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## EWA Conference - Key Findings and Lessons Learned

The EWA Conference was organised in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 22 November 2013.

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## Presentation of the EWA Toolkit

One of the key outcomes of the EWA project is a toolkit for alcohol-related interventions in workplace settings. The toolkit provides guidance for developing and implementing alcohol preventive interventions within workplace settings.

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## Turning Point Scotland - EWA Pilot

During 2013 TPS participated in the EWA pilot and worked in partnership with Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS). At the time of the pilot intervention TPS were in the process of moving to a zero tolerance alcohol and drug policy which was a culture change for the organisation.

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## Eurocare: Reflections on Future Work on Alcohol and the Workplace

Secretary General, Mariann Skar, reflects on future work on alcohol and the workplace.

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*The EWA project has received funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme.*



## EWA Conference - Key findings and Lessons Learned

The EWA conference took place in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 22 November 2013, and marked the end of the EWA project. The conference gathered a wide audience from all over Europe which met to learn about the EWA project and discuss issues related to alcohol and the workplace.

*Joan Colom, Program on Substance Abuse, Public Health Agency, Government of Catalonia (GENCAT)*



*The EWA Conference in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 22 November 2013.*

Why EWA? Because alcohol consumption has significant economic, safety and legal implications for workplaces. Alcohol use during or before work, along with excessive consumption of alcohol generally, makes accidents more likely and can affect workers' performance, absenteeism, presenteeism and lead to loss of production.

It can also have detrimental effects on the social climate in the workplace and on an organisation's image. All of these consequences of alcohol can hit employers' profitability resulting for instance in lost productivity costs that represent about half of the total social cost of alcohol to the European Union.

Also because, EWA researchers were convinced, that alcohol prevention at workplace could be beneficial and offer return on investment but some more research was needed to evidence their effectiveness and there was also a need to harmonize the content and level of development of the this interventions across Europe.

### What have we done?

The project aimed to contribute to raise awareness about the importance of alcohol-related harm at workplace, to show how to bring about organisational and individual change that leads to safer alcohol consumption and in a longer term, contribute to reduce alcohol-related absenteeism, presenteeism and injuries. To do so, the following consecutive actions have been done.

- Carry on a comprehensive review of scientific evidence on the impact of alcohol in the workplace;
- Compile a series of case studies of existing good practice in addressing alcohol-related issues within workplaces;
- Develop, implement and evaluate innovative, evidence-based, alcohol interventions in 55 workplaces with over 9,400 employees across 11 European countries.
- To launch policy recommendations and a toolkit on how to develop and implement alcohol preventive actions in the work place

## What we have learned

EWA has shown that alcohol preventive interventions at workplace can help change attitudes, raise awareness and change drinking behaviour among workforce. The external intervention show better results on knowledge, consumption and behaviour than internal ones and basic intervention has more impact in knowledge whereas comprehensive interventions help more in changing behaviour. The majority of participating employees and employers support the introduction of alcohol policies at the workplace and having a workplace alcohol policy in place to help change the corporate culture around alcohol. Main benefits from implementing effective alcohol intervention for employers are improved workers health and welfare, safety at work and productivity and reduced costs associated with the reduction of accidents, absenteeism, and presenteeism. In addition, improved working environment and corporate image of the company and contribution to corporate social responsibility.

In summary, EWA has proven that is possible to implement such type of interventions across Europe, showing that they are well received and valued by both employers and employees and that a shift in alcohol policies at workplace is possible.

## What does EWA recommend?

EWA recommendations for EU, national and regional policy-makers:

- public health policy and action should include a focus on workplaces as a setting for alcohol-related health promotion and support the widespread deployment of comprehensive alcohol policies;
- alcohol policy should incorporate raising awareness amongst companies/organisations and their representative bodies about the considerable impact that alcohol can have on safety, performance, productivity and reputation, and promote “alcohol free”

*continues on page 5*

## Actions to raise awareness within workplaces for employees

### Essential actions:

Deliver key messages about alcohol consumption and reducing alcohol-related harm

### Raising awareness for employees often includes a focus on:

- Informing and creating awareness about the risks related to the use of alcohol both in the workplace and for the health and well-being of individuals;
- Providing information on the existing availability of treatment and support including through self-referral to specialists outside the organisation;
- Explaining alcohol policies and procedures.

### Creative interventions can include interactive events that embrace:

- Fact sheets and leaflets;
- Information and campaign posters;
- Small gifts with messages;
- Alcohol unit and consumption calculator;
- Group exercises or small group discussions;
- Role play;
- Quizzes;
- Guide and manuals for workplaces (including e-versions);
- “Mocktail “bar (serving alcohol-free cocktails).



## EWA Toolkit

**One of the key outcomes of the EWA project is a toolkit for alcohol-related interventions in workplace settings.** The toolkit provides guidance for developing and implementing alcohol preventive interventions within workplace settings.

It builds on evidence and good practice lessons derived from the DG SANCO-funded European Workplace and Alcohol project. The toolkit has a specific focus on how employers and those working with workplaces can:

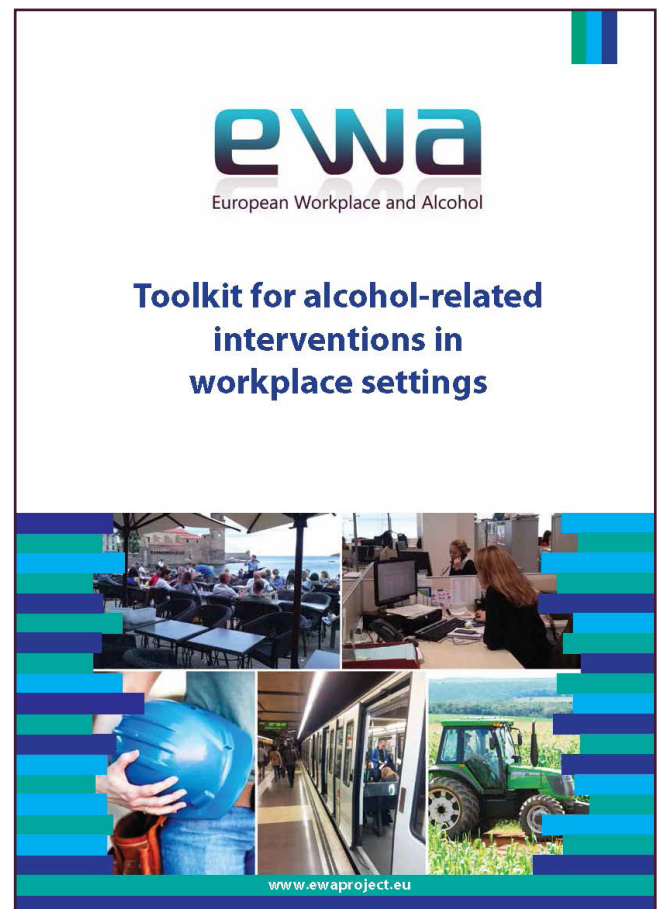
- improve workplace productivity and reduce absenteeism and presenteeism<sup>1</sup> ;
- reduce workplace accidents and make workplaces safer;
- raise awareness amongst employees about how, in relation to alcohol, they can live healthier lives
- and be more productive at work;
- support employees to change their alcohol-related behaviour to live more healthily during and outside working hours ;
- help the adoption of a workplace culture that, with respect to alcohol, is supportive of healthier living and improved workplace performance.

### Who the toolkit is for

The toolkit is aimed at 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 highlights both how to establish effective alcohol preventive interventions that can benefit employees and employers and provides insight into the rationale for promoting and commissioning such interventions. It also flags up the key components for effective alcohol interventions in workplace settings.

### How to use the toolkit

The toolkit has been designed to be practical and simple to use. It briefly explains the reasons why alcohol preventive interventions in the workplace are important and shows tactics to build and implement a workplace alcohol programme. It provides a step-by-step guide



to developing and conducting a range of interventions. Essentially, incorporating a “check-list” of factors to consider when developing or commissioning alcohol preventive interventions in workplaces. It highlights the key tasks that should be taken to establish an effective intervention.

The toolkit is available in a printed version and online at [www.ewaproject.eu](http://www.ewaproject.eu).

In addition, a series of downloadable resources that are supportive of, provide more contextual evidence for, and complement the toolkit are also available on-line.



European  
Commission



## Greeting from the European Commission

**The EWA project is a great opportunity for private and public sector organisations, public and private employers, non-governmental organisations, representatives of civil society and trade unions to help prevent harmful alcohol consumption.**

*Natacha Torres da Silva, Policy Officer, DG Health and Consumers (SANCO)*

Alcohol harm is a major public health concern in the EU, accountable for over 7% of all ill health and early deaths. Harmful alcohol consumption is a risk factor for more than 60 diseases, for accidents and injuries and is a contributory factor towards interpersonal violence. The workplace is a particularly appropriate setting for the implementation of strategies to reduce alcohol related harm. For this reason, adults and workplaces are key targets for preventive measures outlined in the EU Alcohol Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2006. This Strategy aims to

support Member States in their efforts to reduce alcohol related harm.

The results of the EWA project highlight the power of workplace-based preventive interventions targeting alcohol consumption. These have been shown to have potential to change awareness, attitudes and behaviour among the workforce. Now that this project has come to an end, we look forward to receiving updates regarding its continuation and further details of successful impacts.

## EWA Conference continued

workplaces – where possible working with companies and organisations to utilise peer to peer methods of engagement.

Recommendations for companies and organisations:

- adopt a comprehensive, written, alcohol workplace policy – for long-term impact;
- implement health-related alcohol programmes, as comprehensively as resources allow – including as part of a wider health and well-being agenda;
- pro-actively make their workplaces “alcohol free”;
- review working practices and management styles that can cause stress and perpetuate or worsen heavy drinking;
- where they have experience of alcohol policies and interventions, consider acting as “champions” to engage other companies and organisations;
- utilise the EWA toolkit as good practice guidance for workplace policies and practice.

### What comes next?

The Government of Catalonia (GENCAT) will work from now on, together with EURO CARE, towards ensuring the proper dissemination of the results arising from EWA at European level but also will try to expand and keep the EWA network alive in order to maintain the momentum and promote the exchange of experiences and if possible, discuss future developments and actions to be done, including the preparation of other projects if calls appear. GENCAT feels that further actions in this area are possible and is open and would like to listen to ideas on that direction.

All the deliverables from the EWA project will be available at the website: [www.ewaproject.eu](http://www.ewaproject.eu).

If questions and doubts please contact us by e-mail at: [ewa@gencat.cat](mailto:ewa@gencat.cat)

### Acknowledgements

GENCAT and the EWA Management team would like to thank to all the partners, associated and collaborating ones, subcontractors and enterprises involved for the huge effort done, for their motivation and immense contribution to the EWA project.

## Turning Point Scotland - EWA

**During 2013 Turning Point Scotland participated in the EWA pilot and worked in partnership with Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS). At the time of the pilot intervention TPS were in the process of moving to a zero tolerance alcohol and drug policy which was a culture change for the organisation.**

Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS) is Scotland's national charity working to reduce the harm caused by alcohol. AFS' vision is a future free from widespread health and social harm caused by alcohol. To achieve this AFS work with a range of partners including policy makers, practitioners and workplaces. AFS have worked in partnership with the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives for six years to provide training and information for workplaces across Scotland. This work has given the organisation a wealth of experience and expertise in terms of developing and delivering alcohol workplace policies and interventions, and AFS were therefore delighted to have the opportunity to be an associate partner in the EWA project. As part of the EWA project AFS delivered four pilot projects within a diverse range of workplaces in Scotland. Interventions were adapted to suit different levels of need within the organisations – from introducing workplace policies in some, to supporting the further development of an existing well-being programme. Turning Point Scotland was one of the organisations who took part in the pilot interventions.

Turning Point Scotland (TPS) is a not-for-profit voluntary organisation and registered charity that provides a wide range of person-centred, recovery-focused social care services to adults with complex and challenging support needs. These services include crisis intervention, housing support, care at home, community rehabilitation, social enterprises and residential care to eight different client groups. Support needs include substance misuse, learning disability, mental health, homelessness, criminal justice, autism, early onset dementia and Huntington's disease. The provision of this broad spectrum of services to a diverse range of clients is a unique position amongst Scottish voluntary sector care providers, as most tend to focus on one or two client groups only. TPS employs 1200 staff and operate 35 frontline services across 18 local government areas in Scotland.

During 2013 TPS participated in the EWA pilot and worked in partnership with Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS). At the time of the pilot intervention TPS were in the process of moving to a zero tolerance alcohol and drug policy which was a culture change for the organisation.

Being part of the pilot gave TPS access to a range of materials and expert advice through the partnership with AFS. Of particular benefit was the opportunity to use the EWA baseline questionnaire to get a sense of staff attitudes towards alcohol in the workplace and later to assess the impact of the alcohol policy launch and other pilot interventions. AFS provided guidance and support on the development and wording of the policy and assisted with workplace activities such as quizzes, mocktail and canapé event, on-line assessment of alcohol use using Drugmeter and provision of leaflets and other promotional material. The TPS occupational health service and employee assistance scheme were also key partners in this initiative. Being involved in the EWA pilot helped provide focus, structure and motivation and the support of AFS gave TPS confidence and credibility to not only successfully introduce this important policy to our workplace, but also to ensure that it is now embedded in the organisation's wider well-being in the workplace agenda.

For further information:

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## Eurocare reflections on alcohol and the workplace

**The European Alcohol Policy Alliance, Eurocare, is an alliance of non-governmental public health and social organisations working on the prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe.**

*Mariann Skar, Secretary General, Eurocare*

Alcohol is the world's number one risk factor for ill-health and premature death amongst the 25-59 year old age group, a core of the working age population. Europe is the heaviest drinking region of the world and alcohol is a major threat to the public health, safety and economic prosperity of EU citizens. Alcohol has been classified by the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer as a Category One carcinogen, defining it as a determinant of many types of cancer. Increased alcohol consumption is also linked to increasing levels of obesity and diabetes in European populations. Alcohol and workplace is therefore an important issue for us to include in our work on alcohol policies.

There is a direct relationship between harmful use of alcohol and the workplace. Risky and heavy drinking can damage the workplace through increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, relationships between employees as well as directly contributing to accident and injuries at work.

*“Employers can play an important role in addressing alcohol-related harm through the workplace, an opportunity to reduce direct costs and also to demonstrate corporate social responsibility”*

(Science Group of the EU Alcohol and Health Forum)

Secondly, alcohol is the number one risk factor for ill-health and premature death among working population<sup>1</sup>, and it is therefore important to look at the broader context of alcohol policies when discussing alcohol and workplace, and not reduce this issue to workplace policies alone. This can also be turned around, and workplace interventions can be used not only to address drinking in the workplace itself, but also address drinking that occurs outside the workplace but with an impact on the work environment, productivity and employers.

A third issue to include in the reflection on alcohol and workplace is the issue of workplace as an arena to reach a large segment of the working-age population with prevention work, for example identifying individuals at risk<sup>2</sup>. The workplace is in this perspective a way to reach out and arena for interventions.

All these perspectives are important when addressing a comprehensive alcohol policy, at both Member State and European level. Eurocare will continue to focus on alcohol in the workplace and also try to bring onboard stakeholders like the employers and trade union organisations. Eurocare has increased its knowledge and network by being a partner in the EWA project, and is committed to bring the finding of EWA further in our work.

<sup>1</sup> “Alcohol, work and productivity”: Scientific Opinion of the Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (2011)

<sup>2</sup> “Alcohol, work and productivity” (2011)