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JOINT STATEMENT

01/09/22

RC72 AGENDA ITEM 10: EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON ALCOHOL 2022-25 (EUR/RC72/12)

This statement is delivered on behalf of Movendi International, European Alcohol Policy Alliance, European Association for the Study of the Liver, European Cancer Organization, EuroHealthNet, European Federation of Nurses Associations, European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians, European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations, European Public Health Association, European Public Health Alliance, International Federation on Ageing, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, Norwegian Cancer Society, Union for International Cancer Control, World Cancer Research Fund International, and World Heart Federation.

We welcome the European framework for action on alcohol 2022–2025. We endorse the evidence-based language of the Framework. We support the six areas for priority action. They provide a concrete focus on the most cost-effective alcohol policy solutions, while supporting national adaptation in response to local challenges.

There is no safe level of alcohol consumption for cancer and other NCDs. Even small amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Europe has the highest rates of alcohol consumption per person, the highest prevalence of heavy episodic alcohol use, and the lowest rates of alcohol abstinence in the world.

Public recognition of alcohol harm remains worryingly low across the region. That is why warning labeling on alcohol products is urgently needed. For example, the European Union should introduce mandatory ingredient, nutrition and warning labels on alcohol products.

We are deeply concerned about the growing health inequalities affecting especially vulnerable groups: the unborn child, youth, older people, people on lower incomes, and children of households with alcohol problems.

The practices of the alcohol industry in our region are of major concern. A recent WHO Europe report detailed how the digital ecosystem is used by alcohol companies to promote alcohol consumption among children, youth, females, and other vulnerable groups. Alcohol industry interference still is a serious obstacle to public health centered alcohol policy action.

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Only 16 out of 51 countries in the Region reached the target of a 10% reduction of overall alcohol consumption between 2010 and 2019. 17 countries saw increases in alcohol use. Almost no progress has been achieved since 2016 in the implementation of the NCD Best Buys alcohol policy solutions.

We are concerned that alcohol pricing policies remain the lowest priority in the region, even though they are the single most cost-effective measure. A recent landmark study found that introducing a minimum alcohol tax share of 15% for all alcoholic product types according to their alcohol content can prevent 132,906 deaths. This shows the untapped potential of alcohol policy.

We urge Member States to adopt the framework. To make alcohol policy the priority it should be, we call on Member States and WHO to:

- Adequately resource full implementation of the framework,
- Develop guidance to protect alcohol policy from industry interference, and
- Strengthen the governance of alcohol policy at regional level.

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Joint Statement Co-Signatories:

1. European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare),
2. European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL),
3. European Cancer Organization (ECO),
4. EuroHealthNet,
5. European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN),
6. European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD),
7. European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations (EFNNMA),
8. European Public Health Association (EUPHA),
9. European Public Health Alliance (EPHA),
10. International Federation on Ageing (IFA),
11. International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA),
12. Movendi International,
13. Norwegian Cancer Society,
14. Union for International Cancer Control (UICC),
15. World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRFI), and
16. World Heart Federation (WHF).