

Open letter to Mr. L. Varadkar, Minister for Health of the Republic of Ireland, to congratulate on the publication of the “Public Health Alcohol Bill”

Dear Minister Varadkar,

European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare), European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) and European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) sincerely congratulate you on your recent publication of the “Public Health Alcohol Bill”, a landmark legislative package to tackle alcohol-related harm in Ireland.

We are greatly encouraged by the comprehensive nature of the Bill, which proposes measures widely recommended by the public health community, including Minimum Unit Pricing, compulsory nutrition labelling and health warnings, in-store placement regulation and restrictions on advertising, marketing, promotions and sponsorship.

Evidence, in particular from the WHO and OECD, consistently shows that to achieve significant and lasting public health effects a mix of policy tools is required to reshape incentives in food and drink environments. The approach taken in this Bill is fully in line with state of the art recommendations and reflects your careful consideration of this evidence and the seriousness of the Irish Government’s intention to reduce alcohol-related harm. This is in particular underlined by the setting of a concrete goal to reduce average annual alcohol consumption in Ireland from 11 to 9.1 litres per person by 2020.

We also take this opportunity to call upon Irish Members of Parliament to support this Bill through the legislative process without compromising but rather, if necessary, enhancing its reach and ambition. The duty to protect citizens requires resisting attempts by (parts of) the alcohol industry to derail the legislative process.

As leading European-level public health organisations, we believe the approach taken by the Bill will serve as inspiration for other European countries to follow suit. It should also inspire the European Commission to step-up efforts to introduce coherent policies to curb alcohol-related harm at European Union level.

In this context, we sincerely applaud the leading role that Ireland is taking in tackling the harm caused across society. We once more want to congratulate you on this achievement and offer our full cooperation on the subject of tackling alcohol harm, including in European fora.

Sincerely yours,

Mariann Skar, Secretary General, European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare)
Dr Laurent Castera, Secretary General, European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)
Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)