
MANUAL FOR A LOCAL ALCOHOL PREVENTION POLICY IN ROMANIA



DRAIN

Dutch Romanian Alcohol policy Implementation Network



Colophon

DRAIN, Dutch Romanian Alcohol
policy Implementation Network

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Toolkit

Besides the manual, several documents and materials are produced to support the development of a local alcohol policy. These tools provide useful information when starting a project, but can also support the implementation of the project. Throughout the manual you will find references (→ *Written in red*) to materials from the toolkit. All the materials can be found and downloaded from the DRAIN- website: www.drain-project.eu. A description about how to use the tools can also be found on this webpage. Some examples of materials can be found in the kit added to this manual.

The DRAIN toolkit contains the following materials:

Project materials

[DRAIN project documentary](#), [DRAIN project brochure](#), [press articles booklet](#), [DRAIN newsletters](#) and the [local action plan](#).

Educational campaign

[Parents' brochure](#) and a [documentary for parents and students](#)

Legislative materials

Two stickers for alcohol sellers regarding age limits, a [legislation brochure](#) and pamphlet and [Pitești's by law](#).

Research

[Mystery shop articles](#), a [student survey article](#), an [adult survey article](#), an [alcohol outlet article](#), an [evaluation report of the educational campaign](#) and a [process evaluation report](#).

Preface

The Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP) cooperated with the Romanian municipality Pitești to create a foundation for preventive action for alcohol use among youngsters in Romania. They worked on this together for three years (April 2008 till April 2011) in the DRAIN project (Dutch Romanian Alcohol policy Implementation Network). This project was financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the MATRA program. This program provided funds to promote social change in Central and Eastern Europe.

Pitești functioned as a pilot city. Within this municipality a model is developed about how to implement a regional and local alcohol policy based on the latest scientific findings. In this manual you can read about how to implement this model. An explanation is given how a Romanian community, whether or not in cooperation with other communities, can develop and implement an effective alcohol policy.

This manual is a response to the growing number of alcohol related problems in Romania. If national and local authorities don't take action on short term, these problems will continue to increase. This is worrying because figures about alcohol use in Romania are already very high compared to other countries in the European Union.

We express our hope that this manual inspires communities and organisations to put a stop to the increase of alcohol related problems in Romania, especially among the new generation of youth.

[Tudor Pendiuc](#), mayor of the municipality of Pitești

[Wim van Dalen](#), director of the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP)

Pitești / Utrecht, March 2011

Summary

The Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP) cooperated with the Romanian municipality Pitești to create a foundation for preventive action for alcohol use among youngsters in Romania. With the experiences in Pitești as a basis, a model for preventive action was created. This manual provides a description of how to develop and implement a local alcohol prevention policy.

[Chapter 1](#) provides background information on alcohol related problems in Europe and Romania.

This chapter illustrates that alcohol consumption causes many problems, not only on an individual level, but for the whole society. Alcohol use can cause a huge economic burden and is the third leading risk factor for poor health globally. Young people are especially vulnerable to the consequences of alcohol consumption. The drinking level in Romania is among the highest in the world.

[Chapter 2](#) presents an overview of the theory behind an effective local alcohol prevention policy.

When developing a local alcohol policy the local government should be the main organising institution. Some important aspects should be taken into account:

- The main focus of this policy is to reduce alcohol related harm among youth;
- Preventive action should not be primarily directed at the individual, but on the environment of young people e.g. parents, teachers and sellers. The main target is to reduce the availability of alcohol for young people. Educational prevention (school) programs alone will not change drinking behavior
- Cooperation between different organisations is essential.

[Chapter 3](#) illustrates how the implementation of a local alcohol policy should be prepared

Gathering regional data about the drinking level of young people, the attitudes of parents and the availability of alcohol forms a good basis for preventive action and formulating realistic and appropriate project goals. A policy plan should be written which describes the goals, the vision and the budget of the project. The main goals of the project should be: Creating awareness and to change norms in the community about alcohol use among youth and reducing the availability of alcohol for youth.

[Chapter 4](#) describes the implementation of a local alcohol policy.

Specialised task forces need to be formed on three project elements: public support, regulations and enforcement. They should formulate concrete action points on these three subjects. Public support can be established through frequent media coverage and cooperation with schools in order to reach parents. Spreading knowledge about existing legal regulations and raising awareness about the importance of the compliance with these regulations (especially about the legal age limit) are important steps towards the improvement of compliance. Also, the existing level of enforcement on alcohol legislation needs to be identified and police action intensified in order to improve enforcement.

[Chapter 5](#) Success factors in developing a local alcohol policy.

Good communication and cooperation are key factors to make a project into a success.

Chapter 1

Alcohol a threat for our health

1.1 Harmful consequences of alcohol use

Alcohol: no ordinary commodity

"The harmful use of alcohol causes an estimated 2.5 million deaths every year, of which a significant proportion occur in the young. Alcohol use is the third leading risk factor for poor health globally. A wide variety of alcohol-related problems can have devastating impacts on individuals and their families and can seriously affect community life".

This quote illustrates the global consequences of alcohol use. Dr. Ala Alwan wrote this in his introduction in the "Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol"¹. This strategy was approved by the Sixty-third World Health Assembly in May 2010 and represents the commitment by the Member States of the World Health Organisation to sustained action at all levels.

The next quote makes it clear that alcohol is no ordinary substance and can have serious consequences for the society; it comes from a book edited by Tomas Babor². In this book several noted scientists provide a scientific foundation for the need for (local) governments to take policy action based on proven interventions to reduce alcohol related harm.

"Alcoholic beverages are an important, economically embedded commodity. Alcohol provides employment for people in bars, restaurants and the agricultural sector, brings in foreign currency for exported beverages and generates tax revenues for the government. But the economic benefits connected with the production, sale and use of this commodity come at an enormous cost to society. Three important mechanisms explain alcohol's ability to cause medical, psychological and social harm: physical toxicity, intoxication and dependence. (...) For this reason, alcohol is not a run-out-of-the-mill consumer substance"³.

Less is better

Alongside tobacco, alcohol is one of the main factors causing preventable deaths and disability². It is often said that moderate drinking has some health benefits for some individuals. However the negative consequences are much more severe. Apart from being a drug of dependence, alcohol is a cause of some 60 different types of diseases and conditions (see fig. 1)⁴. Alcohol consumption can also have a negative impact on people other than the drinker through alcohol related crime (e.g. domestic violence), family dysfunction, traffic accidents and problems in the work-place.

Based on the most recent scientific knowledge of Dutch Health Institutes the following conclusion related to the use of alcohol has been formulated:
For men: do not drink more than 2 glasses alcohol a day. For women: drink no more than 1 glass alcohol a day. In general the advice is: less alcohol is always better.

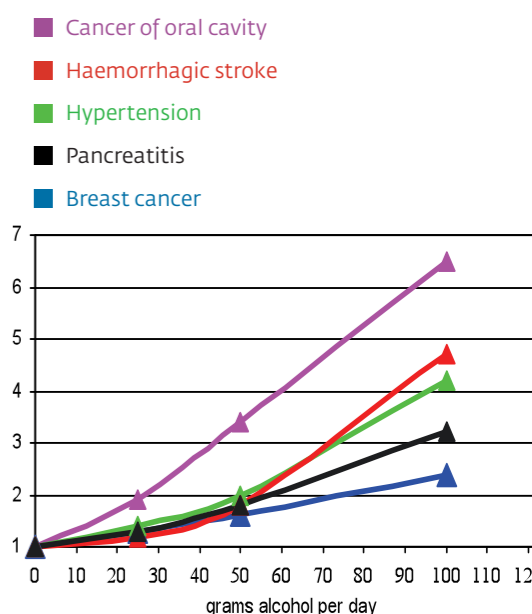


Figure 1: Relative risk on diseases per grams of consumed alcohol.⁴

¹ World Health Organisation (2009) Evidence for the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm. WHO: Regional Office for Europe.

² Babor, T., Caetano, R., Cassell, S., Edwards G., Giesbrecht, N., Graham, K., Grube, J., Gruenewald, P., Hill, L., Holder, H., Homel, R., Österberg, E., Rehm, J., Room, R. & Rossow, I. (2010) Alcohol: no ordinary commodity, research and public policy. [second edition] UK: University Press.

³ Alcohol and Public Policy Group (2010) Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity – a summary of the second edition. Addiction, 105: 769–779.

Risks for young people

The risks of alcohol consumption are even more serious for younger people⁴. There is no safe level of alcohol use for teenagers, especially those under the age of 18. The young brain is still developing until the age of 24 and the consumption of alcohol can disrupt this process. Brain activity decreases as a consequence of heavy and frequently drinking. Learning problems can be the result. Also, if teenagers start drinking under the age of 16, the chance of addiction in later life is four times higher. The earlier a young person starts drinking alcohol, the greater the risk of alcohol-related problems in later life. Therefore the message should be (at least): 'No alcohol before 18'.

The economic burden of alcohol

Alcohol has a considerable impact on society. The problems attributable to alcohol represent a huge economic burden⁴. The tangible costs are presented in the figure 2. The figure does not include all the emotional damage alcohol can cause through ill health and crime

1.2 Alcohol consumption in Europe and Romania

Alcohol Drinking in Romania among the highest in the world

Alcohol consumption in Europe is higher than in any other region in the world. The average recorded drinking level per capita in Europe is about 9,51 litres per person over 15 years old. In Romania this figure is 11,3 litres. However, the unrecorded alcohol consumption in Romania is estimated to be 4.0 litre of pure alcohol per capita, which makes a total figure in Romania of 15,3 litres per capita. Compared to other countries in Europe, in only 7 other countries (Russia, Ukraine, Andorra, The Czech Republic, Moldova, Estonia and Hungary) the average drinking level is slightly higher⁵. In conclusion can be said that the drinking figures in Romania are among the highest in the world (see table 1).

Like in all European countries the majority of the people in Romania consume alcohol; 7 of 10 Romanians reported that they consumed alcohol in the last year and 87% of them drunk alcohol in the last month.⁶

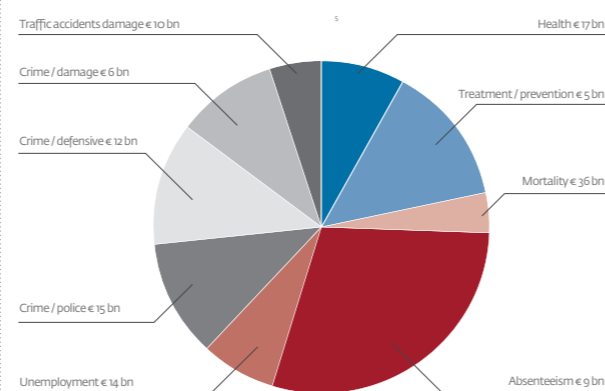


Figure 2: Tangible cost of alcohol in Europe⁴

	Recorded consumption	Unrecorded consumption	Total consumption
Romania	11.3	4.0	15.3
Europe	9.51	2.67	12.18
World	4.37	1.76	6.13

Table 1: Average recorded drinking level per capita in liters.⁵

⁴ Anderson, P. & Baumberg, B. (2006) Alcohol in Europe. London: Institute of Alcohol Studies.

⁵ World Health Organisation (2011) Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2011. WHO: Geneva.

⁶ Eurobarrometer (2010) EU citizens' attitudes towards alcohol. Brussels: TNS Opinion & Social.

Alarming binge drinking figures in Romania

Looking to even more alarming figures: 39% of the Romanians reported to drink 5 or more glasses of alcohol beverages per occasion at least once a week (binge drinking). Romania rates second highest country in Europe with this number. Only in Ireland binge drinking is more popular.

Romania has a long tradition of consuming alcohol. Every day drinking is often, especially in the rural areas, considered as a natural life style. The homemade alcohol is called plinca or țuică which is a distilled brandy of approximately 40% alcohol content. It is made from fruits such as apples, plums and pears. Homemade wine and spirits are often considered natural and healthy because it is manufactured with own produced fruits, and without chemical additives.

Alcohol related harm in Romania

The WHO has collected data about the risks of harmful alcohol use in the world. Compared to, for example, the Netherlands and the USA the alcohol related mortality in Romania, especially on liver cirrhosis, rates higher.⁷

Despite the fact that Romania shows high figures of alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm, most Romanians realise that drinking alcohol has serious health risks. In comparison with Europe Romanians seem more aware of the health risks.

For example: 68% of Romanians realise that drinking alcohol can increase the risk of heart disease (respectively 53% of Europeans); 62% of Romanians realise the relation with drinking and a depression (49% of Europeans do). From all the 27 countries in Europe the Romanian population is most aware of the risk of cancer related to alcohol (57%). On average in Europe only 36% of the population is aware of this risk.⁸

Youth drinking in Pitești

Several research studies have been conducted during the DRAIN project to outline the alcohol related norms, problems and drinking patterns in Pitești. Knowledge about the local alcohol related situation is very useful in determining the focus of the project. Some important findings are:

- 88% of Pitești youth (between 14 and 19) drinks alcohol (now or in the past).
- 50% of youth starts drinking alcohol before the age of 13.⁹
- 60% of parents indicated that their child did not start drinking before 18 while more than 30% of the children indicate that they already started drinking alcohol before the age of 13.
- Pitești youth can buy alcohol anywhere they like, sellers don't check for age or ID.¹⁰
- 62% of all schools in Pitești have alcohol sales points situated very near the school fence.¹¹

From these studies it can be concluded that teenage drinking is a serious problem. Not only is it a problem of the youth itself, but it becomes clear that the environment in which they live is also very important; many parents underestimate the problem and alcohol sellers don't comply with the age limit law.

	Liver Cirrhosis	
	Male	Female
Romania	60.2	28.1
USA	13.5	6.1
Netherlands	6.1	3.2

Table 2: Standardized mortality rates, 15+ years (per 100 000 population).⁷

⁷ World Health Organisation (2011) WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2011. Geneva: WHO

⁸ Eurobarrometer (2010) EU citizens' attitudes towards alcohol. Brussels: TNS Opinion & Social.

⁹ Van Hoof J.J., Moll M. (2008) Youth Alcohol Consumption in Romania: Results of a Student Survey in Pitești.

¹⁰ Van Hoof J.J., Moll M., Constantinescu M (2009). Selling alcohol to underage adolescents in Romania: Compliance with age restrictions in Pitești. Rev Cercet Interv So 27:82-91.

¹¹ Van Hoof, J.J., Reijlink, M.J., Van Dalen, W.E. (2010) Alcohol outlets near schools in a midsize Romanian city. Prevalence and characteristics. Romanian Journal of Legal Medicine 18(4):295-300.

1.3 The development of alcohol policies in Europe and Romania

Urgent need for a national and local alcohol policy in Romania

The alcohol industry, especially the beer and spirits industry are very active in all countries in Europe, also in Romania. Romania is an example of a country where new open market systems permit global alcohol companies opportunities to utilise modern marketing campaigns to introduce new alcohol products and drinking styles (see picture). The economical power of these companies, directly or indirectly, influences health policy. They promote the policy interests of the industry. These developments challenge the public health sector and governments to respond with national and local public health strategies to minimise the consequences of alcohol consumption.¹²

No enforcement, no compliance

Romanian legislation already contains a number of legislative provisions regarding selling, consuming, marketing and traffic. For example selling alcohol to and consumption of alcohol by people who have not reached the age of 18 years old is not allowed. Unfortunately in general these alcohol laws are poorly or not at all enforced in Romania. For example a research by the University of Pitești in cooperation with the University of Twente (the Netherlands) showed that sellers in Pitești easily sell alcohol to minors¹⁰. Hardly any of the sellers ask for an ID card or refuse to sell alcohol. One of the reasons of these bad figures is that the sellers have nothing to fear of any control.

A successful alcohol policy: reduction of availability of alcohol

Scientific studies show that national and local alcohol policy can be successful, especially if the availability of alcohol will be restricted. Research shows that the key elements of an effective alcohol policy are^{2,4}:

- A good price policy: high taxes and a minimum price level.
- Good enforcement of and compliance with existing age limits for buying alcohol.
- Restriction of number of selling places.
- Restriction of alcohol marketing.
- Enforcement of alcohol and traffic laws.
- Early detection by doctors of excessive drinking.

Some of these policy measures have to be taken at national level and others at regional level.

¹² Alcohol and Public Policy Group (2010) Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity – a summary of the second edition. *Addiction*, 105: 769–779.



Modern marketing campaigns have introduced new sweet alcohol products that are too attractive for young people

Education in itself is a soft tool

In many countries for many years the main alcohol policy activities were focused on education of young people, by informing them about health risks and other consequences of alcohol use. Unfortunately all these educational investments didn't have any success.¹³ Research has shown that the brains of young people are not capable yet to take responsible decisions about their health. As a result young people are in general not interested in information about short term and long term consequences of their health. It can be effective however to educate parents about the consequences of teenage drinking.

Youth are more likely to follow 'modern lifestyles' and the use of alcohol is one element of these lifestyles, also stimulated by alcohol marketing on television, radio, during events and via social media on internet. Alcohol is hot, cool and attractive for young people. Therefore sellers, parents, teachers and the local and national authorities have the duty to protect young people against the risks of alcohol. The best way to do this is to offer children as much as possible an alcohol free environment: no drinking under the age of 18, no possibility to buy under the age of 18, good enforcement of alcohol laws and restricting alcohol marketing.¹⁴

¹³ Holder, H. (1998). *Alcohol and the Community. A Systems Approach to Prevention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴ Vorst, van der, H. (2007). *The key to the cellar door. The role of the family in Adolescents' Alcohol Use (Proefschrift)*. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.

Chapter 2

An integral alcohol prevention policy

As illustrated in chapter 1, alcohol can cause a lot of damage to individuals but also to societies and communities. An effective policy to reduce alcohol consumption is therefore of great importance to improve public health as well as to reduce social costs.

Over the past few years countries and regions came to realise this, now there are many examples of successful local prevention policies (see textbox 1 and 2 on page 15 and 16). Consequently, more information is available about what an effective policy is and how such policy can be implemented. In this chapter the characteristics of an effective integral local alcohol prevention policy are described.

2.1 The need for an alcohol prevention policy on community level

Prevention of alcohol consumption by young people can best be organised and fitted to the needs of the community on a local level. On a community scale the negative consequences of harmful use of alcohol are felt the most. The visibility of negative consequences of alcohol on a community level creates a willingness to act. The local government is the best party to decide about suitable actions and interventions to tackle or prevent alcohol related harm or problems.

Goals and key aspects

The goal and reason to design a local alcohol policy is to reduce and prevent alcohol related harm within the community. The main target group is children and adolescents; this group is very vulnerable to the effects of alcohol and is relatively easy to be influenced. Also, by preventing them from starting drinking alcohol (at a young age) a lot of harm in later life can be prevented.

The concrete goals of the policy should be:

- Create awareness and change norms about alcohol use among youth in the community:
 - Spread the norm 'No alcohol before 18'
 - Spread information about the health risks of drinking alcohol
- Reduce the availability of alcohol for youth in the community:
 - Create compliance with alcohol regulations
 - Establish effective enforcement



Mr. Tudor Pendiuc,
Mayor of Pitești

"Fighting against harmful drinking among youngsters is one of our most important programs in Pitești. Pitești is the only city in Romania where such a program is implemented and we are the first city to develop our own local alcohol policy. We shall continue to make the youth more aware of the risks of alcohol, but in order to reach this the whole community needs to be involved"

textbox 1

Eindhoven area - The Netherlands
In 2006 a regional alcohol prevention project started in which 21 communities participated. The main goal was to postpone the average starting age of drinking alcohol which was set at 12,2 years old. The interventions during the project were directed at the environment of youngsters (e.g. parents, schools, bars). Action was taken against public drunkenness and selling alcohol to under aged children or intoxicated persons. The results are positive, the starting age on drinking rose to 14,1 in 2009, but the project team is still working on improving this. The project also experimented in using breathalyzers in public places to detect youth drunkenness. On national level breathalyzers are only used by the traffic police. The idea of using the breathalyzers for a broader cause (for example at school parties, public events or public transport) is now considered on national level.

2.2 A successful alcohol prevention policy

Emphasis on the environment and policy change

Norms and values about alcohol and drinking behaviour are not only a personal choice; they are mostly a result of influences from the environment, for example: legislation about alcohol, parenting style, norms and behaviour of friends or amount of alcohol outlets in the environment. Because alcohol consumption is connected to many influences from the environment the whole community must be addressed to change attitudes towards alcohol and drinking patterns not just the individual.¹⁵ Local alcohol policy should be characterised by cooperation between policy makers with different specialisations and local stakeholders from various public and private organisations within the community.

Traditionally, alcohol prevention action has been directed at the individual drinkers in the form of alcohol health education, but research has indicated this does not have a public health effect. The drinking behaviour of adolescents is especially unaffected by information about the consequences of alcohol use. In order to change the drinking behaviour of people, introducing policy which restricts the availability of alcohol is the most effective way. This can be done, by implementing strict rules for example on the number of alcohol outlets, the price of alcohol and the enforcement of the minimum drinking age.¹⁶

Basic principles

From As explained in chapter 1, different policy measures are proven to be effective. There are important general principles at the basis of effective local alcohol policy. One of these principles is that the availability of alcohol for young people has to be restricted, and that alcohol laws have to be enforced effectively. Research has shown that in the absence of an effective alcohol policy, alcohol consumption will increase and societal alcohol problems will also increase.¹

Responsibility of the local government

The main leader in the development of a local alcohol policy will be the local government. The project interventions will be organised on community level. This approach brings different societal aspects like healthcare, education, welfare, public order, control and safety together. The local government is the general coordinating institute in a community and therefore essential as a leader to the project plan. Some measures to reduce the availability of alcohol may sometimes cause resistance within certain groups of the community. For this it is also important that the local government supports the interventions and measures.



Mr. Iosiv Cerbureanu,
secretary of the municipality of Pitesti.

“The role of the local government is very important. We can set local rules in order to limit alcohol consumption among youth. We also try to involve different organisations from within the community in the project.”

textbox 2

Katwijk – The Netherlands

In Katwijk, a city in the Netherlands, a partnership between organisations and volunteers from within the community organised action against harmful drinking. Their main focus is to reduce alcohol related harm among youth.

The police fulfills an important role within the project: they try to talk with the teenagers and educate them about the harmful effects of alcohol use. If youth causes a nuisance or drink excessive amounts of alcohol on the streets or in squares the police reports this to the local government. A letter, signed by the mayor, will then be sent to the parents of the children and they will be invited to come and talk about teenage drinking.

(Read the letter of the mayor on: www.drain-project.eu)

¹⁵ Holder H. D. (1998) Alcohol and the community: a systems approach to prevention

¹⁶ Babor, T., Caetano, R., Cassell, S., Edwards G., Giesbrecht, N., Graham, K., Grube, J., Gruenewald, P., Hill, L., Holder, H., Homel, R., Österberg, e., Rehm, J., Room, R. & Rossow, I. (2010) Alcohol: no ordinary commodity, research and public policy. [second edition] UK: University Press.

2.3 Building blocks of an effective local alcohol prevention policy

In paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2, it is explained that prevention should not be addressed exclusively to individuals but to the whole community. Drinking alcohol is part of a life-style which is connected to the society. A prevention policy should therefore also be connected to the society; three important societal aspects form three essential policy pillars in constructing a prevention policy (see fig. 4).

The three pillars: public support, regulations and enforcement, each represent an essential part of the local alcohol policy.¹⁷ Forming a plan with these three pillars as a basis will help in constructing an effective project strategy. All three pillars demand their own strategy, work plan and involvement of stakeholders. Each building block will be explained in the next paragraph.

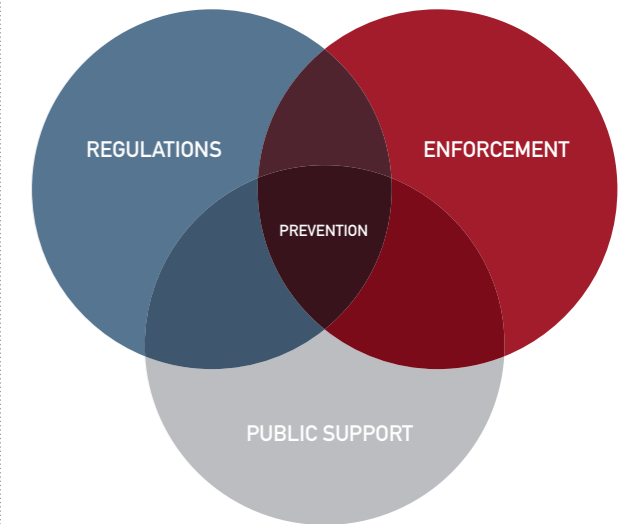


Figure 4: Three policy pillars

¹⁷ Reynolds, R.I. (2003). Building Confidence in Our Communities. London: London Drug Policy Forum.

2.4 Policy pillars

Pillar 1: Public support

People within the community have to be aware of the project: what measures will be taken and which stakeholders are involved. Also, the subject of the project needs to be clear: the seriousness of the risks of drinking alcohol on a young age. People within the community have to be informed about the importance of the subject and the goal of the project. The success and effectiveness of the project depends on public support for the implementation of the proposed policy and of the project activities.

Within the project public support should be created in three ways:¹⁸

1. Increase the knowledge and awareness about the health risks of alcohol consumption for youth within the general public or specific groups.
2. Increase the knowledge about the necessity of the policy measures.
3. Inform the public about the results of the policy, for example by the media.

The media is a very important partner in realizing public support. Journalists should be involved in the project strategically to spread information and report about the activities.

The implementation and the concrete action points for this pillar are described in paragraph 4.4.

Pillar 2: Regulations

The reduction in availability of alcohol by means of effective regulations is the most important factor in reducing alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm.¹⁹ Availability of alcohol can be legally reduced for example by: regulations that limit the number of alcohol sales points and reduce the opening times of bars and shops, and by making sure sellers comply with the legal age limits. Effective and actual legislation is important and the community has to support the legal alcohol regulations.

It must be clear to all people within the community (especially authorities and organisations) what kind of legislation concerning alcohol exists. For alcohol sellers this is very essential, trainings about alcohol legislation and compliance for example can be a good intervention. Sellers should be trained to systematically ask youngsters for ID and refuse sales of alcohol to minors.

The implementation and the concrete action points for this pillar are described in paragraph 4.5.

Pillar 3: Enforcement

Without proper enforcement, alcohol legislation is not effective. Police needs to enforce laws actively; otherwise the chance on compliance by the community is very low. Therefore enforcement is an essential point of focus in the implementation of a local alcohol policy. Not only new policy measures need enforcement, it is also of great importance that existing alcohol laws are enforced.

There are different authorities in Romania that are responsible for the enforcement of alcohol laws. The local government as well as the regional and national government are responsible for enforcement at local level and have separate enforcement tasks. The direct enforcing authorities are the community, district and national police and the gendarmerie. Good cooperation between these parties is very important. In the beginning of the project it is good to clarify the responsibilities of the different authorities. It is also wise to make agreements on the enforcement priorities and describe this in a local enforcement strategy.

The implementation and the concrete action points for this pillar are described in paragraph 4.6.

Practise in Pitesti 4:

Educational Campaign

Together in a workgroup teachers and parents developed an informative brochure for parents to inform them about the dangers of teenage drinking and what they can do to prevent or reduce this. In order to get this information to the parents, schools were asked to participate in a campaign.

Ten motivated schools in Pitești were invited to join the educational campaign. Officially the educational campaign started with a speech of the mayor and a march with school children through the city centre of Pitești. The children carried warnings for alcohol and distributed flyers.

The ten participating schools agreed on organising one or more activities or meetings about the consequences of alcohol consumption for parents or students during the rest of the school year. This campaign was received very well. The schools responded very positively towards the campaign. They experimented in how to get the message across, by inviting experts: a policeman or a doctor. A lot of parents and students started to think about the subject of alcohol consumption. Children and parents were very glad to receive information which they were often not aware of. This campaign created a lot of public support and the campaign received a lot of positive media attention.

Practice in Pitesti 3: An example of a public awareness campaign in Pitesti.

Practise in Pitesti 5:

Pitesti's by-law

In May 2010 the city council in Pitești agreed on a new local law. In this so called by-law they agreed on the following points:

It is forbidden to serve and sell alcohol within 200 meters of a school during school hours. All alcohol sellers are obliged to put a sticker with the legal age limit and that they do not sell alcohol to those who have not reached this age.

The mayor may inform the parents/ guardians and educational unit of under aged persons who violate the public order or public peace. If an alcohol selling point does not comply with these regulations it will receive a fine. If the offence is repeated by the same selling unit the selling license may be suspended for 10 to 30 days.

Practice in Pitesti 4: A local by-law was accepted in Pitești

¹⁸ Gascbaranyi, M. & Mulder, J. (editors) (2007). Handleiding lokaal alcoholbeleid, een integrale benadering. The Netherlands:

¹⁹ World Health Organisation (2004) WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol 2004. Geneva: WHO Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

2.5 Pitești: The first city in Romania with its own local alcohol policy

Pitești is the first city in Romania which has established its own alcohol prevention policy. During three years many meetings, research and interventions have taken place, with a concrete positive result. In the textbox on the right the different results through the years are listed.

Pitești can function as an example for Romania regarding the development of local alcohol policy to prevent alcohol use among young people. Communities may not have the same alcohol related problems and habits, but there is a general approach or model to reduce drinking problems among young people. This model of evidence based alcohol community prevention in Romania (the DRAIN model) is what has been developed in Pitești in the past years. This model will now be spread nationwide through this manual. In the next chapters there will be explained, more concretely, how to establish such a program in your city or region.

Practise in Pitesti

2008: Scientific research conducted by a Dutch and Romanian University gives insight in the alcohol related habits, norms, values and problems among parents, students and alcohol sellers in Pitești.

See practice in Pitesti 1, pg. 21 and practice in Pitesti 1, pg. 22

September 2009: A local action plan has been accepted by the city council. This opened the doors for concrete action.

See practice in Pitesti 2, pg. 26

October 2009: A delegation of key persons within the DRAIN project went on a training trip to the Netherlands. These persons were inspired by their Dutch colleagues who were also active in community alcohol prevention.

November 2009: An educational campaign was organised in cooperation with 10 schools. A festive opening march took place and many educational meetings for students and parents were organised at schools.

See practice in Pitesti 3, pg. 18

May 2010: Together with local authorities and law experts a proposition for a local law change was drafted. A by-law was approved by the local city council and from this point the police has the authority to tackle the sale of alcohol near schools.

See practice in Pitesti 4, pg. 18

December 2010: A manual for local prevention policy was written to disseminate the project to different cities and regions in Romania to implement their own local alcohol policy.

January 2011: Three different cities in Romania; Bacău, Râmnicu Vâlcea and Târgu Jiu, are making plans to start implementing the DRAIN model.



Figure 4: Original signed document of the by-law in Pitești. In the textbox Practice in Pitesti 5 (pg. 23), the content of this local by law in Pitești is explained. The introduction of this law was an important step forward within the project, because it implies a concrete reduction of the availability of alcohol for youth.

Chapter 3

Preparing a local alcohol prevention policy

Before taking action and starting to implement project activities, the project needs to be prepared very well. Chapter 3 describes this preparation phase. Data needs to be gathered to get an accurate picture of the alcohol use of young people, the attitudes of parents and the situation regarding compliance and enforcement of the existing alcohol laws. A first project plan needs to be designed, with the available data as a basis. Also relevant stakeholders within the community need to be informed about the project plan.

3.4 Gathering data

Existing (inter)national research on alcohol related harm is very useful and easy to retrieve (see also chapter one of this manual). It can be used to paint an overall picture of the main alcohol related problems. To describe the local situation due to alcohol consumption among young people, specific local, up to date information is needed.

Existing data

There are different types of data and some of these data are documented by professionals. For example, data can be retrieved from the police; such as records on the number of fines to alcohol sellers for selling to under-aged children, or records on the number of alcohol related traffic incidents. Doctors or hospitals can for example provide useful data on prevalence of alcohol intoxications and alcohol related diseases.

The information from these local data sources is very important in supporting the local policy regarding drinking among youngsters.

Local research

Organising local research studies within the project will deliver very specific information, this data is very useful. Doing research can be expensive, but it does not necessarily have to cost a lot of money. Collaboration with a university for example is a very good solution. Interested students can volunteer in investigating the issue. Local research not only contributes to an accurate insight into problems, but can also create political support for the project and free publicity in the media (see figure 5).

Examples of possible studies are:

- A questionnaire that is handed to students or parents asking them about alcohol use, alcohol related problems and attitudes towards alcohol. Public opinion and behaviour can hereby be measured.
- Organising purchase attempts by minors. During this study some seventeen year old youngsters will try to buy alcohol in different alcohol outlets in order to check the compliance with age limits. In the textbox aside the so called 'mystery shop research' in Pitești is described.
- Mapping the number and kind of alcohol sales points within the community. In Pitești this study was conducted by the police. They made pictures of all alcohol sales points close to schools and presented the overview in a report (see figure 7, pg. 30).

→ Examples of useful research methods or reports conducted in Pitesti can be found on the DRAIN website.

Practise in Pitești 1:

Mystery shop research

The law forbids the sale of any type of alcohol to youth under the age of 18. In a mystery shopping research in Pitești four 17 year old students were trained to carry out alcohol purchase attempts in a systematic way to investigate compliance with the above mentioned law.

The sales persons do not know the study is being conducted, because this may cause them to act in a different manner to which they normally would. Supermarkets and bars in the city were visited by the students. The students order or buy drinks the "normal way". When asked for age, they lie and state that they are 18, when asked for ID, they show their real ID.

In Pitești 58 alcohol sales points in seven of Pitești's neighbourhoods were visited in October 2008 (at the start of the DRAIN project). All 58 purchase attempts were successful and therefore compliance with the Romanian law stating that no alcohol can be sold to youth under the age of 18 is 0%. Only in one purchase attempt the sales person asked about the age of the mystery shopper. Despite this intervention, the mystery shopper was allowed to buy an alcoholic beverage.

Practice in Pitești 1: An example of local research in Pitești: A mystery shop study.



Mrs. Maria Constantinescu,
Professor at the University of Pitesti

"Universities are an important stakeholder to involve in the project. They dispose of a lot of useful existing data. They are of course also a useful partner to assist in or conduct new data collection. Not only data collection but also the knowledge where members of the university dispose of, for example on legislation, can be of use within the project."

3.2 A policy plan

Before starting to promote the idea of implementing a local alcohol policy and recruiting a team to carry this out, a solid policy plan should be prepared. A policy plan reflects the main vision, the general and measurable goals, the target groups, the main interventions and the required budget in order to tackle the signalled alcohol problems. The plan should be accepted by the local city council in order to get formal consent on the implementation of the project.

The following points should be elaborated and included in the policy plan:

1. Describe the existing problems and the vision behind the project

Based on national, regional or local data about alcohol problems and specifically the drinking problems of youth, a description should be made of the seriousness of the existing problems. Make clear that policy and action is needed. In this part of the plan there should be a description of what the vision of the project is. It must be explained in what way the project tries to actively prevent and tackle alcohol related problems among youth. It must be clear why this specific approach is chosen for the project and which interventions support this approach. In chapter 2 of this manual the vision of the project is explained. The most essential aspects of the vision are:

- The focus is on preventing alcohol consumption among youth. Youth is an important focus group since the society has the responsibility to protect them from bad influences (e.g. easy availability of alcohol) because they are very vulnerable for bad influences. Changing youth drinking behaviour is also important since they form the new generation of the society. At a younger age the drinking behaviour of youth can still be influenced relatively easily; better results on preventive action can therefore be expected.
- Educational messages directed to youth itself don't change their drinking behaviour. Youth drinking behaviour is influenced by their surroundings; action should therefore be directed at limiting the availability of alcohol in the direct surroundings of the young drinker.
- Different organisations and people from within the community work together to reach the same goal and communicate the same message.

2. Describe project goals and overall activities

Using the building blocks model and the local data as starting point, the different project goals can be formulated and explained. The most important aims of the project should be:

Creating awareness and change norms in the community about alcohol use among youth:

- Spread the norm 'No alcohol before 18. Especially among parents.
- Spread information about the health risks of drinking alcohol.

Reduce the availability of alcohol for youth in the community:

- Create compliance with alcohol regulations.
- Establish effective enforcement.

For each project goal concrete measurable targets (if possible) should be listed. Existing (inter)national data and new data from observations and local research (see practise in Pitești 1 and 2) should support these project targets.

Realistic project results can be established based on the local data.

For example, concrete project targets can be:

- Postponing the average drinking age from 14,5 to 16 years old in three years.
- Compliance by alcohol sellers should be up to at least 40 % in three years (not more than 60% of the under aged youth should be able to buy alcohol in shops).

Research in the bars of Pitești

Monday, the 6th of December 2010 | Claudiu DIȚA

The local authorities in Pitești, in collaboration with a Dutch foundation, named STAP, initiated a research program in the bars, restaurants and also in supermarkets in the county capital city. The research aims to check the way in which the owners of such public houses and the sellers observe the law concerning the selling of alcoholic products to underage persons. A similar research study, organised two years ago also in Pitești, showed that no bar and no shop observed this legal provision!

The checking is carried out with the help of teams consisting of young persons under 18 years old who ask to buy alcoholic drinks. Two years ago, all the barmen sold alcoholic drinks to the young persons under 18 years old in question, without even asking them how old they were, and without asking them to show an identity card. The results of the checking of this year will be soon made available and the authorities hope that they will be better.

A pilot program at the national level for reduction of alcohol use by young persons under 18 years old has been carried out in Pitești since 2008. This program will be extended to other towns of the country. On the other hand, the representatives of this current government announced that they intended to propose a bill under which the access of teenagers in bars after 09.00 p.m., from Monday to Thursday, will be forbidden.

Figure 5: A newspaper article in 'Argesul', a local newspaper in Pitești.

Practise in Pitești 2:

Student and parents' survey

In 2008 a student survey was conducted among 1500 students and in 2009 a parents' survey was done among 432 parents. From these two studies a clear image could be formed about norms, behavior and knowledge among teenagers and parents about alcohol consumption. By questioning the parents as well as the students, a nice comparison can be made between the answers of students about drinking behavior and the perceptions of parents about the drinking behavior of their child.

Some interesting results from both studies are:

Parents are too permissive when it comes to alcohol consumption. Most parents do not drink less in front of their children and parents greatly underestimate the use of alcohol by their child. About 34% of the students indicate that their parents do not know that they drink, or they have at least never discussed it with them, while 85 percent of the parents indicate that they discussed this subject with their children. 71 percent of the parents indicate that they do not permit alcohol consumption before the age of 18; however, 88 percent of the Pitești youth (aged 14 - 19) drinks alcohol (now or in the past).

Practice in Pitești 2: An example of local research in Pitești: A student and Parent's survey.

Next, concrete intervention goals should be connected to the project goals:

- Create awareness and knowledge among parents and professionals about teenage drinking.
- Generate public support for the project and the subject by frequent media coverage.
- Improve enforcement by the police.
- Improve compliance with the age limit by sellers.

From these intervention goals concrete activities can be formulated in the action plan (STEP 3)

3. Describe the national and local alcohol related regulations and responsibilities

Here you give a description of the national legislation concerning alcohol. A good overview is necessary to provide accurate information of the overall legislative situation. Also, an overview of the existing local regulations and responsibilities is needed to outline a framework for the proposed changes or points of attention. It must be clear who, at local level, is responsible for the enforcement of alcohol legislation. The relevant alcohol related problems among youth in the region or community must be described. Reducing these problems will be the target of the policy.

4. Describe the budget of the project.

A lot of interventions can be done without the need of a big budget; still some money needs to be reserved for promoting the project (through media and materials) and funding a local coordinator. However this project model is based on the cooperation of people within the community who want to volunteer in order to reduce community problems. Results can therefore be realised from the strength of working together and personal motivation.

5. Get the support of the mayor and the city council.

As said in § 2.4 the local government should be the main responsible party for the project and should support the project plan. The mayor should therefore present the plan (point 1 till 4) to the city council and will, hopefully, find the support for the local action plan.

After formal consent of the local city council, one can continue taking the next steps.

3.3 Inform local stakeholders about the project

When the policy plan is written, it is wise to inform the main stakeholders about the policy plan. The people that should be informed about the plan (in this stage of the project) are representatives from organisations connected to the three building blocks of prevention (education and public support, laws and regulations and enforcement). During this meeting the stakeholders are informed about the overall project plan and are invited to think about possible activities and about their role within the project. This meeting is very useful in measuring the support for the vision and goals of the new policy.



Dr. Cristina Petcu,
national coordinator within the DRAIN project

"Stakeholders fulfill a crucial task in all phases of the project. The project is formed by and through members of the community; specialists of institutions in charge with alcohol policy, teachers and parents, the media and others. In fact we can say that the stakeholders are the action group, being able to properly analyze the actions taken and provide solutions whenever necessary. Everything depends on motivated people within the community!"

Chapter 4

Implementing a local alcohol prevention policy

This manual offers 7 stepping stones in implementing a local alcohol prevention policy. Following and implementing these 7 steps will help you in realising a successful local alcohol prevention policy.

	Activity	Toolkit	Pg.
STEP 1:	Appoint a competent project coordinator		32
STEP 2:	Discuss the project plan with local stakeholders and form taskforces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project network 	33
STEP 3:	Construct an action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan 	34

Step 1 to 3 should be executed after each other in order to start implementing the project.

STEP 4:	Generate public support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly press releases and free publicity Meetings with parents (organised by schools) Informative materials for parents/ children/ doctors/ schools 	36
STEP 5:	Create awareness and compliance with regulations and improve them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance action plan for sellers Sellers compliance training Sticker for sellers with age limits Information materials for sellers 	38
STEP 6:	Improve enforcement of alcohol legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement strategy Police enforcement training Informative materials for police people 	40
STEP 7:	Create continuation of the new policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contracts of continuation process evaluation 	41

Steps 4 to 7 can and should be implemented simultaneously. The implementation of these four steps will continue throughout the project.

Step 1

4.1 Appoint a competent project coordinator

The project coordinator is the key person in establishing a successful alcohol prevention project. This person must be chosen wisely. The project coordinator must have some knowledge and interest in the subject of alcohol prevention and be capable of leading the project. It should also be a person with an extensive network of people within different organisations within the community. Above all, the project coordinator must personally be motivated to make the project into a success. The project coordinator will be hired by and works for the local government.

Step 2

4.2 Form a network and taskforces

When the action plan of the project is clear, it is important to carefully choose partners to form a network of people to work with. The local government and the local coordinator play the main roles in this process. The local coordinator will invite several relevant parties to inform them about the action plan. Motivated organisations and persons will be asked to contribute to the project in a way which fits their function and expertise. Within the network, the following organisations should at the least be represented: Schools (teachers), Police, Media (journalists), University (students or professors), Medical organisations (doctors) and parents. Besides these organisations it is also possible that the following institutions fulfil a role within the network: School inspectorate, the local licensing unit, youth organisations, religious organisations and sport clubs.

From the group of people within the network, different task forces can be formed. Representatives of the local authorities chair these task forces supported by the local coordinator. Which different task forces can be formed depends on the project plan and the network. A good solution can be to form three groups according to the three pillars of the building blocks model (public support, regulations, enforcement). The enforcement group should for example be represented by policemen from different police forces; the regulations group by members from the local government and some policemen; the public support group should be represented by some people from the press, some parents and some representatives from schools. A taskforce will formulate and carry out the different action points described in the action plan (§ 4.3) for the relevant pillar.

A task force should have no more than 7 or 8 members. Within the task force discussions will take place about which different action points will be formulated and how they can best be organised and executed. The taskforce members (representing different organisations) should join forces to spread the same health message within the community. Communicating the same message is very important in creating public support for interventions.



Mrs. Dumitra Sima,
Local project coordinator of the
DRAIN project in Pitesti.

"In the beginning not all the organisations in Pitesti acknowledged the importance of the project. As a coordinator, I needed to push a lot.

Working with the local authorities is very important. Without political support a project can not succeed. Of course, the mayor is most important, but the secretary is also a key person for the project, he is able to assist in making or changing local legislation."

Step 3

4.3 Construct an action plan

As described in the previous paragraph, the taskforces can formulate different action points per pillar. In the action plan these concrete action points that need to be taken in order to reach the project goals will be described. The action plan should be approved by the local council before to take concrete actions. In this way the continuation of the project is more secure.

An action plan should consist of different parts:

1. Action points

According to the three building blocks, concrete actions can be listed which should take place within the project. Some examples of different action points are:

Public support (STEP 4)	Regulations (STEP 5)	Enforcement (STEP 6)
Organise at least 1 meeting for parents a month per school.	Identifying the existing legislation on alcohol.	Identifying the existing level of enforcement on alcohol legislation.
Send press releases to the media after every important event within the project.	Doing a license check for all alcohol sales points (if they are still valid).	Organise a police training about enforcement of alcohol legislation.
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

In paragraph 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 a description is given about the implementation of the three policy pillars. From these descriptions the different action points that need to be formulated per pillar become clear and can be extracted.

2. Project structure

In the overview with action points a list should also be added with persons or organisations that will be actively involved and what their role and their responsibilities will be within the project. Per action point it must be described which persons or organisations will be involved and what their task will be.

3. Create a timeframe for the project

It takes time to establish a local alcohol policy; this should and can not be rushed. If you want to reach permanent effect a project should last for at least two to three years. Make a realistic time schedule describing when different interventions or results should be realised.

4. Finances

An overview of the budget should be made. It must be clear what part of the budget is reserved for which purpose or activity.

→ The original text of the local action plan of Pitesti can be found on the DRAIN website.

Practise in Pitesti 3:
Local action plan

The project team, in cooperation with the local government of Pitesti worked hard on writing a proper and clear action plan. Within this plan the project goals were described supported by data on national and local alcohol use and policy. Also, concrete action points were listed and attributed to the responsible persons or institutes. From the plan it became clear that the project was ready to start implementing concrete interventions.

In September 2009 the local action plan was discussed and approved by the city council of Pitesti. The local city council hereby gave its formal consent and support for the continuation of the project as described in the plan.

Practise in Pitesti 3: A local action plan was approved in Pitesti.

Step 4

4.4 Generate public support

Media

Frequent media attention is very important. Media attention to the subject or the project can increase public support. In this way the subject is placed on the public agenda and people start to think and form an opinion about the subject. If enough good and correct information is published by the media the problems concerning alcohol consumption can not stay unnoticed by the public and the local politicians. This is the most important feeding ground for policy change.

Within the project there must be good connections and agreements with some local or regional journalists who are personally motivated and have the opportunity to publish articles or TV news items about the project and about alcohol. In the beginning of the project it could be a wise idea to contract one (or more) journalists to fulfil this task. To earn free publicity during the project press contacts must be actively invited to project events. Also, press releases should be sent to press contacts when there are some interesting developments or news to publish about.

Reaching parents

Parents are an important group to focus on. Parents have an important influence on the alcohol consumption of their child.²⁰ To reduce alcohol related harm among youth, parents must receive information about how to cope with teenage drinking. A good medium to reach this specific target group; parents, but also to reach their children are schools. Schools are a very important and useful channel to communicate information about alcohol and the project. Organising meetings for parents in schools is an effective way to reach the parents.

→ In the toolkit different products concerning public support can be found: a brochure for parents with information about teenage drinking, a brochure about press attention within the project, a report with guidelines for an educational campaign, a documentary for parents and children about alcohol and a documentary about the project can be found on the DRAIN website.



Claudiu Dita,
Journalist at Argesul newspaper, Pitesti

"Journalists and mass-media are very important to a program that aims to lower the alcohol consumption for the young people. But you have to find journalists that really believe in this cause. People are attentive to all signals of the mass-media and, considering this area of information, you have to be very careful what message you deliver to the public. A wrongly caught message is sometimes worse than the lack of it. And alcohol, like all drugs, is something you don't play with: it is a life and death issue!"



Mrs. Silvia Neagoe,
Director of Scoala Nr.6 N. Balcescu, Pitesti.

"We organise now an alcohol prevention related activity every month. For the school the involvement of the parents committee is very important, because usually parents are difficult to reach. The press is also very important in order to reach parents and students."

²⁰ Vet, R., Van den Eijnden, R. (2007). Het gebruik van alcohol door jongeren en de rol van ouders: resultaten van twee metingen. Rotterdam: IVO-research (NIGZ).



Step 5

4.5 Create awareness and compliance with regulations and improve them

Awareness and compliance

In order to create awareness and compliance with alcohol legislation people need to be informed and trained in what the rules are and how to comply with these laws. Often, the specific rules according to alcohol use and sales are not fully clear to all citizens even for police people, local authorities or bar owners this is sometimes the case. Good, structured and clear information about existing alcohol legislation can be essential in reaching compliance with the laws and consequently the reduction of availability of alcohol. For example information about age limits for selling alcohol and how bar owners can best instruct their personnel about this is essential in reaching compliance with the age limit law.

Policy measures

Another direct step in limiting the availability of alcohol can be to implement new policy measures. From experience in Pitesti and from research by the WHO²¹, it can be concluded that an effective alcohol policy should focus on (some of) the following policy measures:

- Restricting days and hours of sale, certain locations or density of retail outlets. Install specific closing times or entrance hours for bars and discotheques.
- Restricting drinking in public places. Prohibiting the use of alcohol in certain areas in town and in certain hours. This promotes physical safety and social order.
- Limit alcohol marketing and price promotions in bars and discotheques. Prohibit, for example, price promotions for alcoholic products in case the discount is 25% higher than the normal price or handing out free drinks. Especially marketing and promotion targeted at and appealing to young people should be controlled.
- Promote non-alcoholic beverage consumption, by making soft drinks cheaper than the cheapest alcoholic drink.

The most effective policy mix can be different between regions; every region needs to determine their own optimal and most effective policy. From the experience of the DRAIN project some suggestions for effective local law changes in Romania can be made. One of the policy measures that was introduced in Pitesti was the restriction of alcohol sales near schools (see pg. 22).

→ A legislation pamphlet, stickers for sellers with age limits (pg. 30, fig.8) and the original text of the by-law in Pitesti can be found in the toolkit on the DRAIN website.



Step 6

4.6 Improve enforcement of alcohol legislation

In Romania police organisations have the task to enforce existing alcohol legislation. They have the responsibility to organise strong and effective enforcement. It should be clear which responsibilities the different police authorities carry. It is wise to make agreements on the enforcement priorities and describe this in a local enforcement strategy.

An enforcement strategy

Different concrete agreements can be made, for example:

- Every first Friday of the month a 'control team' will check alcohol sales points on compliance with the legal age limit. Different police forces can work together to form a control team which specifically focuses on the compliance with age limits by sellers. The team can possibly use the mystery shop approach (see pg. 28). Compliance with age limits is a very important subject. Good compliance can reduce alcohol related problems among youth. From research results in Pitești it became clear that a lot of improvement on this matter is needed.
- If a shop does not observe the age limits correctly for the third time in one year (observed by the police), this will mean the suspension of the alcohol selling licence for a certain period of time. The local council will have to approve with this measure, but this policy is a good way of showing that the city is taking this matter seriously and sellers should comply with the law.
- Every time a law offence is found by the police, there will follow a small report in the newspaper.

An important tool in increasing the impact of enforcement is frequent media coverage. The effect of enforcement is small if it only has impact on the alcohol outlets which are punished by the police. However, if this message about punishment is in the newspaper or on local TV, a much bigger group will be informed about these sanctions. Through media coverage you can even give people the impression that the police are more active than they really are. People will comply with the law better if they think there is strict enforcement. By frequently publishing about police checks and punishments, sellers can estimate that the risk of getting punished higher than it actually is. Through this it is likely the compliance will increase through relatively few police actions. There should be made agreements with the local press about frequent media coverage about police enforcement.

- The police can inform alcohol sellers and bar owners about alcohol legislation by handing out brochures and stickers (displaying age limits). They can ask sellers to put the sticker on a visible place near the entrance of the outlet.



Figure 8: Left: A sticker for shops near schools who can, according to the local law in Pitești, not sell alcohol during school hours. Right: A sticker for all alcohol sales points illustrating the age limit for buying alcohol.

→ The sticker with age limits, a legislation brochure and articles about mystery shop studies in Pitești can be found in the toolbox on the DRAIN webpage.



Mr. Cezar Toma,
Gendarmerie officer in Pitești

"Romania has a lot of existing alcohol legislation but the implementation of these laws fails. We made pictures of all alcohol outlets close to schools, the results were alarming. The local law in Pitești gives us the possibility to fight this. We also participated in preventing activities in schools, during football matches, and cultural activities. There we informed youth about the consequences of alcohol use"



Imaginea nr. 20. Imagine a S.C. „Feti Cristina” S.R.L., loc unde se comercializează/consumă băuturi alcoolice, situată la intrarea în incinta Școlii Generale nr. 15 „Adrian Păunescu”.

Figure 7: An example from the report the gendarmerie made about alcohol outlets near schools. The picture on the left shows a small store which sells alcohol very near the school fence, on the right you see the school sign.

²¹ World Health Organisation (2004) WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol 2004. Geneva: WHO

Step 7

4.7 Continuation of the new policy

When the project progresses some data about the results of the project are very welcome. Politics as well as the public will probably ask for some concrete results. To be able to show visible results which come forth from the project can be very stimulating.

During the project some replications of initial studies can give insight in concrete changes during the project period. As mentioned in paragraph 3.2 replications of the student or adult survey, mystery shop research or exposure to marketing can give insight in results on this subject. These results can be communicated during the project.

When the project comes to an end a range of interventions and actions have taken place. It is very important that the results of the project won't fade away after the project has ended. During the project one must therefore also focus on structurally integrating new information and ways of working within the community. The focus on alcohol policy must become an integrated part in the community. Police must for example understand that the enforcement of alcohol laws and the checking of compliance with these laws is their responsibility and is now a part of their work. This accounts also, more or less in the same way for activities for parents, by schools and teachers (and other organisations within the community). The focus on alcohol use and alcohol policy must be a part of their work; they must dispose of good information about alcohol use and they must educate people in the right way about this, they must also know how to cope with people who experience problems through alcohol consumption.

A way to ensure continuation of the policy after the project has ended is to ask different organisations to make a kind of contract with the local government in which they explain how they are going to continue their activities after the project has ended.



Chapter 5

Success factors for an effective prevention policy

5.1 Reserve a budget for the project

There are some ways in realising a budget to carry out the project plan. A big budget is not a condition for success, with a small budget the project can be just as successful, but money can make things easier and speed things up. A small budget however, reserved by the local government, is necessary.

Additional finances can possibly be arranged by certain funds or in cooperation with health organisations. It is worth while looking for possible investors for the project, local, regional or even national health or welfare organisations or private funds might have the possibility to finance certain projects.

The advice is not to accept money from companies who have a direct interest in producing or selling alcohol. In this way the project is not longer functioning independently from commercial interests. Experience has taught that commercial partners have the intention to interfere in goals of the policy and in activities of the project. They do not accept stronger legal regulations, restriction of alcohol marketing and concrete information of the health risks of alcohol. The alcohol industry promotes the so called 'responsible use of alcohol' which easily can be interpreted as a way to promote drinking. For more information of the strategies of the alcohol industry, see the website www.eucam.info.

Not much money is needed if everyone joins forces and is willing to sacrifice some time and effort to make this happen. It should be considered that implementing legislation in itself does not require substantial resources, and that a start can be made with a minimum level of enforcement which could then gradually be expanded over time.

Research shows that preventive measures can be very cost-effective. This means that in the long term less money will be spent for example on healthcare, treatments or material damage as a consequence of alcohol use. A good local alcohol policy should save money on the long term.²²

²² PricewaterhouseCoopers (2010). Rendement van preventie becijferd. Press release 30 September 2010.

5.2 Cooperation and communication

A key aspect within this project approach is cooperation and motivation. Because of the integral approach good cooperation is essential. People from different organisations must work together in a similar way to change the current situation. Without good cooperation interventions are much less effective. Also communication is essential in establishing good cooperation within a project. This is mainly the task of the local coordinator.

Concretely, good cooperation and communication means frequent project meetings to share each others opinions and ideas. It is important that these meetings are organised well. The project coordinator should prepare the meetings, but it should not be a one-sided meeting. All participants should have the chance to interact. The chair and the project coordinator should keep the project goals in mind to structure the meetings and to get to concrete action points. All stakeholders must be kept informed about the development of the project. A good way to inform the stakeholders is by writing monthly or bi-monthly newsletters.

→ In the toolkit on the DRAIN webpage examples of newsletters to keep the stakeholders informed (in Pitești) can be found.

5.3 Expertise

Organising a project to implement a local alcohol prevention policy can be difficult sometimes. A good suggestion before starting a project like this or while implementing the project is to ask the advice of experts in the field. Obvious experts are the people from Pitești that organised or took part in the DRAIN project. It is also possible to inquire for information at the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP). This organisation assisted Pitești in realising their local alcohol policy. Contact information can be found on the DRAIN webpage.

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STAP is an independent knowledge institute organisation that promotes the implementation of effective alcohol policies on local, national and international level. STAP has expertise on alcohol policy advice and research, monitoring alcohol marketing, alcohol free environments for young people and alcohol and pregnancy





Manual for a local alcohol
prevention policy in Romania



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