

## Executive Summary

Heavy drinking poses **severe health risks** and can have **multiple negative short and long-term consequences for the individual**, including academic failure, violence, road accidents, injuries, intoxication and risky sexual behavior, addiction and adverse health effects, e.g. disruption of brain development. Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to those effects.

Despite alcohol consumption being part of most European cultures, having a long tradition and being consumed in a moderate and responsible way by the majority of the population, the **negative effects of underage and heavy episodic drinking are felt widely in the whole society**, whether through anti-social behaviour, reduced work efficiency, costs to the health care system, unemployment, absenteeism and low productivity in the work environment. Consequently, reducing harm caused by underage and heavy episodic drinking has to be **a task for the whole society**.

Underage drinking is commonplace in most European countries and youth and young adults generally have a high rate of harmful drinking.

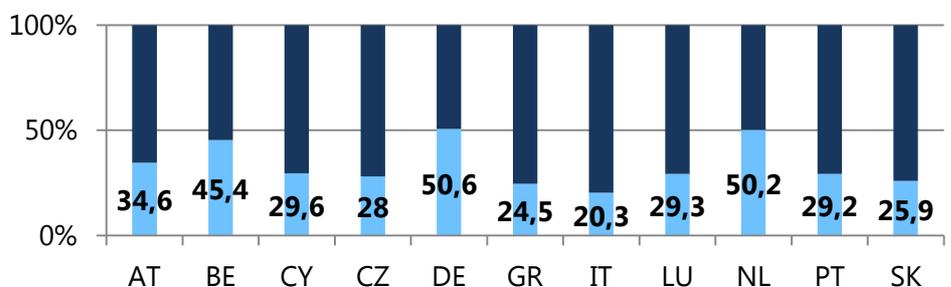
The EU-funded project “Localize it! – local strategies for reducing underage and heavy episodic drinking” aims to **support municipalities in developing and implementing coordinated and custom-fit local alcohol strategies**.

Municipalities are strengthened in their capacity to reduce underage and heavy episodic drinking. Localize It! is implemented in 11 countries and 22 municipalities across Europe.

## Visible effects of underage &amp; heavy drinking

Common community harms associated with heavy drinking include vandalism, disorder, property damages, garbage, violence (violent crime, assaults, sexual violence), family problems, abuse, traffic accidents, nocturnal disturbances, suicides.

Heavy episodic drinkers\* between 15 and 19 years in% (2010) in European countries (Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH))



\*at least 60 grams of pure alcohol or 6 standard drinks on at least one occasion in the past 30 days.

## Space holder for relevant local data or information (to be filled out by each partner)

*e.g. number of hospital admissions due to heavy alcohol consumption, number of traffic accidents related to alcohol consumption and young people, number of police deployments related to alcohol consumption of young people, sickness leaves, country-specific ESPAD data, etc.*

To reduce underage and heavy drinking, action needs to be taken by authorities closest to the citizens and where alcohol consumption actually takes place – **on the local level**.

This policy brief is intended to raise the awareness on the issue of underage and heavy episodic drinking and to point out the need and the options to act for the municipalities.

[www.localize-it.eu](http://www.localize-it.eu)

## Why the municipality? Why local?

- A coordinated local alcohol strategy has proven to be the most promising approach.
- The combined (long-term) contribution of stakeholders, both nationally and locally is necessary to tackle excessive alcohol consumption.
- The municipalities are needed to ensure continuous steering of measures to influence the drinking behavior of young people.
- Side effects cause a decrease in life quality in municipalities and districts.
- Heavy drinking causes a substantial financial burden in the municipalities.
- Municipalities are responsible for health prevention in their community (European Charter on local Self-Government).

„Alcohol policy becomes specific when it is locally implemented“ (RADIX, Switzerland)

„The topic of alcohol consumption always has a local dimension“ (Stadt, Land, Alkohol, Germany)

„Comprehensive youth protection needs a strong personality and a good environment,“ (C. Jordi, RADIX, Switzerland)

„The municipality as the immediate surroundings of young people and adults, offers a suitable basis for addiction prevention“ (Forum Prävention, Italy)

“Tackling alcohol [...] requires planning and action on all levels – nationally, across the city and in local communities“ (Glasgow city, Joint Alcohol Policy Statement)

“National strategies could be more effective if they are supported by local and community based activities.“ (EU Alcohol Action Plan)

### How to implement the local alcohol strategy?

- Cooperation with local prevention experts
- Rapid assessment and response (RAR), thorough situation analysis and needs assessment by the prevention experts
- Involvement of relevant local actors (round table)
- Use access to a pool of Good Practice measures
- Development of an action plan, including structural and individual prevention measures
- Implementation of measures
- Process and outcome evaluation

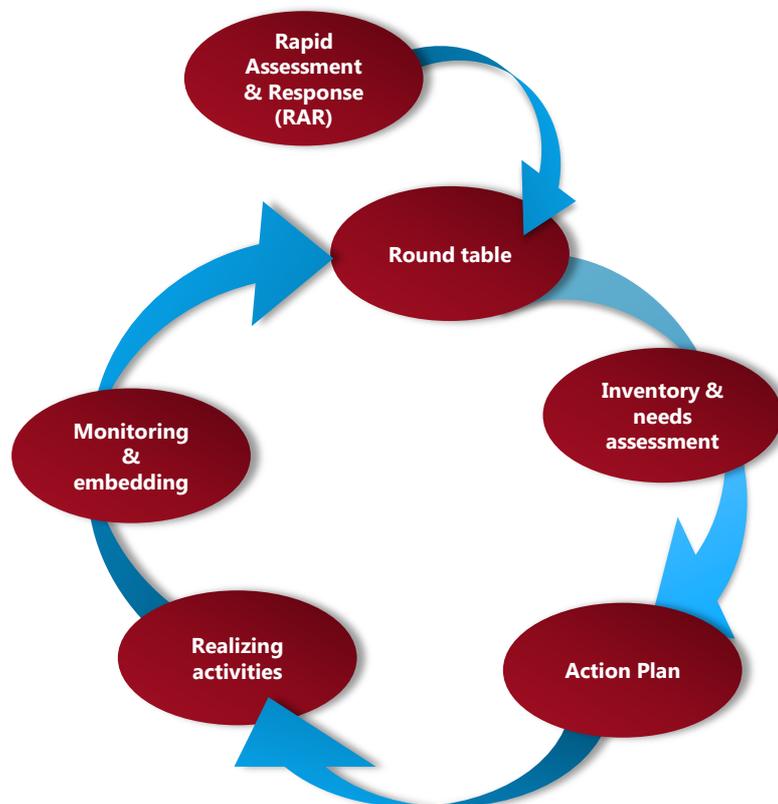
### Benefits for municipalities

- Custom-fit support by experienced prevention experts
- Access to Good Practice and expertise
- Improvement of life quality in the municipality or district
- Sustainable effects by implementation of local alcohol strategy process
- A network of relevant actors will evolve to steer the process and ensure sustainability
- Responsibilities will be clearly distributed by the round table
- Continuous information of political boards about the activities by the round table

### Approaches for the local alcohol strategy

Parental work (1), schools (2), children in families with alcohol problems (3), alcohol in public space (4), party scenes, festivals, gastronomy & retail (4), refugees (6) and road safety (7).

### Process of local alcohol strategy



### Resources

Commission of the European Communities (2006). An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm. Brussels.

Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action (CNAPA). (2014). Action Plan on Youth Drinking and on Heavy Episodic Drinking (Binge Drinking) (2014-2016).

LWL-Coordination Office for Drug-Related Issues (Ed.)(2012). TAKE CARE! Strategies towards responsible alcohol consumption for adolescents in Europe. Münster: LWL.

World Health Organization (WHO)(2012). Alcohol in the European Union. Consumption, harm and policy approaches. Copenhagen.