

Stockholm, December 13, 2021

To the Parliament of Lithuania  
To the heads of the parliamentary committees



*Letter of concern: Alcohol policy changes in Lithuania*

Lithuania has been a positive example in the last five years to every country struggling with alcohol related harm. Numerous international action plans, strategies, and policy papers have been signed by countries committing to implementing evidence-based alcohol policies, particularly the "best-buys" (taxes, availability, and marketing). Most countries have not implemented these plans. Lithuania has.

Current restrictive alcohol policy in Lithuania is evidence based: raising taxes, limiting availability (including age limits) and banning alcohol advertising has a solid scientific basis. And it has yielded very positive results. Both alcohol consumption and related harm have been going down. According to the Lithuanian department of statistics your country has reduced per capita alcohol consumption from 14 litres in 2015 to 11.1 litres in 2019. We congratulate Lithuania for such a reduction and remind that it is in the interest of public health, security and productivity to have as low a consumption level as possible.

Every country should avoid policies based purely on ideologies, dominated by industry interests which are not helpful in reducing alcohol-related harm. Revoking evidence-based policies, or watering them down, does have negative effect on public health. Estonia decided to reduce alcohol taxes in mid-2019, cross-border trade being the main argument for that change. A recent study revealed that in 2020 per capita alcohol consumption grew by 1.7 per cent compared to 2019 and has now reached the highest level of the past five years. Preliminary data from the National Institute for Health Development (Tervise Arengu Instituut) shows that 615 people died of diseases directly caused by consumption of alcohol, up by more than 100 from 2019. Also, the largest number over the last decade. While there might be additional reasons for the increase, tax reduction and making alcohol more affordable is unarguably one of the principal explanation, ns for these negative developments in Estonia.

Lithuanian lawmakers and the government should prioritize public health rather than succumb to the pressure of industry. It is crucial to give alcohol policies time and legislative support and grant an effective enforcement system to get the proven efficiency from these strategies. We encourage you to protect current alcohol control policy measures.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Allebeck, president, NordAN

*NordAN board members:*

Marja Pakarinen, *EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention*  
Representing Finland

Christian Bjerre, *Blue Cross Denmark*  
Representing Denmark

Peter Moilanen, *Swedish National Council on Alcohol and Drugs*  
Representing Sweden

Aðalsteinn Gunnarsson, *IOGT Iceland*  
Representing Iceland

Nijole Gostautaite Midttun, *Lithuanian Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition*  
Representing Lithuania

Viljam Borissenko, *The Public Foundation of Hope*  
Representing Estonia

Jaspar Langgaard, *Blue Cross Faroe Islands*  
Representing Faroe Islands

Stig Erik Sørheim, *Actis – Norwegian Policy Network on Alcohol and Drugs*  
Representing Norway

*Further information:*

Lauri Beekmann,  
Executive director, NordAN  
+3725261884  
[beekmann@nordan.org](mailto:beekmann@nordan.org)  
[www.nordan.org](http://www.nordan.org)

*NordAN was formed in September 2000, as a network of non-governmental organizations committed to reducing the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, who backed an evidence-based alcohol and drug policies, and who did not receive funding from the commercial alcohol industry. Today NordAN has over 70 non-governmental, voluntary member organizations in all eight Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), all active in the field of alcohol and drugs.*