Media, Young People and Alcohol: Towards a European Policy Framework

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Factual Background

- Exposure to drinking in audiovisual media influences young people to start drinking earlier, to drink more often and to drink more when they drink

- Current trends of decreasing or stable youth drinking could have been much better

- Increasingly difficult and costly to control or restrict media exposure or content on all levels

- Media is increasingly targeting young people and becoming increasingly unrestrained regarding content

- Alcohol industry ditto, plus lobbying for increasing access to alcohol

- Alcohol is one of the main factors threatening public health and poses particular dangers for young people also in other terms (violence, criminality, victimisation, social exclusion, et cetera)

Basic Policy-relevant Issues

- **What *can* be done?**
  - **Now**
  - **At different levels (private, local, national, multinational)**
  - **By different parties (families, communities, schools/agencies, state, industry, young people)**
  - **Cost-effectiveness (lack of good intervention studies)**
  - **Long-term effectiveness (emerging new media landscape)**
  - **Young people's own voices absent**

- **Restricting factors**
  - **Core social values: freedom of expression, life-style and enterprise**
  - **Costs for individuals in terms of well-being and life-prospects**
  - **Technological development and lack of social coordination**
  - **The role of media and alcohol in our cultures**

- **Co-responsibility**
  - **Can children and young people be responsible?**
  - **What responsibilities should be taken by different parties?**
  - **What is the proper reaction to irresponsibility?**
  - **What measures should be taken so that responsibility is shared as it should?**

Responsibility of young people

- Young people can properly be responsible from age 15, but…..

- Young people's ability to take responsibility is *very* dependent on the assistance of others.

- Knowledge about short- and long-term risks is a part, but….

- Young people's ability to take responsible primarily undermined via unconscious motivational mechanisms.

- Intervening measures need to target *this* aspect, rather than "informing"

- Listen to what young people say!

- Acknowledge that they find drinking as well as media depictions of drinking attractive and beneficial!

- Learn from what they care about!

Industry, family and community

- **The media and alcohol industry are not forced – they choose to target young people in the way that they do**

- **Both do things which contribute to adverse outcomes**

- **Both *can* make the products in question less accessible and/or attractive for young people**

- **Both can make and distribute their products so that young people's ability to take responsibility is supported rather than undermined**

- **Family/parents can do a lot to support young people**

- **General problem for all: coordination**

- **Without coordination, taking action makes for a loss**

- **Without coordination, effects will be negligible and unequal**

Call for Papers!

- **Special issue of *Studies in Ethics, Law and Technology***

- **"New Media, Young People and Risky Behaviour: Ethics and Policy Implications"**

- **Guest editors: Christian Munthe & Karl Persson (University of Gothenburg)**

- **Featuring a special symposium from the Alcopop TV Culture workshop**

- **Deadline: March 1, 2012**

- **Send to: christian.munthe@gu.se**

- **See leaflet for further details!**

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