

NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 • 2014



What is RARHA?



Patrícia Pissarra
Project Leader

RARHA is a Joint Action (2014-2016) that is funded under the EU Health Programme and by EU Member States to address some commonly identified priorities to reduce levels of alcohol related harm in the EU.

RARHA's three main work strands focus on: 1) generating more comparable data across EU Member States on consumption patterns and on alcohol related harm; 2) understanding the scientific basis for different guidelines for low risk drinking across Europe, to provide guidance to policy makers; 3) the development of a tool-kit to disseminate good practices on early intervention services, school-based programmes and public awareness programmes.

The Joint Action RARHA is coordinated by the Ministry of Health in Portugal (General Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies - SICAD). 32 Associated Partners from 27 EU Member States as well as Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, as well as 28 Collaborating Partners, such as the EMCDDA, WHO, Pompidou Group and OECD, among others, take part in the Joint Action.

The main goal of the Joint Action is to contribute to the health and well-being of the EU citizens and to reduce costs to health systems and the wider economy.



Visit our new website!
www.rarha.eu



Coordination Team of SICAD - EMCDDA at the RARHA Kick Off

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the RARHA Joint Action! This action just began in January, but it is already a clear demonstration of the high level of Member States commitment in the work of alcohol related harm.

I would like to start by highlighting the mission of SICAD, which focuses on the reduction of use of psychoactive substances, the prevention of addictive behaviors and the decrease of dependencies in Portugal. One of our main responsibilities is to support the Government with the design and evaluation of the national strategy, as well as on the implementation of policies on this area. In this regard, we must develop mechanisms for planning and coordinating the definition of policies and define the technical and normative guidelines for the intervention. This is the reason why the exchange of good practices is essential, as well as the development of technical guidance and planning.

Alcohol plays a central role in many cultures. Today, drinking activities take many forms – rituals, social occasions and ceremonies, all involve having a drink. Alcohol is universally associated with celebration and drinking is, in most of our European cultures, an essential element of festivity.

These social and cultural aspects of drinking influence directly the de-

velopment of policies and legislation on alcohol issues. Indeed, although Europe is the world's region with the highest alcohol consumption, it was only in October 2006, that the European Commission adopted the first EU Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm, as there was increasing evidence that national alcohol related public health problems were becoming more widespread across the EU.

We need to take advantage of this momentum and work towards a healthy European new generation. This Joint Action is of utmost importance as it will contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy. We hope to make available an incentive for the Member States to take forward the work on common priorities, providing a platform for exchange of views and intensifying cooperation and coordination.

The harmonization of data across the EU on drinking habits and on alcohol related harm is crucial to driving action in this area. It is also important that we understand the science underpinning different drinking guidelines across Europe, and that we exchange good practice on what works. RARHA's activities will contribute to resolving the problems posed by alcohol related harm in Europe. By acting together on such issues, we are more likely to improve the situation than by acting alone. RARHA outcomes will indicate that a broad consensus

DID YOU KNOW?

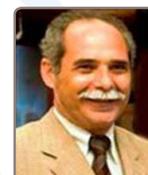
- The average European drinks the equivalent of 10.9 L of pure alcohol every year. That is almost double the world average of 6.2 L (2010 figures)
- 3 in every 40 Europeans have an alcohol use disorder.
- The harmful use of alcohol is a component cause of more than 200 disease and injury conditions in individuals, most notably alcohol dependence, liver cirrhosis, cancers and injuries. In Europe, Alcohol is responsible for 12.8% of the burden of disease and injury, almost double the burden in the Americas and the Western Pacific.
- The death rate in the EU for alcohol abuse in 2010 was between four and five times higher for men than for women.
- Alcohol costs societies some 2–3% of GDP, mostly from lost productivity.
- Among those aged 15–64 years living in the EU in 2004, 138 000 died of an alcohol related cause, of which 7700 (5.6%) were deaths in people other than the drinker.

is achievable on how to tackle alcohol related harm.

I take this opportunity to stress the support of the EU Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action (CNAPA) members to the Joint Action, representing their governments, and also to the European Commission, reiterating its engagement and support in helping all the Member States involved to further develop and improve the capacity to reduce alcohol related harm.

To conclude, I would like to call your attention for this major public health concern and to invite you all to contribute, in the context of this Joint Action, to the reduction of alcohol related harm.

Manuel Cardoso
Deputy General Director,
SICAD



UPDATES

RARHA Kicks Off

The RARHA Joint Action Kicked Off on 31 January 2014, when it was formally presented to members of the Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action (CNAPA), national and international stakeholders and the press, at the EMCDDA headquarters in Lisbon.

It was a busy week for many RARHA partners, as the Kick Off meeting was preceded by a Management Group meeting attended by the coordination team, work package leaders and co-leaders, who amongst other things approved the Consortium Agreement. The Steering Group, comprising all associated partners, also met on 30th January, to review and confirm the decisions made by the Management Group and to discuss the Joint Action's implementation.

Alcohol Law Enforcement

The Third European Conference on Alcohol Law Enforcement: Easy taking promotes easy drinking, took place on 21 and 22 May 2014 in Tallinn, Estonia, and was organised by the National Institute for Health Development in Estonia (NIHD), the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP), both RARHA partners, and the European Network on Alcohol Law Enforcement.

The aim of the conference was to promote knowledge exchange to reduce excessive youth drinking by alcohol law enforcement. Conference participants focused on these the policy making and policy enforcement.

Further information and presentations can be found on STAP's website: www.stap.nl

Work Package Meetings

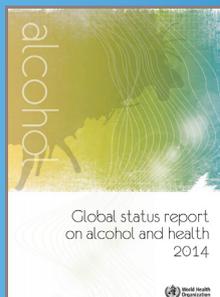


Paulo Macedo (Health Minister), Manuel Cardoso (RARHA Coordinator), João Goulão (General-Director of SICAD), Wolfgang Gotz (EMCDDA Director) at the Kick Off Meeting in Cais do Sodré, Lisbon - 31/01

The first meeting of RARHA WP4 (Monitoring) took place in Krakow on 16-17 May 2014. Twenty-six associated and collaborating partners participated in the meeting, to discuss and elaborate the thematic blocks of the draft questionnaire that will be used to conduct the European Survey on Drinking Patterns and Alcohol Related Harm. Participants also discussed issues such as authorship guidelines, the pilot study, the sampling and translation of the questionnaire, interviews and databases.

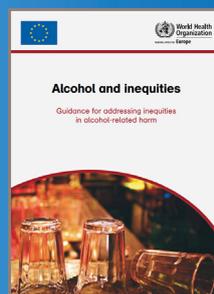
In addition, RARHA WP6 partners (Good Practice Tool Kit) met in Tallinn on 20-21 May 2014, just before the Third European Conference on Alcohol Enforcement, to discuss their work-plan and the draft questionnaire for collecting good practices.

NEW PUBLICATIONS



Global status report on alcohol and health 2014
World Health Organization

Alcohol and inequities: Guidance for addressing inequities in alcohol-related harm
Belinda Loring, World Health Organization



COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION



INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE ROUX

"Over the last seven years, the level of alcohol related harm has been persisting in Europe at unacceptably high levels leading to serious negative impacts on health, society and economy.

The Joint Action is an important initiative to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the EU citizens [...]. The Commission invested in it because of the need to develop a set of complementary tools to support both the development of evidence and Member State policies [...]. Better access to comparable data on alcohol consumption and harm would help Member States to put the national situation into perspective and consequently, would be essential for the Com-

mission to monitor progress across the EU [...]. While there is an abundance of initiatives to prevent alcohol related harm, there is lack of solid evidence of their effectiveness. Combining examples of successful approaches would contribute to wider implementation across Member States, with benefits for individuals and the society.

Altogether, the tools developed in the Joint Action will help in the planning of public health policies that in the longer term contribute to reducing alcohol related harm, the risk of chronic diseases and the burden for health systems."

[➔ Read the full interview online](#)

Philippe Roux is Head of Unit for 'Health Determinants' at DG Health and Consumers.

PARTNERS' CORNER

"Slovenians are amongst the highest consumers of alcohol in the EU. The decision to take part in this Joint Action was simple: we want to address this, to see what other countries are doing in this field and to take the opportunity to perhaps transfer good practices from other countries. We need more and better comparable data to understand the strengths of other countries. We also want to understand why there are such different ideas across Europe on harmful levels of drinking, and to learn more on how best to communicate guidelines. Finally, the Joint Action provides us with an opportunity to network with other experts in the field from across Europe, which is always very important.

This is the first Joint Action on Alcohol, and we are very happy that the EC supported it, since it is a political issue. We are in turn happy to support the Joint Action."



Sandra Rados-Krnel

National Expert on Public Health NIJZ, Slovenia (WP6 Lead)



The National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ), Slovenia, collects and analyses data relating to alcohol consumption in Slovenia, and also designs and implements health promotion and alcohol prevention programmes across Slovenia.

PARTNERS' CORNER

"One of the PARPA's duties is to monitor the size and model of alcohol consumption in the Polish society. This kind of knowledge is necessary to provide efficient alcohol policy and raise public awareness of the risks connected with alcohol. In previous years, PARPA has conducted population surveys on drinking and alcohol-related problems but we had no possibility to compare the outcomes of our research with the results of similar surveys carried out in other countries. Participation in the RARHA Joint Action gives us this possibility.

We expect to develop and implement standardized methodology for monitoring drinking patterns and alcohol related harm in the countries participating in the project. Comparison of the survey outcomes obtained in the participating countries (based on the same methodology) will be a significant contribution to the scientific knowledge about the differences in drinking patterns. Moreover, the project may provide comparative monitoring of alcohol epidemiology across Europe. This data will have a great influence on developing alcohol policy in Poland and the EC."



The State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems (PARPA) was established to build the foundations of the state healthcare policy concerning the improvement of alcohol-related harm prevention, treatment, and public education in Poland. Among other things, the Agency coordinates with state and local government representatives and offers professional help to many institutions and associations engaged in the implementation of the National Program for the Prevention and Solving of Alcohol-Related Problems.



Krzysztof Brzózka
Director PARPA,
Poland (WP4 Lead)

"Applying common methodologies to obtain comparable data is important to monitor progress in reducing alcohol related harm at national and EU level, and to benchmark developments against wider trends... There is no doubt that the analysis of the already existing guidelines will provide better insight, helping policy makers take evidence-based decisions and widening common ground in communication on alcohol related harm. We hope to build consensus on the use of low risk drinking guidelines by facilitating the exchange of good practices among MS public health bodies."



The Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) is the leading scientific body of the Ministry of Health and the National Health System in Italy. Under the National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance & Health Promotion (CNESPS) of the ISS, the Population Health and Health Determinants Unit (PHU) is engaged in the formal monitoring of consumption in the population at risk, brief intervention strategies, prevention strategies and training of health professional. The Unit is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Health promotion on Alcohol and alcohol-related problems .



Emanuele Scafato
Director, Population's
Health and Health
Determinants Unit
(CNESPS) ISS, Italy
(WP3 lead and
WP4, 5 and 6)

INTERVIEW

Eurocare calls for a new EU alcohol strategy

BY ANNA GALLINAT

Europeans are addressing the continent's alcohol issue but more should be done to get involved and more can be done. That is the impression I get when speaking to Mariann Skar, Secretary General of Eurocare (European Alcohol Policy Alliance) and partner in RARHA. Talking about the Joint Action she says: "More cooperation and knowledge exchange between Member States and other stakeholders in regards to alcohol will lead to a better European approach on these issues."

On 27th and 28th of November, the 6th European Alcohol Policy Conference will be held in Brussels. Eurocare is the main organiser. The conference aims to bring together a broad representation of stakeholders concerned with alcohol-related harm (policy and decision makers, scientists, and alcohol and health experts). The objective is to strengthen networks, build capacity and stimulate action to prevent and reduce alcohol-related problems at all levels. Ms. Skar, explains that "there is strong need for a new EU Alcohol Strategy. Both RARHA as well as the European Alcohol Policy Conference contribute to that goal."

The conference will address the following topics: EU Alcohol Strategy, price and taxation, marketing, harm to others, labelling, RARHA and more. The Joint Action will be presented on the second day of the conference. Before the official start, Eurocare will host a satellite event in the name of RARHA (Wednesday, 26th November), where Member States representatives and RARHA partners will gather and be informed about the project. According to Ms. Skar, "It will be held under the premise of a 'status report': informing about the project, present on what has been done and achieved so far and describe the way forward." A detailed programme will be available soon.

"In times, when EU Member States differ so greatly on alcohol policies, e.g. regulation, taxation or standardization, it is all the more important to advocate for a new shared EU Strategy on alcohol." Ms. Skar says. According to Eurocare, the EC can and should take on the following issues in a common Strategy: regulation of advertisements (e.g. on social media), increase minimum tax on alcoholic beverages, labelling (health and nutrition information) and harmonise drink driving regulations, the definition of a "standard drink", and the minimum age of 18.



Mariann Skar
Secretary General of Eurocare

Eurocare is involved in RARHA in Work Packages 5 and 6 as well as in dissemination. They are, for example, responsible for developing and carrying out a consumer survey. Ms. Skar explains: "RARHA is a new meeting point for Member States to talk about alcohol-related harm and alcohol policy. There are many good practices across Europe, so it is already great to share them. We also hope that the collaboration will increase talks on alcohol legislation and policy implementation."

For more information on the 6th European Alcohol Policy Conference, the RARHA satellite event and other upcoming events visit

www.eurocare.org or [email info@eurocare.org](mailto:info@eurocare.org)

6th European Alcohol Policy Conference
27-28 November 2014, Brussels
www.6EAPC.eu



KEY MESSAGES

- Europe has the **highest** shares of drinkers and the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm in the world.
- Reducing alcohol related harm requires **action across all government sectors** and society.
- Wide participation in RARHA reflects the importance accorded by European countries to **a solid knowledge base for public health policies to reduce alcohol related harm.**
- The information and tools developed in RARHA will **serve the planning of public health policies** on alcohol in the future.
- Joint Action RARHA builds a bridge from the EU alcohol strategy of 2006 to – hopefully – the launch of a **renewed strategy** by the new Commission.
- EU has a crucial need for **comparative data and research** to develop effective actions to reduce harmful use of alcohol.
- People have the right to obtain **relevant, understandable and reliable information** on the risks and consequences related to alcohol consumption and to be empowered to avoid and reduce risks.
- **Information and education activities** to reduce harm from alcohol are best used as components in the framework of broader public health policies based on measures with the best track record of effectiveness.
- Partners from different Member States contribute with **54% of the RARHA budget**, exceeding the minimum required by the EU health Programme, with which the Joint Action is co-financed.



RARHA is coordinated by:



Newsletters are produced by:



Co-funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union

For a full list of list of partners visit www.rarha.eu