



European Heart Network  
Fighting heart disease and stroke

# Press Release

## **EHN Launches New Position Paper on the Impact of Alcohol Consumption on Cardiovascular Disease**

### ***Time to Act on Alcohol as a Cardiovascular Risk Factor***

**Brussels, 12 June 2025**

The European Heart Network (EHN) unveils its new position paper, "**The Impact of Alcohol Consumption on Cardiovascular Disease**," a decisive call for action, underpinned by the most up-to-date scientific evidence. The EHN position paper is based on research performed by Tim Stockwell at the University of Victoria, Canada. It dismantles long-standing myths about alcohol's supposed benefits for heart health and highlights the urgent need for stronger policies to protect people's cardiovascular health and build healthier environments across Europe.

Despite widespread public belief, there is no conclusive scientific evidence that low-to-moderate alcohol consumption protects against cardiovascular disease (CVD). On the contrary, research confirms that even low levels of consumption raise the risk of major cardiovascular conditions, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, atrial fibrillation, heart failure and stroke. At higher levels, the risks only increase. For many years, the World Health Organisation has been warning that cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death resulting from alcohol in the WHO European Region, followed by cancers, digestive diseases and injuries.

"The idea that alcohol is somehow good for your heart has persisted for too long," said **Dr Charmaine Griffiths, President of EHN**. "This position paper sets the record straight: when it comes to heart health, less alcohol is better, and none is best."

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death also in the EU, responsible for 1.7 million deaths annually, or 32.7% of all deaths. Alarmingly, alcohol consumption alone is linked to an estimated **50,000 cardiovascular deaths each year**. The burden is unequally distributed, with disadvantaged populations suffering the highest levels of alcohol-related harm.



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Europe has some of the highest alcohol consumption rates globally, with **nine of the ten most-consuming countries located within the WHO European Region**. Binge drinking is particularly prevalent among young people, yet public awareness of alcohol as a cardiovascular risk factor remains dangerously low.

In light of these findings **EHN urges EU decision-makers to adopt a bold set of policy actions** to curb alcohol-related harm and prioritise public health:

- **Introduce mandatory front-of-pack energy labelling and list of ingredients** for all alcoholic beverages
- **Add EU-wide health warnings to alcohol products** to inform consumers of associated cardiovascular risks
- **Raise alcohol excise duties and implement minimum unit pricing**
- **Set a harmonised legal minimum age of 18** for purchasing and consuming alcohol, online and offline
- **Ban alcohol marketing to children and young people**
- **End EU subsidies for alcohol production and related products**

“There is no safe level of alcohol consumption for cardiovascular health and the burden on stroke has been established for a very long time,” said **Marleen Kestens, EHN Manager for Cardiovascular disease Prevention Policies**. “Public health must take precedence over outdated myths and industry narratives. Strong, evidence-based policies are essential to help people live longer, healthier lives.”

In this paper, the European Heart Network formally recognises alcohol as a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease and rejects any claim that alcohol consumption, at any level, offers cardiovascular benefits. With around 50,000 alcohol-related cardiovascular deaths occurring in Europe each year, the paper stresses the urgent need to dispel persistent myths about alcohol’s protective effects on heart health and calls on policymakers to take decisive action to prevent further loss of life.

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