

Summary report

The 2018 APN Symposium took place in Edinburgh, hosted generously by Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh on 19th November by SHAAP, one day before the 8th European Alcohol Policy Conference.

As in the previous year the APN symposium was combined with a meeting of WHO/EURO. This again worked out extremely well; till the tea break in the afternoon, the sessions were held jointly; 2 of the agenda items were then dealt with separately.

In the joint session approximately 100 persons participated.

The agenda for the combined meeting had been developed in full co-operation with WHO/EURO and included an overview of alcohol in Europe (by Professor Jürgen Rehm); an introduction of the new WHO/HQ SAFER initiative (by Dag Rekve from WHO/HQ); an overview of the responses in European countries (by Lars Moeller) a keynote speech on alcohol and cancer plus a Norwegian initiative to mobilize the population, and a review of recent developments in selected countries. WHO/EURO also presented a recently published Fact Sheet on Alcohol Consumption, Alcohol-attributable harm and Alcohol Policy Responses in European Member States, Norway and Switzerland, showing that much action is still needed to reduce the burden alcohol places on its citizens.

The review of recent developments in selected countries showed a varied pattern, with very positive policy developments and legislative action in Scotland (by Eric Carlin from SHAAP) and Ireland (by Suzanne Costello from Alcohol Action Ireland) and also in the Baltic countries (by Laurie Beekmann from Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN)) and a less positive development in Finland (by Nina-Rehn Mendoza from Nordic Welfare Centre) with in fact the gradual undermining of the alcohol monopoly.

Subsequently Nick Heather moderated an interesting panel of presentations on the role of primary health care and screening and brief interventions with experiences from Scotland (by Peter Rice from SHAAP), Catalonia (by Lidia Segura from GENCAT), Portugal (by Federico Rosario from Dão Lafões Primary Health Care Center), Slovenia (by *Tadeja Hočevar*, National Institute of Public Health) and Italy (by Emanuele Scafato from Istituto Superiore di Sanità).

In the APN separate session, excellent presentations were given on digital marketing by Nathan Critchlow (University Stirling) and Anu Katainen (University of Helsinki) clearly showing that this is a new ground heavily exploited by alcohol marketers - without any adequate response for control so far.

The last agenda item was on the role of the industry in alcohol policy making: the presentations and the debate showed the pervasive influence of the industry in policy making. Attention was drawn again to the APN Guidance paper by Jim McCambridge which is one of the very few if not the only piece of balanced guidance on this subject for the public health community.

If you wish to see a more detailed report on the meeting please refer to the [following link](#).