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Press release | 13.05.2015

OECD backs minimum pricing

EFA press release from SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP and EFA Member of the European Parliament **Alyn Smith** welcomed a major report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which backed minimum pricing and called for further efforts to tackle alcohol abuse.

The report emphasised that while Minimum Unit Pricing had the potential to reduce drinking among heavy drinkers, moderate drinkers of all levels of income would be largely unaffected.



Adults in Scotland consumed an average of 10.1 units of alcohol per week (13.7 units for men and 6.8 units for women) in 2013.

Alyn said:

"The OECD's comments on the Scottish Government's minimum pricing are great news. Minimum pricing is a proportionate, evidence-based policy to cut down on harmful drinking amongst the heaviest drinkers.

"The latest modelling carried out by the School of Health and Related research (ScHARR) at Sheffield University estimated that a minimum price of 50p per unit would result in 300 fewer deaths per annum after 10 years.

"Since the policy is presently before the Court of Justice in Luxembourg after the Scotch Whisky Association challenged it any support that it receives is welcome.

"We need to do more. The OECD's plea for a series of evidence based and cost-effective policies to tackle alcohol abuse echoes my own hopes.

"Last month, along with my colleagues in the European Parliament, I voted in favour of creating a new EU-wide alcohol strategy. I clearly stated that this is not a problem that will just go away and unfortunately this report confirms that I was correct.

"That the report shows that more people are drinking from a younger age is deeply concerning and confirms that this is not a problem that will solve itself. We must take action to help the current and future generations of Scots."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Alyn's Speech to the European Parliament (Monday, 27 April 2015 – Strasbourg)

VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0P0qNE6nFM

TEXT: *"Madam President, I very warmly welcome Commissioner Hogan's comments on nutrition labelling and join with others in the House in saying: do please hurry up, we have been waiting long enough. People have the right to make choices based on information that presently the drinks industry is not giving them.*

"But I will focus specifically on Recital B and paragraph 39 of the motion itself, which is a fine motion that I hope colleagues will support. Recital B specifically says that the competent authorities in the Member States are best prepared to tackle alcohol abuse.

"In Scotland that is the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament. In paragraph 39 we make specific reference to our plans in Scotland for minimum unit pricing of alcohol. It has been proven to work in Canada. It is a proportionate, evidence-based policy to cut down on problem drinking – specifically problem drinking – presently before the Court of Justice in Luxembourg after the Scotch Whisky Association challenged it.

"So it is sub judice but I hope that we can agree here that the first step to tackling a problem is to admit that it exists. Sadly in Scotland we do have too many people who drink excessively. We are serious about tackling that, and minimum unit pricing is an important step within those plans and I do hope there is nothing in EU institutions which will stand in our way."

OECD Full report entitled "Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use: Economics and Public Health Policy" is available here:

http://www.oecd.org/health/tackling-harmful-alcohol-use-9789264181069-en.htm

Conclusion on Minimum Pricing:

"MUP has been proposed as a particular policy response to market conditions experienced in Scotland and elsewhere. Concerns about the potential impact on low income moderate drinkers appear to be unfounded as their levels of purchasing result in relatively small effects. Moderate drinkers across the income distribution will be little affected by MUP. Low-income heavy drinkers appear to be the group that may be most affected in terms of changing consumption, whereas high income heavy drinkers may be able to afford to maintain harmful drinking patterns".

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