



Summary report October 2011 APN meeting in Poznan, Poland

The Alcohol Policy Network in Europe (APN) organized its meeting this year in conjunction with the Medusa Experts Conference (part of Poland's EU Presidency Program) in Poznan, Poland 10 October 2011. PARPA, the Polish State Agency for Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems, proved to be an excellent and generous host.

APN emerged out of 2 EC sponsored Europe wide research projects: Bridging the Gap and Building Capacity. The network has currently some 100 members working in the field of alcohol policy making in governmental offices or in non-governmental agencies throughout Europe.

There was a number of very high quality presentations on current dominant themes such as local community action, pricing and young people; with keynote addresses presented by Sven Andreasson, Ann Hope and Evelyn Gillan. There were also updates and a discussion on recent developments concerning alcohol policy in the EC and in WHO by Giulio Gallo and Lars Moeller respectively as well as a review of the actual situation in Poland and a very interesting analysis of stakeholders' interests and standpoints carried out in Slovenia. An exciting open debate took place on the future of European alcohol policy making. A special interest session on local alcohol policy making concluded the day.

Some quotes of the meeting;

"Local communities can be stimulated to develop effective alcohol prevention programs - but it has to be said that most health promotion programs in use have had little impact on harm.Policies that reduce the availability of alcohol on the other hand are effective - but do require a substantial amount of advocacy work. ..."(Sven Andreasson)

"If we are serious about reducing the harm caused by alcohol then we must get serious about implementing policies that actually work. The simple truth is good alcohol policy saves lives, bad alcohol policy kills people. In Scotland the government no longer believes that alcohol problems only affect a minority of the population. They have accepted the public health case for adopting

a whole population approach and recognise that controls on price and availability are key to reducing alcohol harm. This represents a paradigm shift and we hope it will encourage other governments in Europe to adopt alcohol policies formulated by public health interests." **(Evelyn Gillan)**

"...limited progress has been made in implementing effective measures to reduce pressure on young people to drink. In fact the spread of alcohol marketing through digital media (Facebook etc) has increased children's exposure to risk from alcohol. The vast majority (80%) of 15/16 year olds continue to consume alcohol (ESPAD surveys 1995-2007), despite the fact that many countries have an age limit of 18 years for alcohol purchase. A new EU strategy would hopefully provide better protection for children by tackling alcohol marketing, cheap and easy access to alcohol and child proofing all public policies" **(Ann Hope)**

The meeting took place at a time which is critical for alcohol policy making at European level: indeed the EU strategy is coming to an end soon leaving a great challenge for new EU alcohol strategy and work after 2012 and the WHO European Regional Office's new alcohol action plan is at its very beginning after the Member States agreed at their meeting a couple of weeks ago in September in 2011 Baku.

With this meeting APN proved again to be an extremely valuable resource for anyone with an interest in public health oriented alcohol policy making serving as a European platform for exchange, delivering top presentations and providing a unique opportunity for information and high quality debate. APN also announced its association with the NCD Alliance.

Membership of APN is free of charge; the only admission criteria are a proven genuine interest in developing public health oriented alcohol policies and no interest or association with the alcohol industry in its widest sense.

For further information and membership application: www.alcoholpolicynetwork.eu

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