

Open letter to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania

Utrecht, 16th May 2017

Dear members of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania,

The Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy STAP wishes to congratulate you with your efforts for a more restrictive alcohol policy. STAP fully supports your plans, especially when it comes to the following three policy issues:

1. Setting adequate age **limits** for the sale of alcohol. In the Netherlands, after 7 years of lobbying the age limit of 18 years, this age was set in 2014 for buying and holding in the public space of all alcoholic beverages. This new measure was supported by a national campaign to explain why this measure is necessary (e.g. because of the influence of alcohol on brain development of young drinkers and the increasing number of young people with an alcohol-intoxication, yearly 1500). We also advocate for sufficient experienced alcohol enforcement officers.
2. Reduce the **availability** of alcohol. Municipalities have an important preventive and enforcement task in the Netherlands. Its purpose is also to reduce availability of selling places, create social support for the new age limit and promote effective enforcement. Despite this important role of the municipalities, more and more municipalities allow businesses such as hairdressers, clothing stores and bookstores to serve alcohol, although it is forbidden on behalf of Dutch alcohol legislation. This development shows the influential role of the commerce with at the background the beverage industry. The industry wants to create a situation where alcohol use should be available at any time and at any place.
3. Limiting alcohol **advertising marketing**. Our organization has been monitoring the alcohol advertising in the Netherlands for many years and has successfully achieved, in cooperation with MEP's, that there is from 2009 on no alcohol advertising on TV and radio from 6 am to 9 pm in the evening. After the installment of this so-called partial legal time-ban the alcohol producers have tripled the amount of advertising with as a result that after the introduction of this policy, young people were faced with more advertisements than before the introduction of the time ban. This bizarre development has been described in a scientific article (1). You can imagine that we don't trust the industry in making new proposals or new self-regulation articles or whatever and therefore we are now calling for a total ban on advertisements and sponsorship.
4. A fourth important element in our work refers to the **price of alcohol**. We stress always the importance of effective taxation levels and we promote the introduction of a minimum-

unit-price. Price is used by the producers as well as by the supermarkets as a marketing instrument. The most recent lobby of our institute refers to the necessity of a minimum price for alcohol as was accepted by the Parliament of Scotland as one of the most recent important and effective measures to reduce the harm of alcohol. We concluded based on a small monitoring research that supermarkets in the Netherlands deliver beer and wine for very low prices, mostly of unknown brands which is very challenging for young people and excessive drinkers. One of the reasons is that producers are not obliged to include in the price of alcohol for consumers the rates of taxation.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ir. WE. Van Dalen MCs

Director of the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy STAP

Reference

1. Craig S. Ross, Avalon de Bruijn, David Jernigan, 2013; Do time restrictions on alcohol advertising reduce youth exposure? Journal of Public Affairs Vol 12, number 1 pp 123-129)