

"Alcohol is a serious problem across Europe because on average twice as much alcohol is consumed here than in the rest of the world. We have to continue working in the name of a single European alcohol strategy that enables governments to achieve their goals more efficiently," Evelin Ilves said as the keynote speaker of the 6th European Alcohol Policy Conference in Brussels.

"Although it is said continuously that alcohol has been part of the European economy and traditions for a long time, the European demographic and economic challenges of the 21st century caused by alcohol must be taken more seriously and regulations that would help reduce alcohol consumption in Europe must be considered," Evelin Ilves said.

She stressed that in addition to a European single vision it is necessary to create strong cooperation between various areas and educate politicians that operate outside of the healthcare sector. "The wider involvement of federations of employers, trade unions and the private sector may help us heighten awareness of alcohol-related harm as an issue of economic development," said Evelin Ilves, who is attending the conference in Brussel upon the invitation of the European Alcohol Policy Alliance Eurocare, said.

According to Evelin Ilves, the connection between the impact of alcohol on employee health and general economic development has remained a niche topic. "People have not fully realised that alcohol hinders people's development at every level. It harms the development of the organs of a foetus and the brains of teenagers and it impedes the ability of adults to adjust to work life. Alcohol harms social development in a family and the extensive consumption of alcohol may be a hindrance for all of society, as it loses the valuable productivity of its labour force to it," she added.

"According to the World Health Organization, the consumption of alcohol is the third most important risk factor for diseases and mortality in Europe. People in Europe continue to consume twice as much alcohol as is consumed on average in the rest of the world: in 2010, 10.2 litres of pure alcohol per person were consumed in Europe and it cost 156 billion euro for Europe in terms of reduced labour productivity, illnesses and premature deaths," said Evelin Ilves, who is also the Champion of Health for Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region.

Additional information on the 6th European Alcohol Policy Conference: <http://bit.ly/1Hlaxpp>  
Home page of the European Alcohol Policy Alliance Eurocare, which organises the conference:  
<http://www.eurocare.org/>

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