review (Walczak, B. et al., 2019) was carried out to find out to understand evidence on the role of sport activities in alcohol use prevention. 23 out of 32 studies found that engagement in sports activities increases the tendency to drink alcohol. No association was observed in eight studies and only one paper indicated a negative association - that is evidence of sports protecting from alcohol use. Thus the review concludes that sport activities, especially team sports, seems not to be a protective factor against alcohol use, and that under certain circumstances it may even increase the risk of alcohol consumption. Another systematic review of 17 longitudinal studies (Kwan et al, 2014) examining the relationship between sport participation and alcohol and drug use among adolescents had similar results. They indicated that sport participation is associated with alcohol use, with 82% of the included studies showing a significant positive relationship. Ng et al. (2017) found that alcohol use was more common among 14-15 years old sport club members compared to their peers (not statistically significant). There is also evidence in the literature of long-term effects of sport engagement to alcohol use later in life. Appelqvist-Schmiedlechner (2017) found that heavy drinking was more common among men who had been engaged in competitive sports at the age of 12. It is important to recognise though that sports can and does have a positive impact



on young people, affecting mental health (Lubans et al. (2016), and is a good way for young people to meet others (Merkel, 2013), and promote inclusion (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 2009).

In the FYFA-study there were few interviewees, especially in Poland and Italy, who reported that young people involved with sports use more alcohol than others. The interviews interpreted this to be a result of the culture of celebrating victories and ending the season with alcohol. However, most FYFA-study respondents felt that young people doing sports drink less alcohol than those who do not. They provided well-argued and pragmatic arguments for this view, such as athletic ambition and high goals and a lack of time for celebration. Stakeholders at the club (WP6) felt the same, saying that “their” young players do not consume alcohol (as much) as young people in general. Are these results evidence based, or is this an optimistic illusion?

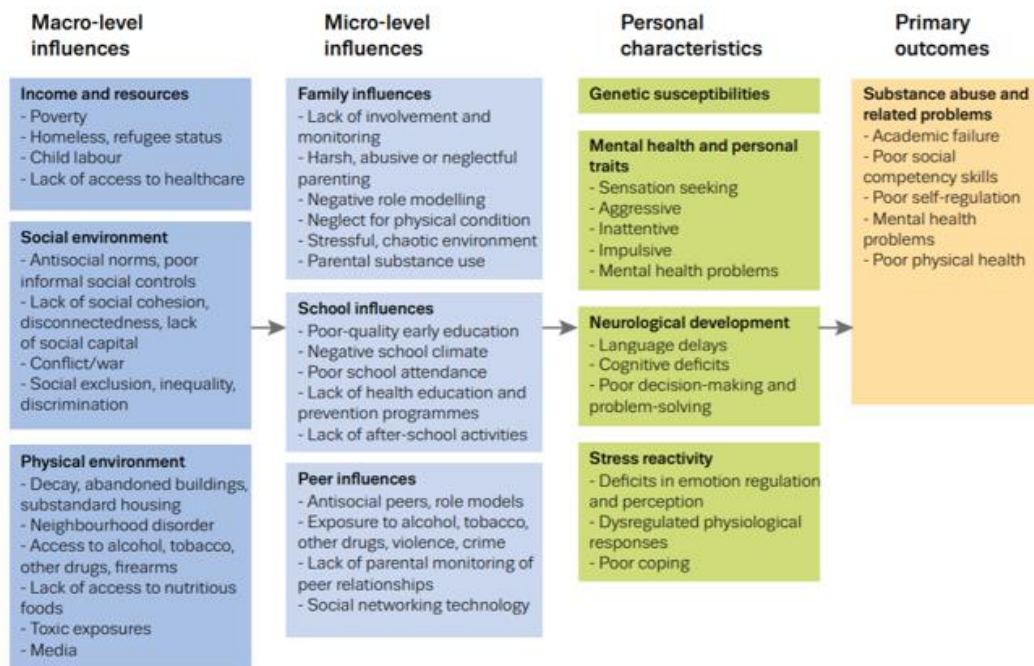
Age can be one factor to explaining these results. The average age among FYFA interviewees was 14 and that might explain why alcohol does not yet play a role in their lives. Even though only a very limited group of young people were interviewed in the FYFA-study, it seems that the older the interviewees, the more often the use of alcohol was reported. Aira, T. et al (2010) have found that young people’s attitudes toward alcohol becomes more permissive and alcohol testing becomes more common when moving from the age group of 13 years to 15 years. In the FYFA-study younger interviewees who took training very seriously had stricter attitudes towards substance use, both towards one’s own and towards their friend’s alcohol consumption. In Scotland, some of the interviewees were slightly older and more relaxed in their training and substance use than Polish and Slovenian 14-years-olds.

It is also important to note that FYFA/WP7 is a qualitative study and the young people are not representative of all young people within the respective countries. For example, the coaches selected interviewees, and they might have, consciously or unconsciously, selected young people who are especially sporty and have a health orientated lifestyle. Also, the interviewed youth might have been inclined to report results they felt were hoped for or that would present their peers in a positive light.

Apart from engagement in recreational sports there are of course many other important factors affecting young people’s drinking habits. For example, Ngo et al (2017) found that experience of substance use among youth was associated more with lower academic grades than participation in sports club activities. This was also found by UNODC. The likelihood of using alcohol and other substances during youth, and to encounter related unwanted consequences, is impacted by a myriad of societal, social, and individual level factors. The opportunities to

engage with peers and be influenced by their positive or negative social norms, or to receive adult attention and structured leisure time activities allowing to practice social skills, for example in the context of organised sports, are just one among them. Substance use is often related to socio-economical background. The same factors increasing the likelihood towards substance use may also compromise school attainment and the abilities and possibilities to successfully socialize to working life.

Risk factors that can be addressed by prevention interventions



Source: Based on UNODC, 2013

http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/11733/20192546_TDMA19001ENN_PDF.pdf

Taking into account the wider research base, across Europe there has been reduction in youth alcohol use. Youth culture and drinking manners seem to be changing. Adolescents who grow up today seem to value school and education. They want to perform well (Nordic Welfare Centre, 2019). Maybe this phenomenon is reflected in sports too, and drinking culture affected by new generations doing sports.

Whatever the reasons are, it is important to see that there are young people who have adopted a strong athletic identity without alcohol. Young people find themselves that this kind of identity can work as a protective factor against alcohol harm for them and at the same time it



offers an excuse for refusing alcohol. We need to support these young people and make this attitude last throughout puberty.

Sports clubs and the prevention of alcohol harm

The evidence would suggest overall that doing sports *per se* does not automatically mean youth sobriety, and so the question arises if there is more that sports clubs can do. Maybe sport clubs could serve as a platform for alcohol prevention for young people?

The Icelandic model has attracted much attention in recent years. The comprehensive prevention program working at the community level has led to a dramatic decline in young people drinking. According to ESPAD, the share of abstainers in Iceland grew from 20.8% in 1995 to 65.5% in 2015. Encouraging hobbies such as football is an important part of the Icelandic model. The idea is to provide young people with meaningful activities and reduce uncontrolled free time. Conditions have been improved by building new football halls. Particular attention has been paid to the training of junior coaches. From the age of five, children receive a licensed coach who receives the same level of salary as, for example, a teacher. Municipalities provide training facilities free of charge and families receive around € 400 a year, which can be used for children's hobby expenses such as sports. Parental controls, connections, feeling cared about school, not being outdoors late at night, telling parents how to address the negative effects of peer groups are also key components of the model. (Sigfusdottir, I.D et. al, (2008) ; Kristjansson, A. et al. (2020) ; Nordic Welfare Centre (2019))

Young people interviewed in this FYFA study felt that they have good knowledge about alcohol issues given by school, parents, friends, and through the internet. They also felt that "it would be nice to have discussions with the coach about the alcohol topics." Even though they saw there was no current need for that. This is a great opportunity for sports clubs to play a role. On the other hand, the scientific research evaluating interventions like this do not in most cases produce the desired results. For example, a Finnish study found an increasing association between alcohol substance use and counselling of specific substances by the coaches with athletes' (14-15 years old). An explanation may be found from the content and mode of the operation. Kokko and Paakkari (2014) found three models for health promotion among coaches: implicit, reactive and deliberate. The study mentioned above focused on a reactive model (coaches reacting and discussing substances only after substance use already has occurred). The researches concluded that coaches may lack sufficient knowledge to deliver health promoting messages. Sport clubs decide themselves whether coaches are expected to be influential regarding preventing alcohol harm or not. If coaches are expected to give guidance, they need proper education for that. "Challenges in health promotion in sports clubs



are to encourage coaches to take part in appropriate education that can improve their contribution to the reduction of substance use in sports” (Ng, K. et al, 2017). In a study of young people aged 12-15 years engaged in sport, Martin., L. et al (2016) found that 75% discussed health issues with their coaches in the last six months. The most common topics were sleep and rest, injury prevention, and self-confidence in sports. The three most common topics that the coach had never addressed with young people were alcohol, peer pressure related to substance use, and tobacco.

Line Up Live Up is UNODC’s evidence-informed and sports-based program for crime and drug use prevention in sports settings. In addition to improving young people’s knowledge of risks and drug abuse and to affect their attitudes, a significant part of the program is to strengthen the life skills. Life skills enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands, stressors and interpersonal conflicts of everyday life. UN and WHO point out that education for young people should focus on skills like self-control, emotional awareness, communication, social problem-solving and academic support. These are all skills that fits well with everyday life and strategies at sports club.

Young people in the FYFA study felt that the discussion of alcohol issues was the best method of substance abuse education. Also stakeholders from the sports clubs (WP6) trusted peer education and this is the method recommended by the United Nations / UNODC and WHO too: “Prevention programs are most effective when they employ interactive techniques, such as peer discussion groups.” Every sport club should have rules and strategies for substance use prevention. It is also a great possibility for a sports club to improve one’s social responsibility. Investing in alcohol prevention for young people would be a positive step for any sports club.

Young people felt that that there is no alcohol drinking or alcohol harm at their sports clubs. Abstaining from alcohol by young players as well as coaches or other staff exists. But there was a group of young people who reported their parents drinking alcohol every now and then in the sports club setting. Sports clubs should pay more attention to this. Club rules are for everyone and it is important to model good behavior, and that includes parents too.

To summarise, sports club activities offer risk factors in relation to alcohol, but they can also offer a platform to strengthen protective factors in young people’s lives. The main risk factor is



peer intoxication and peer pressure. Protective factors can include a broad sense of community responsibility, coach support, reinforcement of life skills, club rules and strategies and adults setting a good example.

Prevention of alcohol harm and legislation

- **Age limits**

Restrictions on availability of alcohol is one of the WHO's "best buys" for reducing harms from alcohol. In most FYFA countries the legal drinking age for beer and wine is 18 years. Belgium is an exception with the lower limit (16 years). The legal drinking age for spirits range from 18 to 20 (Finland). (WHO, 2018).

Young people in the FYFA study did not oppose the age limits for alcohol purchasing, in fact, rather the opposite. Most respondents considered the age limit of 18 as appropriate. This was also the view of most young people in Belgium. One in three FYFA respondents was willing to raise the limit up to 21 years or even higher. Four young people felt that the legal drinking age should be dropped from 18 to 16/17 so that they would be able to go to pubs and drink inside, rather than having to put themselves at risk drinking outside. This was a real demonstration of thinking to note.

When the club stakeholders were asked about the appropriate drinking age the majority of them answered that 18 years is the most appropriate age (WP6).

The final conclusion is that legislators (except in Belgium), young people and adults at the clubs are relatively in agreement on the age limits set for alcohol. Young people were even willing to raise the age limits.

- **Alcohol marketing**

Almost all young people in the FYFA study had frequently noticed alcohol advertisements on various platforms and in sports. Most interviewees felt that alcohol marketing does not have an impact on them but could affect others. There is a contradiction between scientific research and young people's own views. According to research (Babor, T. et al 2010, WHO 2015, Sigfusdottir, I.D et. al, (2008) ; Kristjansson, A. et al. (2020) ; Nordic Welfare Centre (2019)



alcohol advertising speeds up the onset of alcohol use by children and increases alcohol consumption and binge drinking in adolescence. Alcohol use started at a young age, in turn, predisposes individuals to problems in adulthood: heavy alcohol and other substance use is strongly associated with substance use started at a young age. The more children see alcohol advertising around them, the greater the impact of advertising on their behaviour.

The club stakeholders (WP6), for their part, saw that alcohol advertising does have an influence on young people. Some considered young people to be smart enough and not influenced by any kind of alcohol promotion.

It seems that both young people themselves and some of the adults at the sports clubs underestimate the effectiveness of advertising. At least young people would need more education to improve their media literacy skills. Paakkari, L. et al. (2017) found that perceived health literacy was higher among adolescents ages 13 and 15 who participated in sports club activities than their young counterparts. Maybe sports club settings could work as a platform for discussing the goals behind alcohol advertising too.

Sports are widely sponsored by alcohol companies. Most of the young interviewees felt that a ban on alcohol advertisement in sports would be a good idea. Some interviewees mentioned alcohol sponsorship as a source of income to the club.

- **Sports events**

Alcohol intoxication among spectators at sporting events and related problems, such as violence, are of great concern in many countries (Elgan, T.H, 2017). As a part of Swedish "Fotboll utan Fylla" (2015) project almost 3,300 people who were randomly asked to have their alcohol levels taken when they arrived to watch the football match, and 50% had been drinking alcohol. The average blood alcohol concentration was 0.63 mg/l. Every tenth person was heavily intoxicated. There is reason to assume that the situation is not very different from this in the countries of the FYFA study.

Young people interviewed in FYFA reported seeing a lot of alcohol use resulting in negative consequences (like violence) in football stadiums. On the other hand, they felt that alcohol can



also contribute to there being a good atmosphere. In a Swedish study almost 7 out of 10 (68 percent) believed that the atmosphere would be better if the number of heavily intoxicated people in the football arenas decreased (STAD).

4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the interviews with young people about what they felt would reduce alcohol harms among young people and also the impact of sports.

(1) Recommendations for young people themselves

- Don't become an outsider of society. Having a place to study or job are important
- Get a sports hobby and ideally do it professionally with high goals.
- Understand the harm caused by alcohol to your health and to your sports performance.
- For those who drink alcohol, this should not be consumed until they are 18 years old.
- If having a drink, do it in moderation.
- Choose carefully the company you hang out with.
- Do not force anyone to drink alcohol (social pressure).

(2) Recommendations for parents, coaches, teachers, and other adults in young people's lives

- Don't allow your underage kids to drink alcohol. Attitude is important.
- Discussion is a better way to deal with young people, rather than just warning them about the harms.
- Listen to young people and help them.
- Don't buy alcohol for minors.
- Drinking should be moderate, not just among young people, but among adults too.
- Don't behave aggressively when watching football games.
- The coach should discuss alcohol issues with the team and prepare the team rules together.

(3) Recommendations for society and for decision makers

- Restrict alcohol advertising in sports.
- Ensure that alcohol consumption at football matches is moderate and that public safety is guaranteed (e.g. restrict beer selling, amount of the stewards).



- Improve controls to ensure that shops don't sell alcohol to minors.
- More attention should be given to the problem of adults buying alcohol for minors.
- Improve the safety for young people who drink in parks and streets (e.g. lower the age limit letting them enter pubs).
- Produce nationwide campaigns.
- More health education to schools in an interesting way.

Suggestions and research needs (Italy)

- To extend the FYFA interview to other students and to different age groups
- To encourage and support sports activities for young people as a disincentive to alcohol consumption
- To ensure strict compliance with the ban of selling and serving alcohol to minors and for clubs/associations to avoid any form of sponsorship by the alcohol industry and alcohol advertising related to young people
- To implement/support/enforce communication and information campaigns on health and social impact of alcohol in sports settings
- To implement/support/enforce alcohol education and prevention initiatives on alcohol-related harm to different stakeholders within sport clubs/associations with the active participation of young people.

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Appendix 1: Letter to Parents. Information and Permission for Interviews

TEMPLATE TO MODIFY FOR NATIONAL PURPOSES!

[address institution]

[logo FYFA]

Letter to the parents about their children participation to the FYFA project (information and consent form)

Dear Football Parent,

Underage drinking is a worrying problem all over Europe. FYFA (Focus on Youth, Football and Alcohol) is an EU project to identify and disseminate good practices for prevention and health promotion in cooperation with sport clubs.

As a part of an EU project XX/XX ry is carrying out the research to find out opinions and ideas of young people themselves. Interviews for the study will take place in Belgium, Finland, Italy,



Poland, Slovenia and UK. Interviews in XX are accomplished among XXa juniors. It is great pleasure and honor to have XX as a national partner in the project.

Four girls and four boys aged 14 years will be interviewed in XX. Paired interviews will take place at the same time with weekly rehearsals. The estimated duration for the interview is 30-45 minutes per pair. Questions to be asked are listed in the end of the letter. Participation to the project is entirely voluntary. There will be cinema tickets available as thanks for participation.

The results of the interview will be processed with full anonymity. In order to ensure correct information transfer, the interview will be recorded by means of an audio-recorder. Data to be collected is used for research purposes only and it will be destroyed after finishing the project. Any identifying information is kept out of published report.

Consent of the parents is crucial part of the process when dealing with the minors. Attached to the letter you find the consent form. Please sign it and bring it back to the contact person of XX by __.__.2019.

Thank you so much for your valuable cooperation!

If you have any questions or remarks, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher in charge ([email](#))

Representative of FYFA-partner

Representative of sports club

Name of the young person participating to the FYFA research:

CONSENT FORM FROM THE PARENT

- I have read this form and agree to its terms.
- My daughter/my son can participate in the interview.

Date

Name of signatory and signature

CONSENT FORM FROM THE INTERVIEWEE



I have read this form and agree to its terms.

Date

Name of signatory and signature

What is FYFA-project?

FYFA (*Focus on Youth Football and Alcohol*) (2017-2020) is a project to reduce underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking among young people. Project will generate good practices and develop guidelines for youth sport clubs regarding alcohol across EU. FYFA gets funding from 3rd EU Health program and its implemented by eight Member states.

For further information: www.eurocare.org www.ehyt.fi #fyfalcohol

Appendix 2: Questionnaire used in Belgium, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and in the UK

ALCOHOL USE BY YOUNG PEOPLE

- In your opinion, how common is drinking alcohol among your age group?
- How do young people react to their peers' drinking in your peer group?
- Do young people participate in sports drink more or less than other young people? Why is this?
- What about you? Has sporting activities got any impact on your alcohol-related attitudes or behaviour? Describe.
- Do you think alcohol consumption of young people (who have not yet reached the legal drinking age) is a significant problem?
- What do you think would be an appropriate age to try alcohol? What do you think would be an appropriate legal drinking age?

ALCOHOL MARKETING

- Alcohol advertisements are seen quite a lot in media, web, shops and so on. What do you think of them?
- Does marketing have any influence on young people's alcohol use (positive or negative)? Describe.
- Have you seen alcohol marketing in connection to the sports? At your sport club or elsewhere? What kind of thoughts you have about this?

SPORT EVENTS

- Beer is sold in many sport events. What do you think of that?



- In your opinion does selling beer influence the atmosphere or the behaviour of the spectators? Describe.

EXPERIENCES AS FOOTBALL JUNIOR PLAYER

- Have you ever been confronted with alcohol-related behaviour at your club? Describe your experiences.
- Do you think the consumption of alcohol beverages at your club is problematic? Why? By whom (young people, adults)? Could you tell us more?

TACLING ALCOHOL-RELATED BEHAVIOUR

- Where do you get information and support in alcohol issues?
- Have you ever been a part of any preventive action to reduce alcohol harms? Describe your experiences. How did it affect you?
- Has there ever been any actions at your sport club to minimize the risk of the alcohol behaviour? Describe. How was that? Have you ever discussed alcohol issues with the coaches?
- Would you like to get more information or support in alcohol issues? What it could be?

STATEMENTS

1. Most people of my age drink alcohol every now and then
2. Most people of my age have binged on drinking (more than three drinks at the time) at least once a month
3. Boys drink more than girls.
4. Young people participating in sports drink less alcohol than others at the same age group
5. It is appropriate that my coach discusses alcohol issues with the team.
6. I see alcohol marketing around me every day
7. Alcohol advertisements influence me and make me want to drink.
8. Alcohol marketing should be forbidden in sports (covering media, events, products, etc.)
9. It is weird if someone of my age has not yet tried alcohol
10. Sports are an important factor for me not drinking

ANYTHING ELSE

Is there something else you would like to say? Questions, remarks?



Appendix 3: Questionnaire used in Italy

L'opinione dei giovani sul consumo di bevande alcoliche, i giovani e lo sport

Gentile studente,

l'Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), attraverso l'Osservatorio Nazionale Alcol si fa promotore del **progetto Europeo 'FYFA - Focus on Youth Football & Alcohol'** (www.FYFAproject.eu), della Commissione Europea, focalizzato sul **gioco del calcio** ma, per l'Italia, anche su altre discipline sportive quali la **pallavolo** e l'**atletica leggera**.

In questa fase ci rivolgiamo ai **giovani** per una **raccolta di informazioni e opinioni** mediante l'utilizzo di un **questionario anonimo** sull'**impatto del consumo di bevande alcoliche nei giovani**.

I giovani a cui ci riferiamo hanno un'età compresa tra i 13 ei i 15 anni, di entrambe i sessi e praticano attività sportive.

Se desideri partecipare, esprimi il tuo parere personale rispondendo alle domande del questionario.

Età:

Sesso: Maschio Femmina

Partecipazione ad attività sportive:

- Dilettantistico Agonistico Occasionale con gli
 Non pratico sport, ma desidero comunque partecipare all'attività

Disciplina praticata:

- Calcio Pallavolo Atletica leggera
 Altro: specificare.....

Esprimi **il tuo parere personale** rispondendo alle domande del questionario

1. Il consumo di alcol è diffuso tra i giovani della tua età?

1=per niente 2=poco 3=abbastanza 4=molto 5=moltissimo



2. I giovani che praticano sport bevono di più dei loro coetanei?

Si No Non so

Se Sì, sai motivarlo?.....

3. Tu personalmente consumi bevande alcoliche?

Si, regolarmente Si, occasionalmente No

3.1 Se Sì, il consumo di bevande alcoliche ritieni possa influenzare la tua attività sportiva?

per niente poco abbastanza molto moltissimo

Eventuali ulteriori informazioni:

4. Il consumo di alcol tra i giovani minorenni è secondo te un problema?

per niente poco abbastanza molto moltissimo

5. Conosci qual'è l'età legale per poter consumare alcol?

16 anni 18 anni 21 anni non so altro,
specificare.....

6. Quale dovrebbe essere l'età legale per poter consumare alcol?

16 anni 18 anni 21 anni non so altro,
specificare.....



7. La pubblicità delle bevande alcoliche ha influenza sul consumo di alcol nei giovani?

- 1=per niente 2=poco 3=abbastanza 4=molto 5=moltissimo
-

Eventuali ulteriori informazioni:

8. Ti è capitato di vedere pubblicità di bevande alcoliche in ambito sportivo?

- 1=Si 2=No

-

8.1. Se Sì, in quale contesto?

Nella tua
associazione
sportiva

Nell'associazione di
qualche amico

Altro specificare.....

9. La tua associazione è sponsorizzata dall'industria dell'alcol?

- Si No

10. Quanto sei d'accordo sul fatto che le bevande alcoliche (birra, vino, ecc) siano in vendita nel corso di eventi sportivi?

- per niente poco abbastanza molto moltissimo
-

11. Secondo te, la vendita di bevande alcoliche nel corso di un evento sportivo influenza lo svolgimento dell'evento stesso e gli atteggiamenti dei tifosi/spettatori?

- per niente poco abbastanza molto moltissimo
-

Eventuali ulteriori informazioni:

12. All'interno del tuo Club / Associazione sportiva sono consumate bevande alcoliche?

- Si, No Non so



Se Si:

12.1. Da chi sono consumate?

	Minori	Adulti
1. Atleti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Tifosi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Altro (specificare.....)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12.2. Quanto spesso si consumano nel tuo Club/Associazione?

	Minori	Adulti
1. Raramente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Qualche volta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Frequentemente	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ogni volta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Non so	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12.3. Dove?

	Minori	Adulti
1. Mensa /Bar del Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Spogliatoi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Palestra	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Altro (specificare.....)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12.4. In quali occasioni?

	Minori	Adulti
1. Prima di un allenamento	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Durante l'allenamento	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Dopo un allenamento	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Altro (specificare.....)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Qualcuno ti ha mai parlato dei rischi legati al consumo di bevande alcoliche?

Si	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Se Si:

13.1. Chi te ne ha parlato?

Insegnanti	Allenatori	Genitori/parenti	Amici	Altro.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



9. È strano se qualcuno della mia età non ha ancora provato l'alcol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Lo sport è un disincentivo al consumo di alcol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Eventuali ulteriori informazioni e commenti:

Grazie per la tua partecipazione

