



# **Recommendations for youth sport clubs related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking**

Deliverable D9.2 – Guidelines for youth sport clubs related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking

## **Work package 9**

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## Main Partners

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## FOREWORD

### **FYFA – Focus on Youth Football and Alcohol** ([www.fyfaproject.eu](http://www.fyfaproject.eu))

- is a European project (EC, 3<sup>rd</sup> Health Programme, HP-PJ-2016) aiming to reduce underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking among young people engaged in sports.

The participating research institutions are based in six European countries: Belgium, Finland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom and worked together on:

- reviewing policies and practices related to young people, alcohol and international sport and gathering evidence of best practices at international level.
- determining the status quo of the policies and practices to reduce heavy episodic drinking related to underage people, alcohol and sport at national level.
- reviewing policies and practices related to young people, sport, and alcohol in local youth sports clubs in the six Member States.
- analysing attitudes of young football players from each of the six Member States towards alcohol and reducing alcohol-related risks and harms.
- capturing young people's perception of alcohol marketing, their attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol and how this is impacted by playing sports, and what they would consider effective practice. Young people also took part in the production of a video in Finland, Poland and Scotland to present their key messages in relation to alcohol and sports.
- promoting the exchange of knowledge and good practices between and within European countries and raising awareness of alcohol related harm amongst policy-makers.



## 1. What are these recommendations

The *Recommendations for youth sport clubs are related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking*, these summarize the results of the FYFA project in a form of a practical tool to be used by various stakeholders engaged in sports to develop policies and interventions aimed at reducing alcohol use and alcohol related harms among young people.

## 2. For whom are these recommendations

The FYFA *Recommendations for youth sport clubs related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking* may be useful for:

- managers of youth sports clubs,
- trainers and coaches,
- parents of young players,
- local and national policy makers,
- representatives of sport associations,
- managers and administration of various sports settings,
- all people engaged in youth sports.

## 3. How can these recommendations be used

The FYFA *Recommendations for youth sport clubs related to underage drinking and heavy episodic drinking* may facilitate:

- elaboration of policies addressing the issues of alcohol, youth and sports,
- planning and implementation of preventive activities in sports settings,
- developing knowledge on alcohol, prevention and sports among sport club managers, staff members and supporters.
- engagement of various stakeholders in prevention of alcohol use and abuse by young people,



- advocating for regulations at national and international level to support sports-based alcohol prevention
- improving health promotion and alcohol prevention activities in sport settings.

## 4. INTRODUCTION

### What is the problem with alcohol and adolescents?

In spite of a recently observed decline in the prevalence of alcohol use among adolescents (Inchley et al., 2018), alcohol remains the most commonly used substance in this population. More than 50% of 15 year old European students have drunk alcohol at least once during their lifetime and 35% reported heavy episodic drinking in the past month (ESPAD Group, 2016).

In adolescence, alcohol consumption is a significant risk factor for intentional and unintentional traffic and non-traffic injuries (De Looze et al., 2012; Cremonte & Cherpitel, 2014). Moreover, it can alter healthy brain development. Alterations in both grey- and white-matter brain structures, and aberrations in brain activity are observed in adolescents who engage in heavy episodic drinking (Squeglia, Jacobus & Tapert, 2014) and result in poorer motor, cognitive, emotional, and social functioning.

### What is the problem with alcohol among youth engaged in sports?

Practicing sports is a healthy and positive way of spending free time and therefore can be an effective, tool to tackle behavioural problems of children and adolescents (Loprinzi et al. 2012). However, being a member of a sports club can also generate negative outcomes concerning e.g. alcohol consumption and drug use. Authors of systematic reviews and meta-analysis (Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Diehl et al. 2012; Kwan et al. 2014, Walczak et al., 2020) consequently conclude that the evidence for positive correlation between alcohol use and sports is much stronger than for the protective value of sports activities in regard to alcohol use. That means that physical activity itself is not enough to prevent adolescents from alcohol use. Research data indicates that there is a need to do more to improve the protective role of sport environments. It is also crucial that we understand and build on the potential of sports, it can and has shown to be such a positive influence, but that should also include the messages it promotes.

## Why alcohol prevention is required in sports settings?

- Because sport is so popular! The majority (62%) of 15-24 year-olds Europeans exercise or play sport regularly or with some regularity (Special Eurobarometer, 2017). This huge reach in society makes sports settings good environments for health promotion and the prevention of risky behaviours (Geidne et al., 2013).
- Because it can support public health! Sport can be a key factor in creating healthy lifestyles and inspiring community development. Sports clubs have an important stimulating potential for living a healthy lifestyle, especially when integrating a preventive approach in their internal policies (Hallderson et al., 2013).
- To have better results! Alcohol consumption has a negative impact on sports performance (Barnes, 2014; Lecoultrre & Schutz, 2009; Maughan, 2006; Murphy et al., 2013; Pesta et al., 2013). Sports clubs would greatly benefit from improvement of interventions focusing on the prevention of alcohol use and alcohol related problems.

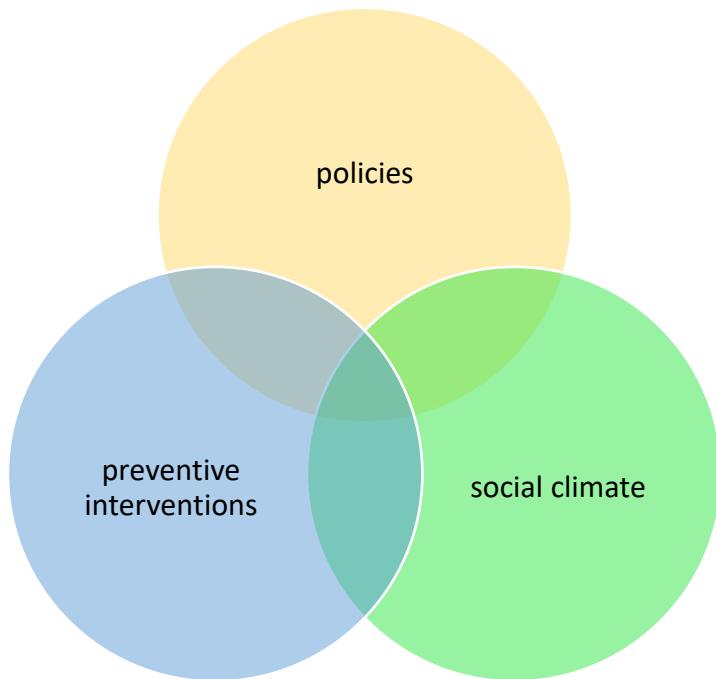
## 5. How to improve alcohol protective functions of sports environments? AIMS and OBJECTIVES of these recommendations

On the basis of the up-to-date scientific knowledge, these recommendations aim to promote best policies and practices in preventing alcohol use and alcohol related harms among youth in sports settings. Acknowledging the fact that each sport setting is different, taking into account the social environment, characteristics of players, discipline, professional vs. grassroots level, general preventive culture etc. these recommendations are universal – applying to all, adult supervised settings where young people practice sports. We underline adult supervision because **coach involvement is one of the key determinants of delinquency prevention in sports** (Mahoney et al. 2004).

The recommended alcohol prevention practices may concern several aspects of the sports environment, such as (Graph 1):

- International, national and local policies regulating alcohol use, distribution and marketing in sports settings,
- Preventive interventions to be implemented in sports settings,
- Social climate, determined mainly by interpersonal relationships in sports environments and a club's ideology (Kokko, 2009).

Graph 1. Components of comprehensive alcohol prevention in sports settings.



Each of these elements will now be discussed in turn.

## 6. Recommendations on alcohol related policies

At present, the majority of international sporting bodies have no specific regulations to minimize the potential negative implications of alcohol marketing with young people (although, there are positive exceptions presented below!). Instead, the emphasis is generally placed on the safety of people within stadiums and alcohol regulations rely on alcohol industry self-regulations (International Review: Final Report. FYFA Work package 4<sup>1</sup>). This happens in spite of a very clear statement by the World Health Organization and United Nations Development Program (WHO & UNDP, 2018) that **“Marketing and sponsorship of health-harming products has no place in sport.”** The problem is that marketing of alcohol in sport encourages young people to mistakenly associate alcohol with positive health and well-being. Alcohol industries do this, under a façade of community benefit, while their real motive is to make young people brand-loyal, life-long customers (Kelly et.al., 2011; Watson et al., 2016).

Therefore, we recommend:

### At international level

- International sporting federations explicitly ban the marketing and sponsorship of sports by the alcohol industry.

#### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

IN AQUATICS, IN THE FINA (FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE NATATION) GENERAL RULES, IT STATES THAT 'ADVERTISING FOR TOBACCO, ALCOHOL OR SPORTS-RELATED BETTING IS NOT ALLOWED.'

#### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

IN THE INTERNATIONAL LUGE REGULATIONS, IT STATES THAT PROVIDED THERE ARE NO STRICTER NATIONAL LAWS, FOLLOWING ADVERTISEMENT IS PROHIBITED: 1. ON THE ATHLETE AND SLED: ADVERTISING FOR TOBACCO, ILLEGAL DRUGS OR ALCOHOL. THE EXCEPTIONS ARE FOR NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER FOR ATHLETES 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, OR ALCOHOL PRODUCTS WITH LESS THAN 10%. AT THE SPORTS VENUE AND ON BIBS ADVERTISING FOR TOBACCO, ILLEGAL DRUGS OR

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fyfaproject.eu/media/I2W4J3K7P8/docs/wp4final061218.pdf>

- Decision and policy-makers to listen to young peoples' voices speaking out against manipulative industry practices (e.g. FYFA video).
- Public society use social media and other platforms to share examples of practices in sports where the risk associated with alcohol use is being disregarded for profit.

## At national level

- In accordance with the WHO & UNDP (2018) recommendations "Ministries of youth and sports must recognize that the right to health is a fundamental responsibility of government and take NCD [noncommunicable disease, which include alcohol related harms] action accordingly".

### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

FRANCE, NORWAY AND LITHUANIA HAVE BANNED ALCOHOL SPONSORSHIP OF SPORTS AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND NEW ZEALAND HAVE EXPRESSED DESIRES TO DO THE SAME (BROWN, 2016).

- More communication and information strategies (campaigns) in sports settings about the impact of alcohol on health are needed.
- National bodies (governmental and national sporting organizations) should support alcohol prevention initiatives and training programmes on alcohol-related harm for different target audiences in sports settings.
- National bodies should encourage and support a dialogue between sporting and prevention professionals.
- National bodies should support the creation of and ensure widely available training materials on alcohol and alcohol-related harm for sports settings and for different target audiences within sports settings to support the prevention of alcohol-related harm and encourage sport clubs to work together<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fyfaproject.eu/media/H8S2H6U3P9/docs/deliverablewp5fyfafinal2852020.pdf>

### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

THE AUSTRALIAN **GOOD SPORTS PROGRAM** ASSISTS CLUBS TO MANAGE ALCOHOL THROUGH AN ACCREDITATION PROCESS THAT SETS MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REGULATORY COMPLIANCE, CLUB PRACTICES AND POLICIES. IN REGARD TO ALCOHOL, ACKNOWLEDGED ARE POLICIES STATING THAT:

1. ALCOHOL IS NOT AVAILABLE OR CONSUMED DURING JUNIOR COMPETITION
2. ALCOHOL IS NOT AVAILABLE OR CONSUMED AT JUNIOR EVENTS OR PRESENTATIONS
3. ALCOHOL IS NOT PRESENT IN THE CHANGE ROOMS WHEN PLAYERS UNDER 18YEARS ARE PRESENT
4. ALCOHOL MANUFACTURERS, WHOLESALERS, RETAILERS OR OTHER BUSINESSES WHOSE CORE FUNCTION IS TO SELL ALCOHOL ARE NOT PROMOTED OR ADVERTISED BY THE CLUB ON ANY JUNIOR APPAREL

## At local level

- Take into account that no-alcohol industry sponsorship but effective 'alcohol management' delivers additional benefits to clubs in the form of financial viability, expanded membership, increased spectators and a greater capacity for competition (Crundall, 2012).
- If alcohol is available in the club - Avoid practices associated with an increased probability of risky drinking while at the club, i.e.: having alcohol promotions; serving intoxicated patrons; and having the bar open longer than 4 hours. (Rowland et al., 2015).
- Make alcohol prevention an integral and explicit part of the general health promotion policies of the club (together with regulations prohibiting tobacco and other drug use, violence prevention, promotion of healthy nutrition, safety and mental health support).
- In club's policies indicated clearly the consequences of violating club's rules, including rules regarding alcohol use:
  - Make sure, that everybody in the club know them

- In the case of substance use incidents among trainees or staff of the club, enforced the consequences with punishments that are proportionate and, implemented consistently.
- Remember that above all else, substance use incidents are signals to provide individualised support for an individual e.g. in the form of a referral to professional intervention or treatment.

**ABOVE ALL ELSE:**

FOOTBALL CLUB KRC HARELBEKE (BELGIUM) HAS A WRITTEN POLICY (BROCHURE) FOR PARENTS AND YOUNG FOOTBALL PLAYERS WHICH STIPULATES THEIR RULES FOR A FAIR AND HEALTHY FOOTBALL CLUB. ALCOHOL IS EXPLICITLY DISCUSSED IN THE HOUSE RULES OF THE CLUB, STATING THAT ALCOHOL USE ON THE PREMISES IS FORBIDDEN AND SANCTIONED. WHEN THE PLAYER IS CAUGHT USING ALCOHOL ON THE PREMISES HE WILL BE SUSPENDED FOR AN ENTIRE MONTH, A

## Recommendations for preventive interventions in a sport club

In general, sports clubs have a positive attitude towards health promotion, however, in terms of direct policies and education this seldom translates into practice (Meganck et al., 2014). It is recognised that sport clubs are not the settings for traditional education (like schools) or implementing of typical preventive programs (with number of structured sessions to be regularly implemented). **Preventive actions towards alcohol consumption undertaken in sports clubs are mainly focused on discussion and education and are implemented in accordance to the situational context<sup>3</sup>.** Therefore our recommendations focus on factors which can facilitate good understanding of the topic, an open exchange of ideas, discussion on alcohol related issues and modeling of healthy behaviors.

### Tips for club managers

- Raise staff awareness of the need for prevention of alcohol related problems as part of a health promotion strategy within the club.
  - Develop your own knowledge on underage drinking, associated risks (for individuals and the club) and opportunities for prevention.
  - Disseminate information on the risks associated with alcohol use by young people and the potential of sport as a prevention environment.
  - Organize a meeting with prevention specialists for club officials, coaches, young people and parents to learn more about alcohol, youth and sport.
  - Discuss with all stakeholders in the club the importance of health promotion as one of the club's aims.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.fyfaproject.eu/media/0001T3Z2G4/docs/wp6d61overviewlocalpoliciesfinal.pdf>  
<https://www.fyfaproject.eu/media/0001T3Z2G4/docs/wp6d62fyfareportlocalpracticesfinal.pdf>

#### IN TERMS OF DIRECT POLICIES AND EDUCATION:

"**I AM MY OWN TRAINER**" PROJECT IS IMPLEMENTED IN THE TOWN GRUDZIĄDZ (POLAND). THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO PROVIDE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND TOOLS (LESSONS SCENARIOS) TO SUPPORT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT (IN ALL DIMENSIONS: PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, SOCIAL) OF STUDENTS. BY INTEGRATING SPORTS WITH PREVENTION THE PROGRAM ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO MAKE RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS TOWARDS HEALTHY

- Make sure that the club's policies serve health promotion and facilitate implementation of alcohol preventive measures, including referral to professional services.
- Know the services available in the club's environment to provide support to individuals with alcohol or drug problems and disseminate this information amongst staff.
- Be consequent - enforce the implementation of club's policies.
- Utilize the potential of young people - they are powerful 'champions' who can encourage peers, parents, communities and policymakers to lead healthier lifestyles and provide healthier environments (like Greta Thunberg!).

## Tips for coaches

- Remember that you are the role model for trainees. They learn much more from observing you (and other people who are important for them) than from listening to what you (and others) tell them. Your attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol are crucial for their education.
- Make sure that young people know and understand club's policies regarding alcohol. Usually it is not enough that some rules are written. You should discuss them with young people, remind them of the rules from time to time and consequently apply them.
- Treat alcohol as part of a wider strategy about general health - discuss alcohol related risks from the perspective of general safety (together with violence, drugs, etc.) and sporty lifestyles (together with healthy nutrition, stress management, relaxation, etc.).

- Where there is a case of an alcohol/drug related incident among your trainees, refer them to appropriate support.

#### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

PROJECT SPORT (WERCH, 2007) IS A BRIEF INTERVENTION, CONSISTING OF:

- AN IN-PERSON HEALTH BEHAVIOUR SCREEN ON 1. SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, 2. EXERCISE, 3. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY NORMS, 4. BREAKFAST AND NUTRITION, 5. SLEEP AND REST AND 6. ALCOHOL INITIATION AND USE.
- A ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATION - ADMINISTERED USING A STANDARDIZED PROTOCOL DESIGNED TO PROVIDE TAILORED, SCRIPTED GAIN- AND LOSS-FRAMED MESSAGES AND
- A TAKE-HOME FITNESS PRESCRIPTION - RECOMMENDING AN ADOLESCENT TO SET

## Tips for parents/caregivers

- Remember that you are the role model for your child. Kids learn much more from observing you (and other people who are important for them) than from listening to what you (and others) tell them. Your attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol are crucial for their education. Show your kid that alcohol does not match with sport and most important of all - don't drink alcohol in sports settings or during sport events, especially when young people are playing.
- Support club's preventive efforts
  - Develop your own knowledge on underage drinking, associated risks and parental influences on adolescent's attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol.
  - Strengthen fair play values (see below) in your child.
  - Talk with your child about all issues concerning alcohol and sports e.g. alcohol marketing, alcohol related incidents in sports. Take these opportunities to express your concerns about the risks associated with alcohol use for your child.
- Make sure your child knows you do not want him/her to use alcohol and why. There might be plenty of reasons and many parents assume their children already know them

and there is no need to explicitly name them. But this is not always true and in general it is better to repeat that you care, rather than not to mention it at all, because:

- he/she is too young,
- you care about his/her health,
- alcohol use may impede his/her performance in sports (and school),
- alcohol use may affect his/her plans for the future.

## Tips for young players

- Remember that you are a role model for your clubmates. Your own norms, values and behaviors influence your peers. Show them that sport and having a sporty lifestyle is important to you and you are not interested in unhealthy behaviors (including alcohol use) which may affect your performance and achievements of your team.
- Support club's preventive efforts
  - Develop your own knowledge on the influence of alcohol on physical activity and performance in sports,
  - Educate your clubmates about a sporty lifestyle including alcohol related risks. Remember, that you might be perceived by other players as more authentic and reliable than adults are!
- Take care of yourself! No one has as much influence on your life as you. Your own decisions are crucial for your health, future and achievements in sports!

### EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:

THERE ARE NEW TYPES OF SPORT ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN FINLAND TODAY. HOCKEY PLAYER PATRIK LAINE IN NHL AND BASKETBALL PLAYER LAURI MARKKANEN IN NBA HAVE BOTH SAID IN PUBLIC THAT THEY HAVE NEVER TASTED ALCOHOL. COMPETITION IS SO HARD IN SPORT THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PLAY WITH ALCOHOL WHEN YOU ARE ON THE TOP. PEOPLE WITH

# Recommendations on the social climate of a sport club

“Social climate” is a term referring to the perception of a social environment that tends to be shared by a group of people. As Bennett (2010) wrote “Like meteorological or atmospheric climate, social climate is relatively distinctive across groups (as the tropics differ from the Himalayas), is dynamic or changeable within groups (like the seasons), and can influence behaviour (like an individual's choice of clothing)”. Similar to educational settings (Allodi, 2010), the social climate in sports settings is shaped by the relationships between adults (trainers, coaches and other members of a club), trainees and among young people. The quality, quantity and directions of these relationships have a significant impact on young people's performance and behaviours in and out of that sports setting.

## Tips for club managers

- Talk with members and staff of the club and encourage them to express their perceptions of:
  - The Club's culture and norms,
  - Expectations of what young people should know and do,
  - Understanding of the club's mission and goal,
  - Order, fairness, responsibility and discipline,
  - Underage drinking, associated risks (for individuals and the club) and opportunities for prevention of risky behaviors in the club.
- Make sure that the values of **fair play** – the true spirit of sport – are the prime values in the club. These include (UNODC, 2002):
  - Respect for teammates and coaches, for one's opponent, one-self, for the game.
  - Putting winning in its proper place - Competition is an essential part of sport, yet too much emphasis on winning can have negative effects on young athletes (it can take the fun out of the game; it may put undue stress on players; it will make sport unappealing for those who are not comfortable with a strong

emphasis on winning; it may make young players vulnerable for use of psychoactive substances enhancing performance).

- Focus on tasks to be accomplished in a sport (especially – personal development) – rather than on winning and losing.
- Encourage parents of young athletes to be involved in the club's activities.

## Tips for coaches

- Strengthen the ambitions of young players about their sports achievements. The ambition and competition level can be an important protective factor! When a player has the ambition to compete at a high level, they will abstain from alcohol consumption in order to be at their best performance. Moreover, the young players who take their sports engagement seriously are so busy with multiple trainings per week that, they hardly have time to do anything else, including partying, apart from their school work.
- Be available for young people and show them you care about them – listen to them, ask their opinions.
- Consequently enforce fair play rules! (see above)
- Be in touch with parents/care givers of your trainees.

## Tips for parents/caregivers

- Be involved in your child's life, including sport activities. Know your child's coach and whenever possible – attend trainings and support your child during matches and meetings.

## Tips for young players

- Respect the rules of fair play! Be respectful for your teammates and coaches, for your opponent, yourself and for the game.
- Be engaged in your club's affairs.

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