WINE in MODERATION

A Pan-European Programme Promoting Responsibility and Moderation in Wine Consumption

COMMON MESSAGE
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1. WINE: A TASTE FOR MODERATION

Wine is integral to European life and culture. The EU is the largest wine producer in the world, as well as the world’s leading exporter of wine products, and the sector contributes some €15bn annually to the EU economy. The wine sector’s importance to the European economy should not be counted merely in monetary terms, however. The sector permeates many levels of European life, contributing significantly to society in socio-economic, environmental and societal terms: where vines grace the landscape, the wine sector provides employment to millions, helping to sustain the fabric of rural societies and maintaining a way of life that is central to the very notion of European identity. Not least, wine and wine products are enjoyed by millions in Europe and around the world, often providing the focus to landmark celebrations as well as being savoured with good food.

The European wine sector acknowledges these important contributions and seeks to promote the wine sector and its products within the EU and abroad.

The European wine sector, however, also acknowledges the health dangers and the negative social and economic impact that can be and have been engendered by the misuse of wine and other alcoholic beverages. It recognises that while for the majority of consumers wine products represent a pleasurable beverage to be enjoyed in moderation, a minority abuse alcoholic products in ways that are damaging to themselves and that can harm others around them. The sector also recognises worrying trends relating to so called binge-drinking that has become especially marked in certain parts of the European Union, and among certain social, age and socio-economic groups.

The European wine sector believes that the quality products it produces in and of themselves incite moderate consumption patterns. However, the sector also recognises that not all people consume wine in moderation, and it seeks to promote moderation and responsibility in wine consumption as the social norm.

To this end, the European wine sector has developed a pan-European programme called “Wine in Moderation”, which works to promote sensible drinking patterns and reduce alcohol abuse and misuse related harm and supports initiatives aimed at reducing harmful alcohol-related behaviour in Europe, while preserving the cultural, environmental and economic place of wine in European society.

This Common Message sets out a common understanding that will form the basis and foundation of the Wine in Moderation programme. The programme is intended to be rolled out across the European Union with a view to:

- Communicating moderation and responsibility in the sensible consumption of wine, and encouraging this as a cultural/social norm.
- Contributing towards preventing abusive and/or excessive consumption of alcoholic drinks, reducing alcohol misuse and helping young people and adults make enlightened, responsible decisions about drinking.
- Cooperating effectively with the competent authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the prevention of excessive consumption or misuse of wine.
2. WHAT IS THE WINE IN MODERATION PROGRAMME AND HOW WILL IT WORK?

The Wine in Moderation programme (‘the Programme’) is the European wine sector’s measurable commitment to implement an effective and specific contribution to the reduction of alcohol-related harm, founded on science based information, broad based education and sector self-regulation. The Programme represents the wine sector’s contribution to the European Commission’s Alcohol and Health Forum within the framework of the EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm\(^1\). The Alcohol and Health Forum, of which the wine sector is an active participant, aims to coordinate participating actors so successful endeavours can be shared with potential partners across the EU.

The Programme is an initiative of the combined European wine sector. Its objective is to promote responsibility in consumption of wine and wine products, support the message of wine as a premium product to be savoured slowly and in moderation, and to educate stakeholders and the public about the social and health risks of excessive consumption and misuse, while encouraging cultural change in the approach to consuming alcohol, and making moderation fashionable. The Programme aims to mobilise the whole European wine sector in building partnerships with stakeholders at supranational (EU), national and local levels, as well as complementing and supporting national initiatives already in place.

Drinking patterns are deeply rooted in and across different European cultures, which, combined with tradition, may make the pace of change very slow. Indeed in certain cultures, excessive or binge drinking is not considered socially abnormal or unacceptable. That is why sustainable and long-term initiatives to tackle harmful drinking must be positive and tailored locally and designed to highlight moderation and responsibility in the consumption of alcoholic beverages as a social norm. While the challenge may be great, the goal is ultimately attainable because although certain cultures experience more alcohol-related problems than others, moderate, problem-free drinking is indeed the general social norm in Europe. The issue being addressed is hazardous and harmful consumption, not consumption in and of itself.

In response to the need for broad research on social and cultural aspects of drinking in Europe, an EU Wine Information Council (WIC) is being developed in coordination with European authorities. The WIC aims to:

- Share “best practices” across the European wine sector organisations in the EU member states;
- Develop a process and structure for a central Wine Information Database to:
  - Coordinate the information flow between the various national and local Wine and Health / Social Aspects Associations, ensuring that information is commonly available for use by any stakeholder
  - Consolidate all relevant information based on sound science
  - Stimulate additional research carried out by independent, credible researchers on aspects of interest and/or concern

\(^1\) COM (2006) 625 final: An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm.
By assuming leadership in communicating moderation and responsibility in wine consumption as a cultural norm, the wine sector will help prevent alcohol abuse and misuse by enabling young people and adults to make responsible decisions. This will be achieved in partnership and cooperation with competent authorities and other stakeholders interested in reducing harmful alcohol-related activities. From this Common Message of moderation, key elements will be extracted and employed in targeted communication materials, including a corporate-style information brochure and an educational ‘art de vivre’ or life-skills presentation, for use with persons of all ages. These materials will cover topics like healthy attitudes towards wine, the risks associated with hazardous and harmful consumption, and the legal environment.

Central to promoting the message of moderation and responsibility in sensible consumption is the “Art de Vivre” education programme, which involves:

- Active education of industry and consumers to encourage cultural change in the approach to consuming alcoholic beverages, making moderation fashionable
- Educating consumers who appreciate wine to do so moderately and responsibly, as part of a healthy lifestyle
- Familiarising consumers with the risks of abuse and misuse and the benefits of moderate consumption of wine to allow them to make informed and responsible decisions.

Last but not least, the European wine sector is a strong advocate of responsible commercial communication. Common sense should govern all forms of commercial communications to consumers. The wine sector reaffirms its commitment to all forms of wine marketing promoting the message of moderation. No communication should target people under the legal drinking age or provide misleading information. To this end, the European wine sector has defined a set of Wine Communication Standards specific to commercial communications on wine and wine products. These standards build on existing national self-regulation codes aimed at reinforcing the traditions of presentation, communication and availability to consumers, inducing moderation and responsibility in the consumption of wine. They also lay out a series of recommendations governing commercial practices and communications. Guidelines for how to use the message of moderation and responsibility in the consumption of wine will also be established.
3. WHAT IS WINE?

A natural product:
Centuries of passion, a multitude of varieties

Wine is a natural, agricultural product recognised by the EU Treaties and defined in EU legislation as a “product obtained exclusively from the total or partial alcoholic fermentation of fresh grapes, whether or not crushed, or of grape must”.

Wine is a strictly regulated product, from the vineyard to the consumer, Vine cultivation and winemaking are regulated by the EU Common Market Organization (CMO)² in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It sets comprehensive and specific standards that cover wine production, including soils, planting areas, authorisation of vine varieties, and wine making.

Wine making is both an art and a science, and different climates and soil types will impact on a single grape variety. Many different styles of wine have emerged as a result of differing viniculture methods, and few winemakers would agree on just one “correct” method of wine making. Each wine is unique. Soil, weather, geology, varietals, and the style of wine making, are all decisive yet variable factors that give each wine a unique character.

Wine regions in Europe produce an endless variety of superb products. While wine remains a natural product, technological innovations have provided for better hygiene and control of the production process, contributing to the production of wines suited to the palate of contemporary consumers. In fact, overall consumption of wine in Europe has declined as patrons increasingly choose higher quality wines.

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Figure 1: Evolution of wine consumption in the EU

Wine as a resource:
A vital industry, an ecological asset, a way of life

The European Union is the world’s leading producer, consumer, exporter and importer of wine. In fact, Europe produces over half of the world’s wine and wine production is an essential economic activity for many regional economies.

In 2004, wine production represented 5.4% of the EU’s agricultural output and for some southern European economies it accounted for approximately 10% of the value of agricultural production; that was the case for France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Spain.
Table 1: Average Production Value of the EU wine sector

Over the last five years average production in the EU-25 amounted to 178 million hectolitres, worth around €16 billion. With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, production will increase by roughly 7 million hectolitres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main wine-producing countries</th>
<th>Production (million hectolitres)</th>
<th>% EU</th>
<th>Value (€ billion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30,6%</td>
<td>7,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28,5%</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23,2%</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,5%</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>7,2</td>
<td>4,2%</td>
<td>1,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other wine-producing countries include Hungary, Greece, Austria, and to a lesser extent Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta.


While in recent years, the volume of wine imports into the EU has been growing, the EU remains a net wine exporter. In 2006, European wine exports totalled €5.5 billion, contributing a net surplus of €3 billion towards the Community’s trade balance.

Vine-growing and wine production also plays an important role in the level of activity and employment in rural areas of many EU member states and their regions.

In 2005, there were about 1.3 million holdings with vineyards for wine production in the EU-25, representing more than 20% of all EU farms. Those farms, occupying more than 3.4 million hectares of land, accounted for approximately 20% of the total employment in EU agriculture, employing over three million people, with the family labour force being still very prevalent. Alongside the permanent jobs, there is also seasonal employment in the harvest. Mediterranean countries (Italy, Portugal, France, Spain and Greece) employ 84% of the total labour force used on holdings with vineyards.

Looking at the evolution of agricultural holdings with vineyards over time, there has been a significant drop in the number of holdings (from 2.1 million in 1990 to 1.3 million in 2005) and in the corresponding level of employment.

These results are a clear indication of a longstanding and profound restructuring process that is taking place in the European wine sector, leading to an expansion of the average farm size and a rationalization of the labour input, within the context of a slight reduction of vine areas.
The socio-economic dimension of vine cultivation extends beyond the agricultural activity in the vineyards and should also take into account indirect economic activities linked to wine production, such as: trade and marketing of wine; production of oak casks, bottles, labels, capsules and corks; development of wine tourism.

The wine sector also makes considerable contributions to the environment. Vineyards ensure human presence in fragile areas that often lack other real economic value. Vines planted on hillsides help limit soil erosion and can also provide fire protection since the low density of their rootstocks help to restrict the spread of fire.

As the wine sector adds value to landscapes and contributes to its preservation, the European Landscape Convention also accords a particular relevance to vineyards. Furthermore, based on the European Landscape Convention provisions regarding the protection, management and planning of landscapes, numerous studies have been developed to highlight the value, to set codes of best practices, to preserve the environment and to promote vineyard landscapes as a label of quality tourism.
4. WINE: THE CULTURE OF MODERATION

History of wine: Celebrating moderation

Wine has evolved as part of European life, culture and diet since time immemorial. Wine making emerged in Europe with the expansion of the Roman Empire throughout the Mediterranean, when many major wine producing regions that still exist today were established. Even then wine making was a precise husbandry that fostered the development of different grape varieties and cultivation techniques. Barrels for storing and shipping emerged, bottles were used for the first time, and even a rudimentary appellation system developed as certain regions gained a reputation for fine wine. As wine production became progressively refined, its popularity increased, and wine taverns became a common feature in cities throughout the Empire.

The culture of wine in Europe predates the Romans: in ancient Greece, wine was praised by poets, historians and artists, and was frequently referred to in the works of Aesop and Homer. In Greece, however, wine was considered the privilege of the upper classes. Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, represented not only the intoxicating power of wine, but also its social and beneficial influences. He was viewed as the promoter of civilization, a lawgiver, and lover of peace — as well as the patron deity of agriculture and the theatre. Indeed, according to ancient Greek historian Thucydides, “the peoples of the Mediterranean began to emerge from barbarism when they learnt to cultivate the olive and the vine”.

With the passing of the centuries, the art of wine making spread to France, Spain, Germany and parts of Britain. By this time, wine was considered an important part of daily diet and people began to favour stronger, heavier wines. European appreciation of wine endured throughout the Dark Ages. Partly because drinking water was still unreliable, wine was the preferred alternative to accompany meals. At the same time, viticulture and viniculture advanced thanks to the husbandry of Church monasteries across the continent, which gave rise to some of the finest vineyards in Europe. The Benedictine monks, for example, became one of Europe’s largest wine producers with vineyards in France’s Champagne, Burgundy, and Bordeaux regions, as well as in the Rheingau and Franconia regions of Germany. The merchant and noble classes had wine with every meal and maintained well-stocked cellars.

During the 16th century wine became appreciated as a more sophisticated alternative to beer and as wine products began to diversify, consumers began to value the concept of varying their drinking habits. People began to discuss the virtues and vices of wine with greater gusto than in previous centuries. Elizabethan England’s celebrated bard Shakespeare remarked that “good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used”, implicitly commenting on the misuse of wine at this time. The Shakespearian era saw the availability of fresh drinking water in London, a breakthrough that moved the wine industry into a new age.

Improved production techniques in the 17th and 18th centuries resulted in the emergence of finer qualities of wine, glass bottles with corks began to be used, and the corkscrew was invented. The French wine industry took off at this point, with particular recognition being given to the clarets of the Bordeaux region by merchants from the Low Countries, Germany, Ireland and Scandinavia. Bordeaux traded wine for coffee and other sought-after items from the New World, helping to cement the role of wine in emerging world trade.
While the 19th century is considered the golden age of wine for many regions, it was not without tragedy. Around 1863 many French vines suffered from a disease caused by the Phylloxera aphid, which sucked the juice out of the roots. When it was discovered that vines in America were resistant to Phylloxera it was decided to plant American vines in affected French regions. This created hybrid grapes that produced a greater variety of wines.

Over the last 150 years, wine making has been totally revolutionised as an art and science. With access to refrigeration it has become easy for wineries to control the temperature of the fermentation process and produce high quality wines in hot climates. The introduction of harvesting machines has allowed vineyards to become larger and more efficient. Although the wine industry faces the challenge of meeting the demands of an ever-larger market without losing the individual character of its wines, technology helps to ensure a consistent supply of quality wines. Modern wine appreciation pays homage to the timeless art of wine making and demonstrates the importance of wine in the history and diversity of European culture.

Culture of wine:
A heritage of cultivation, appreciation, and diversity

As an enduring cultural symbol of European living, the role of wine has evolved over time, changing from an important source of nutrition to a cultural complement to food and conviviality compatible with a healthy lifestyle. The art of viticulture has also evolved, but one principle that has remained unchanged is the European tradition of presenting and communicating wine, which focuses on the origins, heritage and viticulture. Wine therefore tends to be associated with gastronomy, history, local quality products and dignified social settings. As such, despite the differences in consumption patterns across the EU, moderate consumption remains the general norm and it is only a minority of people that misuse wine.

Europeans’ cultural appreciation of wine reflects the diversity of the European experience, savoir-vivre and culinary habits. The association of wine as a part of a European identity also promotes moderate consumption. However, in contrast to the inherent culture of wine, EU member states are experiencing growing trends in alcohol misuse, particularly among young people, with major health, judicial, economic and social implications. Because responsible wine consumption is compatible with a modern, healthy European lifestyle, today’s culture of wine must include a common stakeholder commitment to ensuring that moderate drinking remains the social norm.
5. ENJOYING WINE: A TASTE FOR MODERATION

Appreciated for its flavour, texture, body, colour, bouquet and variety, wine is often a tasty complement to meals when consumed in moderation. Wine continues to be a source of social and cultural pleasure and is enjoyed by millions of adults (consumers of legal drinking age) who appreciate the quality of wine products through responsible consumption. Wine also plays an important role in everyday life: it is often used to celebrate key events such as births, birthdays and weddings and it marks the transition from work to play, easing social interaction.

Wine consumption has decreased over the past 20 years as more Europeans move to higher quality wines they can savour in moderation. However, a minority also consume alcoholic beverages in ways that can be harmful and can have serious implications for personal health. Such misuse involves social costs; impacts negatively on economic development and productivity; drains the resources of health and social security systems; and can pose a threat to public order.

While there are benefits of consuming wine moderately, its abuse and misuse on the other hand, can have serious health consequences. The challenge today is to communicate the benefits as well as the risks responsibly and thus, allowing the overwhelming majority of adult consumers who enjoy wine moderately, continue to do so and helping to prevent alcohol misuse among a small minority.

Moderation guidelines: How much is too much?

Many factors, such as age, body mass index, ethnicity, family history, general health status and the use of medication, influence the definition of modern drinking guidelines. The speed of alcohol consumption and whether it is accompanied by food - as well as the amount and type of food - are conditions that influence the absorption of alcohol. Consequently, guidelines are likely to vary among population groups, as well as across countries and within them individually (Figure 2).
Figure 2: Recommendations on low risk levels of alcohol consumption

As shown in Figure 2, the recommended levels vary in some countries, sometimes up to 2 or 3 fold. In addition, no consistency exists on the sizes of standard drinks across countries, which generally reflects differences in cultures and customs: the smallest drink is 8 g of alcohol in the UK and the largest is 19.75 g in Japan (WHO, 2004) (Figure 3).

Source: ICAP Table 2007: Guidelines
www.icap.org/PolicyIssues/DrinkingGuidelines/GuidelinesTable/tabid/204/Default.aspx,
Harding et al, 2007
Figure 3: Standard drink definitions in different countries

Source: WHO, 2004
However, based on available scientific evidence and different references provided by various public health authorities, it is accepted that low-risk moderate consumption ranges between the amounts set out in the guidelines below:

**Guidelines for low-risk moderate consumption:**
- Up to 2 drink units a day for women
- Up to 3 drink units a day for men
- No more than 4 drink units on any one occasion
- Alcohol should be avoided in certain situations such as when pregnant, when taking certain medication or when working machinery

**Alcohol consumption: terms of measurement**

1 drink unit* representing 10g of pure alcohol equates to:

- **10cl of wine** at 12% vol
- **10cl of sparkling wine** at 12% vol
- **6cl of liqueur wine** at 20% vol
- **7cl of aromatised wine** at 15% vol

(*) *This term indicates the average content of pure alcohol expressed in the most common units of consumption, although serving volumes and consumption guidelines vary across countries.*

Low-risk consumption is considered to be the amount of alcohol that an individual can safely consume without significantly increasing the risk of negative health and social effects (Dufour MC, 1999). This definition can be extended to include the amount of alcohol that an individual can safely consume to potentially experience or gain positive health effects in the longer term.
Importance of drinking patterns
It is not only drinking volumes, however, but also drinking patterns (i.e., how people consume alcohol) and the circumstances under which alcohol is consumed which are important.

As scientific research indicates, the regular, moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages is more beneficial and associated with a lower morbidity and mortality risk than binge drinking the same amount of alcohol, for example, just on weekends (Tolstrup J.S. et al, 2004, Mukamal K.J. et al, 2003, Marques-Vidal P. et al, 2000, Rehm J et al, 2003, Baglietto L et al, 2006).

Who do the guidelines NOT apply to?
Moderate drinking guidelines do NOT apply
- to young people who have not reached physical maturity
- to pregnant women
- drivers
- those taking medication that does not combine well with alcohol
- individuals with a history of addiction or suffering from certain diseases

When in doubt, please consult your physician!

Respecting these guidelines, moderate wine consumption by adults – as part of a balanced diet – is compatible with a low risk, healthy lifestyle. Although some European cultures experience more alcohol-related problems than others, moderate drinking of this kind remains the norm.

Benefits of moderate wine consumption

Alcohol and the heart
Regular moderate wine consumption has been associated with several health benefits. Throughout the developed world, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and accounts for up to 50% of all deaths (WHO Fact Sheet, 2007). Consistently, scientific studies are showing that consuming moderate amounts of alcohol reduces mortality from coronary heart disease as well as from other causes by 25-30% in middle-aged individuals, mainly in men aged over 40 years and in post menopausal women (Corrao G et al, 2000; Wannamethee SG et al. 2003; Klatsky a. et al, 2003, Di Castelnuovo A et al., 2002; Klatsky A.L., 2007; Gronbaek M, 2004).

J-shaped association between mortality risk and alcohol consumption
Moderate wine drinkers live longer than those who abstain or drink heavily. This widely accepted association is known as the J-curve (Figure 4). The relative risk of dying is lowest among light to moderate drinkers and greater among abstainers.

However, the risk increases dramatically with each drink above moderation. Thus, while one or two glasses can be considered “good for your health”, drinking more than the guidelines will not provide more benefits, only more harm! (Corrao et al, 2000)
Figure 4: J-shaped association between mortality risk and alcohol consumption

How does it work?
Approximately half of the cardio-protective effects of wine are believed to be due to alcohol itself since it changes the balance of fats in the blood favourably.

Vascular disease occurs when bad cholesterol (LDL) is deposited in artery walls and builds up, eventually rupturing, causing a clot to form which blocks off the artery, and the tissue supplied by that artery of blood dies.

- Alcohol stimulates the production of the “good” high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) which removes the “bad” low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL) from arteries and veins where it can form plaques.
- It also reduces the “stickiness” or the clotting together of red blood cells which could form a clot and block the blood flow in an artery (thrombosis) resulting in a heart attack or stroke (Lacoste L et al. 2001).
- Furthermore, alcohol has an overall anti-inflammatory effect that affects the blood vessels positively and thus, delays the development of atherosclerosis (Estruch R et al., 2004).

Wine, in addition, contains phenolic substances which act as antioxidants and inhibit bad cholesterol from being incorporated in the artery wall. These antioxidants also reduce the damage caused by the body’s free radicals (toxic waste products) which contribute to causing degenerative diseases in the body such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and ageing. It should be noted that the antioxidant activity in unfermented grape juice is lower than in the finished wine - antioxidant activity increases during fermentation and maturation. Antioxidant levels will depend on the processing, filtering as well as on the variety, vintage, altitude and soil (Frankel E.N. et al, 2000).
Resveratrol, along with quercetin and epicatechin, is one of the main antioxidants found in wine. These phenolic bioflavonoid compounds give wine its characteristic colour and flavour and are produced by plants in response to fungal infection, ultraviolet light, and various chemical and physical stressors, especially during ripening. Researchers have shown that these antioxidants in wine are five times more potent as antioxidants than the benchmark antioxidant, vitamin E.

These findings support the overwhelming and growing body of scientific research indicating that moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages is associated with lower levels of coronary heart disease as well as with better health and greater longevity (Mukamal, KL et al, 2006).

**Wine and diabetes mellitus**

Evidence from large population studies suggests that light to moderate drinkers of alcoholic beverages have also a lower diabetic risk than abstainers or heavy drinkers. Results of a meta-analysis examining the relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and type 2 diabetes indicate a protective effect for developing diabetes when wine is enjoyed moderately. A 30% reduced risk of diabetes is seen in men as well as in women (Carlsson S. et al., 2005, Koppes L.L. et al, 2005, Wannamethee S.G. et al, 2003; Avogaro, A. et al. 2004; Wei, M. et al. 2000).

Exactly how alcohol reduces the risk of diabetes has not yet been clearly established. Research shows that alcohol may improve the body’s resistance to insulin, a problem of type 2 or adult-onset diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes cannot use glucose effectively because of their resistance to insulin (which is the hormone that permits glucose to be used by the body’s cells).

But not only the risk of developing type 2 diabetes is decreased with moderate alcohol consumption; it may also reduce potential cardiac complications relating to diabetes. This is especially important considering that coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death among people with type 2 diabetes, who also have a 4-fold increased risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Research indicates that this risk decreases considerably when they consume wine moderately with meals.

Considering the world-wide epidemic of type 2 diabetes which is expected to rise even further and is associated with major health care costs, preventing diabetes is a major public health issue. It appears that drinking in moderation could however help reduce type 2 diabetes and thereby contribute significantly to public health (Djousse L. et al, 2007).

In light of such findings, the benefits of moderate wine consumption also need to be adequately recognised. However, the scientific findings regarding the benefits of moderate consumption, whether physical, mental or social should not be an incentive to exceed the guidelines for moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages. Please remember, drinking wine should be for pleasure and enjoyment rather than for any health benefit and drinking more than the recommended amounts will not provide more benefits, only more harm!

For full details on Wine, Health and Social aspects, visit www.wineinformationcouncil.eu
6. ABUSE AND MISUSE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Harmful effects of abusive consumption

If consumed in excess, alcoholic beverages increase the exposure to a wide range of risk factors whereby the risk rises with the amount of alcohol consumed. Thus, it is crucial to prevent abusive consumption and the wine sector is committed to doing so.

Assessing the health and social costs

Alcohol-related harm resulting from abuse and misuse is of serious concern. Harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption is one of the main causes of premature death and avoidable disease. One in four deaths among young men (aged 15-29) and one in ten deaths among young women is related to harmful use of alcoholic beverages. Causes of death include road traffic accidents, injuries, violence and liver disease. It is the net cause of 7.4% of all ill-health and early death in the EU and impacts negatively on labour and productivity (Rehm J. et al, 2003, Anderson P. et al, 2006).

Alcohol abuse has also been associated with a range of long-term chronic diseases that reduce the quality of life. These include hypertension, cardiovascular problems, cirrhosis of the liver, alcohol dependence, various forms of cancer, alcohol-related brain damage and a range of other problems (Standridge J. et al 2004).

Heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages in pregnant women can cause malformations of the embryo and their offspring may exhibit symptoms of foetal alcohol syndrome. Thus, it is recommended to avoid alcoholic beverages during pregnancy (Tsai J. et al, 2007).

In addition to health issues resulting from excessive alcohol consumption, there are social consequences, both for the drinker and for others in the community. The consequences include harm to family members (including children), to friends and colleagues as well as to bystanders and strangers, i.e. people being harassed by intoxicated individuals. Alcohol misuse also affects professional lives, with nearly 5% of men and 2% of women in the EU-15 reporting a negative impact of alcohol on their work or studies (Anderson P. et al, 2006).

For full details on Wine, Health and Social aspects, visit www.wineinformationcouncil.eu
7. PREVENTING ABUSE AND MISUSE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Moderate consumption

Drinking wine in moderation minimizes the risk for harm and maximizes potential benefits. It is not only the amount of alcohol that is important, however, but also the drinking patterns.

Drinking patterns

Responsible drinking patterns - enjoy wine responsibly
It is vital that the prevalence of responsible drinking patterns such as those which are predominant in traditional wine-producing countries is acknowledged and promoted as a European social norm. The European wine sector has the following guidelines on drinking wine responsibly and at the same time maximising its enjoyment:

- Understand the wine you drink: knowing where its unique character comes from makes drinking the more pleasurable
- Drink slowly: take the time to savour the wine’s distinctive taste
- Accompany wine with good food: enjoy wine that complements your meals, alongside a glass of water
- Regular consumption of small amounts of wine is preferable to binge drinking large amounts on a single occasion
- Do not exceed the guidelines for moderate, low-risk consumption of alcoholic beverages

When in doubt, please consult your physician!

Understanding complex regional and cross-cultural determinants
Traditionally, most European cultures consider wine a refined choice, a view which is consistent with moderate consumption. While wine consumption in the EU has fallen considerably over the past 20 years, among young people, for example, there has been a gradual increase in the misuse of alcoholic beverages, particularly in the form of “binge drinking” (repeated heavy drinking, more than five standard drink units at a time, with the purpose of getting drunk). This trend highlights the importance of analysing drinking patterns and the need to promote responsibility and moderation when consuming alcoholic beverages.

The European Comparative Alcohol Study (ECAS) compared the alcohol consumption and drinking patterns in 14 European countries and found considerable differences. While the European Mediterranean region accounts for the highest alcohol consumption per capita, drinking patterns that pose fewer health risks can be observed there: for example, alcoholic beverages are primarily consumed at home with meals, not in bars/restaurants and not without food. Considerable national variations with regards to “binge drinking” exist as well. For example, 34% of Irish respondents said they usually binge drink, compared to only 2% of respondents in wine-producing Italy and Greece, and 4% in Portugal (European Comparative Alcohol Study – ECAS final report, 2002: Figure 5).
**Figure 5:** Percentage of binge drinking* of all drinking occasions during the last 12 months

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**Percentage of binge drinking of all drinking occasions during the last 12 months**

Hemström, Ö., Leifman, H., Ramstedt, M., ECAS-Survey, ECAS-2-Study, 2002

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* hier: Binge-Drinking: > 1 Fl. wine or > 250 ml spirits or > 2 l beer per occasion

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- **Binge-Drinking here = 1 bottle of wine or 250 ml of spirits or 2 l of beer per occasion**

*Source: ECAS final report, 2002*

In fact, harmful drinking patterns are considerably less common in predominantly wine producing countries, where wine is consumed more regularly, almost exclusively with meals and the volume of alcohol consumed at each drinking session tends to be much lower than in the Nordic countries, the UK and Ireland, which have the highest levels of binge drinking.

Furthermore, enormous cross-cultural variations in the way Europeans behave when they drink exist. In some societies, alcohol misuse is often associated with violent or anti-social behaviour, while in others drinking behaviour is generally harmonious. These differences are partly related to inconsistent cultural beliefs about alcoholic beverages, expectancies regarding the effects of alcohol, and social norms regarding drunkenness (ECAS final report, 2002).

It is well documented in the ECAS 2 study that the traditional method of only considering the per capita alcohol consumption within a country’s population and neglecting the drinking patterns is not necessarily the decisive factor for alcohol related harm. A better understanding of individual drinking patterns, particularly among young people, is required in order to be able to suggest solutions that could minimise alcohol related harm. Evidence-based research which examines drinking patterns as well as the motivation to drink alcohol can contribute successfully to curbing alcohol abuse and misuse. Measures including education and information are essential to encourage individual responsibility and informed choices.
The wine sector recognises the need to collaborate with authorities and stakeholders to strengthen existing projects in EU member states to tackle harmful drinking. It will do this by promoting the use of ‘best practices’ that will implement long-term, sustainable initiatives that highlight the harmful consequences of irresponsible drinking. Reducing alcohol-related harm should concern all stakeholders, and the most effective approach involves partnerships between stakeholders not only at the national level but also at the regional and often more importantly at the local/community level.

For full details visit www.wineinformationcouncil.eu

Wine drinking and the law - knowing and respecting the limits

Because alcohol consumption is embedded and integrated differently into the values of many societies, tailored responses to reflect this diversity and complexity are needed.

The laws of each EU member state have been established by a democratic process which reflects the regional and cultural differences across Europe. The European wine sector supports the enforcement of existing alcohol-related laws and regulations while taking a regional approach to resolving serious problems.

Over the last 25 years, considerable progress has been made towards understanding the relationship between alcohol-related laws, consumption of alcoholic beverages and harm. Since the misuse of alcoholic beverages presents a risk to the consumer, people in Europe demand accurate and consistent information, including information on applicable laws and regulations.

The European wine sector believes in the promotion and enforcement of the laws governing alcohol intake. The wine sector also would like to play a leading role in implementing effective multi-stakeholder projects designed to disseminate information on the implications of alcohol-related harm and disrespect of drinking laws.

Drinking and driving - never exceed the BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) limits for drivers
As with any other alcoholic beverage, the consumption of wine affects the capacity to perform certain activities, such as driving.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)
BAC is the amount of alcohol in the blood stream: a BAC level of 0.5 means that an individual has 0.5g of alcohol in their body for every 1 litre of blood.

Taking a standard drink of 10g of alcohol, BAC will generally increase by 0.2-0.3 for each standard drink. A BAC will generally decrease by approximately 0.2-0.1 per hour (1/4 to 1 standard drink, or 8g of alcohol per hour).

The BAC will increase sharply when alcohol is consumed on an empty stomach.
Absorption of alcohol

After an alcoholic drink is consumed, the alcohol is absorbed rapidly from the stomach and intestine into the bloodstream. The blood alcohol level after drinking a specific number of drinks depends on the rate of drinking and the rate at which it is broken down in the liver. The capacity of the liver to break down alcohol is limited, so that if there is more alcohol in the liver than it has capacity to break down, the remaining alcohol will circulate in the blood to other organs and tissues of the body, such as the brain. Alcohol usually starts to affect the brain within about 5 minutes of being swallowed.

The influence of alcohol on individuals will vary depending on the size, physical composition, gender, general health, metabolism, and/or the conditions under which alcohol is consumed (i.e. with or without food). For example, a woman’s BAC generally increases higher than a man’s because women tend to be smaller and have more fatty tissue per kg body weight than men. Men also have more body water, thus, alcohol is more concentrated in the blood of a woman consuming the same number of drinks as a man. In addition, women have less of the enzyme that metabolizes alcohol in their stomach and liver.

Because of the multitude of factors that affect BAC, it is very difficult to assess one’s own BAC or impairment. Alcohol steadily decreases a person’s ability to drive a motor vehicle safely. Listed below are some of the common negative consequences following the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Impact of alcohol on the ability to drive

Consequences on the psychomotor functions of the driver
- Coordination and capacity to react decrease
- Capacity to judge speed, distance and the relative position of the vehicle is affected
- Capacity to follow a trajectory or to face an unexpected event is affected

Consequences on the vision of the driver
- Field of vision is reduced and peripheral vision is altered
- Recovery of sight after a flash is delayed
- Even with low alcohol levels in the blood, the capacity to see, follow, and accommodate objects is deteriorated

Consequences for behaviour and attitude
- Alcohol may alter driving behaviour and reactions may become aggressive or neglectful
- It may induce feelings of over-confidence, which can give rise to reckless decisions

For these reasons, all EU member states have established legal limits on the BAC for drivers (Figure 6).
Hungary and the Czech Republic (not shown in the table above) have a zero tolerance policy, so the maximum BAC for these countries is 0.

The best advice is to avoid driving if you drink alcoholic beverages. In any case, the BAC limits established for drivers should never be exceeded!

**Wine consumption requires maturity - the need for under-age restrictions**

**Physical immaturity**
Under-age individuals should not drink. Young people are at particular risk of harm from excessive alcohol consumption because it interferes with their growth, nutritional status and personality development. It is recognised that consuming alcoholic beverages increases the probability of an accident while participating in sporting and recreational activities and it diminishes physical, sexual and communicative capacity. The (negative) effects of alcohol misuse are, however, much more pronounced in young people. This is not only due to their physical immaturity but also due to psychological factors.

Since adolescents are still in a phase of physical development, they typically have not fully developed the same capacity to tolerate alcohol as fully-grown adults. It has also been observed that alcohol dependence is more likely to develop, if alcohol use commences prior to adulthood. Researchers found that the earlier the drinking started, the higher the risk of alcohol dependence later in life (Hingson, R.W., 2006).

Furthermore, alcohol affects the brain development in young people, thus, drinking, particularly binge-drinking, at any time before the brain development is complete may adversely affect later brain function (White A. et al, 2004).

**Mental immaturity**
In addition, young people are greater risk takers than adults but still have poorly developed decision-making skills, factors that are reflected in the high levels of injuries (Miller J.N. et al 2007) during adolescence. The young brain is sensitive to injury from alcohol and is less able to listen to body signs to stop drinking (Spear L., 2004).
The high expectations many young people attribute to alcohol as a social lubricant in removing inhibitions can sometimes expose them to major risks.

Furthermore, the constant process of change and transformation experienced by young people affecting both personality and physiology can rapidly facilitate a psychological and physical dependence on alcohol.

**Influence of family**

However, recent research from the UK (Bellis M.A. et al, 2007) suggests that teenagers who taste moderate amounts of alcohol at home with their families are less likely to binge drink.

Parental supervision of alcohol consumption in a family environment may also provide a tool for establishing child-parent dialogues on alcohol. This method requires supporting parents to ensure they promote only moderate drinking behaviours in their children, and only when appropriate. Parental figures must set an example in establishing and promoting drinking habits that are socially acceptable.

**Minimum purchasing age - supporting respect for underage sales ban enforcement**

The laws of each EU member state reflect regional and cultural differences. Legal restrictions on the age at which people may purchase alcohol vary from country to country and typically range from 16 to 21 years of age. Because all EU countries legally restrict sales to youth, the wine sector supports that consumers of all ages should be well informed of the minimum age established for purchasing and drinking alcohol.

**Table 2: Minimum legal purchasing age in various countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Beer &amp; Wine</th>
<th>Spirits</th>
<th>Minimum Legal Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Luxemburg*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Malta*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark**</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland***</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece*</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sweden***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Countries with no age limit off-premise (Belgium only for beer and wine).
** Off-premise legal drinking age for Denmark is 16.
*** Off-premise legal drinking age in Finland for spirits and in Sweden for beer, wine and spirits is 20.

Legal restrictions covering the minimum purchasing age can only be effective, however, if the respective laws are enforced. Enforcement is very important because studies indicate that under-age youths can still purchase alcoholic beverages regardless of legal limitations. This is probably the result of insufficient or inconsistent enforcement, particularly when there is little concern about law enforcement in the community. The European wine sector will contribute to raising awareness and encouraging societal respect for the laws governing the minimum alcohol purchasing age.

For more details visit www.wineinformationcouncil.eu
8. COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS: ADVERTISING RESPONSIBILITY

Advertising and commercial communication can be an important tool for producers and companies in helping improve market share, secure customer loyalty and provide the public with product information. At the same time, producers and companies must carry out commercial communications with consideration for the legitimate economic interests of consumers and their right to information and freedom of choice.

For full details of the self-regulatory and legislative environment for commercial communications in each of the EU member states please see our “Wine Communication Standards”

The manner in which wines are traditionally presented, communicated and served to consumers induces moderation. Commercial communications on wine must comply with applicable legislation and self-regulatory codes of practice in force with respect to the communication’s form, content and medium. The European wine sector is committed to social responsibility towards consumers and society by strengthening and intensifying the promotion of responsible wine advertising, and shaping commercial communications for wine products in a way that does not promote harmful consumption.

The European wine sector has established the EU Wine Communication Standards aimed at promoting best practice across the EU whilst taking into account the specific characteristics of the wine sector. It focuses on:

- Reinforcing the traditions of wine presentation, communication and availability to consumers as a means to promote moderation and responsibility
- Ensuring commercial communications on wine products do not encourage or condone excessive consumption or misuse of any kind

These standards are established as a set of basic principles which act in tandem with the existing legislation and with the requirements of good business practices and provide guidelines for the application of best practices by national self-regulatory mechanisms and company codes.
9. KEY POINTS TO SAVOUR

- Wine production and consumption has been a part of European heritage for millennia. The European Union is today the world’s largest wine producer and exporter.
- Each wine is a natural unique product. To ensure its authenticity and quality, wine is subject to a comprehensive strict regulation from the vineyard to the consumer.
- Appreciated for its flavour, texture, body, colour, bouquet and variety, wine is often the ideal complement to good food.
- Only by savouring wine moderately and slowly, its complex flavours can be fully appreciated and enjoyed.
- Alcohol abuse and misuse damages health and can cause a variety of social problems.
- Wine consumption requires maturity: underage people should not drink.
- Avoid drinking if you drive and - in any case - never exceed the BAC limits legally established for drivers.
- Responsible drinking patterns:
  - Understand the wine you drink: knowing where its unique character comes from makes drinking the more pleasurable.
  - Drink slowly: take the time to savour the wine’s distinctive taste.
  - Accompany wine with good food: enjoy wine that complement your meal, alongside a glass of water.
  - Regular consumption of small amounts of wine is preferable to binge drinking large amounts on a single occasion.
  - Do not exceed the guidelines for moderate, low-risk consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- Based on available scientific evidence and different references provided by various public health authorities, it is accepted that low-risk moderate consumption ranges between the amounts set out in the guidelines below:

**Guidelines for low-risk moderate consumption:**

- Up to 2 drink units a day for women
- Up to 3 drink units a day for men
- No more than 4 drink units on any one occasion
- Alcohol should be avoided in certain situations such as when pregnant, when taking certain medication or when working machinery.
# Alcohol consumption: terms of measurement

1 drink unit* representing 10g of pure alcohol equates to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink Type</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wine at 12% vol</td>
<td>10cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparkling wine at 12% vol</td>
<td>10cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liqueur wine at 20% vol</td>
<td>6cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aromatised wine at 15% vol</td>
<td>7cl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) This term indicates the average content of pure alcohol expressed in the most common units of consumption, although serving volumes and consumption guidelines vary across countries.
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