

A Standard Drink in Ireland: What strength?

A Health Service Executive Report



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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1.0 European dimension

A recent European report on *Consumer labelling and alcoholic drinks*, highlights the relevant EU Treaty obligations, consumer protection policy and directives that aim to provide a high level of health protection for consumers¹. As noted in the report, an objective of consumer policy is to protect consumers effectively from the serious risks and threats that they cannot tackle as individuals. The product safety directive requires producers to give relevant information to enable consumers to assess the risks inherent in a product, where such risks are not immediately obvious without adequate warning, and to take precautions against these risks.

Alcohol is not an ordinary product. Alcohol has harmful properties (it is an intoxicant and a drug) and the risks associated with it are extensive². There is no clear level of drinking below which alcohol related accidents, injuries or diseases do not occur. In other words there is no known 'safe' or 'sensible' level of alcohol consumption for any one individual. The issue is one of risk and the continuum ranges from low risk to high risk. The risk of alcohol harm increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Therefore, to reduce alcohol harm, the focus needs to be one of low risk drinking.

To date, European Union directives have minimum requirements for assessing the risk of alcoholic beverages. These include that all alcoholic beverages over 1.2% volume must state on the label the alcohol content (%ABV); alcohol products containing certain allergens must list these on the label and wine and spirits must indicate 'contain sulphites'. There are also a number of technical regulations in relation to wine and spirits, mainly definition, description and presentation. However, as yet, there is no EU obligation to have a health warning on the label, although France has a health warning on the risk of drinking during pregnancy. In 2007, the Minister of Health and Children in Ireland signalled her intention to legislate for a health warning on alcohol products, but it has yet to take place. The European Commission adopted a new proposal on food labelling in early 2008, which will require clearer and more relevant information on food labels³. However, wine, spirits and beer are to be exempt from the proposed regulations. For the first time, mixed alcoholic beverages (alcopops/RTD-ready to drink) will be required to list ingredients and nutritional information (including energy value) on the front of the bottle.

There is limited evidence of an impact of alcohol warning labels on drinking behaviour and alcohol related harm. However, the European report on alcohol and labelling concluded that consumer protection principles would suggest that where there is a risk to health in consuming alcohol and in particular during pregnancy, when taking medication or when driving or operating machinery, consumers should be informed about the risks. Recommendations in the report call for precise and consistent information on labels which should form part of a more comprehensive integrated strategy to reduce the harm done by alcohol (Appendix A). The label and packaging should, in addition to health warnings, contain information on its alcohol content (grams of alcohol) and ingredients that might lead to allergies.

1.1 Irish Dimension

Over the last two decades, a wide range of alcoholic beverages have been introduced to Ireland. In 1995, the introduction of ‘alcopops’, so called because of their similarity to soft drinks, created a brand new category of alcoholic beverages. These ‘alcoholic lemonade’ products had strong appeal to those underage because their sweet and fruity flavours disguise the taste of alcohol. A further expansion of the ‘alcopops’ category has been the pre-mix drinks containing a blend of spirits, soft drinks and other flavourings, called ready-to-drink (RDT) products such as Bacardi Breezer, Smirnoff Ice and WKD. Cocktails, usually a mix of spirits and other flavours, have also become popular as have liqueurs. The popularity of spirits-based drinks is reflected in the sale figures, a 70% increase in sales of spirits between 1995 and 2002.

In Ireland, there is much confusion on what constitutes a typical or ‘standard drink’. Part of the confusion stems from the use of the ‘UK unit’, which is inappropriate in the Irish context. The UK unit was devised in the early 1970’s as a simple method to calculate the alcoholic strength in different drinks⁴. The purpose was to help scientists and health professionals in the clinical setting estimate alcohol consumption for comparative purposes. The measure used was called a ‘unit of alcohol’ and related to the most common drinks and alcohol content of drinks served in the UK. A ‘UK unit of alcohol’ is found in a half pint of beer (3.5%ABV) or a small glass of wine (100ml) or a single measure of spirits (1/6 gill) and equals 8 grams of pure alcohol. Although the UK unit was used in Ireland, it did not reflect the typical strength or serving measure of drinks sold in Ireland. For example, a single measure of spirits is larger (1/4gill vs. 1/6gill) in Ireland.

A pilot study undertaken in 2000 showed that a typical drink in Ireland was equal to 10 grams of alcohol and called a ‘standard drink’ reflecting the alcohol content and typical serving sizes in Ireland⁵. Therefore, the UK unit measure is not appropriate and should not be used in Ireland. In the international arena, a standard drink is the usual term used. The UK unit (8 grams) is the lowest standard drink measure used. Some countries use 10 grams as their standard drink measure including Spain, Italy, New Zealand and Australia while other have higher or no measures⁶. The key factor is to provide accurate and reliable information in the Irish context for health professionals, policy makers and the general population in Ireland.

2.0 Purpose of study

The purpose of the study was to examine the different alcoholic beverages currently available in Ireland, in terms of beverage categories, the alcohol content and serving size of typical drinks and other relevant information. The findings of the study will help clinicians and health professionals to more accurately assess patient alcohol intake, provide a valid measure for inclusion in alcohol screening tools and help to inform policy on labelling and other relevant health information.

2.1 Study Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were

- To document the different beverage categories on sale in Ireland
- To track new alcohol products on the market
- To list the different container / server sizes of alcohol products
- To document the alcohol content or strength (ABV) of the products
- To calculate the grams of alcohol per typical container/serving size
- To calculate the 'standard drink' in Ireland
- To identify health warning messages listed on products
- To identify other relevant information listed on alcohol products

2.2 Data collection and analysis

The list of alcohol products, as identified in the drinks industry trade directory⁷, was used as the initial template for data collection. A number of visits to a variety of retail outlets (off and on-licensed premises) were undertaken and included small and large supermarkets, off-licences and pubs. A letter was submitted to the retail outlets, outlining the purpose of the study and requesting co-operation. The retail outlets fully co-operated. Information was gathered on the different alcoholic beverages on sale in the shop, the container size, the alcohol content (strength of alcohol) and other relevant information on the label and packaging. The purpose was to obtain information on a wide variety of alcohol products but not necessary each single product on sale. Several additional alcohol items were added to the final product list (over 500 items) which reflected the broad range of alcohol products available in Ireland. Excel was used to organise and analysis the data.

3.0 Results

The findings of the study are presented under the following headings – alcoholic beverages categories, alcohol products in terms of alcohol content, server/container size, standard drink and label information.

3.1 Alcoholic Beverage categories

The alcoholic beverages on sale in Ireland are generally divided into four main beverage categories based on the Revenue Commissioners’ excise duty rates – beer, cider, wine and spirits. However, for the purpose of this study the findings would suggest there are six different categories when examined by alcohol content and container size - beer, cider, alcopops/RTD, wine, liqueurs and spirits.

3.2 Alcohol products – alcoholic content

The alcohol content or alcoholic strength of a drink is shown on the label as alcohol by volume (% ABV). A 5% ABV means 5 parts ethanol (alcohol) to 95 parts water. Each of the beverage categories contains alcohol in different concentrations with some variation within categories. Beer products range in alcohol content from 3.8% up to 7.5% ABV. However, based on the most popular brands the dominant value for beer is 4.3% ABV. The alcohol content of cider products start at 4.5% ABV and range up to 7% ABV with the dominant value at 4.5%. Alcopops/RTD products range from 4% to 5.6% ABV with the most popular brands at 4% and 5% ABV. Wines are stronger in alcohol content than beers and vary from 11% to 14.8% ABV, with many in the middle range of 12-13% ABV. Liqueurs are generally stronger than wine although the range is from 10% to 40% with many around 17% such as Baileys and other cream liqueurs. Port has an alcohol content of 20%. Fruit flavoured liqueurs such as Peach or Cherry liqueurs have an alcohol content of 21%ABV. Cocktails often combine a mix of different alcohol (spirits, liqueurs and other flavourings) which makes it difficult to establish the alcohol content of such drinks. Distilled spirits, the strongest of the alcoholic beverages in terms of alcohol content, come in two strengths; 37.5% ABV for vodka, rum and gin and 40% for whiskey and brandy. The dominant values in each of the six alcoholic beverage categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Alcohol Content of different beverage categories

Alcoholic beverage	Dominant alcoholic content (ABV)
Beer	4.3%
Cider	4.5%
Alcopops/RTD	5.0%
Wine	12.5%
Liqueurs	17.0%
Spirits	37.5%

Since 2000, when the first study was undertaken, the main observed changes are

- a greater variety of stronger beers and ciders,
- a reduction in the alcohol content of two of the main alcopops/RTD brands,
- a greater variety of fruit flavoured liqueurs.

3.3 Alcohol products – server/container size

Alcoholic beverages come in different measures or sizes. In the **on-licence sector**, the traditional pub measures for beer and cider are half a pint and a full pint. The alcopops/RTD drinks are served in a long neck bottle (275ml). The quarter bottle (187.5ml) of wine is the standard serving size for wine in pubs, although a full bottle (750ml) of wine is also available, in particular where food is served. Liqueurs are served as a single measure (71ml) or are mixed with other alcohol or flavourings to produce cocktails. A pub measure of spirits is served as a single (35.5ml) or as a double (71.0ml). In the **off-licence sector**, there is a much greater variability in alcohol container sizes for sale. Beers and ciders are generally for sale in the small can/bottle (330ml) and large can/bottle (500ml) sizes. Beer is also sold in six packs (6x500ml=3,000), cartons (12x500=6,000 ml), trays (24x500ml=12,000ml) or small kegs (5,000 ml/5litre). A feature of cider for sale in off-licences is the screw-top bottles in 1 litre (1,000ml), 2 litre (2,000ml) or 3 litre (3,000ml) bottles. Alcopops/RTD drinks are for sale in the long neck bottle (275ml) and in the larger bottle (700ml) with screw-top. Wine is generally available for sale in full bottles (750ml) and to a lesser extent in quarter bottles (187.5ml), while half bottles (375ml) of wine are less readily available. Wine in a box (2,000ml/2L) is also available. Spirits and liqueurs for sale in off-licences are available in a variety of sizes, small (200ml), a half bottle (350ml), bottle (700ml), large bottle (1,00ml/1L) and very large bottle (1,500ml/1.5L).

The main observed changes since 2000 are:

- All the alcopops/RTD brands are now available in larger screw-top bottles (700ml), although some of the Alcopops/RTD products have a lower alcohol content (%ABV)
- Kegs of beer (5,000ml/5L) now available for sale
- Cider oversized bottles (up to 3,000ml/3L) available for sale
- Standard size alcopops/RTD (275ml) only sold in packs in many off-licences
- Beer more available in large trays (24 cans)
- Overall, alcohol is for sale in larger container sizes in the off-licence sector

3.4 Standard Drink

To establish the standard drink in Ireland, the first step was to calculate the amount of pure alcohol in each of the alcoholic beverages. This involved multiplying the serving size of the drink (millilitres) by the alcohol content (%ABV) of the drink and dividing by 1.25 (1ml=1.25g) to establish the grams of pure alcohol in that specific drink (Appendix B).

This calculation was undertaken for the different alcoholic beverages. Table 2 presents the range of serving/selling sizes and the alcohol content (ABV) within each of the six beverage categories beer, cider, alcopops/RTD, wine, liqueurs and spirits.

Table 2: Strength of Alcoholic Drinks in Ireland

Beverage type	Serving Size Description	Serving Size ml (millilitres)	Alcohol content (ABV%)	Grams of pure alcohol
Beer	Half pint/glass	284ml	4.30%	9.8g
	Small can	330		11.4
	Large can	500		17.2
	Pint	568		19.5
	Keg of beer	5,000		172
Strong beer	Small can	330	5	13.2
	Large can	500		20
	Large can	500	5.6	22.4
Cider	Half pint/glass	284	4.5	10.2
	Small can	330		11.9
	Large can	500		18
	Pint	568		20.4
	Large Bottle	1,000		36
	V. Large Bottle	2,000	5	80
Strong Cider	Large can	500	5.5	22
	Large can	500	6	24
Alcopops/RTD	Long neck bottle	275	4	8.8
	Large bottle	700		22.4
	Long neck	275	5	11
	Large bottle	700		28
Wine	Small glass	100	12.5	10
	Medium glass	125		12.5
	Quarter bottle	187.5		18.8
	Half bottle	375		37.5
	Bottle	750		75
Strong wine	Bottle	700	14.8	82.9
Liqueurs	Glass	71	17	9.7
	Half Bottle	350		47.6
	Bottle	700		95.2
Sherry/Port	Glass	71	20	11.4
Spirits				
Vodka/rum/gin	Single glass	35.5	37.5	10.7
	Double glass	71		21
	Half Bottle	350		105
	Bottle	700		210
Whiskey/brandy	Single glass	35.5	40	11.4
	Double glass	71		22.4
	Half Bottle	350		112
	Bottle	700		224

The results clearly demonstrate that many alcohol products now available on the Irish market contain substantial amounts of pure alcohol. To help the consumer understand the actual amount of pure alcohol in each alcohol container on sale, the total grams of pure alcohol should be provided on the label.

The second step in establishing the standard drink, was to take the dominant alcohol content (ABV) in each of the beverage categories, as outlined in Table 1, with the typical serving size. Table 3 gives the results which show the standard drink in Ireland is approximately 10 grams of pure alcohol. However, several of the serving size of drinks do contain higher amounts of pure alcohol as illustrated in Table 2. Two of the most popular serving sizes, a pint and a quarter of bottle wine, are often mistakenly seen as a standard drink where in fact they are equivalent to 2 standard drinks each.

Table 3: Standard Drink in Ireland

Beverage type	Serving Size Description	Serving Size ml(millilitres)	Alcohol content (ABV%)	Grams of pure alcohol
Beer	Half pint/glass	284ml	4.30%	9.8g
Cider	Half pint/glass	284ml	4.5	10.2
Alcopops/RTD	Long neck bottle	275ml	5	11
Wine	Small glass	100ml	12.5	10
Liqueurs	Glass	71ml	17	9.7
Spirits	Single measure	35.5ml	37.5	10.7

The establishment of the appropriate standard drink in Ireland (SD-IRL) is of vital importance for both health professionals and the general public. Health professionals assess patient alcohol intake by means of a variety of alcohol screening tools. One of the questions often asked is how many drinks do you usually have per occasion or per week? However, if the UK unit (8 grams) is used to count the number of drinks, the assessment can result in an underestimation of patient total alcohol intake. As a general guide for low risk drinking the recommended upper weekly limit used in Ireland is based on the UK unit - 14 units for women and 21 units men. However, when those low risk drinking guidelines are translated into Irish standard drinks (10 grams), the Irish low risk weekly guidelines should be 11 standard drinks for women and 17 standard drinks for men (Appendix C). To provide a general estimate of the average number of standard drinks consumed in Ireland, the per capita figures for 2006 were utilized. This suggests that on average approximately 21 standard drinks are consumed each week by every adult aged 15 years and older. This is a conservative figure given that abstainers are not excluded and represent about 20% of the adult population. Over a year this level of drinking is equivalent to 548 pints or 143 bottles of wine or 51 bottles of vodka per adult.

The volume of drinking and the patterns of drinking are important factors in determining risk of harm. The risks of developing alcohol-related diseases are predominately related to the total amount of alcohol (volume) typically consumed over time, while the risks of accidents and injuries are predominately related to the amount of alcohol consumed on a single occasion (drinking pattern). The existing low risk drinking guidelines in Ireland need to be reviewed, given the emerging evidence of the relationship between risk of harm of accidents and injuries as well as alcohol related diseases and the volume of drinking and patterns of drinking.

3.5 Alcohol products – label information

The first and most important question is ***what health warning messages are provided on the label of alcohol products on sale in Ireland?*** Of the alcohol products documented, there was a health warning message which said ‘don’t drink while pregnant’ in the form of a diagram on only five alcohol products - a beer brand, cider brand, two whiskey brands and one liqueur brand. There were two brands, a port and a liqueur, that had a health warning message displayed in words ‘don’t drink and drive’. This suggests a serious deficiency in providing relevant information to consumers, to enable them assess the risks inherent in the product, in particular for women who are pregnant, for those taking medication or when driving or operating machinery. There is strong support (77%) across the European population for warning labels on alcohol products, as reported in a recent survey⁸. Within Ireland, the support was even higher, where 82% of the population were in favour of warning labels to warn pregnant women and drivers of the dangers of drinking alcohol.

The second question is ***is it easy for the consumer to know the amount of pure alcohol in the alcohol product on sale?*** While the alcohol content (ABV%) was displayed on the label as required by law, none of the alcohol products displayed the total quantity of pure alcohol (grams of alcohol). For example a large can of strong beer has twice the grams of alcohol as a small can of regular beer. This is important information because the more alcohol consumed the greater the risk of alcohol related harm, both in terms of a single drinking occasion as well as regular drinking over time. What was observed was a confusing mix of information – UK units, standard drinks, ROI units, alcohol units, units, units per ml serving, units per glass size and several products had no information. As shown in Table 3, the standard drink in Ireland is equal to 10 grams of alcohol, so reference to units is inappropriate and is more likely to be confusing. Therefore, the Irish consumer needs to have the relevant information on the alcohol products on sale in Ireland, grams of alcohol. The grams of alcohol on all alcohol products would also facilitate European wide information recognition since many European countries do not use standard drinks or units. In addition, epidemiological studies looking at the dose response effects of alcohol use grams of alcohol and thus it is in the interests of the health of the population that the public become familiar with the concept of grams.

The third question is **does the consumer have clear and accurate information as to alcohol products?** A number of alcohol products use the word 'light' in the brand name such as Bud light, Coors Light or Bulmers Light. However, it is unclear what 'light' denotes to the consumer. Many consumers understand 'light' to mean less alcohol. Most of the 'light' products do not explain the meaning of this term. One reference to 'fewer calories' was found in the long neck bottles of Bulmers light, but cans in the same brand did not display this meaning of 'light'. A surprising finding is that Bacardi Breezer, generally known as PPS (pre packed spirits), is in fact a wine-based drink (other fermented beverage category) for excise duty purposes, despite the fact that the brand holds the name Bacardi and uses the 'bat' symbol logo, a well recognised spirits drink produced by Bacardi. The change to a wine-based product may somewhat explain the reduction in alcohol content from 5.4% to 4% ABV to perhaps avail of the excise duty category of less than 5% ABV in the 'other fermented' beverage category.

The fourth question is **does the consumer have relevant health information on the ingredients of alcohol products?** There are clear regulations in the definition of spirits and wines, although detailed ingredients are not provided. The new alcopops/RTD products and some of the newer liqueurs are unclear in terms of what is contained in the alcohol product. The issues of most concern are the ingredients, the proportion of the different ingredients and the caloric content. While Bacardi Breezer products do list the ingredients and their proportion, there are other Alcopops/RTD products such as Fat Frog, Woodys, WKD, Smirnoff Ice, Archers Schnapps and West Coast Cooler that do not and none of these products list the caloric content. In fact, most alcohol products do not list the caloric content of the product, with just a few exceptions such as Bulmers Light.

Many of the alcohol products recorded had additional information on the label, such as drink responsibly, enjoy responsibly, sensible drinking, enjoy 'product name' responsibly. Many products also had the brand logo website address and some had a drink aware website. The rationale for the inclusion of the message such as 'sensible drinking' or 'drink responsibly' observed on some of the products is questionable. Given that alcohol has harmful properties, this type of message does not convey to the consumer the risks associated with the product. Information on alcohol products should be accurate, clear and precise with priority given to consumer information about the risks (health warnings), the total quantity of pure alcohol (grams of alcohol), the product content (ingredients) and health information for weight management (caloric content). Clear and relevant label information is one small, but important, part of an information strategy and should be supported by information at point of sale and through health promotion channels with messages of low risk drinking and ways to access treatment support. Although information is unlikely to change behaviour per se, it is an important supporting strategy as part of a comprehensive integrated alcohol strategy to reduce alcohol related harm.

4. Conclusions

During the last decade, Ireland has seen major changes in the range of alcohol products on sale, the alcohol content of drinks, the size of the alcohol containers for sale and the places where alcohol is for sale. In other words, significant increases in the availability of alcohol has occurred. The findings of this study suggest there are six different alcoholic beverage categories when examined by alcohol content and container size – beer, cider, alcopops/RTD, wine, liqueurs and spirits. The results show a greater variety of alcohol beverages available on the Irish market since 2000, in particular alcopops/RTD, fruit flavoured liqueurs and stronger beers and ciders. Alcohol products for sale come in larger container sizes in the off-licence sector. The overall trend is towards stronger alcoholic beverages in larger container sizes.

The standard drink in Ireland is 10 grams of pure alcohol. The estimated average number of standard drinks consumed in Ireland each week is 21 SD for every person aged 15 years and over, which is very high. The results clearly show that many alcohol products now available on the Irish market contain substantial amounts of pure alcohol. The more alcohol consumed the greater the risk of alcohol related harm. None of the 500 alcohol products displayed the total amount of pure alcohol (grams of alcohol) on the label. What was observed was a confusing mix of information on UK units. There was a lack of clarity in relation to the name of some products, in particular the meaning of the term 'light'. With the alcopops/RTD category it is particularly difficult to know the content of the products. Therefore, the listing of ingredients and caloric content would provide more transparent and useful information to the consumer.

The Strategic Task Force on Alcohol (STFA) recommended that labels on alcohol containers should include certain basic information (ingredients, calories, meaning of 'light') and a health warning⁹. There is a serious deficiency in relation to providing a clear health warning, to enable consumers assess the risks inherent in the product in particular for women who are planning pregnancy or pregnant, for those taking medication or when driving or operating machinery. The Irish consumer needs to have relevant health information on alcohol products for sale in Ireland. Label information on alcohol products should be clear and precise with priority given to consumer information about the risks (health warnings), the total quantity of alcohol (grams of alcohol), the content of the product (ingredients) and health information for weight management (caloric content).

The findings of this study will help clinicians to more accurately assess patients' alcohol intake and provide a valid measure for inclusion in alcohol screening tools. The information will also help to inform policy on appropriate labelling. It will provide accurate and clear information for health professionals for the development of health information material promoting low risk drinking as part of a comprehensive integrated alcohol strategy to reduce alcohol related harm.

5. Recommendations

- 1) Disseminate the findings of this study to a wide range of health professionals in the health services in an appropriate way.
- 2) Revise alcohol screening tools used by health professionals to reflect the Irish Standard Drink value (10 grams).
- 3) Establish a scientific expert group to review Low-risk Drinking Guidelines for Ireland in light of the study findings and the recent scientific evidence on risk.
- 4) Disseminate the findings of this study to other professionals who are in contact with individuals with alcohol problems in the course of their work such as Gardai, social workers, probation officers among others.
- 5) Require a clear health warning label on all alcohol products sold in Ireland. The health warnings should convey the risks inherent in the product, in particular for women who are planning pregnancy or pregnant, for those taking medication or when driving or operating machinery.
- 6) Provide accurate, clear and precise health information on the label in relation to the total quantity of alcohol (grams of alcohol), the product content (ingredients) and health information for weight management (caloric content).
- 7) Support the health warning and information on labels with information at point of sale and through health promotion channels with messages of low risk drinking and ways to access treatment support.
- 8) Set a limit on the maximum container size for alcohol sales in the retail sector to reduce volume selling. Require that alcohol products be available for sale in unit size and not only in six packs.

Appendix A

From Report on Consumer Labelling and Alcoholic Drinks¹

Recommendations on Health messages and warning labels

- 1.1 Effective legislative, executive, administrative and other measures necessary to ensure appropriate packaging and labelling should be implemented, with precise and consistent, but culturally sensitive health messages and warnings across the European Union.
- 1.2 Health messages and warnings on alcohol product packaging and labelling should be part of an integrated strategy to provide information to consumers about alcohol and part of integrated policies and programmes to reduce the harm done by alcohol.
- 1.3 Alcohol product packaging and labelling should not promote an alcoholic product by any means that are false, misleading, deceptive or likely to create an erroneous impression about its characteristics or health effects, including any term, descriptor, trademark, figurative or any other sign that directly or indirectly creates the impression that a particular alcoholic product is more attractive or healthier than another alcoholic product.
- 1.4 Alcohol product packaging and labelling should not promote an alcoholic product by any means, including any term, descriptor, trademark, figurative or any other sign that directly or indirectly appeals to minors.
- 1.5 Each unit package of alcoholic products should carry warnings determined by ministries of health, or appointed public health bodies, describing the harmful effects of alcohol when driving or operating machinery, and during pregnancy or other appropriate messages, such as the risk of dependence.
- 1.6 Each unit packet and package of alcoholic products and any outside packaging and labelling of such products should, in addition to health warnings, contain information on its alcohol concentration (% by volume), alcohol content (grams of alcohol), and ingredients that might lead to allergies.
- 1.7 All messages or warnings should be pre-tested throughout Member States and the Union as a whole before being implemented, and should be re-evaluated over time as part of an ongoing strategy to reduce the harm done by alcohol.
- 1.8 A consistent health warning should be given across the Union to reinforce the message that alcohol is a toxic substance.
- 1.9 Article 5 of European Directive 2001/95/EC which states that products shall provide consumers with the relevant information to enable them to estimate the risks inherent in a product. . . , where such risks are not immediately obvious without adequate warnings should be enforced at European and Member States level.
- 1.10 Precise public health messages need to be developed for alcohol across Europe, in concept similar to the tobacco messages, such as 'Smoking Kills'.

Appendix B - Standard Drink Calculation

Half pint of beer (284ml) at 4.3% ABV is equal to 9.8 grams of alcohol
 $(284 \times .043)/1.25 = 9.8$ grams of pure alcohol)

Appendix C - Guidelines for Low Risk Drinking

UK 1 unit = 8grams alcohol

Ireland 1 Standard Drink = 10 grams alcohol

	Women	Grams of pure alcohol	Men	Grams of pure alcohol
UK	14 units	112 grams	21 units	168 grams
Ireland	11 SD/wk	112 grams	17 SD/wk	168 grams

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