



ALLCOOL

**RAISING AWARENESS AND ACTION-RESEARCH
ON HEAVY EPISODIC DRINKING AMONG LOW
INCOME YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN
SOUTHERN EUROPE**

LAYMAN REPORT

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

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ALCOHOL IN EUROPE

FROM OLD HABITS TO NEW TRENDS

According to the World Health Organization, alcohol is one of the world's top three priority public health areas. The evidence available to support this statement is large, diverse and persuasive. Even though only half the world's population drinks alcohol, it is the world's third leading cause of ill health and premature death, after low birth weight and unsafe sex (for which alcohol is a risk factor), and greater than tobacco.

Culture is a relevant variable to consider when analysing the local and global drinking patterns, even though the traditionally marked differences across countries are diminishing. In the recent years globalisation processes seem to reflect also on drinking habits, with changes in the type of beverages typically consumed. Increasingly, it is possible to find, in different countries, several kinds of alcoholic beverages beyond the more typical ones.

In Southern Europe, a region traditionally seen as part of a moderated drinking culture, a new trend is growing.

Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED - a drinking pattern that consists in the ingestion of six or more grams of alcohol at least in one occasion in the past thirty days) is already a relatively known phenomena for the scientific community. Its specific features, the settings where it most likely happens, its risks, harms and its impact among young people - mainly among college students have already been studied, but little has been done to analyse the relationship between HED and lower socio-economic youth and young adults. It is particularly relevant that deeper knowledge is produced on the topic as the World Health Organization reported low income as a risk factor for alcohol related issues.

THE ALLCOOL PROJECT

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THE PROJECT

The relation between low income and drinking habits is of particular relevance in Southern Europe, undergoing a socioeconomic crisis where families' income is decreasing and unemployment rates are especially high among recently graduated students. Considering this, AllCool project intended to address the HED phenomena among South European low-income and graduated unemployed youth and young adults, on a economic crisis context.

So that regional, national and south European similarities and differences could be understood, a comparative research was conducted in three countries: Portugal, Spain and Italy.

The outputs of this research were crucial for the development of local interventions, which represent an important mean not only to obtain more knowledge about the phenomena, but also to raise awareness.

Pilot interventions were designed and implemented in Porto (Portugal), Tarragona (Spain) and Bologna (Italy), according with the inputs collected both from research and the consultative forums. HED related materials were provided, and dialogue about this behaviour and its risks, as well as harm reduction tips related with alcohol consumption were promoted by trained technicians who worked in the field.

In order to better intervene locally and at the European level, local Consultative Forums were created in Porto, Tarragona and Bologna. To obtain a deeper knowledge about the expressions of HED at a local level, these Forums joined stakeholders and relevant actors and policy makers that contributed to the elaboration of comprehensive recommendations about HED.

In order to be effective in reaching strategic stakeholders and to increase the range of its outputs, the project includes a dissemination plan targeting researchers, ONGs, Health services, social, health and education professionals and decision-makers.

National trainings targeting relevant stakeholders (as health providers, peers, professionals working with low-income youth, police and managers of nightlife venues) were implemented in all three countries as part of one of the project's main goals, which was to tackle this growing trend within the local and regional communities.

A Toolkit regarding tools, methodologies and implementation examples was created, in order to provide guidance and support to professionals who intent to intervene in the HED phenomena.

All data collected from the research conducted and from the interventions that took place in the three cities mentioned resulted in national and European reports that aim to provide a better understanding of the phenomena and serve as a guide to policy and community changes, on a national and an European level, that can be carried out in order to decrease the negative consequences of HED.

RESULTS

Data collected from the three countries involved reveals that, among young people that consume alcohol, with ages from 15 to 29, 51% does it frequently or even at a daily basis. Nonetheless, alcohol consumption is more frequent at weekends and it seems to increase during summer times.

HED prevalence in the last 12 months on the population studied is 73% and appears to be higher among men and more frequent between the ages of 22 and 25. Bologna has the highest prevalence of HED in the last 12 months (82%), followed by Tarragona (71%) and Porto (67%).

There is a clear growing trend that reaches its peak between 22 and 25 years old and, after that, the trend is reversed. 72,3% of the youngsters aged 18-21 has experienced a HED episode, a percentage that rises to 79,8% among those aged 22-25 and drops to 69,3% between 26 and 29 years old.

Bologna seems to have a great influence on this percentages. Collected data points out that 91% of the 22 to 25 group has experienced HED in the last year in Bologna, regardless of the gender. Significant differences between men and women's drinking patterns have been found, especially in Porto and Tarragona, indicating that HED is more prevalent among men than among women.

Results show that the most common consumption pattern is from 4 to 7 drinks in a time gap of 3 to 6 hours and, according to the collected data, women and the oldest age group tend to have more protective behaviours when drinking. Protective behaviours include eating before or during drinking, avoid trying to keep up with others and drinking slowly, as well as knowing where the drink is at all times, drinking with people who can trustfully take care of you if you drink too much, refusing to ride with someone who was drinking all night and making sure you go home with a friend. These last four are significantly more reported by women than by men.

THED is often associated with negative physical and psychological consequences such as vomiting, which was reported by 66% of the people. Being unable to remember what happened the night before is also highly mentioned, as well as being ashamed or missing appointments and obligations.

The socioeconomic variable was supposed to play a key role in the HED growing trend detected in Southern European countries, reinforced by the economic crisis these countries have suffered during the last years. Nevertheless, results show it isn't possible to state that in Southern Europe social position is influencing whether young people performs HED episodes or not. The research final report as well as the data analysis report and all the documents produced by this project can be found in Alcool's website at <https://allcool.ausl.bologna.it>.

Allcool lasted from May 2016 to May 2018 and its estimated project cost is around 394.741€, having the EU contributed with 236.843€.

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