

World Heart Day is no platform for alcohol industry influence

Brussels, 28 September 2026 – On 29 September, World Heart Day, MEP Dario Nardella (S&D) will host an event in the European Parliament on the role of wine in health policy debates, organised by the European Committee of Wine Companies (CEEV). European public health organisations consider it wholly inappropriate that an MEP would give the alcohol industry a platform in a health policy debate, particularly on a day dedicated to raising awareness of cardiovascular disease and its prevention.

Civil society organisations working to reduce alcohol-related harm in Europe object to events like this, which give commercial interests a seat at the agenda-setting table of EU public health policy. Health policy should be guided by independent scientific evidence and the public interest, with appropriate safeguards against conflicts of interest.

The timing of the event is particularly concerning. It will take place on **World Heart Day**, despite the established relationship between alcohol consumption and cardiovascular disease.

Dr Ole Johan Bakke, President of the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), said:

“The European Union and national governments need to recognise the scale of the impact that commercial practices have on health. Public health and wellbeing must be prioritised in policy decisions. This requires coordinated efforts, political will, and courage.”

The World Heart Federation identifies alcohol as a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and has called for policy to be protected from industry interference. The WHO European Region has the highest rate of alcohol consumption in the world, with alcohol contributing to around 800,000 deaths every year. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of alcohol-attributable deaths in the region, accounting for approximately half of alcohol-attributable deaths from non-communicable diseases.

Birgit Beger, CEO of the European Heart Network (EHN), said: “Despite alcohol being deeply rooted in European culture and tradition, we cannot ignore its harmful impact on our health. The European Heart Network’s position paper¹ challenges the widespread belief that low-to-moderate alcohol consumption protects the heart. Alcohol remains a major cardiovascular risk factor and is responsible for close to 50,000 cardiovascular deaths in the EU each year.”

Alcohol-related harm extends beyond cardiovascular disease. Alcohol consumption is also associated with a range of other non-communicable diseases and conditions, including several cancers, liver disease and digestive diseases.

“Policymakers should remember that the primary obligation of these commercial operators is to make profit for their shareholders. They do not have the health expertise, and their contribution should not influence health policy decisions, such as the information which should be provided to the public,” **says Dr Peter Rice, President of Eurocare.**

¹ https://ehnheart.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/07324-CVD-and-Alcohol_web.pdf

Civil society is now calling on Members of the European Parliament and EU institutions to ensure that public health policymaking remains grounded in independent evidence and the public interest. This includes robust conflict-of-interest safeguards and transparency around lobbying and engagement with commercial actors.

Prof Frank Murray, Chair of the European Health Alliance on Alcohol, an alliance of 31 leading pan-European medical societies and health organisations, said: “The heavy consumption of alcohol in Europe has resulted in a public health emergency. The average man in the EU who consumes alcohol uses 31 standard drinks per week, a truly eye watering amount. The resultant health harms, and other harms such as social care and crime/justice effects, cause a huge personal and societal burden, and an unsustainable personal and societal financial cost. The alcohol industry for far too long has had easy access to politicians and policy makers. We must change this urgently and keep the alcohol industry and its actors completely out of health policy making.”

Signatories

Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)
European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare)
European Health Alliance on Alcohol (EHAA)
European Heart Network (EHN)
Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)



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Further information

European Heart Network

[Position Paper on the Impact of Alcohol Consumption on Cardiovascular Disease](#)