

*Government Resolution on*

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**Strategies in Alcohol Policy**



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# *Government Resolution on*

## **Strategies in Alcohol Policy**

### **The Government Resolution**

- encourages a reduction in the harmful effects of alcohol
- contains the main policy strategies and objectives
- gathers all the ministries behind the objectives
- authorizes the preparation of an Alcohol Programme

### **Objectives in reducing harmful effects**

The Government Resolution has three objectives aimed at reducing the harmful effects of alcohol:

#### **A reduction in the harmful effects caused to the well-being of children and families**

The aim is

- to protect children's health and well-being, whatever their age
- to reduce the insecurity caused to families by the excessive use of alcohol and drugs.

#### **A reduction in using alcoholic beverages to a level below the risk level and the harmful effects that this causes**

The aim is

- to decrease the health risks caused by substantial, long-term use of alcoholic beverages
- to reduce the risks of accidents and alcohol-related violence.

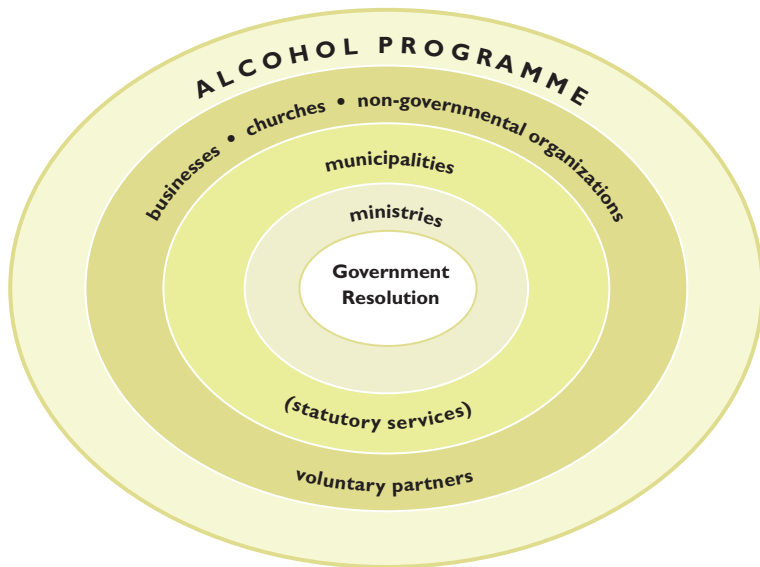
#### **To create a downward trend in the overall consumption**

The aim is

- to reduce all harmful effects of alcohol in general
- to ensure the effectiveness of all measures

## The Alcohol Programme 2004–2007

- will gather the state, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and businesses behind the objectives
- will assemble all the means available
- will be implemented through voluntary partnership agreements

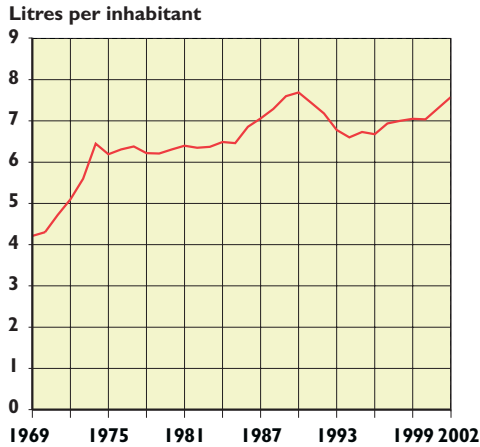


The Alcohol Programme is based on voluntary partnership by the public authorities, businesses and civil society.

## Growth in alcohol consumption and alcohol mortality

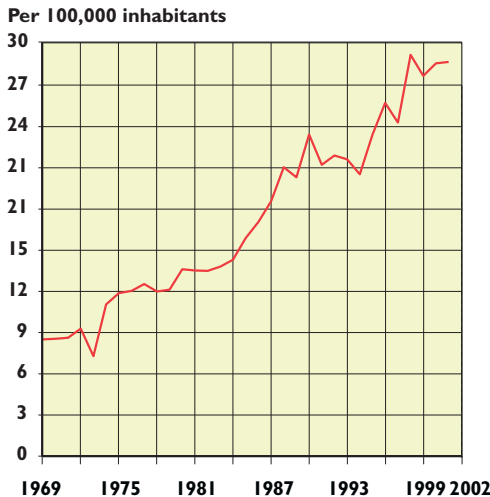
In general, a growth in alcohol consumption increases the harmful effects of alcohol. The objective of the Alcohol Programme is a reduction of all the harmful effects.

### Documented consumption of alcoholic beverages as 100% alcohol 1969–2002



Source: Stakes

### Deaths from alcohol-related illnesses and poisoning 1969–2002



Source: Stakes

### **Strategies in Alcohol Policy**

The Government has in its programme committed itself to preparing a programme and Government Resolution concerning the prevention of the harmful effects of alcohol. The programme will be drawn up in association with the municipalities, non-governmental organizations and businesses. The Government Resolution will put forward to all the parties concerned the direction and principal main strategies of the national alcohol policy.

Under the Finnish Constitution the public authorities must promote the health of the population. The public authorities must also support families and others responsible for providing for children so that they have the ability to ensure the well-being and personal development of children and provide adequate social and health services. The harmful effects of alcohol can be prevented by promoting citizens' well-being, health and security. Preventing the harmful effects of alcohol also means that the risks arising from the use of alcohol and the conditions and behaviour that contribute to them must be controlled in accordance with the common good.

This resolution deals with the harmful effects of alcohol. These effects can be created from using it on a single occasion or from long-term, substantial use. They apply to the entire population and affect the physical, mental and social well-being of individuals, families and communities. At the moment, the harmful effects unduly outweigh the overall benefits that come from producing, selling and consuming alcohol.

In recent years the consumption of alcohol has grown and the harmful effects to health and society caused by this have increased. The liberalization of imports by travellers to countries with lower prices and the pressures that this causes to cut the taxation on and prices of alcoholic beverages only serve to make the situation worse. The growth in consumption is also leading to a rise in the need for social welfare and health-care services, which is increasing costs for municipalities.

Preventing the harmful effects of alcohol has also been dealt with in the following Government Resolutions: The Health 2015 public health programme (2001), Securing the Future of Health Care (2002) and Development Project for Social Services (2003).

## Objectives

The general objective of the alcohol policy is to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol. The Government feels that activities that are in accordance with this resolution and the Alcohol Programme must be aimed at achieving the following three objectives:

### **A considerable reduction in the harmful effects of alcohol on the well-being of children and families**

The growth in the consumption of alcohol is a particular threat to the well-being of children and families. Using alcohol during pregnancy seriously endangers healthy development of the foetus and the child. Excessive use of intoxicants by parents causes a lack of security in families. Alcohol is involved to a great extent in family violence. These risks affect not only the families of alcoholics but all families in which alcohol is used substantially from time to time. If the use of alcohol begins at an early age, the young person's development is at serious risk.

### **A reduction in the use of alcoholic beverages to a level below the risk level and the harmful effects that this causes**

Alcoholic beverages can be used with or without harmful effects. Long-term, substantial use of alcoholic beverages is a serious health risk. Heavy drunkenness increases the risk of accidents considerably and the risk of committing a violent crime or falling victim to one. Even a small amount of alcohol reduces the level of performance and adds to the risk of accidents in traffic, at work as well as at home and during leisure time. Although the risk depends on the amount consumed, the harmful effects and risks affect not only alcoholics and heavy consumers but everyone who uses alcohol and those in their immediate vicinity.

### **To create a downward trend in the overall consumption of alcoholic beverages**

The measures with an overall impact on the consumption of alcohol also affect the amount of alcohol-related problems. Most harmful effects are spread over the entire population, not just

among heavy consumers. If the consumption of alcohol is allowed to grow, the effects of the special objectives and measures will be weakened.

## **Alcohol Programme**

The Alcohol Programme will be based on a voluntary partnership between the public authorities, businesses and civil society. The objective is that with the support of the programme and other partners each party's preventive measures will have a greater impact than before.

The Government will emphasize the importance of the prevention of and early intervention in problems. Preventing the harmful effects of alcohol is a responsibility of the public authorities. The Alcohol Programme must increase the scope at the local and immediate-community level to affect the conditions that create the harmful effects. The means must be based on joint action by the public authorities, businesses and civil society. The Government will improve the preconditions for work to prevent substance abuse as part of the activities of the different administrative sectors.

The effectiveness of the Alcohol Programme should be assessed by surveys, and it must be developed on the basis of existing and new research information on its impacts.