



**Practical  
Guide**



**CUJAT**

**Preventing alcohol abuse  
among pre-adolescents**



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AIDD

### **Educational Path**

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# 01

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## Introduction on the general issues

The first part of the Guide will provide general information on alcohol consumption among European teens, the differences and similarities in young people's drinking habits in different EU countries, a definition of alcohol from a scientific point of view, the relationship between alcohol and humans in history, geographical and cultural differences, the current society and causes that can lead teens to alcohol use and abuse, the physical and psychological consequences on teens and society.

# 01 Alcohol consumption among European teens

## Belgium

### Alcohol consumption among children aged 10 to 14

Alcohol consumption is very common among European teenagers and adults [1, 2]. Yet, this practice is not without risks as it is recognised as a major cause of mortality, morbidity, and disability. Among other, it can lead to alcohol addiction, liver diseases, cancer, neuropsychiatric disorders, accidents, cardiovascular diseases... [1].

For young adolescents, drinking alcohol can have negative and irreversible consequences on brain development [3]. Since ethanol is a small molecule, it can easily pass through the plasmatic membrane and spread in brain tissues, which can lead to attention or short-term memory disorders [3]. This phenomenon is all the more concerning that adolescents often ingest large quantity of alcohol during their first experiences due to a weak sensitivity to ethanol [4].

Early alcohol use can also impact the future quality of life of those young adolescents. Indeed, early initiation to alcohol, when compared to initiation after the age of 15, is associated with increased frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption, and more alcohol-related problems in the late adolescence and early adulthood [5].

### Sociodemographic and psychosocial factors related to alcohol use

Research to identify what determines alcohol consumption by young adolescents before 15, and particularly before 12, is scarce [6]. Determining factors related to family and social circle are the most studied ones. Alcohol use by parents and friends, not living with one's biological parents, parents' positive attitude toward alcohol, and bad parents-children relationships, are some of the identified risk factors for early alcohol use [7-9].

Sociodemographic factors: adolescents from well-off families were more likely than those from a middle or lower class. So were adolescents born in the country and whose both parents were born in the country, compared to adolescents with foreign origins.

Psychosocial factors: young adolescents who had more frequent social interactions were more likely to have consumed alcohol. Communicating with friends through social media at least once a week as well as going out with friends after classes at least once a week were significantly associated to drinking alcohol.

## Gender gap

Unlike with girls, satisfaction at school was significantly associated to alcohol use by boys. The less boys liked school, the more numerous they were who had drunk alcohol.

Only among girls, the family structure and satisfaction in life were associated to alcohol drinking. Those who lived in a reconstituted family and those who had low satisfaction about life were more prone to have drunk alcohol.

## Intervention strategies

Intervention strategies need to be developed to act on a certain number of risk factors of early alcohol use; however, not all can be changed, such as family structure. Yet, identifying them help target teenagers that are the most at risk and adapt prevention messages accordingly.

## France

In France, alcohol use among adolescents aged 11, 13 and 15 has been declining over the past 10 years. However, alcohol remains the psychoactive product most often experimented with between the ages of 11 and 15.

In 2021, 64.1% of 9th graders had ever drunk alcohol in their lifetime. This is the lowest proportion ever observed at this age since 2010 (-19 points), with a differential of -11 points between 2018 and 2021 accounting for nearly 60% of the total decline.

In other words, the number of 9th graders (3e) who have never drunk alcohol has doubled from 16.8% to 35.9%. Use in the past 30 days prior to the survey is also at its lowest level, with 31.8% of 9th graders reporting recent use, down 10 points from 2018 and 21 points from 2010 (53.2%).

However, 1 in 6 students (16.4%) still report having experienced a lifetime episode of drunkenness, a proportion similar to 2018. In addition, 10.4% report having been drunk at least once in the past year; a minority have been drunk more than twice (3.1%), while regular drunkenness affects fewer than 1 in 100 students (0.6%). A small proportion of respondents report regular alcohol use (3.2%), but nearly 1 in 5 have experienced an IPA in the month prior to the survey (18.4%).

### Conclusion

These results are positive in several respects, due to:

- The acceleration of the downward trend in alcohol consumption among the youngest students;
- The doubling of the proportion of students who have never drunk alcohol in 9th grade,

confirming that experimentation with alcoholic beverages is less precocious.

Nevertheless, several points of vigilance remain:

- A significant proportion of 9th graders already report heavy occasional drinking (18.4%);
- Drunkenness during the year, which concerns 1 in 10 adolescents;
- The accessibility of alcohol remains high, even for the youngest adolescents.

If the current situation is the result of the dynamics at work over the last ten years, marked by the continuous decline in the diffusion of alcohol among young people, the accentuation of the decreases observed today is also the result of the exceptional health context experienced during the year 2020. The successive confinements put in place to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular that of March-May 2020, have strongly reduced adolescent sociability.

In 2018, French youth alcohol use levels are above European averages. Compared to other countries, French 11-year-olds lead the HBSC rankings for their level of experimentation with alcoholic beverages (39.3% of boys and 25.2% of girls). However, levels of drunkenness among French 15-year-olds are among the lowest observed in the HBSC survey countries (15.3% of boys and 10.7% of girls).

## Italy

An analysis of the trend in average per capita consumption of pure alcohol, as the sum of the alcohol contribution of all alcoholic beverages, estimated through Joint Point Analysis, shows that in Italy the value has fallen from 19.72 litres in 1970 to 7.65 litres in 2019, with a greater decrease than that recorded at European average level.

Analysing the litres of alcohol consumed by type of drink shows that in Italy the significant portion of pure alcohol is attributable to wine, followed by beer and lastly liqueurs with substantially different trends over time between 1980 and 2019.

In 2020, 14.2 % of men and 6.4 % of women over the age of 11 stated that they habitually consumed alcoholic beverages, for a total of about 5,500,000 people. The highest percentage for both sexes is found among 16-17-year-old adolescents (M=47.0%; F=34.5%) and among the over 65s.

Specifically, in 2020, 11-17-year-olds who drank alcohol were 18.2% of males and 18.8% of females. It is confirmed that the most consumed drink among young males is beer (14.3%) followed by alcoholic aperitifs (10.8%) and wine (7.6%).

Girls consume mostly alcoholic aperitifs and beer (12.6% and 12.2% respectively) then wine in the same proportion as boys (7.4%). The least consumed among both males and females remain spirits and bitters. There are no significant differences in consumption between males and females in this age group. Out-of-meal consumers between 11 and 17

are 8.3% of males and 9.2% of females: the latter increased by 42.6% compared to 2019. For binge drinking, on the other hand, prevalence remains in line with previous years (2.7% of males and 3.0% of females). The prevalence of at-risk drinkers among the very young continues to remain in line with the data of recent years. For females, although the change is not significant, there is an upward trend in female at-risk users, rising from 16.9% in 2019 to 18.8% in 2020.

Approximately 750,000 underage adolescents consumed alcohol in 2020 who, according to public health bodies and scientific evidence, are at risk. There are also 120,000 binge drinkers.

## Poland

A major change in alcohol consumption trends in Poland is the growing consumption of alcohol among young people. Here, too, it is necessary to dispel some well-established, but unrepresentative stereotypes that do not correspond to reality. In the past, it used to be believed that alcohol was more quickly and frequently consumed by problem youth, from so-called “worse” homes, from dysfunctional families, youth with low level of educational aspirations, with school problems, belonging to subcultures of a contesting or rebellious nature. Today, such beliefs should already be put between fairy tales. Current research indicates that young people drink because they like it, because alcohol consumption equates with having fun. The largest amount of drinking is done by people in so-called “good homes,” in which there is neither pathology nor poverty. Children from wealthy families now drink even more than their less well-off peers because they can simply afford more. Young people do not drink because they cannot cope with their lives or contest the world, but to make life fun and enjoyable. Their choices are guided by hedonistic values. More than half, 59%, of 15-year-olds in Poland admit to drinking alcohol. The number of drinkers increases with age. Among high school graduates, the age category between the ages of 18 and 19, the percentage of alcohol users is as high as 91%. At the same time, young drinkers are fully aware of the fact that alcohol seriously harms health. However, neither knowledge, nor awareness of the risks, does not fulfil the role of a factor in them limiting consumption. When confronted with the contradiction that exists between the cognitive and behavioural spheres, young people usually shrug their shoulders dismissively, saying that “after all, everyone does it”. Taking into account the regularities described above, it should be concluded that the picture of alcohol consumption over the past few years is undergoing very dynamic changes.

## Romania

In Romania, alcohol is consumed by 9.2% of female teenagers (slightly below the European average of 9.4%) and 27.8% of male teenagers (above the European average of 16.4%). About 75% of high school students drank alcohol occasionally.

28% report of these episodes of excessive alcohol consumption (more than 5 strong drinks within a few hours). Car accidents represent one of the main causes of death among adolescents caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

Alcohol consumption decreases inhibitions and predisposes the teenagers to an inappropriate sex life and increases the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (HIV-AIDS, herpes, chlamydia) or having an unwanted pregnancy.

In Romania, the alcohol consumption among the population aged over 15 is 14.4 litres of pure alcohol per person per year.

About 25% is represented by unregistered alcohol, homemade, outside the legislation control. The alcohol consumption achieved exclusively by the drinking population is 21.3 litres of pure alcohol/person/year.

About 92% of men and 70% of women have consumed alcohol at least once in their lives, while two-thirds of the population drink alcohol regularly.

Romania ranks 3rd in the EU by the amount of alcohol consumed and 2nd among the countries with the most harmful consumption pattern.

Beer is Romanian's favourite drink. Less than 60% of Romanians consume wine. Spirits are consumed by 39% of drinkers under 35 and about 42% by those aged 35-65 years (WHO, 2014; RARHA, 2016:78, 95-96, 232).

Around 84% of boys and 12% of girls aged 14-16 have consumed an alcoholic beverage at least once in their lives, down from 2007 (81%), 2003 (88%) and 1999 (85%) and below the EU average (87%). The share of students who consumed their first alcoholic beverage before the age of 9 and those who started drinking alcohol after the age of 17 are significantly equal (about 6%). At least once in their lives, 16% of boys and 7% of girls got drunk. One in 5 boys got drunk for the first time before the age of 13.

The share of boys who have been drunk in the last 30 days is 9 percent higher than that of girls. Drunkenness episodes are less common among Romanian teenagers than the average of European teenagers (26% versus 39%). While the number of boys who start drinking increases with age, doubling over the course of the four years of high school, the share of consumption among girls is not influenced by age. A quarter of 18-34-year-olds have been victims of alcohol-related physical violence. Over the past 10 years, both the percentage of adolescents who regularly drink alcohol (52% in 2007, 47% in 2015) and the frequency of excessive consumption (27% in 1999, 36% in 2011) have decreased. 12% in 2015).

In the European profile, Romanian adolescents are in the category of moderate drinkers, but the data should be interpreted with caution because “Romanian students are tempted to provide the answers they consider socially desirable, which means that the level of alcohol consumption is probably higher than the reported one.”

## Europe

### Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD 2019)

*ESPAD Group (2020), ESPAD Report 2019: Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, EMCDDA Joint Publications, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.*

35 EU countries are members of the ESPAD Group: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, the Faroes, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Ukraine.

[https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications/espac-report-2019\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications/espac-report-2019_en)

Even though alcohol use among adolescents seems to have decreased in many EU countries, it is still rather high, with on average around 80% of students reporting alcohol use in their lifetime and almost half reporting use in the last month. There are large variations between countries in the prevalence of alcohol use in 2019, with the Nordic countries (except Denmark) traditionally showing low rates of lifetime and current consumption. The lowest rate was found in Kosovo, but low rates were also observed in the Baltic states, as well as in Montenegro and North Macedonia. Patterns of alcohol use, such as frequency of intake, average ethanol intake and heavy episodic drinking, are rather diverse across EU countries. For instance, high scores on all indicators were observed in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands. In the Mediterranean countries (Italy, Greece, and Spain), moderate to high frequencies of intake are combined with low to moderate average quantities of intake and moderate rates of heavy episodic drinking. Although adolescents may generally drink less than adults, excessive alcohol consumption of any form among adolescents is associated with a number of acute alcohol-related harms (Hingson and White, 2014; Lees et al., 2020; Petit et al., 2014; Windle and Windle, 2017).

Analysis of the previous six ESPAD waves and 28 participating countries highlighted that, up to 2015, moderate decreasing trends in alcohol use were present for both genders in all European regions except for the Balkan countries (Kraus et al., 2018). The overall temporal changes in the prevalence of current alcohol use, as well as heavy episodic drinking, between the previous survey and the present survey are negligible, indicating that the downwards

trend has levelled off and remains rather constant in 2019. Nevertheless, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine reported an increase in current alcohol use of five or more percentage points and Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Lithuania, and Malta reported a decrease in current alcohol use of five or more percentage points between 2015 and 2019. Comparable changes in the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking were found in the Faroes, Germany, and North Macedonia (increase), and Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, and Malta (decrease). With an overall decrease of one percentage point in both the prevalence of current alcohol use and prevalence of heavy episodic drinking in boys and an increase of one percentage point in the prevalence of current alcohol use and a constant rate of heavy episodic drinking in girls between 2015 and 2019, the gender gap in the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking has almost closed (boys 36 % versus girls 34 %) and that in prevalence of current use has closed. Similar observations have been reported for the United States. Results from the Monitoring the Future study suggest that heavy episodic drinking is declining among teens, with greater declines for boys than girls, leading to gender convergence (Clark Goings et al., 2019; Johnston et al., 2015).

Beverage preference, defined by the proportion of the volumes of pure alcohol consumed in different types of alcoholic beverages at the last drinking occasion, varies across ESPAD countries. Overall, in terms of prevalence rates and perception of availability, spirits have gained ground over beer, particularly among female students.

The literature on beverage choice shows associations between beverage preference and drinking motives, quantity of alcohol intake and frequency of heavy drinking. For instance, beer and spirits are reported to be consumed in larger amounts than wine on heavier drinking occasions (Callinan and MacLean, 2016), and preference for beer seems to be associated with risky drinking patterns and illicit drug use (Dey et al., 2014). However, the likelihood of negative alcohol-related consequences or the use of other substances increased among people with risky drinking behaviours, regardless of beverage preference (Dey et al., 2014). While the differences in beverage preference between countries may be explained by differences in drinking culture, lifestyle factors and personal characteristics (Flensburg-Madsen et al., 2008; Room and Mäkelä, 2000), it is worthwhile noting that the distribution of preferred beverages in adolescents diverges from the traditional characterisation of drinking cultures (Iontchev, 1998; Room and Mäkelä, 2000). Drinking characterised by a preference for wine is typically associated with Mediterranean countries (e.g., Italy or France), whereas a preference for beer drinking is mainly associated with countries in central Europe (e.g., Czechia). Northern countries, on the other hand, are typically characterised by a preference for spirits (e.g., Finland and Norway).

The current literature explains the generally observed reduction in alcohol consumption among adolescents across Europe, which is confirmed by the ESPAD data, as a 'devaluation'

of alcohol in concert with a change in the social position of alcohol (Kraus et al., 2019). For example, it has been argued that the cultural reputation of drinking may have changed among young people in such a way that drinking has lost its undisputed symbolic power as a rite of passage to adulthood (Törrönen et al., 2019). There is also some evidence that changes in drinking and intoxication regulations applied at the national level have contributed to the decline in alcohol use among youths (Raitasalo et al., 2020). In a recent pooled analysis based on data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the ESPAD survey, strict policies targeting alcohol availability, marketing and pricing were inversely associated with lifetime alcohol use among adolescents, although not with current alcohol consumption (Noel, 2019). The author reported that pricing policies were also inversely correlated with current binge drinking status among current drinkers. However, Hendriks et al. (2020) have recently expressed concerns about social media contexts, where alcohol-related posts are frequently shared among influencers and adolescents. Taking advantage of the influencers' posts, alcohol brands may find a way to circumvent norms that prohibit advertising for minors. Moreover, teenagers continue to be broadly exposed to alcohol adverts on a daily basis (Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2017). This might partially explain the still high prevalence of alcohol use observed in the ESPAD data. The evidence for a strong link between exposure to alcohol advertising and adolescent drinking behaviour has led to the suggestion that stronger measures counteracting the exposure of adolescents to alcohol advertisements might act as an effective policy measure (Anderson et al., 2009; Jernigan et al., 2016).

## References and online resources

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### France

The governmental site MILDECA: interministerial mission of fight against drugs and addictive behaviors (from 2017 to the present): <https://www.drogues.gouv.fr/essentiel-sur-les-jeunes-et-lalcool>

The health site: la consommation d’alcool et les jeunes (alcohol consumption and young people)

<https://sante-pratique-paris.fr/prevention-dossier-dossier/les-jeunes-et-lalcool-quels-sont-les-risques-et-comment-les-eviter>

The OFDT site: observatoire français des drogues et des tendances addictives (French observatory of drugs and addictive tendencies): <https://www.ofdt.fr/produits-et-addictions/de-z/alcool/#consequ>

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## Italy

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## Greece

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## Poland

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Alcohol and drug use by school youth report on nationwide surveys realized in 2019 - [https://www.cinn.gov.pl/portal?id=15&res\\_id=1880417](https://www.cinn.gov.pl/portal?id=15&res_id=1880417)

## Romania

Hibell et al, 2009; Ministry of Health 2011; Hibell et al, 2012; Van Hoof & Moll, 2012; ESPAD, 2019; INSP. CRSP Cluj, 2015:36-59; RARHA, 2016.

## Europe

ESPAD Group (2020), ESPAD Report 2019: Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, EMCDDA Joint Publications, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

## 02 What is alcohol



### Definition

Alcohol is a beverage containing ethylic alcohol (ethanol or pure alcohol), obtained through fermentation or distillation. 1 “standard” glass of alcohol (quantity per type of alcohol below) = 10 g of pure alcohol.

Alcohol is a drug with multiple effects on our organism and our psyche. It can be an upper or a downer. It can stimulate our sociability and sex drive; it can make us stagger or sleep... Moreover, not only do different people react differently to the product, but a same person can react differently from one moment to another.

### Physiological effects

#### Ingestion

1 standard glass (10 gr of pure alcohol) increases blood alcohol level to 0.2 gr – 0.3 gr/l.

Sex: blood alcohol level increases faster in women (men have more liquid mass therefore dilution is greater).

Weight: blood alcohol level increases faster in thinner, shorter, and older people.

Empty stomach: blood alcohol level increases faster on an empty stomach (faster ingestion).

#### Elimination

Nearly 90% is metabolised by the liver.

The liver eliminates around 0.15gr/l/hour. Therefore, it takes about one hour and a half to eliminate a standard drink).

Only time sobers up.

Drinking water only slightly dilutes alcohol in blood but helps metabolism. However, it strongly decreases the hangover partly due to dehydration. Therefore, it is recommended to alternate between soft and alcoholic drinks when drinking alcohol.

### Effects on behaviour

Excitement: disinhibition, easy contacts, feeling happy... These desirable effects usually happen when alcohol level is between 0.8 and 1.8gr/l; way past the point you can no longer drive!

Inebriation: unstable walk (loss of balance/dizziness), gibbering, loss of reflexes, confusion, dilated pupils, possible aggressiveness, nausea, vomiting, etc.

Depression: sleeping (alcohol stimulates than puts to sleep)

Pre-coma or coma: lack of reaction -> call EMERGENCY right away.

### Place of alcohol in society

Despite a decrease in consumption in the past 40 years, alcohol remains the most consumed psychotropic (acting on the central nervous system) substance in the European Union: every adult person consumes on average 9.1 litres of pure alcohol per year (in Belgium, nearly 10 litres), the equivalent of over 100 bottles of wine, or over 200 litres of beer of average strength – which is almost twice the world average.

For the most part, alcohol is consumed in a non-problematic way.

In Belgium, 82% of people of 15 and above consume alcoholic drinks.

But over 6% of the population tends to drink too much (more than 14 glasses/week for women and 21 for men).

Men drink more (quantity) and more often (frequency) than women.

Adults remain the main daily consumers. 14% of them drink daily and this rate has increased every year since 1997.

### And young people?

Alcohol is also anchored in the habits of young people in Belgium. 85% of 12-20 students in French-speaking Belgium have already drunk.

However, some do not drink, or just occasionally.

Experimentation is increasingly early throughout the decades.

Weekly consumption is decreasing but excessive drinking is increasing. Thus, a relatively high number of young people of 15 and over drink excessively (6 glasses or more on a single occasion) weekly or monthly, most of the time in a party or group context.

The most regular consumptions and the most likely to cause problems (overconsumption, binge drinking, daily drinking) are more frequent among boys than girls.

These types of consumption can cause risk behaviour such as fights, unprotected sexual intercourses, coma, etc.

But young people are rarely daily consumer, unlike adults.

### **Alcohol, a cultural phenomenon?**

It has long been known that alcohol is detrimental to young (and other) people's health. Therefore, why do they drink? Alcohol is deeply anchored in our society's culture and heritage.

### **Belgium**

In Belgium for example, beer is historically one of the most popular drinks. Belgians are proud of their brewers and local producers, and it is commendable to support them.

One just needs to see old movies or read some classic books to realise how ubiquitous beer, wine or spirits are in people's lives, and how long it has been. In cities and towns, in barracks and offices, alcohol bonds people. Old adverts promoting the nutritive benefits of wine could even be found on the back school pupils' textbooks or blotting papers! Has this glorification of alcohol really disappeared from the media?

Moreover, it creates a social bond and shared social joy: a mere "let's drink?" instals trust, complicity, a way to be together and to celebrate an event.

In brief, presented as self-evident in films, the media, advertisements, etc., the presence of alcohol is normalised – a status that tobacco has finally lost, proof that this is not inevitable...

This banalisation conveyed in media discourses is risky as it underestimates the effects of alcohol. But this is how it is: the presence of alcohol has become "natural" (or even indispensable?) in a variety of life circumstances, including for young people: a meet-up, school, sport, or college achievement, a new job, an evening between friends or with the family, a fresh start abroad, good news... In some families, the first drink is also considered as a rite of passage, approved, and encouraged. Does drinking mean becoming an adult? Actually, according to scientists, alcohol is a poison, but its cultural aspect is perceived first, as well as its "magical effect": alcohol brings positive emotions and short-term support. It is both culturally and psychologically important. Therefore, it does not fit in a rational and logical narrative because it is before all a "matter of emotions".

## France

The history of alcohol in France is marked by very different connotations between wine, good for the health, sign of sharing, meetings, food and medicine and alcohol (term which appears late, in the 19th century) when the medical authorities will study the ravages of the drink on the body.

The origin of French wine dates back to the 6th century BC, with the colonisation of southern Gaul by Greek settlers. Viticulture developed rapidly with the foundation of the Greek colony of Marseille.

The cultivation of vines dates back to antiquity in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It is likely that the Romans introduced the practice of viticulture to present-day France. With the rise of Catholicism, wine became more important and medieval religious orders had a strong influence on winemaking. The Church was responsible for perfecting wines such as Champagne, largely attributed to the famous French monk Dom Pérignon.

In our traditional French rural societies, the presence of wine at the table was part of the “restoration” of the body (“bread makes flesh and wine makes blood”); it constituted a drink that was both nutritious and “good” for the health (its “warmth” fought cold and mortifying moods). This shared wine was a sign of social joy and demonstrated the virility of the men present. The sharing of wine helped in the signing of the deal, the engagement agreement, sealed the agreement between the new allies, reconciled the disputes that it animated, and allowed the meeting between two perfect strangers. Wine, food and medicine until the 20th century, accompanied the intimate exchange and bound the social link in a way that was all the more “natural” sociologically as it was part of a long history.

The relationship between the French and alcohol has evolved. Nowadays French people drink less. According to the French Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction, consumption has gone from 26 litres of pure alcohol per year per inhabitant aged 15 and over in 1961, to 11.7 litres in 2017. The latest figures from Santé Publique France, released in February, are also telling: 41,000 deaths were attributable to alcohol in 2015, compared to 49,000 in 2009. They also drink differently... A “better drinking” movement is emerging. Craft beer is experiencing an incredible boom. The number of craft breweries in France has grown from 146 in 2000 to 1,500 in 2018, with strong growth in recent years, although not all brewers make a living from it. Natural wine (reduction of inputs at the time of winemaking) is a trend too, in line with the general development of organic. For the younger generation, it is a way to reappropriate alcohol.

But, in France, it is very difficult not to drink alcohol. Either you are judged as a killjoy or you are considered to have a problem. Not drinking vodka or beer is fine. But to refuse a glass of wine or champagne is to unconsciously refuse to make an effort to assimilate.

## Italy

Today's Europe plays a vital role in the global alcohol market, acting as the source of a quarter of world alcohol production and over half of wine production. The economic role of alcoholic beverage producers is considerable in many European countries, including Italy. Italian culture, together with other Indo-European cultures, has always been in favour of alcohol consumption, giving it a positive image as a convivial and aggregative element on festive occasions.

In essence, alcoholic beverages ritualise significant events in the life of an individual, a family, a group. This contributes to determining in the common conscience a poor perception of the dangers of using alcohol and the fine line that distinguishes social drinking from risky drinking. In Italy, alcoholic beverages have a long history. The introduction of wine in our country is mainly due to two peoples: the Phoenicians and the Greeks, even if probably some small and rare local productions can be traced. However, these were the two peoples who made wine one of the most important products and trades of our peninsula.

Italy was called *Enotria tellus*, or land of wine. Some historians date the beginning of viticulture in Italy around the first millennium BC, during the first travels of the Greeks.

The wine of antiquity, both among the Greeks and the Romans, was diluted with water, because it was believed to be very strong in alcohol due to the late harvests of the time. In addition to mixing with water, the wine was added with honey and spices, generally served in this way when of low quality. In the empire the best wine came from the south, and it was the Falerno, or the wine produced on the slopes of Etna or that of Castelli Romani.

At the fall of the Empire, the invasions by the barbarians, created a sharp decline in viticulture which in the late Middle Ages became an exclusive prerogative of the monasteries, which preserved the viticulture techniques learned during antiquity and then also improved, so much so that in the Renaissance, with the explosion of maritime trade and the opening of new routes, the world of wine was ready to return to the splendour of the empire.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, viticulture and wine regained more and more importance, but the decisive century was in the twentieth century, when starting from the second half when the first denominations of controlled origin began to be established which over the course of 50 years brought our country back to world records like France, the great protagonist of the last four centuries. Thanks to the legal constraints of production regulations, cultivation and production techniques have been considerably improved, and today we have extraordinary results.

The tradition of Italian liqueurs dates to the Middle Ages, when mixtures of herbs, spices and fruit with alcohol and sugar were served as medicines. As we all know, the *Bel Paese* boasts a very long series of liqueurs, of all kinds and of all flavours.

Nowadays, alcoholic beverages, especially wine, are a widely used product in our country

and their consumption is an integral part of Italian culture and tradition.

In recent years, a model of consumption of alcoholic beverages that is completely different from the traditional one has spread, especially among young people in our country, Mediterranean, inspired by consumption with meals and in moderate quantities consumed in the formal and informal control of the family or community.

The new habit, particularly widespread among young people, is characterised by a risky and harmful, episodic, and recurrent consumption of quantities consumed on an empty stomach, which they exceed six units in a time span usually limited to 2-3 hours. This consumption model, imported from northern European contexts, is called “binge drinking” or “drink until you get drunk”. The analysis of the trend of binge drinkers aged over 11 years shows a prevalence that increased almost constantly between 2014 and 2020, with an increase in the last year of 7.3% (male +females), more pronounced for the female gender. Another trend of recent years is an increase in occasional alcohol consumption and consumption between meals. The consumption of aperitifs, bitters or spirits is also increasing. People drink more in the North and in Central Italy. Alcohol consumption increases with the level of education. The number of people taken care of by alcohol services is also increasing.

## Greece

“The word wine has existed in the Greek language since the Mycenaean era, with its own ideogram. Vine cultivation began in Greece and throughout the Mediterranean as early as the Bronze Age. The Greeks inextricably linked their life, culture and history with the vine. The cultivation of the vine and the love for wine were accompanied in Greece with the worship of the god Dionysus. Dionysus was the god of farmers and the rural population. Therefore, the harvest was one of the most important activities of the year, accompanied with religious ceremonies and celebrations of all kinds.

Wine was consumed on many different occasions: the average Athenian had breakfast by dipping some bread in wine. Wine accompanied every meal as a drink, but it also served as a material for cooking, as several dishes contained it. It was necessary for many religious ceremonies for libations, and it flowed abundantly at all festivals; it was an excellent opportunity for the poor to drink one more glass. Wine was also used extensively in medicine for its beneficial properties when consumed judiciously.

Unlike today, wine back then had more alcohol units. The Greeks never drank wine undiluted. They diluted wine depending on the occasion, with a ratio of 2 parts wine to 1 water or even 3 to 1 to avoid intoxication. The consequences of drunkenness were pointed out early on. Apart from wine, however, there were other alcoholic beverages. Using apples, pears, pomegranates, and figs, they made alcoholic drinks like today’s cider and fruit punch, while

by double-boiling certain spirits, they prepared a drink related to raki. Beer was the drink of choice for the ancient Egyptians. The ancient Greeks knew it mainly because of their close ties with the Egyptians. However, the consumption of beer was not popular; it was considered a barbaric habit”.

Nowadays most Greeks consider the consumption of alcoholic beverages as an integral part of social life and entertainment. When people are happy and want to share their joy with family and friends because they got married, baptized a child, graduated from university, got a job, etc., they will consume alcohol. When people are sad because they got divorced, lost their job, lost a loved one, etc., they will drink alcohol. When people just want to have fun, alone or with their friends, at home or in bars and restaurants, they will consume alcohol. So, there is always an occasion, good or bad, for consuming alcohol. Drinking alcoholic beverages is a favourite habit of Greeks. It includes drinks such as wine, beer, whiskey, vodka and others, as well as local, traditional drinks such as tsipouro, ouzo and raki. Yet the risks of harmful alcohol use must not be overlooked.

According to the report “Preventing Harmful Alcohol Use” of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), published on May 19, 2021, with data from 52 countries:

“In Greece, the levels of alcohol consumption are around 10.2 litres of pure alcohol per capita per year, roughly equivalent to 2.1 bottles of wine or 3.9 litres of beer per week per person aged 15 and over. 23.6% of adults engage in binge drinking at least once a month. This corresponds to drinking more than 80% of a bottle of wine or 1.5 litres of beer per occasion. Men consume 16.2 litres of pure alcohol per capita per year, while women consume 4.5 litres per capita per year. 17% of girls and 22% of boys aged 15 have been drunk at least twice in their life. Children who never experienced drunkenness are 31% more likely to perform well at school”.

## Poland

Polish writings of the medieval era provide many examples of the fact that alcohol consumption among Poles was already very widespread in those times. The food product that was used on a daily basis was beer. In the lower strata of the social hierarchy beer was drunk by everyone, from the youngest to the elders. Water in the Middle Ages, it is worth remembering, was not suitable for consumption. It was drawn from all kinds of wells or local rivers, it was often bacteriologically contaminated. Drinking it not infrequently caused gastrointestinal disorders, fever and even pestilence and epidemics. In comparison with water, beer seemed much healthier and certainly safer. In addition to beer, wine was popular in the Middle Ages, but it was much more expensive and more difficult to access. From the 14th century, due to the decline of domestic winemaking, which occurred due to climate change, wines had to be imported from abroad. Therefore, only a few could afford the luxury

of consuming them.

At the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, knowledge of the distillation method became widespread. Using it, people began to produce booze (or vodka), the popularity of which grew rapidly, mainly due to the strengthening of the political and economic position of the nobility. Consumption of booze showed a trend of increasing. Contributing to this was the so-called propination privilege, which granted the feudal lord exclusive right to produce and sell liquor within his estate and imposed on the peasantry the obligation to drink a top-down amount of alcohol in the tavern on the occasion of weddings, baptisms, deaths, or the completion of purchase-sale transactions.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw a further flourishing of drunkenness, which during the reign of the Saxon dynasty became a Polish national trait, at least with regard to the nobility. Drinks of all kinds were also very popular in everyday life. The ambition of every nobleman's was to offer their guests the amounts of drinks beyond measure.

After the alcoholic debauchery of the 18th century, Poles entered the 19th century in a state of alcoholic intoxication. Drunkenness complemented the already dramatic situation of a nation that had lost its independent state and was sinking into poverty. Given the need to halt the progressive degradation of Polish society, the struggle for its sobriety became a challenge, even a pressing necessity. In the 19th century, particularly in its second half, various pro-sober living initiatives spontaneously formed. Social movements, medical movements, numerous brotherhoods, for which the background and support was the Catholic Church, exhorted the Polish people to get sober. Unfortunately, World War II and the years of German occupation in Poland wiped out these successes. Alcohol became a tool in Hitler's policy of exterminating the Polish nation.

After World War II, the effects of occupation policies were compounded by new problems: mass migration, demobilisation, urbanisation of the countryside, rapid industrialisation, breaking of traditional social ties, changes in value systems, etc. A new model emerged, a combination of rural drinking infrequently, but in the form of "binge drinking," with the old urban pattern of drinking frequently, but in smaller amounts. The new model combined the worst of both, large quantities and frequent consumption. The communist authorities were unable to find a solution to the growing alcohol problems. Propaganda proclaimed that alcoholism was a legacy of the capitalist system. It was naively forecast that in a socialist state this phenomenon would disappear. To make this vision a reality, mechanisms were implemented to tightly control by the state the production and circulation of alcoholic beverages, which in turn contributed to the development of moonshining. In 1948, a Social Anti-Alcohol Committee was established to track down, punish and, as a result, radically remove from the social space all manifestations of post-capitalist alcoholic pathology. This strategy was aimed at masking problems and propagandistic glorification of the new political

system.

A change in the approach to alcohol and related problems became possible only in 1956. The political transformations of that period opened the field for discussion of the alarmingly growing consumption of alcoholic beverages in Poland. At the time, the Sejm passed the first post-war Law on Combating Alcoholism. However, the level of alcohol consumption continued to rise in the following decades. The alarming level was reached in the late 1970s. The situation has become so serious that researchers have addressed it. An expert report issued by the Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences entitled "Poland 2000" highlighted the magnitude of the losses that alcohol causes in the economy and in the life of the social. A nationwide discussion about alcoholism and the problems associated with it began. The work of promoting sobriety in 1980 was joined by "Solidarity" supported by the Catholic Church. In the climate of social change, the Law on Upbringing in Sobriety and Counteracting Alcoholism was born, which was passed in 1982.

In Poland, hitherto isolated from the influence of the Western world, a new phenomenon occurred: the admiration and uncritical imitation of everything from the West. A new lifestyle was spreading rapidly, based on values promoting youth, happiness and success. The success must be exposed and obtains its fullest expression in the field of consumption. It became fashionable to "hang out in pubs," which brought together mainly young people. Feasting took place mainly over beer, whose popularity began to grow at an unheard-of rate.

Among the wealthier part of society, the 1990s saw a significant increase in interest in wine. There was even a somewhat snobbish fashion for setting up home cellars, following the French model. However, after a period of increased fascination, coinciding with the years 1996-2005, this interest began to decline.

The figures relating to current alcohol consumption in Poland are alarming, compared to other European countries. The structure of alcohol consumption in Poland is dominated by beer (58.4%), second place is occupied by vodka and spirits (34.2%), third place is occupied by wine and mead (7.4%).

Nowadays the phenomenon of alcoholism among the best-educated and best-earning Poles is increasing. The increasing number of female drinkers is another noticeable change in the area of alcohol consumption.

## Romania

In the 19th century, over 80% of Romania's population lived in the countryside, engaged in agriculture and, obviously, did not fare it very well. For most, brandy obtained by distilling fruits and grains was the weapon of choice. It is drunk either from own production or from the village inn. In the mountain villages production took place with all people together, in the

village cauldron.

Wine was stepping into the picture too. Beer was present, but mostly in towns and fairs. It was more of an urban drink, for travellers and small traders. The wealthy population, on the other hand, were among the privileged who had access to expensive cognacs, vodkas, and wines.

In the 19th century, the Romanian state had a clear goal to bring money to the budget. And since everyone was drinking, it was clear that excise taxes on alcohol would become one of the most profit-making sources.

During the communist period, the industrialisation and urbanisation of the first socialist decades had the greatest impact with the democratisation of consumption. For many, the rural way of thinking was still that alcohol is a matter of prestige: you have a lot of money, you drink more. And most of them had a stable income. Many bars and restaurants were opening. It's not just poor-quality brandy anymore. Prestige drinks were whiskey and fine cognacs for men, a symbol of sophistication. For women, there were aromatic spirits, especially in bars. Beer is starting to be accessible everywhere.

It is also then that the social role played by alcohol changes. Being integrated into the team at work, into the group of friends, starts to be linked with the idea of drinking together. Beverage also began to be linked to the configuration of gender, male identity. Hence the idea that being a man means drinking a lot and being resistant, or the idea that men drink together, separately from women. But despite all the changes, hard liquors remained a favourite drink among men, beer drinkers were even considered more effeminate because they preferred a soft drink.

With the fall of the communist regime, it was a prolific period for smugglers and those selling counterfeit alcohol. Especially those who had prior connections in the services or militia managed to get rich very quickly from this business.

Now, beer is Romanians' favourite drink, followed by wine, while spirits have gone to the bottom of the ranking, especially in urban areas. Beer is always linked to the idea of male identity, football and friends.

Even if in history, alcohol played both an adjunct role for classical treatments and a way for ordinary people to come into contact with the gods, the drinks of the 21st century offer: flavours, colours, sensations - the perfect premises for an unforgettable evening in the company of the beloved ones. But the dangers to which those who consume alcohol in excess are exposed are multiple.

In recent years, Romanians occupy top places in both production and consumption of alcohol. The 510 million litres of wine produced in 2021 ranks Romania 6th place in Europe and 13th in the world, and the 1.8 billion litres of beer places it 9th in the EU. In terms of consumption, Romania ranks 5th place in the list of countries with an excessive consumption pattern.

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## 03 Why do pupils drink

### Why do we drink alcohol?

What are our motivations and hindrances to drinking a certain quantity of alcohol? It is not always easy to answer these questions, but three factors are frequently mentioned as taking a part and influencing each other, based on Dr Olivenstein's triangle: the person, the product, and the context.

#### Intrapersonal factors

- Some research indicates that hereditary factors can take part in alcohol use and the development of alcohol-related problems. The sons of alcohol-addicted fathers would be more concerned than daughters in this case. However, research does not offer unequivocal results, because it is not always possible to accurately make out the roles of heredity and "environmental factors" (i.e., the influence of the environment one has been raised into). In any case, no "alcoholic gene" has been discovered to explain it all. It is probably a conjunction of several factors.
- Some personality traits seem to protect (critical mind, adaptability, social skills, good self-esteem, etc.) or to increase risks (impulsiveness, aggressiveness, search for sensations and new things, high stress, lack of satisfaction in life, etc.). If a teenager is often anxious or stressed and has difficulties overcoming those feelings, they will be more vulnerable to the attraction of alcohol or other drugs; they might consider it as "self-therapy" or as an escape to forget their problems. Over time a vicious circle can set in, in which the initial solution strategy becomes the problem. Another personality trait that can play a part is natural impulsiveness, which can lead to a search for stimulations. People suffering from ADHD for example are more exposed than other people to risk of addiction-related problems.
- Apart from personality traits, stress factors also play a part. If a child experiences serious problems in their environment or goes through difficulties related to a specific life phase (such as puberty and adolescence), they could be more tempted to use alcohol and other drugs.
- Alcohol and drugs are also more likely to "fill the vacuum" if the child has few interests or interesting activities.
- Multiple consumptions: young people using other psychotropic substances (tobacco, cannabis, ecstasy, etc.) or spending an excessive amount of time on television or video games are more likely to develop overall risky behaviour.
- Early introduction to alcohol increases the risk of developing an extensive, or even

problematic use in adulthood.

- Expectations, beliefs and motivations can also influence (in one way or another) the alcohol use.

### Interpersonal factors

- Family can be a gradual, socially adapted and very contextualised (culturally adapted) learning environment, promoting a reasonable and qualitative use of alcohol. However, problematic alcohol use by the family can have a negative influence on the child's drinking and well-being.
- The social situation also plays a part, regardless of whether drinking takes place in it or not. The presence or absence of people who care about the child, childhood spent in a stressful environment, the existence or lack of leisure possibilities and the chances of finding employment influence the alcohol and drug use.
- Friends' (peers') influence fosters the use (and abuse) of alcohol, especially among minors.
- Perceived social norms: a tendency to increase one's drinking to be closer to the assumed norm (often overestimated), which amplifies the phenomenon.
- Religious belief can integrate, value or forbid alcohol.

### Environmental factors

- Accessibility to alcohol, ubiquitous in supermarkets, bars, events, gas stations, night shops, etc. influences its consumption.
- The low price of most alcoholic drinks and special offers (happy hours, buy 1 get 1 free, etc.) also encourage (excessive) drinking.
- Advertising and marketing: systematic association between drinking and partying; marketing of sweeter, more fruity or colourful drinks; special offers, distributions of free objects and/or alcoholic drinks, advertising with celebrities, etc.
- Social media are also a good recruitment field, through influencers or challenges launched around excessive drinking, which young (and less young) people are quick to take on. Going viral is like a drink: you don't refuse it!
- Law: driving under the influence, sale to minors, public ebriety, etc.
- Media discourse: contributes to normalise drinking, with a risk of underestimating harmful effects

### Association of factors

The factors above are not independent from one another, they interact. It is impossible to accurately predict whether someone will have alcohol related problems, but the simultaneous presence of those factors can provide an indication on the risk for one given person.

For example, if a child is naturally nervous, quickly worries, has a family in which drinking is frequent, has conflicts with their family, and if there are alcohol related problems in the family, the risks are increased.

## Why do young people drink?

From 12 years old, many changes happen in children, including an increasing tendency to experiment new behaviours and to “test their limits”. Drinking alcohol can be part of it. Research show that alcohol is by far the most common drug among young people. Over seventy-five percent of 12–14-year-old children have already drunk alcohol and fifteen percent do it regularly.

Moreover, this experimentation sometimes happens within the family. Indeed, while most parents want their children to stay away from drugs, their position is frequently different when it comes to alcohol. For example, during a family gathering, many parents let their children taste alcohol: about one child out of five has tried alcohol this way before the age of 12.

Preadolescents are at an age when they gradually move away from their parents and spend an increasing amount of time with their peers. They seek their own identity. They experiment and find new interests and activities.

## Peer pressure and alcohol

- Belonging in a group, being like the others, is part of adolescence and the process of identity building.
- In group, young people can also encourage each other. Peer pressure and norms can be at the origin of regular alcohol consumption. The need to belong to a group can lead young people to increase their alcohol consumption, compete with others their age to see who can sustain the most alcohol...
- However, group culture can also provide protection. Young people can let the person who drinks know that they are crossing the line and that they are ruining the atmosphere.

## Self-perception and alcohol

- Self-esteem, when it is too strong or weak, can lead to alcohol consumption. If a teenager always needs alcohol to change their self-perception, they are greatly at risk.
- Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, alcohol can give the feeling of being comfortable with oneself. Besides, it decreases negative feelings and tension. But it will not help solve problem on the long term.

This excess of self-confidence can also lead young people to take risks and adopt risk behaviours they could later regret. For example: swaggering, looking for a fight, hitting on too many people, committing acts of vandalism, etc.

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## 04 Consequences

### The physical consequences

The brain keeps developing until about 23 or 24 years old. Starting drinking at an early age can cause irreparable damages.

During growth, the liver is also smaller. Alcohol stays longer in the system because it is assimilated more slowly.

The gender of the person can also make a difference. Alcohol spreads in all fluids of the organism, and boys have an average of ten percent more fluids in their organism than girls. For this reason, girls become inebriated faster and more intensely than boys.

#### Main risks for young people:

- Alcohol disturbs brain development. Reasoning, concentration, planning, space direction abilities and memory can be damaged by alcohol. School results plummet and the brain suffers permanent damages.
- Since organs are vulnerable, risks of liver and gastric problems are high.
- Alcohol can also disrupt hormonal balance, which stops bone development. These disruptions also affect sexual development. For example, girls can have irregular periods.
- Reflexes decrease more than among adults, which increases the risk of accident.
- Self-control decreases faster and impulsive and aggressive behaviours appear more easily. When going out, young people who drink are more frequently victims/perpetrators of aggressions than adults.
- Black outs, i.e. (almost) complete lapses of memory, are clearly more frequent. A black out is almost bound to happen if a teenager drinks five or six drinks or more in a short time. Those black outs are always very bad for the brain. Memory can suffer permanent damages if those black outs are frequent.
- Drinking a lot and fast increases the risks of alcohol intoxication. This intoxication leads to a sedative state, which can stop breathing and the heartbeat.
- Starting drinking at a young age, for example at 12-14, there is an increased risk of serious alcohol-related problems in adulthood, according to several scientific research. Conversely, when drinking starts later, for example at 18, those risks decrease.

### The psychological consequences

Generally speaking, alcohol has an anaesthetic effect: it is therefore used as a remedy to gloominess and psychic troubles. Alcohol offers short-term support, but it is harmful on the

long term, especially when it is systematically used to solve one's troubles.

### **Alcohol and depression**

Alcohol seems to suppress feelings of depression. It feels like you can more easily set your problems aside, "feel" them less. However, it is again just a temporary effect. The real cause has not been treated: it has just been lulled.

Moreover, on the long term, the opposite effect will happen: alcohol will increase the feeling of depression and even trigger it.

Usually, this depression decreases when you stop drinking. If depression continues after stopping alcohol, medication or therapy can be recommended.

### **Aggressiveness and impulsiveness**

Alcohol does not only inebriate, it also disinhibits. Thus, under the influence of alcohol, we often express our feelings more quickly and vividly. Feelings of aggressiveness are also more readily expressed and can easily devolve into physical aggression. Small irritations can turn into aggressiveness crisis. Alcohol is present in numerous conflicts that lead to violence.

### **Alcohol and fear**

Fear is part of our life: it protects us in threatening situations. However, fear can become so overwhelming that alcohol, because of its narcotic effect, can appear as a solution, even a temporary one. Yet, it does not solve anything on the long term but, on the contrary, has an unsettling effect. Fear can increase in intensity. A better solution consists in addressing one's fear, not always avoiding frightening situations but learning how to face them.

### **Alcohol and sleeping**

Alcohol is sometimes perceived as a remedy to sleep troubles. But using it systematically for its soporific properties leads to an increased reliance on it for this purpose. Besides, alcohol is detrimental to healthy sleep. Sleeping phases during which processes happen in the brain are shortened. Drinking large quantities of alcohol helps falling asleep, but that sleep is disturbed, and one is often awakened after a few hours (usually around 3 or 4 in the morning).

Other healthier approaches help treat sleeping troubles such as sleep rituals, relaxation exercises...

### **Alcohol and psychosis**

Drinking large quantities of alcohol is not recommended to people suffering from psychotic crises (loss of contact with reality, which can be frightening).

Extreme alcohol drinking can also lead to “alcohol psychosis”. In this case we have complete confusion and possibly delirious ideas.

Abruptly stopping excessive drinking can trigger delirium tremens (with delirious ideas such as “seeing bugs”). Medical help is absolutely necessary in this situation.

## The social consequences

### Short term effects

Effects can be both positive and negative depending on the quantity of alcohol that has been drunk and on the situation:

- from cheerful and enthusiastic to tense and aggressive
- from slightly disinhibited to almost offensive
- from “pleasant chitchat” to “unending rambling”
- from self-confidence to aggressiveness

### Long term effects

- Drinking a lot of alcohol can decrease contact with other people: fear of people’s gaze or judgement, lack of energy to start a relation with other can lead to social isolation.
- When one drinks a lot, they prefer being with other people who drink a lot as well and avoid acquaintances or friends who drink moderately and might make “unkind” comments.
- Excessive drinking can easily lead to tensions and conflicts with the close circle (family and friends).

A teenager who drinks excessively runs the risk of keeping (or even amplifying) this behaviour in adulthood, which will have serious social consequences:

- Problems at work, such as repeated “sick” leaves, mediocre performances, conflicts with colleagues, etc.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol, fights, and domestic violence, which frequently cause legal problems.
- Financial troubles, either due to bad budget management, unemployment, the cost of drinking, fines, etc.

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<https://aide-alcool.be/>





# 02

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## **Strategies for preventing and responding to alcohol use and abuse among preadolescents**

Following the FDGs, practical guidance will be outlined, focusing on how to deal with young people on sensitive topics.

## 01 Teacher feedback: Evaluation of the Multiple-Choice Questionsv

The family can and must be a point of reference for young people who are approaching risky situations for the first time, in contexts that can compromise the lives of their sons and daughters. Often, mothers and fathers have a different perspective regarding possible interpretations of the positive and negative conduct of their offspring. In general, parents have worried and still worry about the situations they themselves witnessed during the early stages of their adolescence and in the years to come. Different mentalities, over the decades, have changed their appearance in relation to drinking, moving from playful and concrete situations (parties, tests of strength, etc.) to symbolic representations linked to the field of communication, in relation to alcohol in films with actors who “they smoke and drink”, and therefore representatives of a certain way of being and thinking. Therefore, from the point of educational strategies the parents were able/wanted to follow the same trail as the actor (extra-adolescent representation), and proceed towards a strong identity figure: 1. on the one hand, well rooted in the culture of the 60s, although concerns the period of feminism (freedom), and 2. on the other, at the same time, sized in the “macho” role even at the expense of facing obvious health problems, playing dice with death. Singers, actors and other figures in those years consciously recognized and flaunted the most malignant habits (for example linked to smoking and concomitantly to alcohol and, in this case, think of De André in Italy and Alain Delon in France , just to name a few), a terrible mixture that has led hundreds of recognized or idolized characters to cancer. This bond between teenagers, adults and entertainment characters has recently projected us towards a clearing of other even more complex situations, linked to the drugs of the 60s, and to the curiosity of new drugs, which, more or less, continue to perpetuate the alcohol-drug relationship (for example (stimulant drugs: cocaine, amphetamine, amphetamine derivatives, caffeine, GHB, smart drugs, antidepressants, khat; hallucinogenic drugs: Indian hemp and derivatives, LSD, mescaline, ketamine, psilocybin), but this time with little awareness, as happened to the actors and singers more prone to addiction. In essence, the connection between smoking and alcohol has never given up and has always been renewed. For this reason, massive work is needed linked to the training of young people , in a media-educational situation: reading, writing, critical spirit, ability to choose and media citizenship, are fundamental steps to build a “family awareness” and a “culture of choice” which is crucial for today’s young people, to leave them a “space for freedom”: choosing, sharing among peers, discussing with adults, would ensure a decisive ability to discern verisimilitude.



## 02 Pupils at the center

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In all prevention programs, it is important to put children at the center of the work.

The use of active techniques. Making children protagonists and builders of their learning of the decisions necessary to face life and not only passing on cognitive information, but involving them in the learning process, starting from their experiences, fears, knowledge, prejudices. Children seen in their entirety - Rogers' person-centered approach, Ausubel's meaningful learning, Vygotsky's concept of proximal development, cognition and emotion: Lucangeli's hot cognition, Pellerrey's ability.

For decades we have been witnessing a great wide-ranging socio-cultural transformation that involves all contexts of life, society, family, school, the world of work, relationships, free time, the means and ways of communicating and interacting. with the others.

This socio-cultural-value-technological earthquake has produced great collective and individual disorientation, unstable models, fragmented, confused, conflicting, uncertain messages, calling into question and throwing away various certainties and points of reference.

All this has affected society and, in particular, the new, growing generations in need of stable models and certainties that many adults are no longer able to guarantee.

In this historical-social context, we have increasingly seen the spread of addictions, both known and new, which represent a great social emergency at multiple levels. Among these, a very large space, as described in many parts of the project, is occupied by the use and abuse of alcohol among pre-adolescents.

It is, therefore, increasingly important to activate prevention and promotion strategies for well-being in school contexts, categorizing them based on the age of the children.

Even now, disciplinary learning or an activity on health education based on the idea of transmitting a series of notions and knowledge on a given topic prevails, as a simple passage of information, in a linear and one-way path, from the teacher to the learner.

In this dated vision of learning, only the cognitive aspect is considered, leaving out other fundamental components, such as emotional, relational, social and motivational ones.

For several reasons, many studies have led to the conclusion of how important it is, in long-lasting, meaningful and meaningful learning, to take into account all aspects of the identity of oneself and others.

As Morin, a psychologist and sociologist, describes well, it is important to “transmit not pure knowledge, but a culture that allows us to understand our condition and help us live”.

Not neutral and sterile knowledge, detached from any context, but transversal skills to be reused, life skills, life skills that can be used in various contexts.

In every learning process, the focus must be placed on the children, the true protagonists of their training and growth path. To be effective, every prevention path must take this into account, otherwise it risks becoming cold rhetoric and one-way communication that will not last over time and will not lead to any reflection or change within the development processes. Only in this way can we talk about significant learning that can be extended to various areas of life.

In light of what has been said, the issue of alcohol with children cannot be addressed as a series of rules and limits imposed by adults and society but must be articulated in a broader, multidisciplinary path that activates different perspectives and disciplines - medical -health, psychological, social, historical, cultural, artistic, literary - and the different aspects of identity: social, emotional, relational, motor.

This implies having a global vision of the person, not only of the other, as a student and person, but also of oneself, both involved in the relationship, having awareness of oneself, of one's limits, prejudices, skills and ways of approaching of the kids and the facets of the theme. It is therefore important to have an attitude that is not severe and judgmental but based on trust, passionate and welcoming.

For this reason, it is essential to keep in mind, in all learning and prevention programs, the centrality of the relationship and, consequently, of the students, protagonists of the entire process.

In any type of relationship, even more so in an educational relationship, it is therefore essential to give importance to the emotional climate that is established. The type of emotional climate that is created in building the relationship will, in fact, be the basis for a dialogue characterized by reflection, trust, exchange and respect.

Usually, we remember the experiences that moved us. The cognitive part remains, in fact, always linked to the emotional aspect which occupies a predominant part. We thus speak of warm cognition , precisely to underline the interdependence of emotions and learning.

In an era, as previously described, of great fragmentation and disorientation, it is even more important to feel like you have an active role, within any learning process, not to feel like just

passive recipients of notions but to feel involved, participants in it. that happens to us and that creates a transformation within us.

A path that must enhance potential and resources, previous knowledge, consolidating critical thinking and encouraging the acquisition of transversal skills to be used in different life contexts, to arrive at “know-how and knowing how to live”.

This entails, on the part of adults who deal with young people and children, particularly with education, learning, prevention and health promotion, having full trust in the potential and resources of others, co-building a relationship of respect and exchange, in which authentic dialogue is possible, in which the acquisition of knowledge but also critical reflection and greater awareness of oneself and the world around us are promoted. What is learned will not be elaborated, therefore, in an empty ground, in a neutral context but takes shape, it is elaborated with what is already present - the renowned zone of proximal development of Lev Semenovic Vygotskij, Soviet psychologist and pedagogist.

The new information thus connects with concepts already existing in the cognitive structure to create new connections and new neural networks.

The latest research and experience confirm the complexity of the learning path, considering it as a circular path, as in any type of relationship, a continuous exchange, in which not only a passage of information occurs but a process is started which always brings a change, a modification, a before and after, a transformation process that includes all the actors. As Leo Buscaglia, an American teacher and writer, wrote, “ every time we learn something new, we ourselves become something new”.

In such a process, everyone turns out to be active protagonists.

This allows the other person to feel important, to enhance their experience, their opinions, their history, in a continuous dialogue between the adult and the children.

Placing children at the center of their journey defines them as people with their own identity and personality, growing and developing, and strengthens their self-esteem and promotes their motivation.

Putting children at the center means making children feel like protagonists of their growth and learning journey, it means not imposing principles, albeit important, from above, not feeling them imposed by the adult world, but instead internalising them and making them our own, something that belongs to and allows you to develop your own independent thinking.

Putting young people at the center means starting from their life experiences, from their opinions on a topic such as the issue of alcohol and offering a protected context for

reflection, free from prejudices to encourage critical thinking of self-awareness with respect to various topics that revolve around this theme - role of one's family and socio-cultural models, habits, traditions, fashions related to consumption; role and conditioning of the peer group; knowledge of alcohol, health risks; knowledge of one's body and the difference between children and adults - to name just a few main ones.

Putting children at the center means promoting awareness of oneself and of the social context in which one lives to co-construct together a path of self-awareness and self-determination, both at an individual and collective level, of man at the internal society in history and continuously intertwine the various levels to support a global vision of the topic as a *modus operandi* to address the various topics - and not just alcohol - and also transport it into other disciplinary learning.

Putting children at the center means encouraging learning of topics that allow them to reflect on themselves, on their own thoughts and preconceptions, on their own conditioning and, together with adults and classmates, review themselves and their own vision of life.

This will allow you to feel active, autonomous, capable of taking care of yourself and capable of building your own identity on an evolving path, supporting the motivation to know, curiosity about yourself and the world, self-efficacy and self-esteem, thinking of themselves as people capable of making decisions, of having an important role in their own path and in their own life and not at the mercy of the events and transformations of society.

Each topic must be addressed by putting together what one does, what one experiences in the family, in society with what one knows and adds and integrates to build a personal baggage, through comparison, identification, sharing and knowledge activities.

Consequently, the activity will be characterized by an active methodology. We talk about active techniques, not only because they imply an action, a movement but because different aspects of identity are activated and dynamism occurs, both at an individual and group level.

The tools and methods that can be used are many and are not limited to rigid schemes but can be the result of creative choices that can be adapted to the type and age of the user.

## 03 The classroom and the group as a resource

The importance of shared learning, group presence, discussion with others and guided reflection. Promote critical thinking, multiplicity of perspectives, increased attention, dialectical and reasoning skills and the involvement of all. The class group as an educational and didactic resource that can promote well-being, motivation, makes people feel belonging, strengthens participation and the ability to express themselves. From focus groups to other activities involving the group-social learning and self-efficacy by Bandura, the group as a resource by Gori, activating the resources of Maria Polito's class group, by discussing we learn Clotilde Pontecorvo.

The relationship with others is a profound need of man, we are born from a relationship between individuals and we form inside the body of a woman, in an intimate relationship with another organism which, for about nine months, is our place and space, our home, our habitat. Subsequently, we need relationships with others to survive and live in the world, we depend on our caregivers for a long time, more than other living species, for our growth, from different points of view. Furthermore, we are born and grow within a relational context, at multiple levels, the family, the local community, contemporary society.

All this underlines and confirms how the relationship is a fundamental dimension of the human being, in all its different evolutionary phases. Specifically, for children, the group represents a relational sharing space in which they can grow, experiment, reflect and distance themselves from the family.

In this period of life, a group that all children refer to and live with on a daily basis is the class group, a daily place of growth, socialization and learning for a long period of our lives. The school classroom is therefore not just a physical space but must become a relational space of well-being, where everyone feels appreciated and welcomed in the expression of their thoughts.

In the classroom there are different relational dynamics, not always functional, at multiple levels. According to Gustavo Pietropolli Charmet, a well-known psychoanalyst who deals with adolescents, there are two types of class, the official class and the secret class and they do not always correspond or merge into a single group. Within these groups, different processes of projective identification are determined and nourished and different emotions and experiences flow out, which are not always easily manageable.

The group is often the scenario within which children experiment to try to grow and emancipate themselves from the family, to become autonomous and find their own identity.

The children's need for relationships and experimentation, the desire to feel seen and to belong to the peer group, the motivation to create forms of socialization can become key elements to be used to promote a classroom climate characterized by serenity and well-being.

The class has a significant role in the lives of individual members, being an obstacle and/or resource, a theater of representations of different selves in progress, a mirror of risks or possibilities.

The role of social interaction at school is in fact underlined by more research, as a teaching engine and motivation for the individual and for the group.

The group can thus become a facilitator in this great period of changes and transformations and a great educational and learning resource.

The classroom, as an educational resource, can legitimize prosocial behaviors or behaviors favorable to one's health and well-being, in favor of the individual or the group.

Working with the group on the paths of prevention of discomfort and promotion of well-being allows you to create a sense of belonging, the desire to make your own contribution, to make your presence felt and allows you to create an echo effect, sharing the experience and of experimentation with a community experience.

The reflective space of the class group, based on a positive climate, facilitated and guided by the adult, can, in fact, become a positive reinforcement to escape from the conditioning of the group dynamics, to gain greater awareness of the mechanisms that can be activated in the relationship between equal and greater self-awareness.

The protected space of the group can become a space in which you can create the right distance between yourself and the world, to be able to understand yourself better, to be able to reflect on the various issues without finding yourself involved in relational dynamics and conditioning, to feel like you belong to the group but without getting caught up in it, having the right emotional measure, to be able to reflect and travel outside and inside oneself.

The protected space of the group can become an opportunity for new experiments and sharing.

The kids can experiment and train their skills in a protected context, try to engage in discussions that they are passionate about, making them feel capable, effective, great, in

the eyes of others, adults and companions, and in the eyes of themselves, to strengthen their self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy. Perceiving yourself as capable allows you to strengthen your idea of yourself and your confidence and feeling more competent actually promotes learning.

The adult, if capable of using the present dynamics, can become a guarantor and allow the creation of that neutral and safe place in which one can both express oneself and one's opinions in a free, mature, independent way, and experiment and promote cognitive and dialectical skills. , social and relational.

The presence of others, of the group, in one of the most important life contexts, such as school, which occupies a large amount of space in the children's day, leads to shared learning which allows the possibility of promoting critical thinking, multiplicity perspectives, increased attention, dialectical and reasoning skills and the involvement of all participants. Discussing together is a valid cognitive tool for learning and supporting communication and argumentative skills, for reorganizing knowledge, integrating new information and points of view. Discussing together is a valid tool for relating and reasoning, deepening perspectives and allowing you to make more informed decisions.

All this, confirmed by various research in the pedagogical, social and educational field, becomes possible thanks to the relationship that is established between children and adults and thanks to the knowledge of the complex group dynamics, in order to take into account the risks inherent in such situations and support protective factors.

## 04 Social networks: school, family, services, society

Social networks have been a novelty among our young people for at least twenty years. They have appropriated a very powerful technology that has significantly changed their behavior and the way they think about their lives and their lives. Every day, a large number of preteens and adolescents spend at least a third of their day in new digital contexts. Not everyone knows that there is a deep web (a deep web in the sense of nefariousness) that allows young people and adults to roam freely in disreputable digital places. Many of them cross these thresholds and transform their presence behind the schemes into an on life mode . A sometimes worrying individualism that leads us to think about activities often unknown to families. We can certainly assert that parents and children find themselves on two different levels: the first is vertical, that is, a pyramid with the child at the top and the parents at the bottom; the second is horizontal in which simulated behaviors and attitudes are detected in parents and children who play a part, respecting the rule of “that’s okay”, to avoid situations of mutual conflict. These approaches can take different paths: in the case of alcohol, it is necessary to use useful methods for a school context and create moments of discussion on this delicate topic, through products created both in schools and outside schools, useful for spreading the importance to find awareness of conduct and emotional and cognitive aspects. The company is unable to solve these problems or to carry forward the good ideas. Unity is strength: only a systemic context is able to address these issues, in the sense of a constant connection between institutions, territory, schools, universities and companies, with the aim of obtaining useful, continuous and representative data of the two realities, biological and digital.



# 03

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## Educational Path

## 01 Preparatory meetings with parents and teachers of preadolescents

By the age of 12, many changes occur in boys, including an increasing tendency to experiment with new behaviors and “test their limits.” Drinking alcohol can be part of it. Research shows that alcohol is **by far the most common psychoactive substance** among young people. Over seventy-five percent of 12-14 year olds have already drunk alcohol and fifteen percent do so on a regular basis.

Furthermore, this experience sometimes occurs **within the family**. Indeed, while most parents want their children to stay away from drugs, their position is often different when it comes to alcohol. For example, during a family reunion, many parents let their children taste alcohol: about one in five children have tried alcohol this way before the age of 12.

Therefore, it is important not to turn a blind eye to this matter, but rather **to use the family context cleverly**. Parents can teach their children to experience alcohol consumption in an outlined context, with clear rules and by referring to the law (for example, in Belgium, no alcohol before the age of 16). From the point of view of their health, it is important that **they do not drink before the age of 16**. Indeed, alcohol harms the physical and mental development of children, whose brains are still maturing.

### Why do young people drink?

Preadolescents are at an age where they gradually **distance themselves** from their parents and spend an increasing amount of time with their peers. They seek **their own identity**. They experiment and find new interests and activities.

### Peer pressure and alcohol

- Belonging to a group, being like others, is part of adolescence and the process of building identity.
- In groups, young people can also encourage each other. Peer pressure and norms can be at the root of regular alcohol consumption. The need to belong to a group can lead young people to increase their consumption of alcoholic beverages, competing with others their age to see who can ingest the most.
- However, group culture can also provide protection. Young people can let the drinking person know that they are crossing the line, ruining the mood.

### Self-perception and alcohol

- **Self-esteem**, when it's too strong or too weak, can lead to alcohol consumption. If a

teenager always needs alcohol to change his self-perception, he is very much at risk.

- By increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, alcohol can make **you feel good about yourself**. It also decreases **negative feelings and tension**. But it won't help solve the problem in the long run.
- This **overconfidence** can also lead young people to **take risks** and engage in **risky behaviors** that they may later regret. For example: bravado, looking for a fight, hitting too many people, committing vandalism, etc.

### What are the risks?

The **brain** continues to develop until about age 23 or 24. Starting drinking at an early age can cause irreparable damage.

During growth, the liver is also smaller. Alcohol stays in the system longer because it is assimilated more slowly.

Even **the gender of the person** can make a difference. Alcohol spreads throughout the body's fluids, and boys have an average of ten percent more fluids in their bodies than girls. Because of this, girls get intoxicated faster and more intensely than boys.

### Main risks for young people:

- Alcohol disrupts **brain development**. Reasoning, concentration, planning, spatial direction skills, and memory can be impaired by alcohol. Academic results plummet and the brain suffers permanent damage.
- Because **the organs** are vulnerable, the risks of liver and stomach problems are high.
- Alcohol can also disrupt **hormone balance**, which blocks bone development. These disruptions also affect sexual development. For example, girls may have irregular periods.
- **Reflexes** decrease more than among adults, which increases the risk of accidents.
- Self-control decreases faster and impulsive and aggressive behaviors appear more easily. When they go out, young people who drink are more frequently victims/perpetrators of aggression than adults.
- **Blackouts**, i.e. (almost) complete memory lapses, are clearly more frequent. A black out can occur after the phenomenon of binge drinking or alcoholic binge, which indicates the intake of 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a very short time interval. These blackouts are always very harmful to the brain. Memory can suffer permanent damage if these are frequent.
- Drinking heavily and quickly increases the risk of **alcohol poisoning**. This intoxication leads to a sedated state, which can stop breathing and heartbeat. Severe intoxication can evolve into ethyl coma and death from respiratory arrest.
- According to various scientific researches, those who start drinking at a young age, for example at 12-14 years of age, risk **serious problems related to alcohol in adulthood**.

Conversely, when you start drinking later, for example at age 18, these risks tend to decrease.

### What can parents do?

- Make sure their children drink alcohol as late as possible. At least, **not before the age of 16**.
- **Talk to your children** about alcohol use, both its potential benefits and its disadvantages, in a mutual dialogue and in a relationship of trust.
- **Establish their own limits** that their children must respect when drinking alcohol and **apply penalties** in case of abuse. Adaptations are obviously possible over time, depending on the age and maturity of the adolescent.
- Keep in mind that I'm a **role model** when it comes to alcohol. **If parents drink heavily or excessively**, they need to be honest about it, explain clearly that alcohol does not affect children as well as adults, perhaps acknowledge that they too have problems curbing their drinking, and if so, establish clear boundaries for your use.
- **If their children have been drinking too much**, talk to them when they are sober trying to listen and clearly remind them of boundaries.
- **Share their experiences** with other parents and the education team.
- **What to do if their child has a habit of drinking too much?** First, try to understand with them why they do it. If they don't want to talk to their parents, suggest that they talk to someone they trust (family doctor, teachers, school psychologists, etc.)
- Finally, **parents can be supported** in this situation. Different specialized centers can answer their questions and meet the adolescent, for information or follow-up: school doctor or psychologist, school support services, youth support services, addiction prevention centres, etc.

### Meetings with parents

#### Premises

- welcome the parents, immediately clarifying the purpose of the meetings. Remember that this is a protected space in which to reflect, discuss and share experiences and opinions on the subject of alcohol use and abuse among pre-adolescents.
- Have a welcoming and non-judgmental attitude that values everyone's contribution, giving space and voice to the various perspectives, facilitating conversation and guiding discussion and exchange between parents. Creating a climate of acceptance, collaboration and alliance, remembering that the *focus* remains on the kids, their developmental needs, their resources and fragility and the uniqueness of each one's journey, their psychophysical and relational well-being.

- remember that many parents present resistance on these issues, find it difficult to accept that their children can find themselves in some risky situations at a young age, often tend to minimize the problems or see their children as still young with respect to some thorny issues. Parents tend to protect their children, sometimes denying the possibility that they may find themselves living in dangerous situations for their health and often deny the reality or the riskier aspects. They want to protect their children but in doing so, they risk denying the real risks that children can incur. It's a bit as if they think that talking about a danger is equivalent to making it real. Not talking about it or even denying it made it less topical and present in their life or in that of their family. This prudent and defensive attitude runs the risk of becoming overprotective and does not allow for attunement to the real needs, difficulties and fears faced by young people, driving parents and children away and not allowing them to have a real dialogue.
- This is why it is necessary to address this issue with the parents in a delicate, gradual way, without frightening the parents. It is necessary to bring parents closer to this issue without judging their habits, their opinions. Let them express themselves freely around the issue, without making them feel guilty but guiding them to reflect on the various nuances and complexity of this phenomenon.

### **Ideas and stimuli**

- You can start by asking them what they think about this issue and why alcohol has always been intertwined with human history.
- Biographical interview: ask to remember their pre-adolescence and adolescence, their relationship with alcoholic beverages, the age of their alcoholic "debut" and the way they experienced fun and partying with family and group of friends.
- Subsequently, whoever wants can share in the group.
- Guide them in their reflection by trying to ask, according to them, the difference between their adolescence and that of their children; between the needs and lifestyle habits of an adult and those of a child, the risks that both may incur.
- Make them think about the different family habits and how these can influence the image of alcohol in their children.
- Use the video pills created for parents as a stimulus and reflection on the theme, on their educational methods and on the relationship between parents and children.
- Broaden the reflection on society and on the role that alcohol plays in our day, to the messages that reach young people from various sources (mass media, social networks, reference groups, advertising, influencers, public figures they follow such as musicians, sportsmen, actors, adults, schools and other institutions).
- Introduce the theme of responsibility and autonomy, processes that require gradualness,

attention, guidance and respect from adults. Emphasize the importance of critical thinking.

- Remember the importance of networking and the importance of creating alliances with other educational agencies to support minors.
- Explain the articulation of the work that will be done with the students, the different sessions and ask what they expect from these meetings, how they think the students will react.

## References and online resources

Youth and alcohol: <https://aide-alcool.be/jeunes-et-alcool>

Alcohol at school: <https://aide-alcool.be/alcool-al-ecole>

Parents and education: <https://aide-alcool.be/education-et-alcool>

## 02 Sessions with preteens

### Session 1 – Messages about drinking (for 11–14 year olds)

#### Overview

In this lesson, students examine the different groups in our society who deliver messages to the public about drinking and consider the influence of each of these groups on young people's attitudes and perceptions. Beginning by brainstorming words or ideas associated with the word "alcohol," the class develops a mind map of the people and organizations that deliver messages to us about alcohol and drinking and the different messages each delivers.

#### Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an initial awareness of one's attitude towards drinking
- an understanding of the different groups that convey messages about alcohol
- an understanding of the specific messages being expressed within these groups
- an awareness of the influence of specific groups or individuals on one's attitudes and beliefs about alcohol

#### Preparation and materials

For the mind map exercise, refer to the handout *Mind Map: Where Do We Get Messages About Alcohol?*

#### Method

Tell students they will look at all the different messages kids get about alcohol.

Start with a simple word association game. On the chalkboard, write the word Alcohol in large letters. Ask students to write the first word or phrase that comes to mind when they see it. Elect two students to record their answers on one side of the chalkboard, and then ask the class to share any words or phrases that come to mind. Once their answers have been recorded, take a moment to step back and discuss them with the students. Are they generally supportive, neutral or negative?

Every day we are surrounded by countless messages about drinking. (This should be reflected in the wide range of words and expressions students associate with alcohol.) Ask students to think about the questions: "Where do we get messages about alcohol? Who are the people and organizations trying to influence our attitudes about alcohol?" versus

drinking?” (See the Mind Map handout for an overview.) Based on the template provided and suggestions from your students, create a mind map on the chalkboard. (For younger grades, you may want to use a simplified version.) Once you’ve completed your mind map, go over the words Alcohol students provided.

Have students match various words or messages about alcohol with the appropriate groups in the mind map. ( Words can be linked to more than one group. For example, “party” and “fun” could be associated with the media or with friends and colleagues; “drink responsibly” and “don’t drink and drive” could be associated with school groups , government or medical and anti-drinking; “Tasty” and “cold” could be associated with the alcohol industry, media, etc.) .

Once you’ve done that, take a look at each of these groups and ask students to think about the different messages each group conveys about drinking. Be prepared for a wide range of responses and don’t be surprised to find mixed messages within the same group. For example, under family , the general message from parents might be that drinking is for adults and teens shouldn’t drink; from older siblings, it could be that drinking is fun.

Once this is done, ask the students:

- Which of these groups gives us the most positive messages about drinking? Why? ( Guide them to consider motivation - for example, the media and alcohol industries make money from advertising and selling alcoholic beverages ).
- Which of these groups gives us the most negative messages about drinking? Why?
- Do any of these groups have mixed messages about drinking? ( For example, the alcohol industry creates both advertising campaigns and messages of social responsibility; some friends and peer groups may support drinking, some may not .) What do you think of these “mixed messages”?

### **Think about messages**

Discuss:

Every day, we are surrounded by thousands of messages that inform, entertain and educate us. Some of these messages are trying to sell us things, some are trying to influence the way we think and behave, while others are trying to keep us safe. Everyone wants to persuade us in one way or another.

Before deciding whether to listen to or believe a particular message, we need to ask ourselves a few questions.

- Think about everything we discussed today. What are some questions you should ask about messages?

Answers could include:

- Who is behind this message? ( A company? An advertiser? A healthcare professional? My

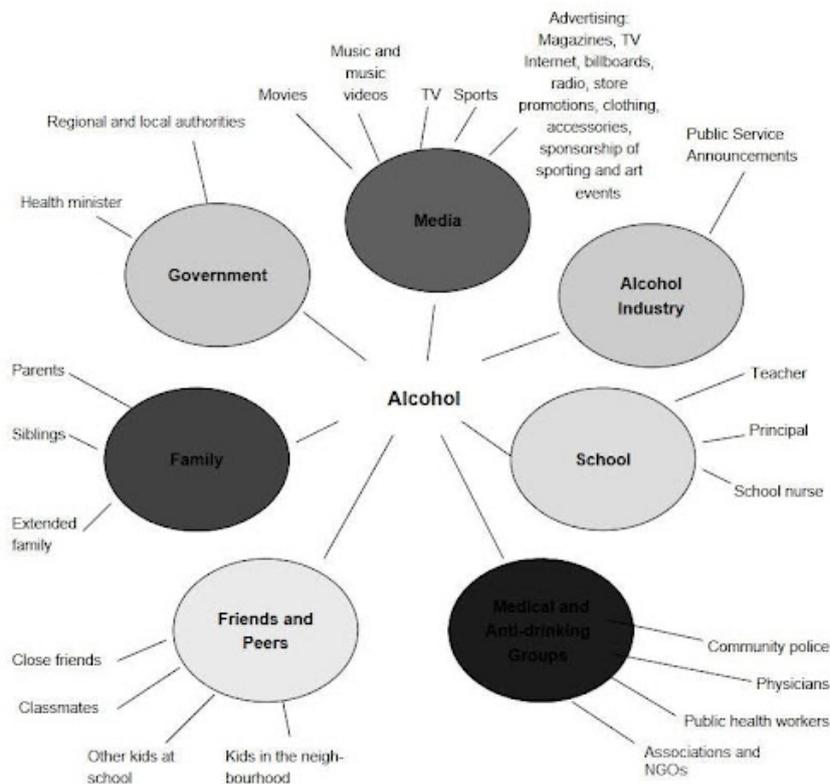
parents? A friend? )

- What’s the message? ( “Buy my product”? “Do not participate in high-risk activities”? “Learn about this so you can be better informed”? “Do this because it’s fun”? )
- How is the person or organization trying to get me to listen to their message? ( Make it look funny? Emphasize that this is really important? Make it look cool? )
- Is the person or organization qualified to tell me what to do? ( For example, is my friend knowledgeable enough to help me make decisions that could affect my health? Should advertisers have a say in what foods we crave? Is this website a credible source for my homework? )
- And most importantly, why is this person or organization sending me a message? What is their motivation? ( To sell me things? To influence other people? Why do they care about my safety and well-being? )

### Homeworks

In their notebooks have students write a short paragraph outlining the word or phrase they associated with Alcohol at the beginning of the lesson and what they think may have influenced their choice of words.

### Mind Map: Where we get messages about alcohol



## Session 2 – Interpretation of multimedia messages (for children aged 9 to 13)

### Overview

In this lesson, students examine the importance of branding and messaging, especially with respect to peer products such as beer and alcohol. Students explore the “3Ps” of brand messaging - personality, location and promise - seeing how they apply to the best-selling beer brands in their own country. Students study how consumers interpret and decide whether or not to act on media messages by applying the media message interpretation process model to a rum advertisement. And for homework, they conduct a “3P” analysis of three alcohol ads.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- How alcohol companies use branding and messaging to attract consumers
- the factors – including media messages – that can influence an individual’s behavioral choices

an understanding of:

- The differences between merit-based advertising and image advertising
- How consumers interpret multimedia messages

### Preparation and materials

Photocopy the documents Mr. Clean, How We Interpret Media Messages and Beer Study  
Photocopy the student’s Ad Analysis assignment

### Method

Class discussion

According to the researchers, middle and high school students know, like and drink the most advertised beer brands. A US company called Stealing Share helps companies develop more effective brands by researching advertising campaigns for similar products. His website features a study of America’s best-selling beer brands. In this study, Stealing Share looked at how the ads for each of these brands created a distinct product ‘personality’, ‘position’ in the market, and ‘promise’ for consumers – we’ll call them the ‘3Ps’. Here are some of the beers they reviewed (Show beer study graph):

- Do you notice any similarities in the “personalities” that have been created around these beers? (Three of the four beers feature “cool” or “hip” as part of the personality profile.)
- What kind of people do you think beers that promote themselves as “cool” are trying to reach? What makes you think this?

- What about the market position? Have these companies managed to develop distinct positions for their brands, or are they all saying the same thing? What is your impression of each beer when you hear its slogan?

- Now let's take a look at the promise of each beer. What kind of people do you think each of these "promises" might attract? Is there any truth to these promises?

As this graphic shows, finding a logo or branding is just the first step in promoting a product.

- What else do advertisers need to do?

Advertisers must give their product or brand maximum exposure, not only in commercials or advertisements, but also – in the case of alcoholic beverages – through positive representations in television dramas and sitcoms, in music videos, talk shows, promotions shops and at sporting events.

And, as we can see from the '3Ps', advertisers also need to create 'messaging' to make their product stand out. For some products, the message is clear and direct. For example, what would you say about this ad for Mr. Clean ? (Show Mr. Clean doc)

- What is the brand for this product? (A big, strong cleaning guy in a spotless white T-shirt.)

- What does the choice of this character as a brand on the product imply? (That this is a hardworking cleaner that will get rid of dirt and grime.)

- What message reinforces the "hardworking cleaner" image? (The tagline: "cleans your whole house and everything in it")

This is an example of a very simple message: "Buy this cleaner as it will make your home spotless."

Most beer and booze ads aren't straightforward at all. Instead of selling products, they sell images, fantasies and lifestyles . "Drink this," many alcohol commercials seem to say, "and you can be glamorous, or sexy, or rebellious, or athletic, or popular, or cool."

Alcohol ads also promote the idea that "everybody does it" – this is called normalization.

We know that advertisers spend billions of euros or dollars trying to make us want to use their products. The big question is: does it work? It's safe to assume that companies wouldn't be wasting all this money if they didn't think advertising worked, but that's a central question when trying to understand how much influence alcohol advertising has on children and adolescents.

Researchers have found that when it comes to children and alcohol commercials:

- Teens who identify with media messages and who want to be like the people in ads have more positive feelings about drinking than teens who don't

- Older boys are more likely to have positive feelings about drinking than younger boys

- Teens who are frequently exposed to alcohol commercials have more positive feelings about drinking than teens who don't see many ads

- Boys who generally like alcohol commercials have more positive feelings about drinking

than boys who dislike or don't notice them

Experts say the key to advertising isn't in the message, but in how the consumer interprets it. That's why companies spend so much money to make sure their product's "promise" is clearly understood by their target audience.

(Show the document *How We Interpret Multimedia Messages*, showing only the first bullet, as well as the diagram above.)

This diagram, created by Dr. Erica Austin and her team of Washington State University researchers, explains how young people interpret messages in alcohol advertisements and the factors that can influence their drinking. According to Dr. Austin:

1. When we get messages from the media – like this rum commercial – we get them in two ways: logically and emotionally. Our logical side asks, "Is this message realistic?" and "Is this message correct?" Our emotional side asks, "Do I like what this message is telling me?"

- Let's look at this announcement from a logical point of view. First, what do you think the message about drinking is in this ad? What does it promise consumers?
- Secondly, do you think this message is realistic? Is this how most people behave when they have a drink?
- Now take a look at the people in this ad. How would you describe them? Do normal people look like this?
- These are logical questions. Now, let's look at this message from an emotional perspective: Do you like what this message is telling you? Why or why not? (Find out the second point.)

2. Over time, as we're exposed to the same message over and over again, we internalize or reject it by asking ourselves, "Do I want to be like this?" We make this decision based on logical thinking and emotional feelings. This can sometimes be a difficult decision, because our emotions can be stronger than our sensitive and logical side.

- Sometimes you hear people say "I should have known better" when they act rashly. Has it ever happened to you?
- Let's take a look at this rum announcement again. Even if you know this isn't how real people look or act when they're drinking, do you want to be like that? (Alcohol advertisers are betting that you will, and that it will make you believe the idea that every time you have a drink, it's one big party!) (Check out point 3 and the rest of the diagram.)

3. Whether or not we are influenced by a media message depends on our thoughts, feelings and expectations of the promoted behaviour. We ask ourselves, "What will happen if I mimic what the people in this ad are doing?" If you have internalized and accepted the message in the ad, you will most likely consider the positive consequences. (In the case of this ad, you'll tell yourself, "If I drink this rum, I'll be popular and I'll party and have

fun.”) If you rejected the message of the ad, you’re more likely to consider the negative consequences (“I could get into trouble with my parents or the law because I’m a minor” or “I could get sick from drinking too much”).

Depending on how you interpret the message, you’ll make a decision about drinking. However, we don’t make these decisions alone.

- Can you think of any outside influences that might influence whether or not you buy what the liquor vendors want you to believe? (This could include: friends, parents, teachers, or even life experience — maybe you know someone who’s had a bad experience with alcohol.)

### Homeworks

- Ask students to fill in the Ad Analysis sheet using ads from your country. (Younger students will need help completing this assignment).
- When students have completed their work, discuss and compare their answers.

## Session 3 – The family

### Overview

In this lesson, students examine the different habits, traditions, rules, permits, prohibitions present in their family (parents, grandparents, uncles, brothers), connecting it to family history, past generations and their country’s history of drinking and how fun and celebration are experienced. Subsequently, the students examine and discuss the influence that these elements can have on the perception of this issue.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will become more aware of:

- On the influence that the family and social context can exert on the image one has of alcoholic beverages and on the way one experiences fun, parties and family rituals.
- On the influence that the family and social context can have in creating habits, affecting our behavior and, in general, our identity.
- On the close relationship between the culture of one’s own country and the eating habits of individual families and how this can change over time and influence the vision of the theme .
- On the different personal experiences regarding family and social traditions on the theme of entertainment and alcoholic beverages.

**Preparation and materials**

Interview a family member of your choice on the topic of alcohol.

Choose one or more family members (mom, dad, older brothers, grandparents, uncles) to whom to conduct a short interview on alcoholic beverages.

Family member 1:	
What do you think about alcoholic beverages?	
Which drinks do you usually prefer, with whom and in which contexts?	
Are there any particular family rituals associated with alcoholic beverages?	
Has the image you have of alcoholic beverages changed over time, growing up?	

**Method**

The students will discuss, within working groups, the answers given by their families during the interview. In turn, everyone, in a free way, will be able to share habits, rules, traditions, rituals present in their own family environment and personal experiences connected to this theme, expressing opinions, opinions, adherence, dissonance, indifference, marking what emerges in the small group on a report table that will later serve as a basis for sharing information in the extended class-group.

*At the end of the session, they can be asked to reflect on the similarities and differences that emerged in the sharing work, whether they feel close or distant from the habits that emerged in their families and what struck them about this work.*

## Session 4 – The peer group

### Overview

In this lesson, students examine the dynamics present in peer groups, in particular, throughout the adolescent period, the conditioning, resources and limits of being in a group in relationships between friends, including alcoholic challenges, also present on the web .

### Learning Outcomes

Students will become more aware of:

- On the influence that the relational context can exert on the image one has of alcoholic beverages
- On the limits and resources of peer groups
- On the consequences and risks related to some dynamics and behaviors present in groups and in recreational social contexts in which young people meet
- About alcoholic challenges, videos and images on the web and in the mass media

### Preparation and materials

- Scheme to be filled in for each group in which, divided into columns, the resources and limits of the groups will be listed

### Method

The students will discuss, within working groups, the limits and resources within the groups of children and will try to invent stories whose protagonists are children of their own age in which the positive and negative aspects of the groups and phenomena connected to them (challenges on the web, road accidents...)

Subsequently, each group will try to stage, with a short representation, “skit”, the short stories collected and will try to compare the stories and the themes that emerge.

## Session 5 – Scientific session

### Overview

In this lesson, students will collect scientific information on what alcohol is, on the physical and psychological damage it can create, on the difference between the organism of children and adults

### Learning Outcomes

Students will become more aware of:

- On the nature of alcohol, from a scientific point of view
- On the growth and functioning of one's organism
- On the risks and damages to which alcohol can lead from various points of view (physical, psychological, social, relational, emotional, family)

### Preparation and materials

- Posters, images, drawings, articles

### Method

The students will discuss, within working groups, the information collected, they will draw up a poster which they will then share with the rest of the class.

## Video session 6

### Overview

In this session, the students view and discuss the three videos developed in the project as a final and integration moment of the entire process.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will become more aware of:

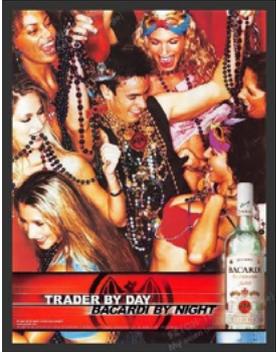
- Of the complexity of the phenomenon of alcohol
- Of himself and of his own growth, identifying himself with the protagonists of the films

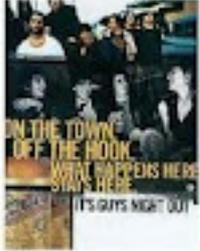
### Method

The students will view the three films, share the experiences aroused, comparing themselves in the class group. This moment will serve as a final sharing space to summarize all the issues and aspects related to the theme of alcoholic beverages.

## Mr Clean



<b>How we interpret multimedia messages</b>			
			
<b>1 + 2 + 3 = Behavioral choices</b>			
<p><b>1</b></p> <p>When we get messages from the media, we get them in two ways: logically and emotionally. Our logical side asks “is this message realistic?” and “Is this message correct?” Our emotional side asks “Do I like what this message is telling me?”</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Over time, as we are exposed to the same message again and again, we internalize or reject the message by asking ourselves, “Do I want to be like this?” We make this decision based on our logical thinking, as well as our emotional feelings. Researchers have found that our emotional feelings can override our more sensitive and logical side.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Whether or not we are influenced by a media message depends on our thoughts, feelings and expectations of the promoted behaviour. In other words, let’s consider “what will happen if I mimic what the people in this ad are doing?” If you’ve decided to accept a message, chances are you’ll consider positive consequences. If you’re prone to rejecting a message, you’re more likely to consider the negative consequence</p>	<p><b>behavioral choices</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">               OR   </div>

Study of beer																			
 <p>Budweiser</p>	<p>Confident, hip</p>	<p>King of Beers</p>	<p>“ Be part of the crowd that ‘gets’ it ”</p>																
	<p>Cool, hip, young</p>	<p>The Beer of Friends</p>	<p>“ Our drinker experience life ”</p>																
 <p>Coors Light</p>	<p>Cool, hip, sophomore</p>	<p>Cold, from the Rockies</p>	<p>“ Makes you cooler (we are not snobs) ”</p>																
 <p>Coors</p>	<p>Real, confident, legendary</p>	<p>The Original</p>	<p>“</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1125 1424 1370 1597"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>Drink Coors and be an original ”</p>																

Ad analytics			
Judging from the ads for each of the following brands, record what you think each brand's personality might be, how it might be positioned in the market (the slogan), and the promise it makes to consumers (what message does it convey about the product?).			
Brand name	Personality	Position	Promise

### References and online resources

Children, alcohol and advertising - Messages about drinking

( <https://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/kids-alcohol-and-advertising-lesson-1-messages-about-drinking> )

Children, alcohol and advertising - Interpretation of media messages

( <https://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/kids-alcohol-and-advertising-lesson-4-interpreting-media-messages> )

Beer rebranding. Only way to win. Market study Beer Rebranding.

( <https://www.stealingshare.com/beer-rebranding/> )

## 03 Closing meetings with parents and teachers of preteens

### Premise

At the end of the course with the children, it is important to carry out closing courses with the teachers and parents in order to review the adults of pre-adolescent references.

These meetings represent a space for synthesis, comparison, exchange, re-elaboration and revision of the entire journey made so far.

Meeting teachers and parents is a way to work indirectly with the children and on the relationship they have with the adults of reference.

### Ideas and stimuli

#### Meetings with teachers.

You can decide to divide the meetings, first organizing a moment of feedback with the teachers and then with the parents.

In meetings with teachers it will be useful to hear the opinion of the teachers present during the course, collect their observations and opinions, regarding how the sessions went and how the students participated.

It is an important moment of sharing in which it will be possible to reflect on several levels, on the children in general, on the specific class group, with its own history and characteristics and on the individual student, with his peculiarities, his efforts and his resources .

It will be interesting to note the relational dynamics that emerged within the class during the course.

These observations will serve to integrate the image one has of the group and of the individual student, seen from a perspective that is not simply didactic but global, all- round , taking into account the various aspects of its identity in the making.

With the teachers it will be possible to use a more technical terminology capable of going into the depths to understand and grasp the fragility, concerns, resources that emerged during the intervention and to be able to reflect on how it is possible, if it is deemed useful, to intervene in a more targeted way.

#### Meetings with parents.

In the meetings with the parents, the presence of the teachers who followed the classes would be useful in order to have the multiplicity of observations and perspectives.

With parents, it is necessary to use simple and clear language, given the possibility of a

varied presence of family situations. In some cases, great delicacy and the ability to grasp any situations at risk or discomfort, linked to this issue or to topics connected to it, are required.

During the meeting with the parents, it will be possible to ask if the children have brought home any stories or experiences regarding the work done in class or if the parents themselves have caught, from their behaviour, small phrases, expressions, moods, such as their children have experienced these moments.

It is important with them to start again from the presentation meeting and ask if, in the meantime, there have been reflections or shared comments on what they heard and experienced in that specific meeting.

We will proceed to resume the work done with the students, describing the activities in greater detail and explaining their general meaning. You will always remain on a group level without referring to individual pupils, to respect each other's privacy. If any particular situation should emerge, the parents will be told that it can be discussed at a later time, in a private interview.

It will be possible to view the work carried out by the students and reflections will begin on the matter, on the single theme addressed and on the entire course.

It will be possible to conclude the meeting by showing the video pills created specifically for the parents in the project as a moment of synthesis and to provide a space for subsequent comparison and exchange of opinions.

At the end, the parents will be asked if the initiative has led to changes in the image that parents had with respect to alcoholic beverages, if they have acquired new tools to initiate or resume a dialogue with their children on this topic.

In these meetings, it is important to give a unified, articulated and global view of the work carried out with the young people, trying to assign meaning to the individual activities and placing them in a broader framework.

The purpose of these meetings is to involve parents and teachers in understanding the importance of drinking alcohol at a young age, inserting it into the broader theme of growing up and becoming aware and responsible adults, with respect to oneself and others.

For this reason it is important not to lose sight of the adult's perspective, integrating it with the developmental perspective of the children. We will try to explain the articulation of the intervention and the correlation between the different themes.

What emerged in the work done with the young people will be told, creating an area of exchange on which to debate and confront each other.

An attitude of listening and openness will be maintained towards teachers and parents who will bring their perspective, sometimes different or complementary, in order to integrate it and create a multidimensional vision that integrates the different points of view.

With both teachers and parents, these moments can be a stimulus, a beginning for the continuation of the work that they, with different roles and in different contexts, will continue with the students.

These meetings are a way to give each protagonist (students, teachers and parents) meaning and value and see themselves and others in a new light.

## 04 Follow-up and suggestions to be given to the organization of schools

### What can the school do?

There are specialized services (for addictions, youth support, etc.) that can act in schools to encourage prevention, reflection and action.

Goals:

- Create a reference group for reflection and action composed, if possible, of different stakeholders: students, teachers, educators, psychological, medical and social support staff, parents, and even in some cases local authorities and the police. School staff have a key role as they will be alongside young people throughout their schooling. The specialized staff is above all an information point; school supervisors will observe the continuity of the projects and policies highlighted in the school.
- **Help participants understand their concerns** about alcohol and substances. This reflection requires **working on everyone's representations of** substance use, what is allowed or not, the reasons that can lead people to use them, what this use means, who to contact when you have a problem with substances, etc. . Working with students is essential. For example, teachers or educators can create a charter in collaboration with students: everyone can identify with it and commit to respecting it.
- **Highlight what can be done at school**, starting from resources, past and current projects, the desire to change, etc. For example:
  - » Have a **clear rule** about what can and can't be done in school. If serious problems occur, the possible consequences and the processes to be followed must also be known.
  - » Prioritize a **broad educational policy** that takes into account norms and values.
  - » Take care of the general atmosphere of the school. **A positive school climate** is determined by various factors, such as: contact between teachers and students, between management and students, support for students, recreational activities and opportunities for students to participate in school policy.
  - » **Helping young people assert themselves** and trust themselves can be a lever for action on the part of teachers, educators and parents. As? Give them a sense of value, develop their critical mind (about advertising for example), help them make their choice and stand by their side, discuss and listen, so as to set up a relationship where they will feel they exist as a person and not only as children or as teenagers.

## Follow-up and suggestions

At the end of the entire articulation of the intervention it seems important to offer feedback to all the bodies that make up the school, first of all, to the Headmaster with specific, pre-established moments.

It may be useful to draw up a report that takes into account all the chapters of which the intervention is divided and all the protagonists who have benefited from and brought the project to life: from children to teachers to parents.

The report should include:

- the actions that led to the realization of the project, all the moments of the process, how it was born, why, its development.
- The times in which the entire intervention was articulated.
- All the protagonists: the students, the teachers involved, the parents, any experts.
- The contents covered in the various meetings with teachers and parents and the contents of the various sessions addressed to the students.
- What emerged from the various working groups, ideas, opinions, relational dynamics, reflections, difficulties, strong points of the various groups, classes and individual students.
- The conclusions reached at the end of the articulation of the intervention. The conclusions include any conclusions reported by the various protagonists to whom the project was addressed. It will be necessary to specify whether the set objectives have been achieved or whether expectations have been disregarded.
- Any future planning. They may include the desire and/or request on the part of the various protagonists to re-propose the intervention in future years or the possibility of enlarging the initiative's field of action.

The text should not only contain the meetings held with each of them but should serve as a broader scope to increase awareness among the various representatives of the school and as a basis for a possible open dialogue also with citizens and institutions.

The project acquires greater significance if the path achieved with the students does not remain an extemporaneous moment, limited in time and space. It is important that it becomes an integral part of a wider planning and training by the school and is not limited only to the purely didactic aspect but contemplates the complexity that the children will face, becoming the adults of tomorrow and marking the fate of our future.

It is essential that the school has a global approach centered on the person that takes into account all the different aspects of identity (bodily, affective, relational, emotional, social,

cognitive).

It is extremely important to maintain, within the school context, profound attention, an atmosphere of openness and acceptance, an ability to listen and dialogue between adults and children who know how to recognize and grasp signs that may cause concern and alarm.

It is essential to integrate sensitive issues, such as those of alcohol, within the educational program, touching them and deepening them in the individual disciplines.

It will be essential to create moments of exchange with parents on adolescent issues, on risks and developmental fragility, to create and/or consolidate educational alliances in favor of minors, in order to build networks, relational links that support and contain the developmental path of children .

For this reason it seems important to pay attention to every phase of the process started, maintaining an open and continuous dialogue between all the members of the institute and between school and family and school and territory.

The school has a fundamental role of training, growth, responsibility towards the students. In this sense, the school has an arduous task, central from a social point of view. It is the crossroads of many needs: individual, family, collective and social.

The school thus plays different roles, both towards the students and their families, and towards society and the collective good.

The school must be a spokesperson for the needs, hardships, worries, hopes of the young generations and can also become a bridge between families and institutions, raising public awareness of sensitive issues, including alcohol, promoting greater awareness on the matter.

This awareness can become the basis for a concrete mobilization involving various institutional positions and lead to a broadening of perspective on the issue.

For this, it is necessary to broaden the horizon thinking not only of paying attention to these issues as something ongoing, a basis to be reposed, integrated with the various school disciplines, but also as an element that does not remain closed to the school context, but that it can also receive attention and listening to the citizens, to those who hold institutional offices, to the governors who hold the fate of our territories and our social lives in their hands.

The school must increasingly become a spokesperson for the needs of children and a sounding board for risks and concerns, for the gray areas that can arise in their lives and which, inevitably, can show different implications which, in relapse, can involve the whole society.



# 04

## Good Practices

The aim of the Educational Path is to provide schools with training material they will use to test the CUT! Educational activities. The activities include:

A preparatory meeting to introduce teachers and parents to the topic of alcohol use and abuse among teens. Drinking often starts in a family context and parents have a role to play, both as educators and as role model.

Sessions with pre-adolescents to introduce them to the topic. Every day teenagers are exposed to messages about alcohol from various sources – media, family, peers – shaping their view of it. In the activities, teachers first survey students' attitude towards alcohol, then analyse with them various messages (from advertisement, prevention campaigns...) to understand how associations are being created between alcohol and certain concepts (fun, party, danger...). In another session, students are asked to think about attitudes towards alcohol in their family environment (permission/prohibition, traditions...) and to interview family members using a common questionnaire. Then, students discuss in groups in order to understand how peers can influence them, and write and perform short stories on the subject. Finally, students collect informative material about alcohol, watched the videos developed for the project and discuss together.

The activities are followed with meetings with parents and teachers, and suggestions to organising schools.

This Educational Path is part of a larger set of guidelines, which starts with informative content, including an overview of alcohol consumption among young people in Europe and in partner countries, an explanation of what alcohol is and what its effects are, and a description of the position of alcohol in history, culture, and society.

The Educational Path has been tested in pilot schools in five countries of the CUT! partnership: France (3 teachers), Greece (4 teachers), Italy (4 teachers), Poland (5 teachers), and Romania (10 teachers). A survey was then submitted to the teachers who participated in the activity, in which they rated the Educational Path (aspects such as its usefulness, relevance, innovativeness...) and described their experience in organising it.

## 01 **Teacher feedback: Evaluation of the Multiple-Choice Questions**

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Teachers who implemented the Educational Path were asked to rate several aspects of the activities on a scale from 1 to 4. Their responses are overwhelmingly positive, almost all of them giving 3 and 4 rating to every question. The average scores throughout the five countries are as follow:

## 02 Teacher feedback: Evaluation of the Multiple-Choice Questions

Four open questions were submitted to the teachers to share their experience, comments, and suggestions related to the activities. Here is a synthesis of their answers.

1 | *Please describe the activity/ies you carried out in class and the feedback you received from students.*

Videos were shown to the students to deliver informative and scientific content. These include the awareness videos produced by the CUT! project partnership. To involve students more actively, several strategies were used:

- Mind maps: students were asked to write on a blackboard words they associate to the word “alcohol”;
- Discussions during which students shared their experience and opinions regarding alcohol;
- Interviews during which students questioned their family about their attitude to alcohol, before discussing it in class;
- Analysing advertisements to understand how alcohol are depicted in the media;
- Some teachers took other initiatives to involve the students creatively, such as creating logos, posters or comics, or writing articles for their school journal.

2 | *Which topic, related to the topic of alcohol, has received the most attention from kids? And which one was the most difficult?*

The topic highlighted most frequently is predictably the harmful effects of alcohol on health and the body, and how it can affect development when you start drinking at a young age. Behavioural effects and their impact on relationships with family and friends also came up in several countries. Advertising, brand messaging, the image of alcohol transmitted in the media and by celebrities were topics addressed by the teachers that drew the attention of students, opening their eyes on the ways the media influence their perception of alcohol. Teachers in France especially reported challenges in discussing those matters with parents and families.

3 | *In your experience, what was the benefit of the course with the boys?*

Awareness is the most frequently mentioned benefit. Those sessions gave teachers the opportunity to provide useful and accurate information regarding the dangers of alcohol, and to open student’s eyes on how alcohol has been trivialised in their culture. The activities encouraged the students to open up about their experience with alcohol and their feelings about it, and taught them they can talk about it safely. Gender issues were also raised;

drinking may be seen as a sign of manhood, and some types of alcohol tend to be associated with one gender or the other (beer and spirits for men, wine for women).

#### 4 | *Final thoughts and suggestions.*

Teachers report positive experiences running the activity with students, and suggest it should be repeated in the future.

## 03 **Conclusions from teachers in Greece**

Based on the feedback received from the teachers, it is evident that the testing of the CUT! Educational Path has yielded meaningful and insightful results. The diverse range of activities carried out in class, including discussions, video analysis, mind mapping, and creative exercises, facilitated an engaging and informative learning experience for the students. It is clear that the programme fostered a deepened awareness and understanding of the risks and consequences associated with alcohol consumption among pre-adolescents.

However, the feedback also sheds light on areas where the programme can be enhanced. Understanding complex concepts like the '3Ps' of brand messaging was challenging for some students, suggesting that more clarification or concrete examples may be beneficial in future renditions of the programme.

The benefits of the programme, particularly for the boys, were notably positive. The CUT! project provided not just information, but also encouraged critical thinking and personal agency when it comes to alcohol consumption, which is crucial in alcohol prevention efforts. The teachers' recommendations for future seminars and continued updates in schools underscore the value and potential of the CUT! Educational Path in playing an integral role in alcohol prevention education. However, the difficulty experienced in involving parents points to an area for further exploration and improvement.

In conclusion, the testing of the CUT! Educational Path was a fruitful endeavour, providing valuable insights into its effectiveness, impact, and areas for improvement. It demonstrated the importance and potential of such initiatives in equipping pre-adolescents with the knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges related to alcohol consumption. The continued refinement and implementation of this Educational Path, therefore, holds promising prospects for enhancing alcohol abuse prevention efforts among young boys and girls.

## 04 Conclusions from teachers in France

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Feedback received from teachers shows that the CUT! educational path has yielded positive and encouraging results. The diversity of activities carried out in class, the mind map, the discussions, the analysis of videos and advertisements, the creation of articles, questionnaires for the parents have promoted the awareness of the pupils in the face of alcohol consumption on risks and consequences.

During these exercises, speaking was free, fluid, the exchanges constructive.

The difficulty lies in involving the parents, who in France still consider the subject taboo.

In conclusion, the CUT! educational path constitutes a precious aid in the awareness of pre-adolescents in the face of this problem and provides the necessary knowledge to prevent the abuse of alcohol consumption.

## 05 Conclusions from teachers in Italy

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Overall, the course proved to be valid and clear in all its parts and easy to adopt in several school contexts, including within a more general project on health prevention. In the future, one could think about a greater involvement of parents in seminars dedicated to the use and abuse of alcohol by preadolescents and the influence of their own actions on their children's choices. Another possible suggestion could be an online meeting between the pupils from the European countries involved to share their experiences.

The project was really effective, because it did not only convey content, but provided personal involvement at the level of expressing one's own experience through the externalisation of emotions and ideas. The activities were motivating as they included practical steps to involve the pupils. It would be important to publicise the course more widely by means of online and print sources. More teachers and students could be involved with short training and refresher courses on the subject. The benefits of the project are also considerable for a future investment in the younger generation in terms of preventing alcohol abuse, fostering self-awareness and self-control and the development of critical thinking.

## 06 Conclusions from teachers in Poland

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On the basis of the answers and feedback offered by the teachers in the questionnaire, it is clear that the Educational Path the CUT! Project is a high-quality result. The teachers appreciated its usefulness, clarity, and the great variety of activities to carry out in class, especially the video pills, mind map ideas, and discussions. The involvement of the students and the knowledge they gained during the testing phase prove its value in the education on the damaging effects of alcohol use and abuse among pre-adolescents

## 07 Conclusions from teachers in Romania

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The activities, according to the answers of the teachers involved in the testing, but also based on personal experience, were a real success. Based on the feedback of the participants, a major impact was achieved very subtly through the means proposed for raising awareness about alcohol abuse. Most of the secondary school students from our institution were involved in the activities, children aged between 11-14 years. Presenting the activities of our associated partners, they found them very interesting, applying this guide together with children from their schools. We can create new partnerships through which other teachers and students can also benefit from the educational path in the shortest time.

The video pills were used, and they are interesting. The scientific information that presents the risks for young people was heard for the first time for most of the participants, as well as the understanding that consuming alcohol with parents, relatives or friends is not a normal thing. The parents understood that listening and support can be beneficial in children's lives. For the boys the benefits were obvious. In addition to the critical thinking that was developed, the pre-adolescents received a lot of information.

Involvement in the Educational Path of the Cut! Project is a great joy. We believe that through our entire activity, we had the opportunity to offer complementary experiences to the educational system for a significant number of pre-adolescents in Romania. Through the project we have the opportunity to contribute to the awareness of the effects of alcohol consumption among minors and to produce a positive change in their lives.

## 08 General conclusion

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The Cut! Educational Path aims to provide students with information about the danger of consuming alcohol, especially at a young age, and to freely discuss about the topic. In these respects, the activities have been successful. Students in five countries were actively involved in discussions and activities, helping lift some taboos around alcohol use. A point of attention is the difficulties in involving the parents, as reported by teachers in several countries, suggesting this should be an area of focus for future instalments. Despite this reservation, teachers believe in the usefulness and effectiveness of the CUT! Educational Path and believe it should be organised on a regular basis.



Preventing alcohol abuse  
among pre-adolescents