

REGULATING PRICE FOR HEALTH PURPOSE

Position - June 2012

The Brewers of Europe, the voice of the European brewing sector, promotes responsible beer consumption and has a proven track record of initiatives that form part of our ongoing work to combat alcohol misuse. By submitting over a third of the commitments to action, Europe's brewers have become the leading contributors to the EU's Alcohol and Health Forum. Earlier this year, the brewers renewed their commitment by launching the European Beer Pledge. Through this voluntary initiative, brewers commit to taking concerted and measurable action to improve consumer information, ensure responsible advertising and address alcohol misuse in line with the expectations of citizens and EU policymakers.

However, The Brewers of Europe does not believe that legislative pricing policies, whether imposed through taxation or any other means, are an appropriate way to address alcohol misuse. Tackling alcohol-related harm requires an in-depth analysis of all the drivers of the behaviour of the minority of consumers that misuse alcohol, whilst pricing policies unfairly impact all consumers. The Brewers of Europe is convinced that a targeted, evidence-based approach is the effective and sustainable way forward, recognising that the vast majority of European citizens are responsible, moderate consumers.

Furthermore, with regard to one policy measure being considered in some Member States, The Brewers of Europe has obtained legal advice that prohibiting retail sale below a minimum price based on alcohol content would not be compatible with the European Treaty since it would restrict the free movement of goods, be disproportionate and suspend price competition in an important part of the market. Moreover, minimum pricing could be challenged under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade since it would favour domestic production.

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