

Stockholm, 2 May 2017

*Open letter to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania*

Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN) – an international umbrella organization for NGOs in the Baltic and Nordic states, involved in reducing harm from alcohol and drugs, would like to congratulate the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the proposed alcohol policy package that includes all the effective and cost-effective measures to tackle alcohol related harm. This is a right move with which you are showing positive example to all Europe. Alcohol problems are preventable and it is unacceptable that we tolerate that harm. Therefore we encourage every member of the Parliament of Lithuania to vote for these measures and set public health interests above economic ones.

As you know, in all the countries in the Baltic-Nordic region alcohol use causes serious health and social problems. Lithuania is certainly no exception. Lithuania ranks currently third in per capita consumption of alcohol in the world.

Alcohol related problems require a long-term, consistent and evidence based alcohol control policy. With your proposed measures you have addressed all the relevant areas of alcohol policies. Limiting alcohol availability, banning alcohol advertising and raising alcohol taxes have all strongest evidence base in reducing per capita consumption and harm that is related to that. Nordic countries have a longstanding positive experience in enforcing these measures that have been the foundation to a public health oriented policy and we can recommend it to any country that wants to tackle this harm.

From 1st of March, 2017 you have already substantially increased alcohol taxes, which is unarguably a cost-effective measure. Alcohol taxes need regular monitoring as prices should rise alongside with increasing income of the population, otherwise it ceases being effective deterrent for consumption. So we urge you to keep the focus on that in the future as well.

As you know from your experience public health goes against various financial interests. You will experience pressure from different economic operators who have clear vested interests in this. It is crucial to give precedence to the health, well-being and security of your children, young people, families and every Lithuanian who is influenced by alcohol today. In order to reduce alcohol related harms, it requires bold and decisive action. We urge you to implement these planned measures and keep on working with evidence based alcohol policies.

Yours sincerely,

*Peter Allebeck*  
president, NordAN

*Lauri Beekmann*  
Executive director, NordAN

*NordAN was established in September 2000 as a network of non governmental, voluntary organizations who all worked to reduce the consumption of alcohol and other drugs and who supported a restrictive alcohol and drug policy and who did not receive contributions from the commercial alcohol industry. Acting on these principles NordAN today have grown to have 90 non-governmental, voluntary member organisations in all the eight Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), all active in the alcohol and drug field.*