



**EUROPEAN ALCOHOL POLICY
CONFERENCE
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ACTION
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Alcohol and rights

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Jillian van Turnhout acted as Rapporteur for the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the Communication from the European Commission, *An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm*. The Opinion addresses the public health issue of reducing alcohol related harm: harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption as well as under-age drinking contributes to alcohol related harm. The EESC welcomes the Commission's Communication, but also raises a number of areas of concern. The EESC expresses its regret that the Commission did not acknowledge that one of the reasons for so much alcohol related harm is that alcohol is a psychoactive drug, a toxic substance when used to excess, and for some an addictive substance. The EESC calls for a reduction in the exposure of children under 18 years to alcohol products, advertising and promotions be included as a specific objective to provide greater protection to children. The EESC urges the Commission to address the economic consequences of alcohol related harm. The negative effects go against the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and have implications for the workplace, society and the economy. The EESC welcomes the creation of the Alcohol and Health Forum which could be a useful platform for dialogue, between all relevant stakeholders, and lead to concrete action aimed at reducing alcohol related harm. The EESC urges that education and awareness raising initiatives should be part of an overall integrated strategy to reduce alcohol related harm. The EESC is concerned that there is a disturbing inconsistency between the research evidence-base of effective measures to reduce alcohol related harm and what are being proposed as Community actions. Throughout the Communication, education and information are frequently cited as the intended measures. However, the research evidence suggests that such measures have a very low rate of effectiveness in reducing alcohol related harm.