

Alcohol Control Policy and Health in Europe
(A special issue of International Journal of
Environmental Research and Public Health)

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International Journal of
*Environmental Research
and Public Health*

https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph/special_issues/alcohol_policy

Overview contribution:

Berdzuli, N., Ferreira-Borges, C., Gual, A., & Rehm, J. (2020). Alcohol control policy in Europe. Overview and exemplary countries. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(21), E8162. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17218162

Plus contributions on:

- Russia (evaluation of the National Concept)
- Lithuania (implementing best buys)
- CIS countries (mainly on labelling and health warnings)
- NCD goal for alcohol
- Unrecorded consumption
- Attitudes towards alcohol policy
- Use and potency as basis for alcohol policy

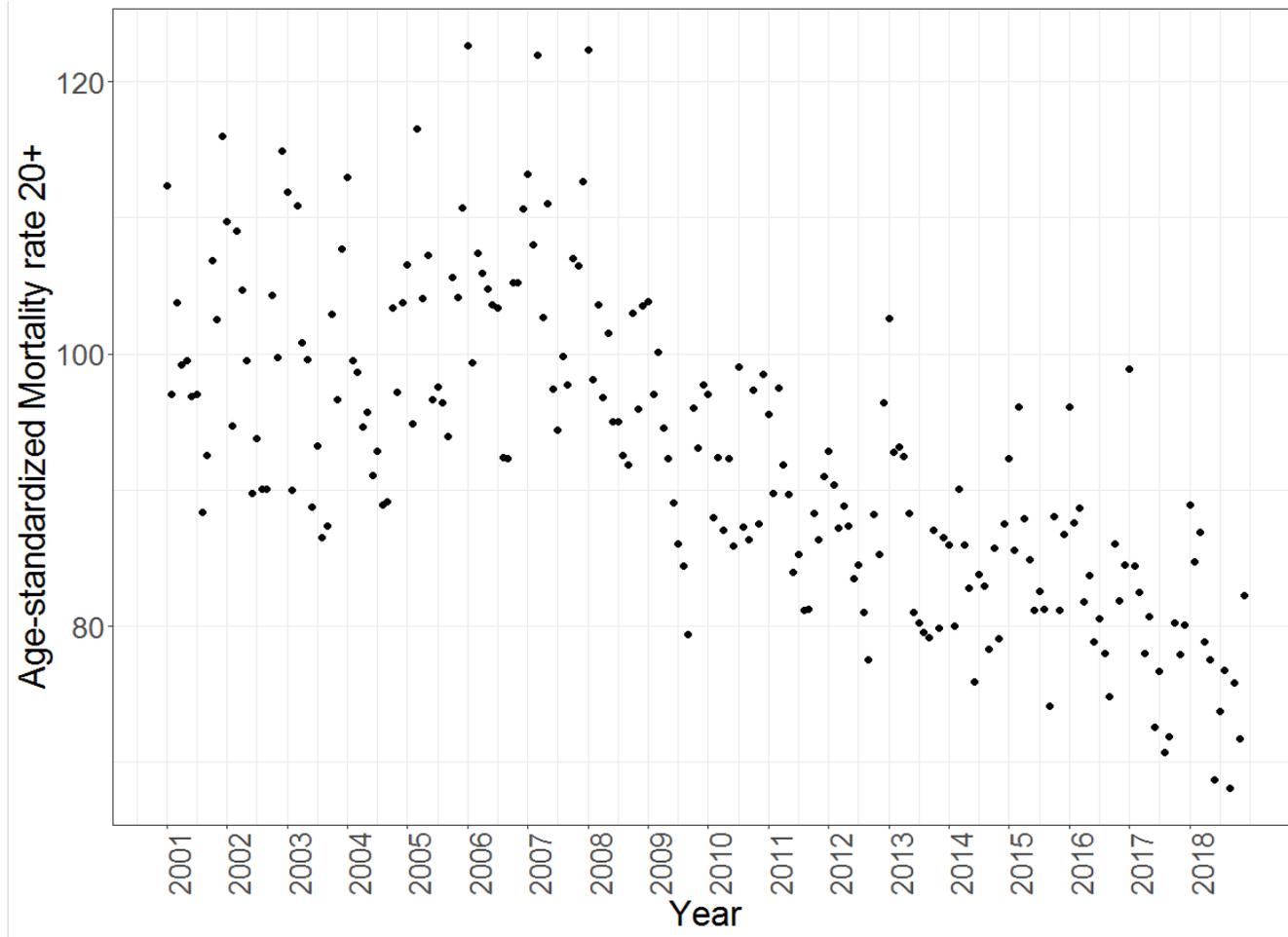
Highlights from Berdzuli et al., 2020

Alcohol is a major risk factor for burden of disease. However, there are known effective and cost-effective alcohol control policies that could reduce this burden. Based on reviews, international documents, and contributions to this special issue of International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (IJERPH), this article gives an overview of the implementation of such policies in the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region, and of best practices.

Overall, there is a great deal of variability in the policies implemented between countries, but two countries, the Russian Federation and Lithuania, have both recently implemented significant increases in alcohol taxation, imposed restrictions on alcohol availability, and imposed bans on the marketing and advertising of alcohol within short time spans. Both countries subsequently saw significant decreases in consumption and all-cause mortality, and increases in life-expectancy. Adopting the alcohol control policies of these best-practice countries should be considered by other countries.

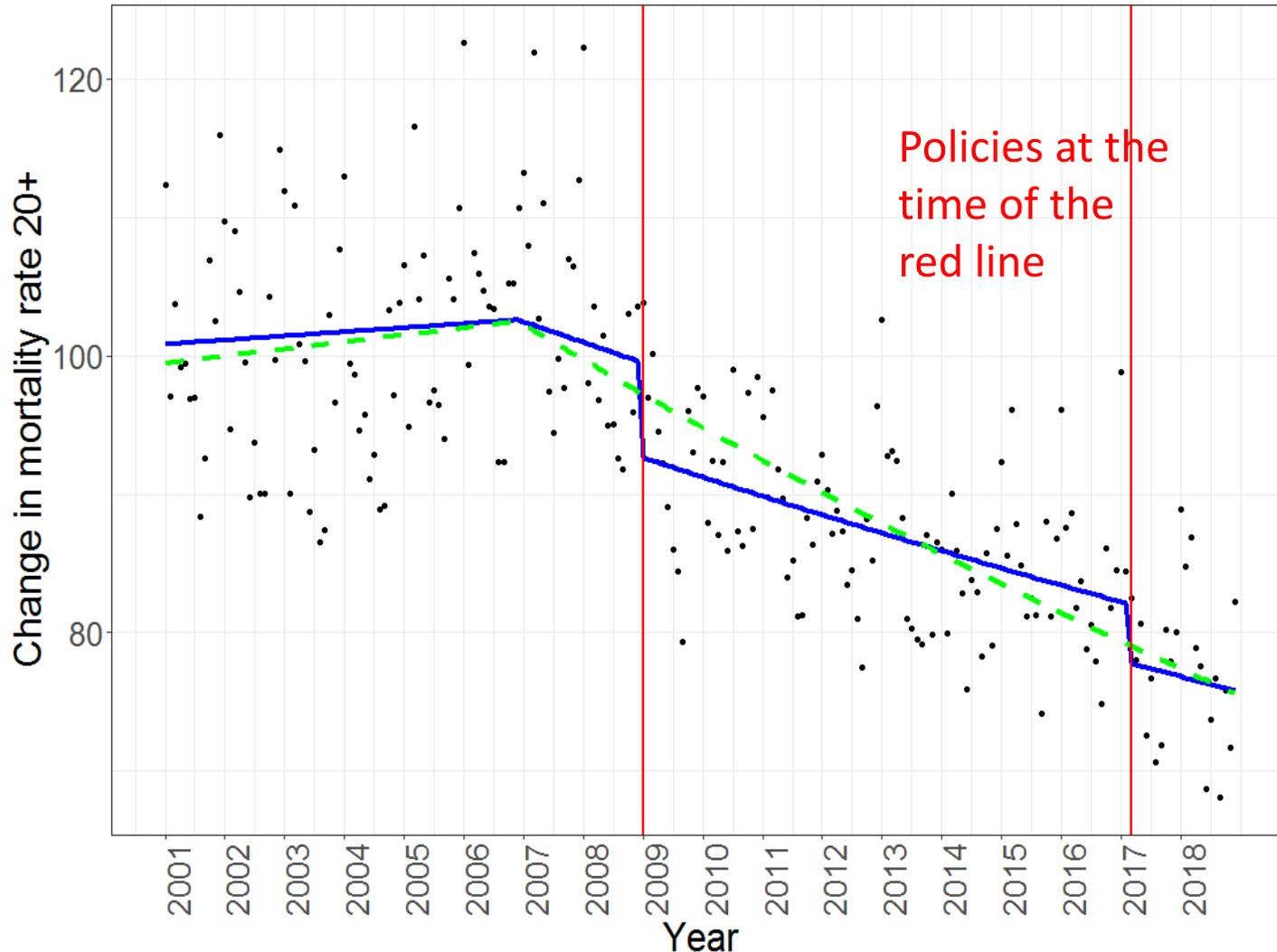
Current challenges for all countries include cross-border shopping, the impact from recent internet-based marketing practices, and international treaties.

Alcohol policy and all-cause mortality in Lithuania: 2000-2019



Alcohol policy and all-cause mortality in Lithuania: 2000-2019. Explaining the trends!

See the mortality points which followed some upward trend until about 2007, and then a downward trend (green line). Alcohol policies could be shown to dramatically increase this downward trend (blue line)



Model Predictions

- JP with Policy
- - JP only

Date	Policy Description
Jan 1, 2009	Increased alcohol taxation: Reduced alcohol availability: Restrictions imposed for off-premise sales, ban on open alcohol in vehicles
March 1, 2017	Increased alcohol taxation: Excise taxes raised by 111-112% for wines and beer and 23% for hard liquors

Another example: Health warnings (Neufeld et al., 2020)

Whereas the EU not even in this year with the focus on cancer can decide binding warning labels for alcoholic beverages (e.g., Alcohol can cause cancer), the Eurasian Economic Union has not only decided this, dealt with the WTO process, and already implemented mandatory warning labels:

Eurasian Economic Union Technical Regulation 047/2018, which is, to date, the only international document to impose binding provisions on alcohol labeling

However, the article also describes how best intentions can be watered down in the consultation processes.

Conclusion

Best practices in alcohol control policy in some European countries have been shown to save lives and increase the life expectancy of national populations. Such best practices need to be considered across Europe. However, formulating and implementing alcohol control policies is a challenging task, one which requires securing the support of the general population and answering in a proactive, innovative, and coordinated manner to key challenges, such as those resulting from the new forms of alcohol delivery and digital marketing, which have resulted from recent rapid technological change.