

## EU Alcohol Strategy revisited

The EU had an Alcohol Strategy in place from 2006 to 2012, but the European Commission did not immediately renew it, despite having earlier planned to do so. An assessment report found that overall the Strategy had provided positive added value, although its aims had not been fully achieved. The ENVI Committee is now urging the Commission to start work immediately on a new EU Alcohol Strategy for the coming years. The plenary is due to vote during the April session to endorse this call for action.

### Alcohol consumption and its effects in the EU

The EU has one of the highest levels of [alcohol consumption](#) in the world (on average 10.7 litres of pure alcohol per person aged 15 and older each year). Harmful drinking is a major [public health concern](#) across Europe: it is the [third leading cause](#) for preventable premature death and disease. Alcohol can increase the risk for over 60 chronic conditions, including liver disease, heart disease and cancer. The annual [cost](#) of the wider social impact of alcohol misuse and addiction in the EU, such as workplace absenteeism and violence, has been estimated at €156 billion (2010 figure).

### European Commission's EU Alcohol Strategy

The EU Alcohol Strategy, launched in 2006, was designed to help national governments and other stakeholders coordinate their action to reduce alcohol-related harm. It focused on efforts to reduce the impact of alcohol on young people and unborn children, in road accidents, and among adults and in the work place. It also sought to inform and raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol consumption, and to develop a common evidence base at EU level. A December 2012 [assessment report](#) determined that there had been considerable achievements under the strategy. Yet, at the same time, it found that alcohol-related harm remained an economic and social burden in the EU, and that the strategy's aims had not been fully attained.

### European Parliament

On 31 March 2015, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted a [Motion for a resolution on Alcohol strategy](#), to be voted following debate on a [question](#) to the European Commission. The Committee calls on the Commission to launch a new alcohol strategy, and to explain why it did not draft a separate report on applying the requirement to provide ingredient and nutrition information for alcoholic beverages by December 2014, as foreseen by [Regulation 1169/2011](#). The resolution urges the Commission to present a European Action Plan to Reduce Alcohol Related Harm as soon as possible and immediately start work on a new EU Alcohol Strategy 2016-22. It also calls on the Commission, the Member States and all other relevant stakeholders to improve indicators and data collection on alcohol consumption; implement measures to restrict alcohol sales to those under the legal age; raise awareness on the consequences of harmful drinking; and consider introducing minimum pricing per alcohol unit.

In January 2014, the ENVI Committee in the outgoing Parliament had also called on the Commission to act in this area. Parliament's [Resolution on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing](#) of 6 February 2013 calls on the Commission to 'give priority to factors that may influence how people in Europe age, such as high rates of alcohol and tobacco consumption'.

Alcohol is one of the [health priorities](#) of the current Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Presidency hosted discussions during the [informal meeting](#) of Health Ministers on 20 April, with a view to developing a new framework on EU alcohol policy, underlining both the economic and health benefits of stepping up action in this area.