

**JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, Belgium, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

**Europe Beating Cancer Plan**

Today we are celebrating the launch of Europe's Beating Cancer. It is a good day for the prevention of alcohol related cancers in the EU.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan emphasizes alcohol-related harm is a major public health concern in the EU and that cancer was the leading cause of alcohol-attributable deaths with a share of 29%, followed by liver cirrhosis (20%), cardiovascular diseases (19%) and injuries (18%)<sup>1</sup>. The target is to achieve a relative reduction of at least 10% in the harmful use of alcohol by 2025. Effective public health prevention as listed below can reduce the social and economic losses caused by harmful use of alcohol.

- Support to Member States and stakeholders for the implementation of best practice interventions and capacity building activities.
- The Commission will review the EU legislation relating to the taxation of alcohol and on cross border purchases of alcohol by private individuals.
- To reduce the exposure of young people to marketing of alcoholic beverages, the Commission will closely work with Member States to reduce online marketing and advertising of these products.
- The Commission will also review its promotion policy on alcoholic beverages in the EU promotion programme for agricultural products.
- Mandatory labelling of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration on alcoholic beverage labels before the end of 2022
- The inclusion of health warnings on the labels of alcoholic beverages will be proposed before the end of 2023.
- Support will be provided to Member States in the implementation of evidence-based brief interventions on alcohol in primary health care, workplace and social services.

In the coming years we expect the population to better recognise that drinking alcohol is associated with a risk of developing cancer in the oropharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, colon, rectum and breast. Even moderate alcohol intake has been shown to increase the risk of developing breast cancer.<sup>2</sup>

The Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN), the European Cancer Leagues (ECL) and the European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) are relaunching our website - <https://www.alcoholandcancer.eu/> to help increase awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer. The webpage is one of our activities as civil society organisations to increase awareness and

<sup>1</sup> For the EU Member States, UK, Norway, and Switzerland:  
[https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/386577/fs-alcohol-eng.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/386577/fs-alcohol-eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation, 2018. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274603/9789241565639-eng.pdf?ua=1>



call for better information to consumers<sup>1</sup>. We are committed to do our part for achieving a healthier Europe.

Wendy Yared, Director of the European Cancer Leagues, *reminds us* that the message in relation to alcohol consumption in the European Code Against Cancer<sup>3</sup> is: *If you drink alcohol of any type, limit your intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention. There is no level of alcohol consumption that is safe as far as cancer is concerned* ([www.cancercode.eu](http://www.cancercode.eu)<sup>5</sup>).

The contribution of alcohol to a range of cancers needs to be better recognized. There needs to be better public information, more awareness among health professionals and effective public health measures to highlight the link and promote action to reduce avoidable illnesses and deaths.

Lauri Beekmann, Executive director of NordAN has noted: *“Alcohol is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as a [Group 1 carcinogen](#). And we have known it for more than 30 years now. The overall awareness of that fact is worryingly low, everywhere”. Even though many cancer organisations and alcohol policy as well as harm organisations have done a lot to increase that knowledge, for some reason, it doesn’t seem to work very well.”*

Awareness concerning the link between alcohol and cancer is of crucial importance for effective prevention efforts.

Mariann Skar, Secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance, emphasises: *“It is high time that the forgotten link between alcohol and cancer is brought to the attention of the public. As consumers we have the right to know about the effect’s alcohol consumption has on our health. There needs to be better public information, more awareness among health professionals and effective public health measures to highlight this link and to further promote action to reduce avoidable illnesses and deaths”*

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

To find out more please visit: [www.alcoholandcancer.eu](http://www.alcoholandcancer.eu)  
[www.cancercode.eu](http://www.cancercode.eu)

For more information, please contact

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<sup>3</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Code Against Cancer released by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the European Commission

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European Association of Cancer Leagues (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](http://www.europeancancerleagues.org)

#### **Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN)**

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Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN) is a network that advocates the prevention and reducing of alcohol- and drug related harm through effective evidence-based alcohol- and drug policy in the Nordic and Baltic countries and in the entire Northern dimension regions of Europe.

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The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 60 member organisations across 24 European countries advocating prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in advocacy and research, as well as in the provision of information and training on alcohol issues and the service for people whose lives are affected by alcohol problems.

[www.eurocare.org](http://www.eurocare.org)