

*The 2017 European Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) aims to galvanize EU and national policy makers into action to address alcohol related harm in Europe. AWARH's 2017 theme is "Alcohol and Cancer" and the focus is on highlighting the avoidable risk alcohol consumption poses with regards to cancer.*

**Brussels, Belgium, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017** – Now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year, the European Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) takes place from 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017, with various activities being carried out under the theme of "Alcohol and Cancer". Research in Europe has shown that 1 in 10 Europeans do not know about the connection between alcohol and cancer, and that 1 in 5 do not believe that there is a link between cancer and the drinks that millions of us enjoy every week<sup>1</sup>. The AWARH partners are undertaking a number of activities this week which will highlight the importance of understanding the risks associated with harmful alcohol consumption.

*"Alarmingly, the burden on society of alcohol related harm continues to grow. In the WHO European region approximately 70% of adults drink alcohol<sup>2</sup>"* says **Dr Biljana Borzan MEP** who will host an AWARH event at European Parliament, in Brussels, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Dr Borzan notes that *"there is clear evidence linking alcohol to more than 60 diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular diseases such as stroke and hypertension, liver and digestive diseases, and brain diseases<sup>3</sup>. The cost of inaction, estimated at 700 billion Euros in healthcare costs alone<sup>4</sup> will only continue to rise, and Europe cannot afford to continue to let that happen"*.

At the AWARH event to be held in the European Parliament on 23<sup>rd</sup> November the AWARH partners will be issuing a Statement highlighting the link between alcohol and cancer, and asking for concrete steps to be taken to support (1) the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol, and (2) the wider dissemination of the European Code Against Cancer.

*'Sadly, the European Commission's approach to alcohol policy does not appear to have changed in the five years of AWARH's existence. If anything, we see that less and less steps are being taken to tackle the growing problem of harmful alcohol consumption'* says **Ms Mariann Skar**, Secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance, who hosts the Secretariat for AWARH 2017. Ms Skar adds *"Fortunately, the Member States are taking*

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<sup>1</sup> Special Eurobarometer 331, [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/alcohol/docs/ebs\\_331\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/alcohol/docs/ebs_331_en.pdf). Accessed November 2017

<sup>2</sup> WHO Global status report on alcohol and health 2014, [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/global\\_alcohol\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/en/) Accessed November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> WHO-Europe, 2012, Alcohol in the European Union – consumption, harm and policy approaches. [http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/who\\_alcoholintheeu\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/who_alcoholintheeu_2012_en.pdf). Accessed November 2017

<sup>4</sup> AWARH infographic, <http://www.awarh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-prevention-of-harmful-alcohol-consumption.pdf>, Accessed November 2017.

*action, as can be seen by the recent policy work in Estonia, Lithuania, Ireland and Finland. It is clear to us, the Awarh partners, that the Commission should be stepping up its actions on alcohol and supporting the Member States. We are encouraged by the Scottish Government's recent success in moving forward with the implementation of a Minimum Unit Price for alcohol. In the coming months the European Commission will have a perfect opportunity to show us how serious it is about alcohol. If the alcohol producers do not produce satisfactory self-regulatory proposals for alcohol labelling, the Commission has the public's, and Member States', support to go ahead and legislate as soon as possible as per Reg (EU) 1169/2011. If they cannot even do that then, we will know this Commission is running away from alcohol policy'.*

## **About Awarh**

The European Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) was initiated in 2013 by a group of likeminded [organisations](#). Awarh aims to raise awareness on the negative effects of alcohol, and call for greater policy action to address the problems it can cause. The Week's ultimate aim is to highlight the need to tackle the significant barriers to a comprehensive and cost-effective policy intervention.

In 2017 Awarh is held between 20th and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017, with theme of "Alcohol and Cancer". The Secretariat for Awarh is held by the [European Alcohol Policy Alliance](#). Information about Awarh, the Awarh partners, and the different activities which will take place during Awarh17 can be found at [www.awarh.eu](http://www.awarh.eu)

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