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The impact of tax on alcopops in Germany

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Alcopops or RTD (Ready to drink) drinks were introduced in Germany in mid-nineties. No other alcoholic product won the market as fast as alcopops. The success of these mixed drinks was attributed to their sweet taste and the smart marketing of the product. From the beginning it was clear that young people was the target group of the marketing strategy. National surveys confirmed the rising attractiveness of such alcoholic drinks and reported after the introduction of alcopops that the alcohol consumption increased among minors. Parallel to the increase consumption rates, more and more cases on intoxicated young people were observed in the emergency rooms of the hospitals. Public debates started about alcohol consumption among minors. The pressure on the political decision-makers increased during these public discussions. In July 2004 the tax on alcopops were introduced to enforce the protection of young people. The law includes that the alcopops tax revenue has to be used for prevention programmes. After the introduction of this special tax, the sales of alcopops decreased by more than 50%. Also the consumption rate of alcopops decreased among young people. 63% of the 12 to 17 year old buyers did not buy alcopops anymore because such alcoholic drinks were too expensive for them. The tax on alcopops had also an impact on the overall alcohol consumption among young people, especially among the age-group of the 11-, 13- and 15-year-old boys and girls: The frequency of alcohol consumption decreased among these age groups. Finally alcopops lost their attractiveness for young people.