



**STOP**

DUTCH  
INSTITUTE FOR  
ALCOHOL POLICY

## Alcohol Age Limits: a new topic for cooperative action in the EU!

Legislation, enforcement and research on alcohol age limit policies in Europe;  
results of the 'Eyes on Ages' study  
Wim van Dalen Vilnius 16-12-2013

## WHO Global Strategy to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol: “Best Buys” for alcohol

- Regulating commercial and public availability of alcohol
- Using pricing policies such as excise tax increases on alcoholic beverages
- Restricting or banning alcohol advertising and promotions



## WHO Global Strategy to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol: “Best Buys” for alcohol

- **Regulating commercial and public availability of alcohol**
- Using pricing policies such as excise tax increases on alcoholic beverages
- Restricting or banning alcohol advertising and promotions

## Eyes on Ages

- Study on legal age limits for alcohol in Europe commissioned by the EHAC of the EC; (Dec. 2012- June 2013)
- Focus on all different aspects of the implementation of age limits: national legislation; enforcement strategies; compliance research
- Data collection in all EU member states by means of a questionnaire to 28 MS + Switzerland and Norway



## General goal of the tender

### GOAL

- General objective: *...to contribute to the protection of children and young people from harmful alcohol consumption by collecting good practises in the enforcement of legal age limits for selling and serving alcohol.*

## Research team

- **Peter Anderson**, *professor and alcohol consultant* (SP)
- **Carina Amréus**, *public health planning officer*, SNIPH (S)
- **Miriam Sahlfeld**, *head of legal affairs*, SAB (CH)
- **Wim van Dalen**, *director*, STAP (NL)
- **Joost Mulder**, *head of department of local alcohol policy*, STAP (NL)
- **Jeroen de Greeff**, *researcher*, STAP (NL)
- **Marian Gacsbaranyi**, *policy maker*, NVWA (NL)
- **Thomas Karlsson**, *vice head of the Alcohol and Drug Unit*, TLI (Fi)
- **Ismo Tuominen**, *Ministerial Counsellor*, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Fi).



## Final products of the study

1. **Eyes on Ages**; *A research on alcohol age limit policies in European Member States. Legislation, enforcement and research*; Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP) Utrecht; The Netherlands (2013).

2. **Case Study Report**; *Good practices to enhance the compliance with minimum age limits for selling and serving alcoholic beverages in EU Member States*; Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP); Utrecht The Netherlands (2013).

3. **Eyes on Ages Network Conference**; *Summary of the day*; Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy STAP Utrecht; The Netherlands (2013).

• [http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/policy/index_en.htm)

• [http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/eyes\\_on\\_ages\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/eyes_on_ages_report_en.pdf)

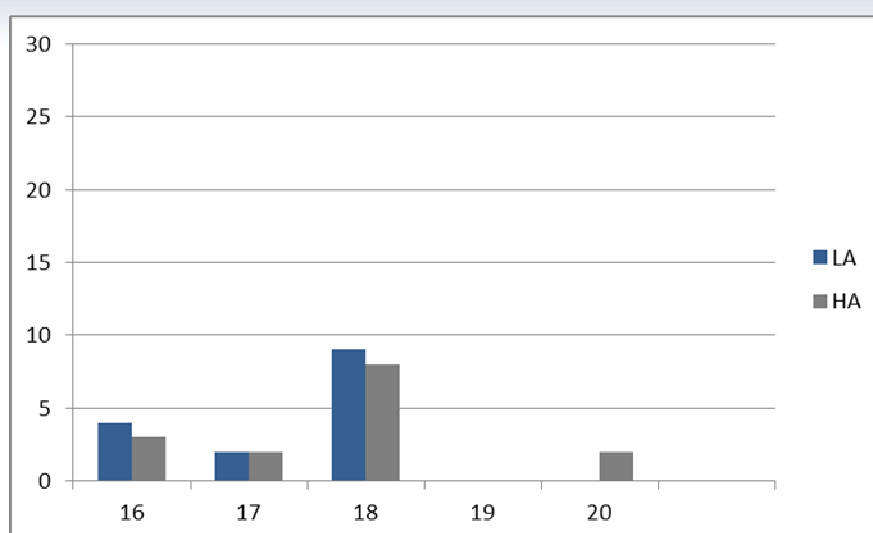


## Overview legal age limits in Europe for selling alcohol

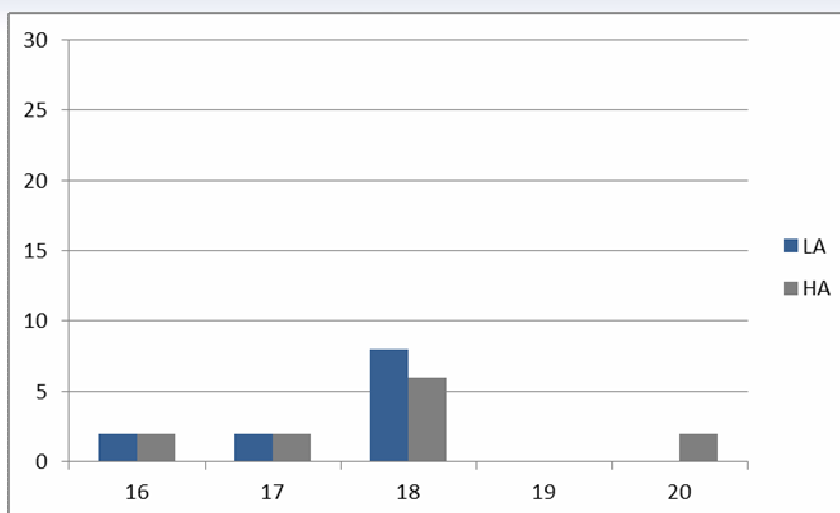
	Onpremise		Offpremise	
	LA	HA	LA	HA
Norway	18	20	18	20
Finland, Sweden	18	18	18	20
<b>17 Countries</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
Denmark	18	18	16	18
Cypres, Malta	17	17	17	17
Belg, Germ, Switzerland	16	18	16	18
Austria, Luxemb, Portugal	16	16	16	16



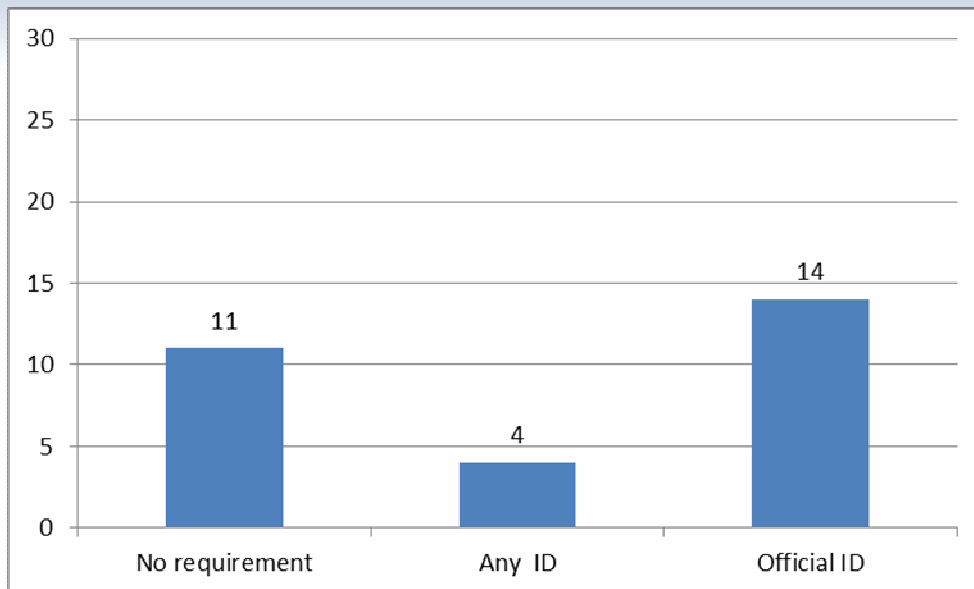
## Age limits for public consumption (n=15)



## Age limits for public possession (n=12)



## Legal requirements for establishing the age



## Why not 100% compliance?

- Buyers look older than they really are and sellers therefore overestimate their age;
- Minors let friends, who are of legal age, purchase alcohol for them;
- Seller's inability to calculate the age from an identification document;
- ....commercial interest...

## Example of age validation: Ageviewer (Netherlands)

- Remote age validation for retail, hospitality service and internet sales
- Compliance studies prove that it is almost impossible for minors to buy age restricted products where the system is applied\*
- Reduction in costs of enforcement



\*Joris J. van Hoof\*, Jordy F. Gosselt, and Menno D.T. de Jong;  
Shop Floor Compliance with Age Restrictions for Tobacco Sales:  
Remote Versus In-Store Age Verification; Journal of Adolescent  
Health 46 (2010) 197–199.



## Enforcement bodies

- Police is involved in the majority of the member states



## Specific enforcement officers

Dutch enforcement officers make use of students during enforcement actions.



## Enforcement bodies differ in:

- Organisation level

- National
- Regional
- Local

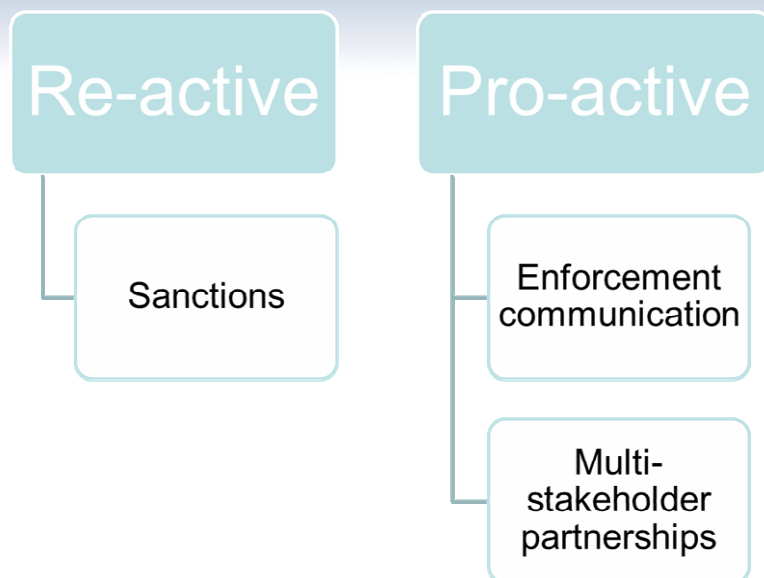


- Type of officers

- General
- Specific

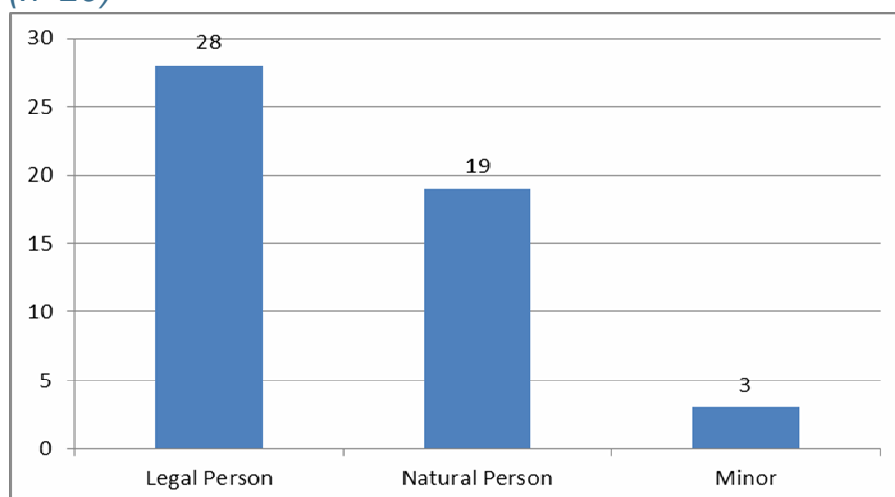


## Enforcement strategies



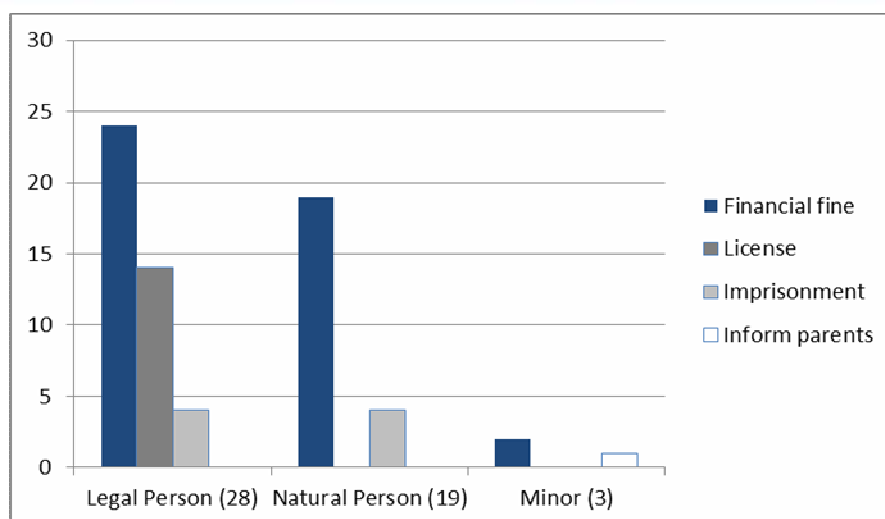
## Who is being sanctioned: the owner, the seller, the minor?

- Situation in on- and off- premise (bars, supermarkets, etc.)  
(n=29)



## Type of sanctions

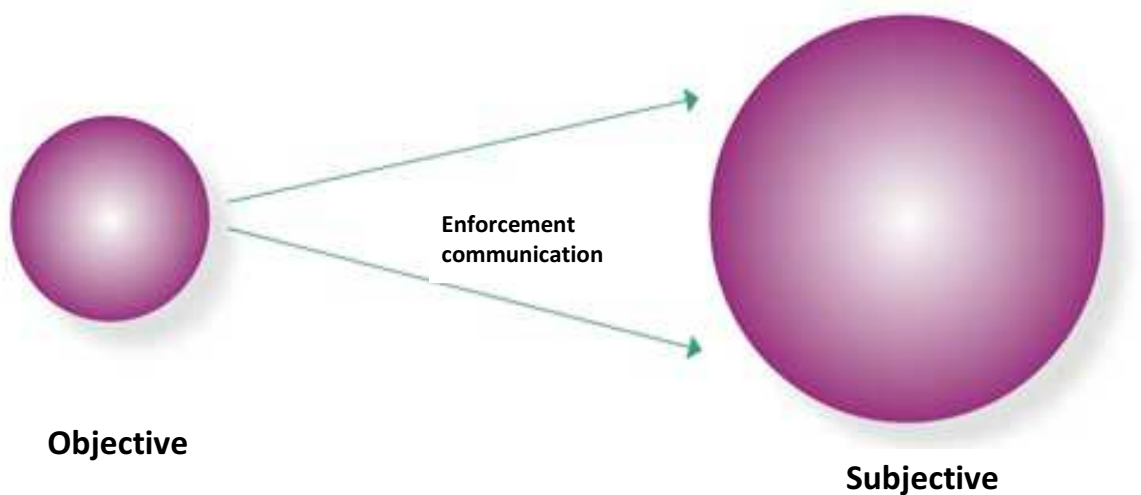
- On- and off- premise (bars, supermarkets, etc.)



## Impact of imposing sanctions

- Hardly any specific impact research in Europe
- Swedish 'Kronoberg model' proven to be effective by
  - Convicting sellers of alcohol to minors
  - Giving extensive media attention to this conviction
  - Contact parents of minor(s)

## Enforcement communication



## Compliance research: Test purchasing research/ mystery shopping

- 17 countries make use of mystery shopping
- 13 out of 17 countries use real minors
- Compliance varies between 0% and 93%
- Only 9 countries have national covered data



## Results compliance research vary enormously

;some examples of results

- Estonia 35,4% (off-premise)
- Germany 65,1% (general)
- Netherlands 28% (general)
- Poland 23% (general)
- Portugal 44% (general)
- Romania 0% (one city)
- Spain 19% (general; excl liquor))
- Sweden 93% (off-premise)
- Switzerland 69,6 (general)
- UK 0% (off-primise)



## Sanctions imposed after test purchasing

- Only 6 countries can use test purchasers for enforcement purposes (UK, CH, AT, HR, SK, DE)
- Uk research: 60% reduction in sales to minors after introducing legal accepted test purchasing

### Sources

- 1. Drug and Alcohol Findings, 2008. Internationally proven community alcohol crime and harm reduction projects feasible in Britain. [http://findings.org.uk/docs/bulletins/Bull\\_07\\_11\\_08.htm#community](http://findings.org.uk/docs/bulletins/Bull_07_11_08.htm#community).
- 2. emails from Professor R. Hodgson, Research Director, Alcohol Research UK ([ray.hodgson@alcoholresearchuk.org](mailto:ray.hodgson@alcoholresearchuk.org)), 19.12.2012 and 22.12.12, inter alia confirming that it was the Swansea research that was referred to in Hansard.
- 3. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo001023/>





**Thanks for your attention**

**Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP)**

Postbus 9769 | 3506 GT | Utrecht | The Netherlands

T: +31 (0)30 6565 041 | M: +31 (0) 6 53295544

[wvandalen@stap.nl](mailto:wvandalen@stap.nl)

[jdegreeff@stap.nl](mailto:jdegreeff@stap.nl)

[www.stap.nl](http://www.stap.nl)

11-12-2013

