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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Onpremise</th>
<th>Offpremise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland, Sweden</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Countries</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cypres, Malta</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belg, Germ, Switzerland</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Luxemb, Portugal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age limits for public consumption (n=15)
Age limits for public possession

(n=12)
Legal requirements for establishing the age

- No requirement: 11
- Any ID: 4
- Official ID: 14
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

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

Re-active
- Sanctions

Pro-active
- Enforcement communication
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships
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-premise)
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
- 2. emails from Professor R. Hodgson, Research Director, Alcohol Research UK (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.
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
jdegreeff@stap.nl
www.stap.nl
11-12-2013