

## Preventing alcohol-related harm in drinking environments

A major European study has examined research from across the world to identify what works to reduce alcohol-related harm in drinking environments. Pubs, bars and nightclubs are often the scenes of high levels of alcohol use, drunkenness and related-harm, particularly in young people. For example:

- Seven out of ten young nightlife users in Europe report having been drunk in the last four weeks<sup>1</sup>;
- In England, the average alcohol use of young nightlife users on a single night out exceeds their entire recommended weekly limits<sup>2</sup>;
- A third of European nightlife users have taken a lift from a driver who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the past month<sup>3</sup>;
- A fifth of all violence in England and Wales takes place in or around pubs, bars and nightclubs<sup>4</sup>.

As well as damage to health, alcohol-related harm places huge burdens on business and public services, for example through absenteeism, medical treatment, criminal justice sanctions and street cleaning after a night's entertainment. Drinking environments are also workplaces for millions of individuals across Europe, who can be the victims of other people's drinking, for example through violence.

The FASE (Focus on Alcohol Safe Environments) project was co-funded by the European Commission to develop a better understanding of what works to reduce alcohol-related harm in drinking environments. The project focused on interventions that can be implemented at local level, covering five key areas:

1. Responsible server/staff training interventions
2. Interventions to reduce underage access to alcohol
3. Policing and enforcement approaches
4. Interventions delivered in drinking establishments
5. Multi-component community interventions

It found that the best evidence of effectiveness available is for multi-component community interventions – schemes that bring together local agencies in a partnership to plan and

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<sup>1</sup> Bellis MA, Hughes K, Calafat A et al. Sexual uses of alcohol and drugs and the associated health risks: A cross sectional study of young people in nine European cities. *BMC Public Health* 2008; 8: 155.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes K, Anderson ZA, Morleo M et al. Alcohol, nightlife and violence: the relative contributions of drinking before and during nights out to negative health and criminal justice outcomes. *Addiction* 2008; 103: 60-65.

<sup>3</sup> Calafat A, Blay N, Juan M et al. Traffic risk behaviors at nightlife: drinking, taking drugs, driving, and use of public transport by young people. *Traffic Injury Prevention* 2009; 10: 162-169.

<sup>4</sup> Walker A, Flatley J, Kershaw C et al. *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09. Volume 1. Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime.* London: Home Office, 2009.

deliver a combination of strategies to prevent irresponsible alcohol sales, address risky drinking and enforce licensing legislation at a community level.

Despite programmes such as designated driver schemes and educational campaigns frequently being used in Europe, the study found little evidence to support their effectiveness. It also found that staff training programmes and test purchasing operations often have little effects when implemented as standalone measures. However these measures can be important components within broader multi-component community interventions.

Critically, the study's authors noted that a scarcity of research has been conducted in European settings, with most having been undertaken in countries including the USA and Australia. They recommended a range of action including:

- Better evaluation of interventions in drinking environments in European settings, including their cost-effectiveness;
- Better sharing of evidence to prevent resources being spent on measures that have little effect;
- Increased collection and sharing of data on alcohol use, alcohol availability and alcohol-related harms at local levels
- Integration of interventions in drinking environments into broader alcohol strategies to address the root causes of risky drinking behaviours.

The full report and case studies of work underway in Europe to prevent alcohol-related harm in drinking environments can be accessed on the project's website: [www.faseproject.eu](http://www.faseproject.eu).

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**The FASE project – Focus on Alcohol Safe Environments**

In its 2007 work plan, the European Commission called for the collection of best practices in work-place strategies, drinking environments and alcohol marketing. The intention of this call is to reduce the impact of harmful alcohol consumption. The FASE project has become a result of this call. In each of the three areas a literature study was done on effective policies and interventions. Cases and examples of these interventions were gathered throughout Europe in order to provide an overview in the three different areas. This led to new guidelines for more effective policies. On the project website <http://www.faseproject.eu/> one can find all information and reports of the project.