



**Tervise Arengu Instituut**  
National Institute for Health Development



National Institute for Health Development

Possibilities for implementing alcohol policy on the local level

Summary of the guidelines for local governments

This summary of guidelines assists in planning activities in the field of alcohol policy.

Above all, these guidelines are intended for local governments but for many activities, they also entail involving various county and local teams, as well as organisations for achieving the desired results.

Guidelines compiled by: Triinu Toobal and Laura Aaben

Guidelines edited by: Tiia Pertel

Reproduction and distribution of this material in any way is prohibited without consent from the National Institute for Health Development.

The material was commissioned by the National Institute for Health Development in 2015

The guidelines were prepared with the contribution of Karin Streimann, Külli Luuk, Jane Alop, Ave Henberg, Lauri Beekmann, Helen Ojamaa-Muru, Jenny Jakobson, Ain Peil, Indrek Ints, Evelyn Leinbok, Doris Teiv, Anne Laar, Andri Ahven, Triinu Täht, Anne Läns, Hille Ilves, Tiina Üksvärav, Anu Vares, Livia Kask

The guidelines were prepared with the support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 “Public Health” programme.

## INTRODUCTION

Dear reader, this is a summary (found at this address) where we have compiled a large amount of knowledge about the methods that allow shaping and implementing alcohol policy on the local level.

**OBJECTIVE?** Prevention and mitigation of problems related to alcohol consumption on the local level with the help of concrete and evidence-based activities.

**FOR WHOM?** For local governments that wish to reduce the damages caused by alcohol consumption.

**WHY?** Damages caused by alcohol consumption entail additional costs in the budget of local governments (social benefits, treatment and counselling services, reduced number of people who are able to work, etc.), which can be controlled by the early prevention and reduction of damages.

**BENEFIT?** Thanks to long-term systematic and deliberate prevention work, as well as early intervention, a local government may “gain” a healthy and vital person who brings in tax revenue for the local government by working and is likely to create added value by raising the birth rate and contributing to the community.

This is a short version of the guidelines and the local governments interested in this field should examine the full version.

It is like a “bank of ideas”, aimed at encouraging and motivating, as well as showing local governments which activities can be implemented on the local level.

## STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDELINES

**CREATING TEAMS.** The first part of the guidelines provides recommended instructions (step-by-step) for beginning the shaping of alcohol policy in a local government.

**SETS OF ACTIVITIES.** These sets of activities are based on international recommendations, study results, and good practices. The great variations in the capability and preparedness of Estonian local governments was considered in preparing these. The sets are as follows:

- 1. A set for public events**
- 2. A set for preventing the alcohol consumption of minors**
- 3. A set for reducing the damages caused by the alcohol abuse of adults**
- 4. Minimum set**

**QUICK OVERVIEW.** The recommended activities have been summarised in tables that follow each set of activities, so that they would be easy to find.

## PRECONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING ALCOHOL POLICY ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

### **1. Form a team.**

Finding 3–5 persons who prioritise this field and are willing to handle this topic is paramount. In relation to the consistent and systematic development of the field, it is important for persons with wider discretion (rural municipality mayor, deputy mayor, chair of a local government council, etc.) to be included in the team and for them to support the activities.

### **2. Map the situation.**

The precondition for choosing a set that corresponds to the needs and opportunities of a local government is the existence of relevant data.

### **3. Choose a set of activities.**

Set common priorities in collaboration with a broad-based working group (non-governmental organisations, schools, hobby and leisure centres, family doctors, law enforcement, etc.) and choose a set of activities that corresponds to the abilities of the local government.

### **4. Form a working group for implementation.**

Implementing the measures of alcohol policy is not only a task for city or rural municipality governments. The precondition for success is a collaboration network that includes members who are motivated to be engaged in the field, because ensuring the consistency and longevity of the activities is important.

### **5. Devise an implementation plan.**

The implementation plan defines the tasks and roles of the parties in the implementation of the activities. It is important that the activities correspond to the abilities of the implementer.

### **6. Carrying out the implementation plan.**

Meetings of the working group should continue during the implementation period to discuss what has already been implemented, as well as to find solutions to the problems and questions that may have arisen.

### **7. Evaluation.**

Changing the norms and values of a community is a lengthy process, which is why it is impossible to achieve fast and immediately perceptible results. One of the easiest ways to evaluate intermediate results is to conduct test purchasing.

## **REMEMBER**

- Political support facilitates the process but its absence does not mean that nothing can be done.
- The set objectives should be realistic.
- Consistency is key in planning activities.
- Prepare for setbacks – dealing with addictive substances is often like “running your head against a brick wall”.

## SET FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

**Implementing legal measures** on the local level does not entail tight networking but it is a process inside the local government, which is dependent on the will of officials and politicians, e.g. sectoral alcohol-free events, restrictions on the strength of the sold alcohol, restricted sale and consumption areas, etc.

**Non-legal measures** include activities that do not entail the implementation of legal restrictions but are carried out by means of rearrangements, enforcement, and collaboration, e.g. responsible sale and serving of alcohol, offering free drinking water, encouragement of an informed and active community.

**Fear makes things seem worse.** Lack of knowledge, lack of experience, and troubles in communication create the most fear. People are often reluctant towards changes but fact-based arguments and unambiguous clear communication about the changes help mitigate opposition.

**Arguments.** Setting restrictions entails the existence of fact-based arguments, which assure the person setting the restrictions that the restrictions are necessary and correspond to valid legislation.

**Positive example.** A local government may set a positive example with their activities by initially setting regulatory restrictions on alcohol consumption at the events they organise.

**Reducing obscurity.** In order to reduce obscurity and time-consuming explanatory tasks among undertakings and the organisers of events, it is important to ensure that the information relevant to the regulations can be easily found, is unambiguous, and as stable in time as possible.

**Direct objective** – the availability of alcohol has been reduced

**Long-term objective** – alcohol-free period has been increased

**Main implementer:** local government

**Cost of implementing the activities for the local government**

– low

**Need for a tight network** – no

ACTIVITIES	ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Organising alcohol-free events	Banning the sale of alcoholic drinks at events of certain fields (fitness and sports, children's events by bodies of water or in their immediate vicinity, etc.)
Setting restrictions on the sales period	A time limit for marketing authorisation (e.g. sales must end an hour before the end of the event) will be added as a restriction when issuing a marketing authorisation for alcohol.
Restrictions on the strength of the alcohol being sold	Restrictions are set on the strength of permitted alcohol.
Restricted sales and consumption areas	Restricted sales and consumption areas, which only allow access to adults, are set up at public events.
Intensifying surveillance	Informing law enforcement units (including security companies) of both new and valid restrictions and of the expectations of local governments.
Responsible sale and serving of alcohol	Drawing undertakings' attention to valid legislation; creating acknowledgement campaigns for responsible undertakings; finding training solutions for servers and partially covering the training costs of smaller local undertakings, etc.
Collaboration with undertakings	Making proposals to undertakings for restricting the use of logos and for training their employees (social skills, responsible serving, etc.). Concluding agreements about the size and colour of serving cups and the use of armbands.
Organising a public transport service for larger events	Mapping the necessary routes; enabling a public transport service during the event; concluding agreements with undertakings.
Informed and active community	Notifying the media of the planned and implemented changes; forwarding an unambiguous and clear message to the community to create preconditions for creating an informed and active community.
Notifying undertakings	Preparing guidelines that introduce the regulations to organisers.
Offering free drinking water	Organising free water for events or collaborating with the organisers of the event with regard to that.

## SET FOR PREVENTING THE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION OF MINORS

**Need for early intervention.** Estonian youth begins consuming alcohol at an early age. The average age for trying alcohol for the first time is 12.4 and for getting drunk 13.4 (HBSC 2014).

**Less resistance.** Of all the proposed sets of activities, implementing alcohol policy to minors is least likely to cause resistance. Even though it is not often expressed, there are quite clear attitudes towards the alcohol consumption of minors – minors should not consume alcohol.

**Focus on adults.** Even though the objective is to prevent and reduce alcohol consumption among minors, most of the activities are aimed at adults. In order to achieve the objective, the environment surrounding youth (including parents, undertakings, school, community as a whole) must be changed.

**Availability.** The most efficient method for preventing and reducing alcohol consumption is restricting access, e.g. more efficient enforcement of valid restrictions through regular test purchasing, training of sales persons, etc.

**Multi-competence.** Legal restrictions alone cannot bring maximum results if the community sees the alcohol consumption of young people as normal, allows the violation of restrictions, and does not pay attention to these violations. Therefore, contributions to shaping the norms of the community must also be made in addition to other activities.

**Wide-ranging prevention.** Preventive activities do not have to be based on an addictive substance. The activities of both the school and the community must help create a safe environment that supports the active involvement of young people and focuses on teaching age-appropriate social coping skills that create less resistance in youth and provide knowledge for dealing with emotions, peer pressure, low self-esteem, etc.

**Direct objective** – the availability of alcohol for minors has been reduced

**Long-term objective** – adults condemn the alcohol consumption of minors

**Main implementers:** local government and divisions

**Financial cost for the local government** – average

**Need for a tight network** – yes

ACTIVITIES	ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Conducting test purchasing	Introducing the initiative to the police and non-governmental organisations; finding test purchasers in collaboration with schools, non-governmental organisations, and other local governments.
Training the employees of sales points	Introducing the initiative to undertakings and the police; finding a potential provider of training services; partially covering the training costs of smaller local businesses, if necessary; providing rooms for the training.
Setting additional restrictions on alcohol sale	Setting sales restrictions on the distance between alcohol sales points, as well as on sale on weekdays and holidays.
Restrictions on alcohol commercials in the vicinity of establishments meant for children and young people	Tightening the existing restrictions on advertising (more exact interpretation of “an area in the vicinity”).
Supporting community agreements	Informing the community, inspiring collaboration, supporting community endeavours.
Surveillance at parties meant for young people	Drawing the community’s attention to the problem; encouraging interventions.
Increasing the awareness of the community	Informing the community, inspiring collaboration, supporting community endeavours.
Development of parenting skills	Supporting and favouring participation in parenting programmes; gathering information and sharing it with parents.
Prevention of drug use in educational establishments	Prioritising the topic; guiding and encouraging the school’s administration to deal with this field; sharing information.
Teaching social coping skills	Prioritising the topic, enabling the implementation of evidence-based programmes (PAX, KiVa, teaching social skills, etc.) on the local level.
Variety of hobby groups and leisure activities	Analysing the need for and use of hobby groups and leisure activities; supporting the creation of alternatives; helping combine the time of the activities with the public transport schedule; enabling free or partially covered hobby groups; organising a systematised overview for parents about the available hobby and leisure activities.
Development of first aid skills	Searching for opportunities (service provider, paying for the service) for conducting first aid training for children and young people.
Providing answers to young people	Involving young people in the decision-making process (e.g. participative budgeting); supporting the activity of youth councils and involving them in the discussions of the council; involving young people in the organisation of events, etc.

## SET FOR PREVENTING THE DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE ALCOHOL ABUSE OF ADULTS

**Clear message.** In order to reduce resistance, it is important to clarify that the objective is not banning alcohol consumption for adults but simply reducing the damages caused by consumption.

**Reasons for consuming alcohol.** Unlike young people, adults often consume alcohol due to stress and insufficient skills for dealing with problems. This means that for adults, a large number of alternatives for spending their spare time is also important, increasing social activity, reducing stress, and decreasing the danger of becoming socially isolated. On the other hand, it is important to provide preventive counselling services (e.g. family therapy) in order to increase people's ability to communicate and cope.

**Regional collaboration.** Providing counselling and treatment services is expensive and thus, not available everywhere. With the help of collaboration between local governments, more persons in need can be lead to the services, including those who would not turn to a specialist in a small community out of shame (transport, the matter of privacy, etc.)

**Consumption as a consequence.** Persons who consume excessive amounts of alcohol may have multiple problems, e.g. not having stable employment, having financial problems, conflicts in the family, etc. In this case, the focus should be on finding solutions to the main problems (unemployment, relationship problems) based on each individual case. Alcohol consumption is often a consequence that accompanies the accumulation of problems.

**Collaboration with employers.** It is difficult to reach adults and bring the message to them. Therefore, it is beneficial to collaborate with employers who have the best contact with their employees.

**High-quality social work.** An individual case-based approach may be time-consuming and have frequent setbacks but it is the only way to help alcohol abusers and those closest to them. Collaboration between various specialists and supporting each other is important for difficult cases.

**Direct objective** – damages caused by alcohol consumption have been reduced

**Long-term objective** – the number of addicts and abusers has decreased

**Main implementers:** local government, family doctor

**Financial cost for the local governmentt** – average

**Need for a tight network** – yes

ACTIVITIES	ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Organising a public transport service for larger events	Mapping the necessary routes; enabling a public transport service during the event; concluding agreements with undertakings.
Responsible sale and serving of alcohol	Drawing the undertakings' attention to valid legislation; creating acknowledgement campaigns for undertakings; looking for training solutions for servers and partially covering the training costs of smaller local undertakings.
Enforcing surveillance	Emphasising the need for enforcement, collaboration with the police.
Legal restrictions	If necessary, regulating the location of and distance between sales points; permitting only counter sales; restriction on sale on certain weekdays and holidays and approval of a corresponding regulation by the council (see legal measures from the set of public events).
Enabling hobby and leisure activities	Mapping the existing possibilities; changing hobby and leisure activities if necessary and adding alternatives; organising availability for residents.
Employment-based programmes	Introducing the initiative to local undertakings; acknowledging successful undertakings; setting a positive example, e.g. making the events and receptions of the local government alcohol-free.
Restrictions for public events	Approval of corresponding regulations by the council (see the description of the set of public events).
Active community	Inspiring community actions, distributing information.
Informing friends and family of possibilities	Mapping local and regional counselling and support services; creating a systematic overview of the existing opportunities; enabling support services to friends and family, if necessary; sharing and distributing existing information.
Developing the skills of social workers	Offering social workers opportunities to participate in trainings and supervisions.
Ensuring psycho-social counselling or peer support	Finding people who are suitable for providing peer support and offering them training opportunities.
Developing collaboration between social workers and family doctors	Promoting collaboration; emphasising the need for the service among the participants.
Supporting and including friends and family	Creating opportunities for the gatherings of support groups (rooms, counsellors, etc.)

## MINIMUM SET

**If preparedness is low.** The minimum set provides local governments with low preparedness to deal with this field with activities that do not require a lot of additional effort or are already integrated in the work of the local governments in one way or another.

**Mitigation.** Implementing the minimum set may offer mitigation but not a solution to the problems.

<p><b>Direct objective</b> – problems caused by alcohol consumption have been mitigated</p> <p><b>Long-term objective</b> – the local government has increased preparedness for shaping and implementing a systematic and targeted alcohol policy</p> <p><b>Main implementer:</b> local government as a coordinator</p> <p><b>Financial cost for the local governmentt</b> – low/average</p> <p><b>Need for a tight network</b> – yes</p>
---

ACTIVITIES	ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Test purchasing and raids	Introducing the initiative to the police and non-governmental organisations; finding test purchasers in collaboration with schools, non-governmental organisations, and other local governments.
Organising alcohol-free events	Banning the sale of alcoholic drinks at events of certain fields (fitness and sports, children's events by bodies of water or in their immediate vicinity, etc.)
Collaboration of social workers and family doctors	Promoting collaboration; emphasising the need for the service among the participants.
Developing the organisation of hobby education and leisure time	Analysing the need for and use of hobby groups and leisure activities; supporting the creation of alternatives; helping combine the time of the activities with the public transport schedule; enabling free or partially covered hobby groups; creating a systematised overview for parents about the available hobby and leisure activities.
Developing the skills of social workers	Offering social workers opportunities to participate in trainings and supervisions.