

The costs of alcohol use

It is estimated that each year 138,000 European Union citizens aged 15 – 64 years, also the working age population, die from alcohol-related ill health and injury. Moreover, lost productivity costs feature as the dominant element in social cost studies arising from the harm done by alcohol, comprising about half of the total social cost of alcohol to the European Union.

Europe has the highest, and still increasing, per person level of alcohol consumption in the world. This has significant economic, safety, legal and health implications for workplaces. Alcohol use during or before work, along with excessive consumption of alcohol generally, makes accidents more likely and it can affect workers' performance, and increase absenteeism and presenteeism. It can also affect the social climate in the workplace and impact on an organisation's image. All of these consequences can lead to loss of productivity and harm employers' profitability.

Responding to these challenges, EWA has:

- completed a comprehensive review of the scientific evidence on the impact of alcohol in the workplace;
- produced a series of case studies of existing good practice in addressing alcohol-related issues within workplace settings;
- building on the EWA review and good practices, developed, implemented and evaluated innovative, evidence-based alcohol interventions in 55 workplaces benefiting almost 11,500 employees across 11 European countries.

Together, this ground-breaking work has helped to build the case for alcohol-related interventions within Europe's workplaces, across the private, public and third sectors – from SMEs to multinational organisations and in diverse economic sectors.

Outcomes

The two key outcomes are a cross-cultural toolkit and policy recommendations. Both derive from the evidence and good practice lessons generated by the project.

Key findings

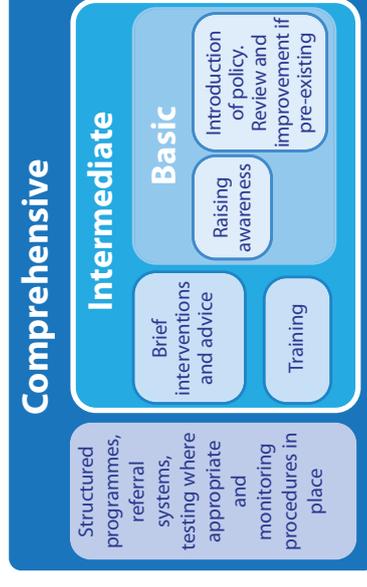
- Workplace alcohol policies have strong support from employees and introducing them can change corporate culture, procedures and practices in relation to alcohol.
- Alcohol-related interventions in the workplace can raise awareness about alcohol-related harm, reduce risky drinking and grow support for workplace policies.
- Organisations with alcohol policies are more likely to secure health and workplace benefits from interventions than those that do not have a policy in place – in particular by reducing drinking levels amongst risky drinkers.

Toolkit

Purpose: The toolkit is for a wide range of stakeholders including employers, occupational and workplace health professionals, trade union representatives, public health service providers, human resource managers and public health policy makers and commissioners. It sets out:

- how to establish effective alcohol interventions
 - key components for good practice alcohol interventions in workplace settings.
- Overview:** The toolkit is practical and simple to use. Available in hard and on-line versions, it comprises:
- A step-by-step guide
 - Key tasks and check list
 - Key tips
 - Examples from EWA
 - Links to additional on-line resources

Focus: The toolkit identifies key considerations in developing workplace alcohol interventions. It is structured around 3 levels of intervention: basic, intermediate and comprehensive and sets out how organisations can act to deliver these.



Policy recommendations

EWA restates the importance of pursuing effective alcohol policies and laws to reduce alcohol consumption and harm, including, advertising bans, taxation, minimum pricing and health information labels.

At EU, national and regional levels, EWA further recommends that:

- public health agendas should include a focus on workplaces as a setting for alcohol-related health promotion and the deployment of comprehensive alcohol policies;
- alcohol policy should aim to raise awareness amongst workplaces about the considerable impact that alcohol can have on safety, performance, productivity and reputation, and promote “alcohol free” workplaces.

EWA also recommends that companies and organisations should:

- adopt a comprehensive, written, alcohol workplace policy;
- implement health-related alcohol programmes;
- pro-actively make their workplaces “alcohol free”;
- utilise the EWA toolkit

EWA

European Workplace and Alcohol

EWA, a project co financed from the EU Public Health Programme 2009-2011, has involved partners from 13 European countries with the following objectives:

- Raise awareness about alcohol-related harm;
- Bring about organisational and individual change that leads to safer alcohol consumption;
- Reduce, in the longer term, alcohol-related absenteeism, presenteeism and injuries

Associated Partners



Collaborating Partners



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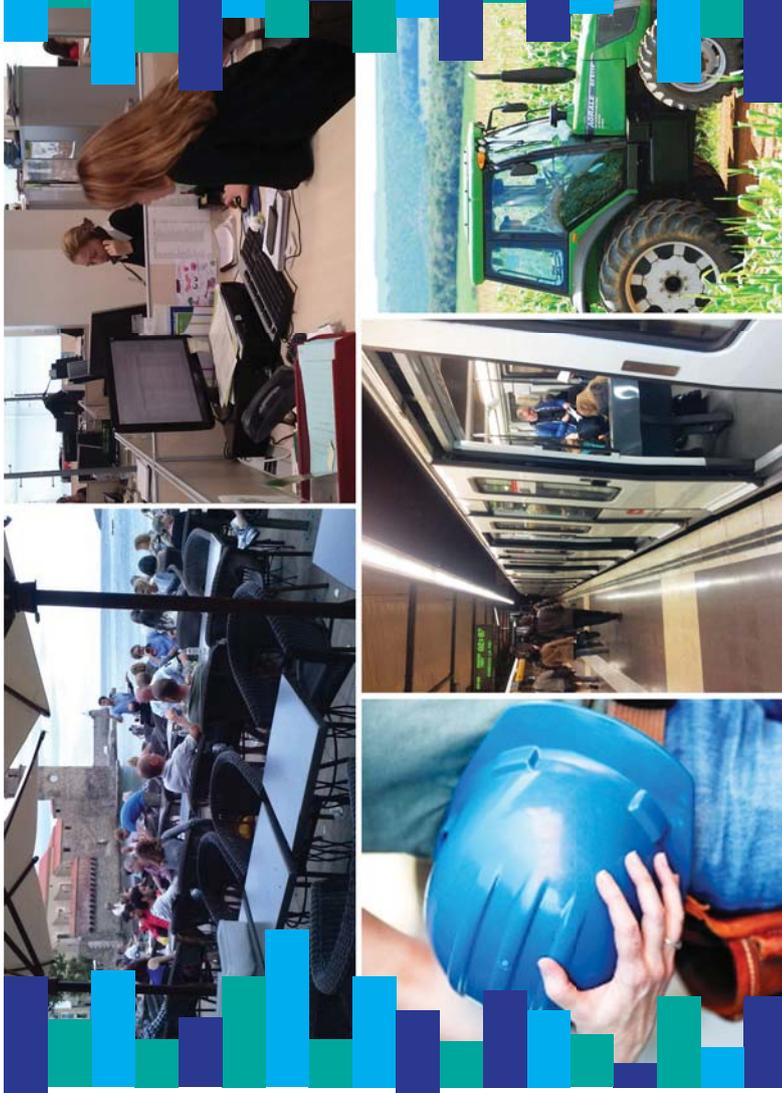
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