



**Policy
Recommendations
Report**



Preventing alcohol abuse
among pre-adolescents



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01

Information at schools

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p10
- 2_ Key findings p12
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p13

02

The theme of alcohol is explained in several subjects

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p16
- 2_ Key findings p18
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p19

03

Alcohol and road accidents

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p22
- 2_ Key findings p14
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p25

04

Alcohol and health

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p28
- 2_ Key findings p30
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p31

05

Alcohol and distribution

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p34
 - 2_ Key findings p35
 - 3_ Policy Recommendations p36
-

06

Monitoring system of consumption and sales data among young people

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p38
- 2_ Key findings p39
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p40

07

Public-level initiatives

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p42
- 2_ Key findings p43
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p44

08

Multidisciplinary project

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p46
- 2_ Key findings p47
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p48

09

Marketing

- 1_ Information gathered from the interviews p50
- 2_ Key findings p52
- 3_ Policy Recommendations p52

Table of content

Introduction

In an era where educational systems face unprecedented challenges, our comprehensive Policy Recommendations Report emerges from an extensive qualitative research effort spanning from August 9, 2023, to January 13, 2024. This research encompassed six pivotal European nations: Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Romania, reflecting a diverse spectrum of educational, legal, and civic perspectives. Through the diligent execution of 31 interviews involving 65 distinguished participants—including primary and secondary school headteachers, educational consultants, psychologists, law enforcement officials, and legal professionals—we have garnered invaluable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of educational policy and practice.

The participants, hailing from varied backgrounds such as school leadership, educational management, civic education, developmental psychology, and preventive program implementation, among others, offered a rich tapestry of experiences and viewpoints. Their contributions are instrumental in shaping our recommendations, aiming to fortify educational frameworks against contemporary challenges while fostering environments conducive to the holistic development of students. This report meticulously synthesises the insights gleaned from these conversations, setting the stage for actionable policy recommendations. Our goal is to advance a dialogue that transcends national boundaries, advocating for reforms that are both innovative and inclusive, thereby ensuring that educational systems can effectively navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

01

Information at schools

This section consolidates findings from project partner countries, presenting a comprehensive overview of current practices and strategies for educating school-aged children about alcohol. Despite diverse approaches, common themes emerge, highlighting the need for comprehensive, age-appropriate education that integrates preventive measures against alcohol abuse within school curricula.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Belgian schools organise various awareness activities concerning addiction, not solely focused on alcohol. These include an “Addiction Day” with workshops and debates led by professional trainers from external organisations, such as AMO, aimed at supporting young individuals. Additionally, secondary education sometimes hosts activities in collaboration with researchers, focusing on alcohol’s effects on teenage brain development. However, primary schools typically do not address alcohol, as it’s believed that children of such a young age should not be exposed to this topic. Parents are generally not involved unless a specific issue arises, though some schools have parent associations that organise thematic events, with alcohol being the theme in some instances.

Greece

In Greece, health and wellness education, including information about caring for one’s body and the effects of substances such as alcohol, is integrated into the school curriculum in several subjects. Students begin their education in preschool and continue through primary and secondary education, where they are taught about various subjects, including the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum is designed to be age-appropriate, with younger children learning about primary care and healthy eating. At the same time, older students delve into more complex topics, such as the risks associated with alcohol and other substances. The goal is to provide a comprehensive education that informs and empowers students to make healthy choices throughout their lives.

The subject of healthy eating, wellness and the dangers of using and abusing alcohol can also be the subject of a School Activity Project, which a teacher in primary and secondary education can organise, according to the instructions of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religions or the subject of an event organised by the Associations of Parents and Guardians of Schools, addressed to pupils and parents, trying to keep up with the socio-economic changes. For example, energy drink consumption has increased dramatically among high school students in recent years.

France

Schools engage in varied preventive programs across different grade levels, focusing on well-being, health, and prevention. Initiatives include informational sessions on screen time for sixth graders, discussions on rights and harassment in fifth and fourth grades and

talks on addictions and consumer legislation for third graders. Additionally, road safety and first aid training are integrated into the curriculum, and efforts to engage parents through conferences on risks like addictions and harassment are made, although with limited success.

Italy

Civic Education has been integrated as a cross-disciplinary subject across all school levels in Italy since September 2020, focusing on themes such as the Constitution, sustainable development, and digital citizenship. Projects within this framework address various issues, including healthy eating, food waste, and the importance of water, alongside the dangers of addiction, especially highlighting the detrimental effects of substance use on health and the environment. A notable project, “No to Food Waste,” targets primary students to cultivate responsible food consumption habits through engaging activities.

Poland

Schools in Poland implement various preventive programs to educate children and teenagers about the risks associated with addictive substances, with a strong focus on developing personal and social skills. Programs like “Candies” for younger students emphasise basic information on addictive substances, emotional intelligence, creative thinking, self-esteem, cooperation, and safety. Older students engage in activities aimed at building relationships, self-esteem, and assertiveness to prevent alcohol abuse. Educational efforts extend to parents and teachers to reinforce these values at home and school.

Romania

The problem of alcohol consumption among young people is known and addressed in educational institutions in Romania, but there is always the possibility of new, more effective approaches.

As students are increasingly exposed to alcohol consumption, they need detailed information about the short-term and long-term effects of alcohol to create a solid motivation to avoid alcohol consumption by setting positive life goals and developing self-respect and civic responsibility.

As alcohol addiction is becoming one of the dangers of our time, with teenagers being the first victims, these activities aim to warn students about the dangers of alcohol consumption,

prevent them from ruining not only their health but also their social life and future and encourage them to use artistic and creative methods of expressing themselves to support the fight against alcohol consumption.

School counsellors play a vital role in student alcohol prevention by providing education, support and resources. Conducting age-appropriate classroom activities, discussing the risks of alcohol use, and using interactive tools and multimedia can engage students and make information more helpful. There must be free local resources, including treatment centres, support groups and hotlines, that students and their families can access for help. Students and their families must be assisted in seeking treatment if/when necessary.

Identifying children at risk must be done as early as possible to prevent the escalation of alcohol-related problems. There must be a close collaboration between teachers and parents to identify the warning signs and to know the children's concerns.

Students should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, sports, clubs or hobbies as alternatives to alcohol consumption; a healthy and active lifestyle is well known to bring only benefits.

Parents should be involved in educational activities about the signs of alcohol consumption in teenagers and how to communicate effectively with their children about this.

02 Key findings

- **Varied Approaches:** Countries employ a range of strategies, from curriculum integration and external collaborations to digital platforms.
- **Focus on Early Education:** Emphasis on starting alcohol education early, tailored to the age and understanding of students.
- **Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Effective programs involve partnerships with parents, healthcare professionals, and community organisations.
- **Digital and Interactive Tools:** Using digital platforms and interactive tools enhances engagement and effectiveness.

03 Policy Recommendations

Integrate Comprehensive Alcohol Education: Schools should incorporate alcohol awareness and prevention into the curriculum across all grades, tailored to be age-appropriate.

Promote Multidisciplinary Partnerships: Encourage collaborations with healthcare, law enforcement, and community organisations to provide comprehensive education on alcohol awareness and prevention, leveraging diverse expertise and resources for a holistic approach.

Leverage Digital and Interactive Tools: Utilize digital platforms and interactive methods to engage students effectively, making learning about alcohol awareness and prevention more relatable and impactful.

Parental and Community Involvement: Enhance efforts to involve parents and the wider community in educational initiatives, providing them with resources and training to support these conversations at home and in community settings.

Continuous Professional Development for Educators: Offer ongoing training and resources for teachers and school counsellors, equipping them with the latest information and techniques for delivering effective alcohol education.

Policy and Program Evaluation: Implement regular evaluations of educational programs to assess their effectiveness, using findings to refine and improve alcohol education strategies.

National Campaigns and Awareness Initiatives: Support and promote national campaigns that align with school-based efforts, broadening the impact of alcohol awareness and prevention messages.

02

The theme of alcohol is explained in several subjects

This section synthesises insights from interviews and analyses conducted in project partner countries, focusing on the theme of alcohol. It identifies common challenges, practical strategies, and unique approaches to alcohol education, prevention, and policy across these countries. The goal is to provide actionable policy recommendations for addressing alcohol use, especially among young people.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

The theme of alcohol is integrated across various subjects within Belgian schools, albeit not extensively. It is mentioned in the context of health, road safety, and even marketing, as seen in French classes where students analyse advertisements. Notable initiatives include guest speakers from Alcoholics Anonymous sharing personal stories and activities related to understanding the effects of alcohol on health and behaviour. Despite these efforts, there is a perception that primary education pupils are too young to engage with this issue, and more emphasis is placed on societal-level interventions and awareness beyond the school's purview.

Greece

In Greece, the national curriculum is undergoing revisions to make it more responsive to contemporary educational needs and societal changes. This revision aims to foster a comprehensive educational experience that promotes well-being and respect for diversity and prepares students to become creative individuals and active citizens, fostering a holistic approach to education that could encompass such topics and create respect for cultural diversity, which may include understanding of the role of beverages and food in different cultures and societies.

In primary schools, which cater to students aged 6 to 12, the importance of maintaining a healthy diet is taught in the physical education lessons during the 5th and 6th grades. Students are taught how a healthy diet can positively impact their physical condition and overall well-being. In addition, the topic of healthy eating is also covered in the music lesson of the 6th grade, where students learn about its effect on the voice. Furthermore, in the Greek language lesson of the 6th grade, students learn about how healthy eating habits are beneficial. However, the topic of alcohol needs to be addressed directly in primary schools. In junior high schools, which cater to students aged 13 to 15, the topic of alcohol is mentioned in the subject of Ancient Greek of the 1st grade, where students learn about the role of wine in ancient Greece, including its connection to the ancient god Dionysus. There is also a chapter on alcohol-related topics in the subject of Home Economics in the 1st grade and the subjects of Political Education and Biology in the 3rd grade.

Also, in the 2020-2021 school year, a pilot program called "Skills' Laboratories" was implemented in 218 primary and junior high schools throughout Greece. Nowadays, the "Skills' Laboratories" are being implemented in all the country's Primary and Junior High

Schools, including the subject: Cycle: Life Skills, Thematic Pillar: Better Living, Sections: Healthy Eating, Mental Health, Road Safety, Prevention and Addictions.

For the most current and detailed information, following the developments released by the Eurydice Unit Greece and the Ministry of Education in Greece would provide the most accurate insights into how these topics are integrated into the national curriculum.

France

Schools collaborate with associations like Addictions France to implement comprehensive prevention and well-being projects. These projects emphasise psycho-social skills, managing emotions, and self-confidence from primary school onwards. Alcohol awareness is addressed explicitly in fourth grade through reflection on adolescence and risky behaviour, followed by a quiz on alcohol myths and realities. These actions are part of a broader strategy approved at the national level, highlighting the importance of developing psychosocial skills among children and young people.

Italy

Alcohol education is crucial and begins in the early years of schooling, explicitly emphasising secondary education through the civic education curriculum. The interdisciplinary project “Noi cittadini del mondo...in-dipendenti” spans 33 hours over the school year, focusing on health, well-being, and the impact of alcohol and other substances. Activities include brainstorming, experimental tasks to understand blood alcohol levels, analysis of advertising materials for addictive products, and creating awareness posters aiming to stimulate reflection and awareness among students about alcohol and addiction.

Poland

Across different educational stages, the theme of alcohol is integrated into school curriculums through programs like “7 Steps” and “Candies”, focusing on prevention, self-esteem, and managing negative emotions. Workshops, meetings with specialists, and personal stories from recovering addicts are utilised to convey the dangers of alcohol abuse and promote healthy coping mechanisms. The shift in approach aims to avoid glamorising recovery from addiction, instead focusing on continuous education and the development of personal interests as alternatives to alcohol use.

Romania

The Church has its own view on alcohol consumption, based on theological and spiritual principles and looking at how alcohol affects the individual and the community. Here are some aspects of the Church's view on alcohol consumption:

- it does not prohibit alcohol consumption but supports it in a moderate and responsible form. Moderate drinking refers to using alcohol in limited quantities and for social or ritual purposes, such as partaking in Holy Communion, where the wine is the blood of Christ.
- it strongly condemns the abuse of alcohol or excessive consumption that leads to drunkenness or immoral behaviour. Alcohol abuse is seen as a weakness and a sin that can have harmful effects on an individual's physical, mental and spiritual health.
- it encourages responsibility and self-control regarding alcohol consumption. Individuals are urged to be aware of their own limitations and avoid situations that could lead them to reckless behaviour.

02 Key findings

- Educational Initiatives: All countries emphasise the importance of incorporating alcohol education within school curriculums, highlighting the effectiveness of early intervention.
- Cultural and Social Norms: The normalisation of alcohol in social settings is a widespread issue, with countries like Poland focusing on shifting cultural perceptions towards responsible consumption.
- Policy and Regulation: There is a consensus on the need for stricter regulation of alcohol advertising and distribution, as discussed in Romania and Italy.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: France and Greece underline the role of public campaigns in raising awareness about the dangers of alcohol use.
- Community and Multi-disciplinary Approaches: The involvement of various stakeholders, including schools, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and community organisations, is crucial for a comprehensive approach to alcohol prevention.

03 Policy Recommendations

Enhance School-Based Education: Develop and implement comprehensive, age-appropriate alcohol education programs across all school levels, integrating life skills and critical thinking about alcohol use.

Regulate Advertising and Accessibility: Enforce stricter regulations on alcohol advertising, especially in media accessible to young people, and control the sale and distribution of alcohol to reduce underage drinking.

Promote Cultural Shifts: Support initiatives aimed at changing social norms related to alcohol consumption, encouraging responsible and moderated use.

Strengthen Public Health Campaigns: Launch national and local campaigns to increase awareness of the risks associated with alcohol use, emphasising the impact on health, well-being, and safety.

Facilitate Community Involvement: Foster collaboration among schools, religious organisations, health professionals, and law enforcement to address alcohol use comprehensively, focusing on prevention, support, and intervention.

Implement Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish comprehensive monitoring systems to track alcohol consumption trends, the effectiveness of prevention programs, and the impact of policy changes, particularly among young people.

03

Alcohol and road accidents

This section synthesises findings from interviews and analyses conducted across project partner countries, focusing on the nexus of alcohol consumption and road accidents. It draws on educational initiatives, prevention programs, legal measures, and public health campaigns to propose comprehensive policy recommendations aimed at reducing alcohol-related road accidents.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Awareness around alcohol and road safety is addressed through specific activities in some Belgian schools. This includes information days featuring police officers discussing road safety and the implications of alcohol consumption. There's an acknowledgement of the importance of educating young people about the dangers of drinking and driving. However, these initiatives are sporadic and not part of a comprehensive, nationwide curriculum. The approach to tackling alcohol-related road accidents through education appears to be more reactive, focusing on the legal aspects and consequences of irresponsible alcohol consumption in relation to road safety.

Greece

In Greece, alcohol-related road accidents have been a significant concern, as driving under the influence dramatically increases the risk of accidents. The Greek government has initiated a comprehensive National Strategic Plan for Road Safety to address this. Announced in 2021, the plan includes targeted enforcement and awareness campaigns, consideration of alcohol interlocks, and a revision of the Traffic Code to focus on frequent violations leading to serious injuries, including drunk driving.

Statistics from the Hellenic Statistical Authority indicated that in 2018, 36 out of 700 road deaths were alcohol-related, with similar figures in 2019. These figures suggest that approximately 23-25% of fatal road crashes in Greece have been linked to drunk driving.

The legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limits in Greece are 0.5g/l for standard drivers and 0.2g/l for novice and professional drivers, with various sanctions ranging from fines to imprisonment depending on the BAC level and recurrence of the violation. Despite these measures, police testing for alcohol is not systematic, with many drivers not being tested after road crashes.

In 2019, the Ministry of Health commissioned a Working Group to draw up a National Action Plan (2019-2023) to Address the Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Consumption, which also includes proposals for the Greek State regarding alcohol and road safety, such as reduction of the upper limit of the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and implementation of a voucher system for young people to travel with taxi from the bar, after consuming alcohol. However, many of them still haven't been implemented.

As part of the effort to reduce these numbers, road safety has been included in the school curriculum in the subject of "Skills' Laboratories" to educate the younger generation. In the framework of this subject, traffic police officers are invited to primary schools to talk about

road safety, or the pupils can visit the Traffic Educational Park of Kilkis.

The combination of legal measures, educational programs, and targeted infrastructure improvements reflects a multi-faceted approach to tackling the issue of alcohol-related road accidents, especially among the youth in Greece.

France

The interviewees did not precisely detail initiatives focusing exclusively on alcohol and road accidents within the educational context. However, the overall preventive measures and school awareness programs, including road safety education and first aid training, indirectly contribute to addressing this issue. The emphasis on addiction awareness, particularly concerning alcohol, in educational sessions likely includes discussions on its impact on road safety.

Italy

Alcohol-related road accidents remain a significant concern, with data showing a percentage of accidents caused by intoxicated drivers. Initiatives like “Serate in sicurezza” by the Lombardy Region aim to reduce these accidents through increased checks and awareness campaigns. The initiative has resulted in numerous vehicle checks, license withdrawals, and fines, demonstrating a proactive approach to improving road safety and reducing the incidence of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Poland

The link between alcohol consumption and road accidents is addressed through education and legal measures. Probation officers and police officers are involved in raising awareness among teenagers about the dangers of drinking and driving, with courts mandating educational classes for offenders. The emphasis is on the legal and social consequences of alcohol abuse, including the impact on traffic safety, with police efforts focused on detecting intoxicated drivers and reducing road safety risks through prevention and enforcement activities.

Romania

Preventing juvenile delinquency and the victimisation of minors is a priority of the Police. In this field, the steps taken are oriented towards informing young people through various methods adapted to the characteristics of such beneficiaries to reduce the risk of victimisation or adopting antisocial behaviours. However, road accidents result in victims or serious injuries despite these efforts.

Experience has shown us that the success of preventive actions depends, in most situations,

on how the problem is approached and the messages are conveyed.

Although the current legislation in Romania related to the crimes and sanctions of those who drive vehicles under the influence of alcohol has tightened a lot recently, it seems that it is not enough because there are numerous cases of its violation.

It is recommended to introduce a discipline studied in every school, a possible name “Road education in schools”, a course taught by police professionals.

02 Key Findings

- **Educational Programs:** Successful interventions in schools across the surveyed countries emphasise the importance of early education on the dangers of alcohol consumption and road safety.
- **Prevention and Enforcement:** There’s a critical need for strict enforcement of existing laws on alcohol sales and consumption, particularly regarding underage drinking and driving under the influence.
- **Public Health Initiatives:** Multidisciplinary approaches, including collaboration with health professionals, law enforcement, and educational institutions, are essential in addressing the challenge comprehensively.
- **Community and Family Engagement:** Parental involvement and community education are pivotal in shaping attitudes towards alcohol consumption and road safety.

03 Policy Recommendations

Implement Comprehensive Educational Curricula: Integrate road safety and alcohol education into school curricula across all levels, emphasising critical thinking and decision-making skills.

Strengthen Law Enforcement and Legal Frameworks: Enforce stricter penalties for driving under the influence and selling alcohol to minors. Implement regular checks and balances to ensure compliance.

Enhance Public Awareness Campaigns: Utilize media and public campaigns to raise awareness about the risks of alcohol consumption, mainly focusing on driving.

Promote Multidisciplinary Collaboration: Foster partnerships among educational institutions, health sectors, law enforcement, and community organisations to develop cohesive prevention strategies.

Support Research and Monitoring: Invest in ongoing research to monitor trends in alcohol consumption and its impact on road safety, adjusting policies as necessary.

04

Alcohol and health

This section synthesises insights from interviews conducted across the project partner countries, aiming to formulate comprehensive policy recommendations on alcohol and health. Despite varying methodologies and focuses, common themes emerge, including the importance of early education, community and parental involvement, multi-disciplinary approaches, and the need for consistent policy enforcement.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Schools in Belgium plan to include healthy eating as a compulsory part of physical education, with alcohol consumption being a significant topic of discussion. This initiative aims to educate students on the health implications of alcohol as part of a broader curriculum focused on well-being.

Greece

In Greece, there's an understanding of the importance of early identification and intervention when it comes to alcohol abuse among young people. Efforts include training primary care providers, educators, and those involved in youth activities to recognise and address potential alcohol-related issues at an early stage. This multi-disciplinary approach is essential to create a network of support around young individuals that includes health services, social services, educational institutions, and even judicial and labour organisations.

Although the specific Greek protocols were not detailed in the search results, the approach described in the literature emphasises training primary care providers in early identification and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful alcohol use. This includes equipping them with the skills to screen for alcohol consumption and provide appropriate advice or referrals as needed. This is consistent with practices in other European countries, as shown in a study protocol for a project aimed at scaling up early identification and brief intervention in primary care to reduce alcohol-related negative outcomes at the community level.

The training of professionals of primary health care structures in the detection of incidents with alcohol abuse and the training of teachers to recognise and point students in the right direction with a problem of alcohol use (concerning themselves or their environment) is foreseen in the National Action Plan (2019-2023) to Address the Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Consumption. However, the implementation is progressing slowly.

Also, the presence of psychologists in some Greek schools began in 2010. Since then, every school year, the institution of the school psychologist has been expanded to more and more schools; however, until today, there are no psychologists in all Greek schools permanently. Usually, a school psychologist is available in each school once a week. The goal is to be there daily.

Overall, the primary care and educational sectors in Greece appear to be increasingly aware of the need for a comprehensive approach to alcohol education and prevention, especially among youth. This aligns with broader European initiatives aiming to utilise digital technologies and community-level interventions to address public health challenges,

including those related to alcohol use.

France

In France, there's a significant focus on the health impacts of alcohol use, with strategies aimed at early detection and intervention for risky consumption patterns. The country has implemented specialised centres providing psychological and medical support to reduce alcohol-related health risks.

Italy

The curriculum emphasises the negative impacts of alcohol on health, mainly focusing on liver diseases, such as fatty liver, hepatitis, and cirrhosis, along with other organ' afflictions. It stresses the importance of moderation and the risks of underage drinking, integrating these topics into broader health education efforts to encourage responsible attitudes towards alcohol consumption.

Poland

In Poland, there's a significant focus on educating individuals about the health risks associated with alcohol consumption. Initiatives aim to inform about the physical and psychological effects of alcohol abuse through various educational methods, promoting a healthy lifestyle and preventive strategies.

Romania

The prevention of alcohol consumption among adolescents and young people by informing, educating and empowering them regarding the risks of the early onset of alcohol consumption and the medical and psycho-social effects generated by alcohol consumption is carried out through campaigns between medical offices or doctors (individually) in collaboration with educational institutions. The progress of students who have received counselling or support should be monitored through follow-up sessions to ensure they make healthier choices.

The medical specialist must continuously communicate with teachers and parents to respond to any concerns.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet, regular exercise and stress management can help reduce the temptation to drink alcohol.

02 Key Findings

- **Variability in Educational Approaches:** Countries differ in their strategies for alcohol education, from comprehensive curricula in Greece to targeted interventions in Poland and Romania.
- **Community and Parental Involvement:** Emphasis on engaging parents and communities in prevention efforts is consistent, highlighting the importance of a supportive environment.
- **Regulatory Measures:** There is a call for stronger regulation of alcohol advertising and enforcement of laws, particularly regarding underage drinking and driving under the influence.
- **Multi-disciplinary Strategies:** Successful programs often involve collaboration across sectors, including education, health, law enforcement, and social services.
- **Focus on Early Intervention:** Early education and intervention are deemed crucial in preventing alcohol misuse, with a trend towards starting education about alcohol and health at younger ages.

03 Policy Recommendations

Early and Comprehensive Education: Implement school-based programs from early education through secondary levels that address alcohol's health impacts, incorporating interactive and multidisciplinary approaches.

Parental and Community Engagement: Strengthen community and parental involvement in alcohol education through workshops, campaigns, and school events to foster a supportive environment for youth.

Multi-disciplinary Approach: Encourage collaboration across sectors, including health, education, law enforcement, and social services, to provide a cohesive strategy against alcohol misuse.

Strengthen Regulation and Enforcement: Enhance regulations on alcohol advertising, especially those targeting youth, and ensure the enforcement of existing laws regarding alcohol sales and consumption.

Support and Treatment Programs: Expand access to support and treatment for individuals and families affected by alcohol use, emphasising early intervention and the availability of counselling services.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch national and local campaigns to raise awareness about the risks associated with alcohol consumption, focusing on driving under the influence and underage drinking.

Research and Monitoring: Invest in ongoing research to monitor alcohol consumption trends and the effectiveness of intervention strategies, adjusting policies as needed to address emerging challenges.

International Collaboration: Foster international cooperation to share best practices, research findings, and policy successes in reducing alcohol-related harm.

05

Alcohol and distribution

This section synthesises insights from interviews conducted across project partner countries, focusing on alcohol education, distribution, and its societal impacts. It highlights the necessity of integrated approaches combining education, legislation, and community engagement to address alcohol-related issues effectively.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Alcohol distribution in schools is strictly regulated, with beer being permitted at school balls for students aged 16 and older in accordance with legal allowances. Additional efforts to remind students of the rules regarding alcohol consumption in public places are made through police orders and informational sessions before significant school events.

Greece

In Greece, there is an emphasis on collaboration with those involved in the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages to foster greater awareness of the risks and harms associated with alcohol, especially among young people. The “We Don’t Serve Teens” campaign is an example of an initiative dedicated to preventing underage access to alcohol. Industry partners support it and focus on the commitment not to serve, supply, or sell alcohol to minors, reinforcing the responsibility of adults in this regard.

Stricter controls on compliance with the age limit and heavier penalties for non-compliance could protect teenagers more effectively. This should not apply only to bars and clubs but also to supermarkets.

France

The interviewees did not precisely detail measures or policies related to the distribution of alcohol. The focus remains mainly on prevention, awareness, and treatment of alcohol-related issues rather than on the regulation or control of alcohol distribution. Efforts are concentrated on educating the public, especially young people, about the risks associated with alcohol consumption and providing support for those affected by alcohol use disorders.

Italy

The interviewees outlined regulatory measures for alcohol distribution, highlighting age restrictions and licensing requirements for sellers. It discusses the government’s role in controlling alcohol availability to mitigate abuse and underage drinking, including specific regulations that limit sales during certain hours and in proximity to schools, aiming to balance business interests with public health concerns.

Poland

The conversation around alcohol in Poland is less about its distribution and more centred on preventive education and the legal ramifications of alcohol abuse, with an emphasis on

promoting responsible behaviour and awareness.

Romania

Although the legislation provides sanctions for those who sell drinks to minors, in many cases, the law is violated. The number of those who could monitor this is minimal in relation to the population. Therefore, the legislation should be tightened. The massive producers and distributors of alcoholic beverages could finance campaigns to prevent alcohol abuse, primarily aimed at students, from the enormous profits obtained from the sale of alcohol.

02 Key Findings

- Educational Initiatives: Critical for raising awareness about the risks associated with alcohol, with programs tailored to various age groups and a strong emphasis on parental and community involvement.
- Legislation and Policy: The need for stringent enforcement of laws regulating alcohol sales to minors, alongside recommendations for tighter legislation and improved monitoring.
- Community Engagement: A multifaceted approach involving law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and community organisations is vital in combating alcohol abuse.
- Preventive Strategies: Incorporating preventive programs into school curriculums and community initiatives, focusing on self-esteem, assertiveness, and healthy lifestyle promotion.

03 Policy Recommendations

Enhance Educational Programs: Develop comprehensive curricula that include alcohol education, focusing on early intervention and promoting healthy choices.

Strengthen Legislation: Advocate for stricter alcohol distribution laws and policies concerning minors and enforce penalties for violations.

Foster Community Collaborations: Encourage partnerships among schools, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organisations to share resources and best practices.

Promote Responsible Marketing: Work with the alcohol industry to ensure advertising practices do not target underage individuals and convey the risks of alcohol consumption.

Support Research and Monitoring: Invest in research to monitor alcohol consumption trends and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs.

06

Monitoring system of consumption and sales data among young people

This section synthesises insights from interviews and analyses conducted across project partner countries on the topic of monitoring alcohol consumption and sales data among young people. It addresses the challenges, opportunities, and diverse strategies employed by each country to manage and reduce underage drinking through education, legal measures, and public health initiatives.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Alcohol advertisements are still very present in public spaces, while it is forbidden for cigarettes, probably because alcohol production is anchored in the national culture and economy.

Greece

Monitoring alcohol consumption and related harm among young people in Greece is a significant concern. A study by the University of Western Attica found that 40% of Greek adolescents had tried alcohol by the age of 15. Additionally, the World Health Organization reports high binge drinking rates among Greek youth, with 41.5% of boys and 10% of girls aged 15 to 19 and over half of boys aged 20 to 24 engaging in heavy episodic drinking. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive monitoring systems to track consumption, sales data, alcohol-related accidents, and hospitalisations to address this public health issue effectively.

So far, Greece is participating in “The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)”, conducted every five years (latest report on 2023) and involving young people(15-16 year-old school students).

France

France has developed a monitoring system targeting the consumption and sales data of alcohol among young people. This includes consultations and preventive activities designed to curb problematic drinking behaviours, highlighting the nation’s proactive approach to engaging educational and health institutions to support youth.

Italy

Italy has implemented a comprehensive monitoring system to track alcohol consumption and sales, particularly among young people. This system collects data from various sources, including health surveys, hospital admissions, and retail sales, to assess trends and identify areas of concern. The information is used to inform policy decisions, target prevention programs, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures to reduce underage drinking and its associated harms.

Poland

There’s an emphasis on preventive measures rather than detailed monitoring systems for alcohol consumption among young people in Poland. Efforts focus on education, legal

consequences, and community involvement to reduce underage drinking and promote awareness of its dangers.

Romania

An analysis of the costs of the harms caused by alcohol consumption by supporting responsible drinking, adapted to specific situations, compared to the costs of health and social care related to the direct or indirect harms caused by alcohol consumption, such as addiction, chronic diseases, mortality and domestic violence, highlights a clear difference from a financial point of view. Also, the efficiency of the campaigns to prevent the abusive consumption of alcohol could be improved by the government by involving specialised people from crucial fields such as health, education, police, and gendarmerie, who could carry out activities provided in the curriculum with both students and their parents.

02 Key Findings

- **Educational Initiatives:** Varied approaches to alcohol education, including school programs and digital platforms, aim to raise awareness among young people about the dangers of alcohol consumption.
- **Legislation and Policy:** There is a call for stricter enforcement of laws regarding alcohol sales to minors and the need for policies that regulate advertising targeted at young people.
- **Community and Family Engagement:** The role of family and community in shaping young people's attitudes towards alcohol is crucial, suggesting a need for comprehensive strategies that include these stakeholders.
- **Impact of COVID-19:** Changes in alcohol consumption patterns among young people during the pandemic highlight the need for adaptable and resilient monitoring systems.

03 Policy Recommendations

Strengthen Educational Programs: Enhance and expand educational initiatives across schools to cover health risks associated with alcohol, the influence of advertising, and ways to resist peer pressure.

Regulate Advertising: Implement stricter regulations on alcohol advertising, especially in media accessed by young people, to reduce the appeal of alcohol.

Support Family and Community Involvement: Encourage programs that engage families and communities in prevention efforts, providing them with tools and information to support young people effectively.

Enhance Monitoring and Research: Invest in research and monitoring systems to track alcohol consumption trends among young people and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies.

Promote Multidisciplinary Collaboration: Foster collaboration between educational institutions, health services, law enforcement, and community organisations to address underage drinking from multiple angles.

07

Public-level initiatives

This section synthesises findings from interviews and analyses conducted across project partner countries on public-level initiatives for alcohol awareness and prevention. It highlights key themes such as the importance of education, regulation, community involvement, and the need for comprehensive approaches to reduce alcohol misuse.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Belgium sees a contrast in the regulation of alcohol advertisements compared to cigarettes. Despite the prohibition of cigarette ads, alcohol advertising remains prevalent in public spaces, reflecting its deep-rooted presence in the national culture and economy. This highlights a discrepancy in public health policies concerning substance use.

Greece

In Greece, there is a recognised issue with underage drinking, particularly among teenagers. While Greek law prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors and their entry to bars and clubs, enforcement of these laws is lax. This has resulted in high availability and consumption of alcohol by young people. The statistics are concerning, with a large percentage of teenagers admitting to having consumed alcohol, with many starting at a very young age. This cultural norm is evidenced by the fact that many children are introduced to alcohol before the age of 13, often in their homes, which can lead to the early onset of regular drinking and the risks associated with it.

In terms of public-level initiatives, there is growing awareness and some progress in addressing these issues. UNICEF has been actively collaborating with the Greek State and Civil Society to create a strategic policy planning and implementation framework to strengthen national capacity in various societal issues, including those affecting youth. The aim is to fully realise children's rights and address systemic barriers that leave children vulnerable.

The data and findings from studies and surveys, such as those conducted by the University Mental Health Research Institute in Athens and the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD), highlight the need for continued and enhanced efforts to address the issue of youth alcohol consumption in Greece.

The National Action Plan (2019-2023) to Address the Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Consumption includes proposals for the Greek State on all the above aspects.

France

France emphasises a comprehensive approach towards addiction prevention, involving public-level initiatives across education, healthcare, and community engagement. These initiatives aim to raise awareness, educate, and provide support for individuals dealing with addiction, including alcohol. Collaboration with various organisations and the implementation of strategies such as the OSSCAR method demonstrate the country's commitment to

fostering a society that is aware of the risks associated with alcohol consumption and equipped to address them.

Italy

Public initiatives include campaigns and programs aimed at reducing alcohol abuse through awareness, education, and preventive measures. These initiatives often involve partnerships between government bodies, educational institutions, and community organisations, focusing on health risks, responsible consumption, and legal consequences of misuse.

Romania

Preventing alcohol use among young people is a significant challenge. However, there are many effective strategies and approaches that parents, schools, the community and society as a whole can adopt to promote healthy lifestyles and abstinence among young people. Parents and adults in the youth's lives must serve as role models for responsible behaviours. Young people often learn from observing the behaviour of the adults around them, so adults must show how they can have fulfilling lives without alcohol.

02 Key Findings

- Education and Awareness: All countries emphasise educational initiatives in schools, ranging from integration into the curriculum to specific programs like “Addiction Day” in Belgium and “Skills Laboratories” in Greece.
- Regulation and Enforcement: There’s a consensus on the need for stricter regulation of alcohol distribution and advertising, similar to the measures for tobacco.
- Community Involvement: Successful programs involve multiple stakeholders, including families, schools, law enforcement, and health professionals, highlighting the need for a multi-faceted approach.

03 Policy Recommendations

Enhance Educational Programs: Implement comprehensive, age-appropriate educational initiatives across all schools to raise awareness about the risks associated with alcohol use.

Regulate Alcohol Advertising: Introduce or tighten restrictions on alcohol advertising, especially in mediums accessible to minors.

Strengthen Regulation and Enforcement: Enforce existing laws on alcohol sales to minors more strictly and consider introducing new legislation to limit alcohol availability in public spaces.

Promote Community Engagement: Encourage community-based initiatives that involve parents, educators, and local authorities in preventive education and awareness campaigns.

Support for At-Risk Individuals: Develop targeted interventions for individuals at higher risk of alcohol misuse, including access to counselling and support services.

Encourage Responsible Media Portrayal: Work with media outlets to ensure a responsible portrayal of alcohol consumption and its consequences.

08

Multidisciplinary project

This section consolidates findings from interviews conducted across project partner countries, focusing on strategies for addressing alcohol consumption and addiction. The aim is to provide actionable policy recommendations that leverage the strengths and insights from diverse educational and preventative measures observed across these countries.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Greece

In Greece, addressing alcohol misuse involves a multidisciplinary approach, particularly in specialised outpatient services. Such services, like the “Athena” Service mentioned in a 15-year study, consist of interdisciplinary teams that include mental health professionals employing various therapeutic techniques. These techniques include motivational approaches, cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy, systemic family interventions, and adjunctive medication when necessary. This indicates a collaborative effort combining multiple areas of expertise to manage and treat substance misuse, with a focus on abstinence and without strict time limits applied to the treatment duration.

In addition, parenting schools have been operating in Greece since 1962. The Parents’ Schools Program is part of the Operational Program “Education and Lifelong Learning” of the Ministry of Education and Religion and is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and National Resources. They provide counselling and support to every mother and father, in the complex role of the parent, as shaped by the modern socio-economic conditions, on specialised topics, including the prevention of addictions by specialised scientists (psychologists, doctors, social workers, etc.).

France

The multidisciplinary approach in France towards addressing alcohol-related issues involves various stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, educators, and community organisations. Projects like the ones undertaken by Addictions France illustrate this approach, where a focus on psycho-social skills, emotion management, and self-confidence is prioritised from a young age. These projects are designed to be inclusive, engaging various parts of the community and educational system to ensure comprehensive coverage of alcohol awareness and prevention.

Italy

The interviewees described a multidisciplinary project incorporating various educational strategies to address alcohol misuse. This project integrates subjects such as science, social studies, and health education, employing interactive methods like role-playing, discussions, and project-based learning to engage students comprehensively.

Romania

The experiences gained in other successful projects should be centralised, under the coordination of professionals, applying good practices.

02 Key Findings

- **Educational Integration:** Schools across participating countries incorporate alcohol and addiction education in various subjects, emphasising the importance of early intervention.
- **Digital Platforms:** France and Greece utilise digital platforms for addiction education, highlighting the role of technology in disseminating information.
- **Community and Family Engagement:** Programs in Poland and Romania stress the importance of community and family involvement in prevention efforts.
- **Multidisciplinary Approaches:** Italy and Greece showcase the effectiveness of multidisciplinary strategies in treating substance use disorders, combining education, legal measures, and health services.

03 Policy Recommendations

Enhance Educational Programs: Implement comprehensive, age-appropriate education on alcohol and addiction within school curriculums across all countries, drawing from successful programs like Greece’s “Skills’ Laboratories” and Poland’s “Candies” initiative.

Leverage Digital Tools: Expand the use of digital platforms for education on addiction, inspired by France’s MAAD Digital and Greece’s online resources.

Strengthen Community and Family Involvement: Encourage policies that facilitate greater community and family participation in preventive education, following the models seen in Poland and Romania.

Adopt Multidisciplinary Treatment Approaches: Promote the integration of educational, legal, and health services to address alcohol and addiction issues comprehensively, as observed in Italy and Greece.

Regulate Alcohol Advertising: Introduce stricter regulations on alcohol advertising, especially in digital media, to protect young people from exposure to harmful messaging.

09

Marketing

This section compiles insights from interviews conducted across project partner countries, focusing on marketing strategies and their implications. It addresses the need for educational initiatives, regulatory compliance, responsible advertising, and the promotion of health and well-being through digital literacy and preventive programs. Based on these insights, recommendations are proposed to enhance marketing practices, emphasising protecting youth from harmful advertising and promoting responsible consumption.

01 Information gathered from the interviews

Belgium

Marketing of alcohol is critiqued for its pervasive presence, similar to the approach towards teaching about advertising in schools. While not alcohol-specific, students engage in activities to decode messages in advertisements across subjects like French, history, and religion as part of the compulsory curriculum. This approach aims to develop critical thinking regarding the influence of advertising, including alcohol marketing.

Greece

Digital marketing in the alcoholic beverage industry, particularly in Greece, is a dynamic and evolving field that encompasses a variety of trends and strategies. Consumer demands, regulatory environments, and technological advancements shape these trends. Key trends and techniques in this domain include:

Target Audience Identification: The target audience for alcoholic beverages varies significantly depending on the brand and the type of alcohol. For instance, millennials represent a substantial portion of craft beer consumers. Each brand identifies its target markets based on its marketing strategies and focus.

Digital Marketing Strategies: Digital marketing is crucial for reaching the right audience effectively. It involves storytelling and presenting the brand narrative in a way that resonates with the specific demographic characteristics of the target audience. This approach is critical in today's consumer landscape, where digital platforms play a significant role.

Trends in the Alcohol Industry: The alcohol industry is influenced by various trends such as sustainability, health and wellness, support for local and craft products, personalisation, the use of social media influencers, diversity and inclusivity, virtual events, and e-commerce. These trends reflect changing consumer preferences and the need for brands to adapt to remain competitive and relevant. For example, there's a growing demand for products with sustainable practices, health-conscious options, and personalised experiences.

Regulatory Challenges and Policy Considerations: The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognised alcohol as a global risk factor for disease, with Europe being the heaviest-drinking region. Digital marketing of alcohol poses challenges for monitoring, regulation, and control, especially considering the threats to children, young people, and other vulnerable groups. Policy considerations and intersectoral dialogues are proposed to address these challenges. This aspect is particularly crucial in regions like Greece, which falls under the WHO European region where these concerns are prevalent.

Appendix VI of the Greek Code of Advertising Communication outlines regulations for the

digital marketing of alcoholic beverages. It mandates that digital commercial communication must not target individuals under 18. Additionally, such communication should only be placed in media where at least 70% of the audience is expected to be over 18. This 70-30 rule also applies to digital channels controlled by third parties, ensuring a minimum of 70% of the audience is above 18. Compliance with this age distribution is required for digital marketing actions on third-party digital channels. Any digital communication on websites controlled by the brand advertiser that involves direct user interaction must be preceded by age verification, confirming the user is at least 18 years old. The content generated by users on a website controlled by the brand advertiser must also adhere to these guidelines. Overall, the landscape of digital marketing in the alcoholic beverage industry in Greece and broadly in Europe is shaped by a complex interplay of consumer trends, technological advancements, and regulatory frameworks. Companies in this sector must be agile and responsive to these dynamics to effectively market their products while adhering to ethical and regulatory standards.

France

The interviewees highlighted the importance of public campaigns and educational projects. These efforts, such as the Addik'tok project, leverage social media and peer influence to promote health and prevent addiction among the youth. The emphasis is on creating content that resonates with young people, using modern platforms to spread awareness and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Italy

The interviewees discussed the influence of alcohol marketing on consumption patterns, particularly among the youth. The text highlights concerns over advertising strategies that target younger audiences and the need for stricter regulations to mitigate the appeal of alcohol through media and promotional activities.

Romania

Responsible advertising could affect young people. Also, better monitoring of compliance with the legislation is required. Violation of the current legislation must be promptly sanctioned, but the need to adopt new mandatory legal provisions for the adequate protection of minors is imposed.

02 Key Findings

- **Educational Approaches:** Belgium and Italy emphasise incorporating media literacy into the curriculum to enhance critical analysis of marketing messages.
- **Preventive Programs:** France and Poland focus on addiction prevention through training and educational interventions.
- **Digital Marketing Regulations:** Greece highlights the challenges and regulations of digital marketing in the alcohol industry.
- **Responsible Advertising:** Romania calls for stricter compliance monitoring and sanctions for advertising violations.

03 Policy Recommendations

Enhance Media Literacy: Integrate media literacy programs across all school levels to develop critical thinking skills regarding marketing messages.

Strengthen Regulations: Adopt stricter digital marketing regulations to protect minors, emphasising compliance and sanctions for violations.

Promote Responsible Consumption: Encourage responsible advertising practices, focusing on health and well-being, to reduce the appeal of harmful products to youth.

Support Preventive Education: Expand preventive programs that address the risks associated with addictive substances, leveraging personal stories and direct experiences.

Conclusions

Drawing on the extensive insights garnered from interviews across Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Romania, this Policy Recommendations Report illuminates the multifaceted challenges and innovative strategies employed to address alcohol consumption and its consequences. The findings highlight the pressing need for a nuanced understanding of alcohol-related issues, emphasising the critical role of early education, multidisciplinary collaboration, and community engagement in fostering preventative measures. The diversity of participants, from educators to law enforcement and healthcare professionals, underlines the importance of a collective approach in crafting policies that resonate across different sectors of society. Moving forward, it becomes increasingly clear that sustained awareness and a committed response from both governments and European institutions are indispensable. The path laid out by the research points to a future where comprehensive education, stringent regulation, and proactive public health campaigns can significantly mitigate the impact of alcohol consumption, particularly among the youth. This endeavour requires a concerted effort to ensure that the insights and recommendations detailed herein inform current policy and inspire ongoing dialogue and action at the national and European levels.



Preventing alcohol abuse
among pre-adolescents