

Joint Action on Reducing Alcohol Related Harm (RARHA) was undertaken in 2014–2016 to strengthen the knowledge base for the development of policy and action. RARHA involved 32 associated partners and 29 collaborating organizations from all EU countries, Norway, Switzerland and Iceland.

Access to adequate information on the characteristics of alcoholic beverages and about the risks involved in alcohol consumption was recognized as an important consumer right. An urgent need was identified to mandate health-relevant information on alcoholic beverage packages to enable informed consumer choice and to support public health bodies' information-giving activities.

www.rarha.eu

Call for a legal framework to ensure the provision of health-relevant information on alcoholic beverage labels

To make rational choices, consumers need to be informed not just about the characteristics of products and the utility offered, but also about the risks they will be exposed to as a consequence of consumption.

On-pack information is the most widely used method for informing consumers, but badly underused in the case of alcoholic beverages. In the European Union, consumers' access to health-relevant on-pack information on alcoholic beverages is limited and sporadic. Women remain the only population subgroup to which on-pack information on risks of alcohol consumption is provided to any significant extent.

The EU Commission should immediately come forward with a legislative proposal to ensure equal access to adequate on-pack information on ingredients, additives, alcohol content, allergens and energy content of alcoholic beverages.

The Commission and Member States should ensure that on-pack information is also provided on alcohol related health and safety risks, as appropriate and relevant to awareness raising needs and priorities at national level.

Declaration of allergens

Alcoholic strength in % by volume

Net content in the bottle



Brand name

Designations

Vintage

Estate produced and bottled

Fantasy name

Producer/supplier

Area of origin

The amount of ethanol (pure alcohol) in the bottle in grams, and the combined energy value of the ethanol and sugar in the bottle.

Verbal statement on health and safety risks, with pictogram to draw attention.

The picture above is an illustration of what a front label of a bottle of wine might look like with (1) the currently mandatory product information, (2) information commonly given by wine producers and (3) **an additional statement on the amount of pure alcohol (ethanol) and on the energy content in the bottle.**

The additional message on the risks of alcohol during pregnancy integrates the pictogram currently mandated in France and a text based on the advice provided by the Chief Medical Officers in the UK. To enhance effectiveness, the position and the format of the risk message should be fixed while the content should rotate to highlight various high-risk situations.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE



Co-funded by the Health Programme of the European Union

"In order to make rational and efficient choices, consumers have to be fully informed about the characteristics and quality of what they consume, about the benefits (utility) they will derive from consumption, and about the costs and risks they will be exposed to as a consequence of their consumption. — Beyond a generic perception that drinking large quantities of alcohol is bad for one's health, consumers have a very imprecise knowledge of the exact modalities in which alcohol poses a risk to humans."

Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use: Economics and Public Health Policy, OECD Publishing, 2015.

www.rarha.eu

This publication arises from the Joint Action on Reducing Alcohol Related Harm (RARHA) which has received funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme (2008–2013).

The content of this publication represents the views of the authors and it is their sole responsibility; it can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and/or the Executive Agency do(es) not accept responsibility for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

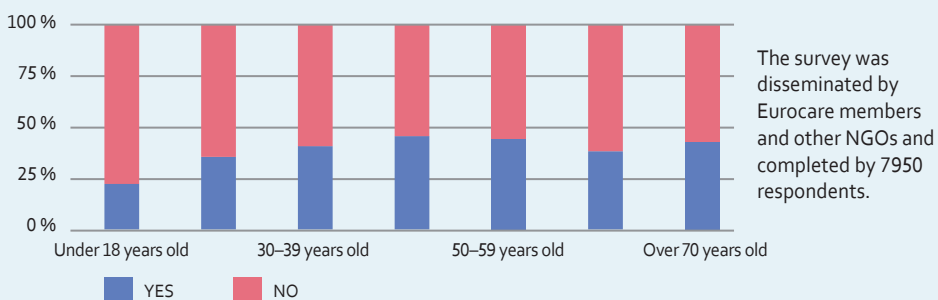


Co-funded by the Health Programme of the European Union

Experts and the public wish information on health and safety risks on alcohol labels and advertisements

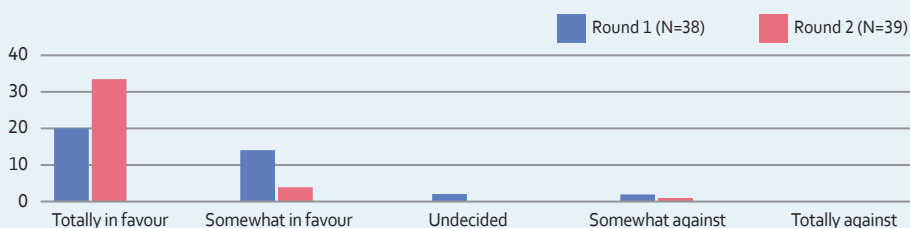
An online survey carried out in 21 European countries in 2015 indicates that across age groups, consumers find that the health related information provided on alcoholic beverage packages is inadequate.

Do alcoholic beverage labels currently provide sufficient health related information?



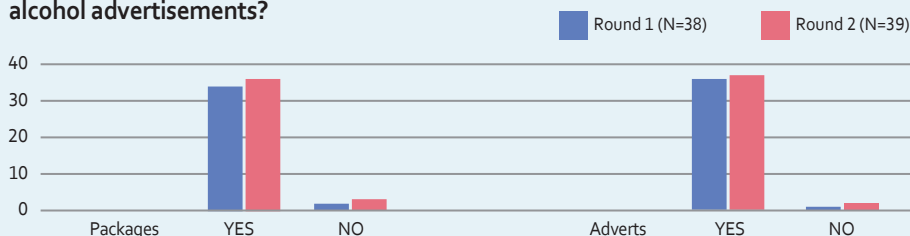
Public health and addiction experts consulted through the RARHA Delphi survey support a requirement to state on the label the number of grams of pure alcohol in the package. Grams in a bottle, can or box of drink can be linked with guidelines on low risk alcohol consumption expressed as a maximum number of Standard Drinks, the size of which is defined in grams pure alcohol. While the Standard Drink sizes vary from one country to another, grams are applicable across borders.

Would you be for or against requiring alcoholic beverage labels to indicate – in addition to the % abv – the grams pure alcohol contained in the package



There is wide support among public health and addiction experts for requiring by law across EU countries messages about health or safety risks on both alcoholic beverage packages and on alcohol advertisements. Similarly wide support has been expressed by the general public in Eurobarometer surveys in 2006 and 2009.

Would it be useful from a public health perspective if warning messages about health or safety risks were required across the EU on alcoholic beverage packages and/or on alcohol advertisements?



Messages about health and safety risks should be designed to fill in gaps in information and to take into account awareness-rising needs at national level. The experts consulted in RARHA highlighted the following risks:

- High-risk situations such as pregnancy, driving, work or any tasks that require concentration, as well as vulnerability at a young age.
- Longer-term risks including increased risk of cancer, risk of adverse effects on the family, as well as risk of increased tolerance and alcohol dependence.
- Risk of immediate harm due to interaction of alcohol with medications or to decreased perception of risk.