
TAKE CARE!

Strategies towards responsible alcohol consumption
for adolescents in Europe



PREFACE

Dear Readers,

in all European countries, there are clear regulations about the age at which adolescents are allowed to buy and consume alcohol. Yet, no precise wording of law can prevent infringements – however, this gap between legal norms and practical experiences seems to be quite wide at the topic of the youth and the alcohol.

Often, it is very easy for minors to buy alcohol in pubs, petrol stations, supermarkets or kiosks. Sometimes, because the employees in retail turn a blind eye on this, sometimes because they do not even know the law for the protection of the youth. Also, young people experience often a careless dealing with the topic of alcohol in their families, where a bottle of wine or a couple of beers simply belong to watching television in the evening. Even key persons from the young people's direct environment, such as experts in youth facilities or coaches in sports clubs, find it difficult to gain access to adolescents when it comes to the topic of alcohol.

The TAKE CARE project dedicates itself to the task of developing and testing new strategies towards a responsible consumption of alcohol among adolescents in Europe. The special idea in TAKE CARE is the multilevel approach: In addition to adolescents only, the project also focuses on parents, key persons and employees in retail.

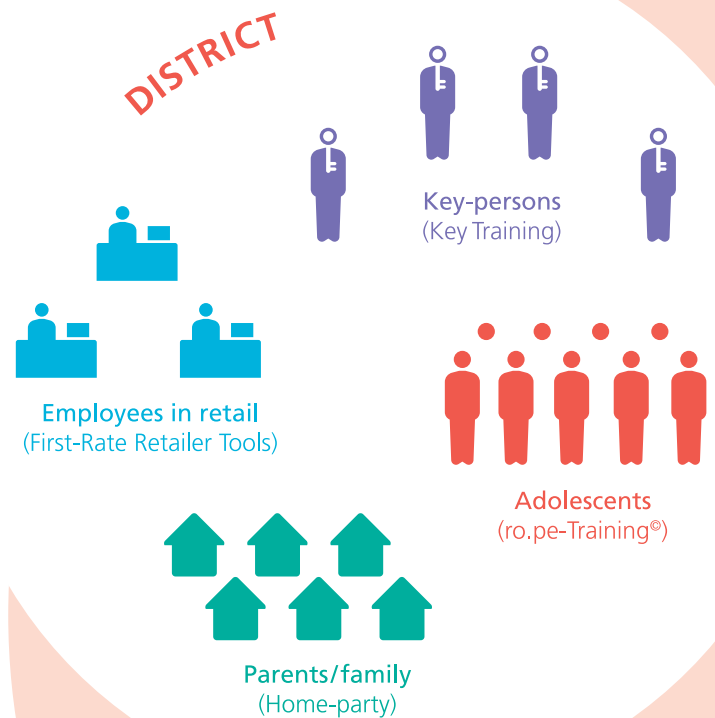
The results of the project, which was initiated by the LWL Coordination Office for Drug-related Issues in cooperation with ten European partner organisations, show: The approach is effective. The evaluation of TAKE CARE did not only prove that adolescents reconsider their consumption habits after the interventions, but also that parents, key persons and employees in retail now know more about the risks of the consumption of alcohol by adolescents – and plan to pay closer attention to the compliance with the laws after the intervention.

In this brochure, you can learn more about the method and results of TAKE CARE – a project, which not only tried out new methodological paths, but, as a joint project of ten partner countries, also showed, how the European idea can be filled with life in practice.

Borrowing from the name of the project: TAKE CARE! Take care of yourself, and also of others.

Wolfgang Rometsch
project director

Nadja Wirth
project coordinator



Multilevel approach of TAKE CARE

TAKE CARE IN EUROPE: STARTING POINT AND APPROACH

If young people drink risky amounts of alcohol, this can have a number of different reasons. Some drink out of frustration, others because they want to have fun. Sometimes a whole group drinks, sometimes a young person consumes by him- or herself, because he or she considers him- or herself an outsider. The consumption can take place on playgrounds or at parties, in a hidden corner of the schoolyard or inside the young person's bedroom. Sometimes it is drinking until they drop; sometimes it is more regular, until it becomes a habit.

Alcohol: A European Challenge

Even if each case is different: Consumption of alcohol by adolescents is a European topic. The legal norms may differ from country to country; also, the drinking cultures of the European countries differ. However, what the countries in Europe share, is the long history of consumption of alcohol on the whole continent. According to a study by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Europe is the region with the highest consumption of alcohol world-wide: On average, each European drinks 9.24 litres of pure alcohol every year; more than 20 % of all adults are getting drunk more or less regularly.

When focusing on young adults, this problem becomes more severe: According to a recent European school survey on alcohol and other drugs (ESPAD 2012), adolescents in Europe have their first alcoholic beverage on average approximately at the age of 13 – and 12 % of the interviewees also reported having their first alcoholic intoxication at this age. There is not much time between first contact and first intoxication in many cases. This means that adolescents, who get contact with alcohol, try on risky consumption patterns quite fast.

In Spite of Prohibition: Buying Alcohol without Problems

And usually they can do this without too many complications – even if the youth laws are tight on paper. In spite of the prohibition to sell alcohol to adolescents before the age of 16 or 18, young people can obtain alcoholic beverages at many places quite easily. 73 % of the pupils in the ESPAD study 2012 reported that it is fairly easy for them to buy beer. The respective figure for hard spirits is 53 %.

There are good reasons for putting a special and joint eye on the consumption of alcohol by adolescents in Europe. Cooperating between the countries. Trying new paths.

The European project of TAKE CARE has done precisely this. It developed new strategies in order to encourage a responsible handling of alcohol by adolescents – and for this the project chose the demanding multilevel approach, which incorporates

the parents, key persons and employees in retail, in addition to the adolescents. For most project partners addressing four different target groups and still pursuing one goal, has been a completely new experience. The project is designed according to the social environment of adolescents – this means the regional, local and institutional structure of places, where young people act and interact.

The main goals of TAKE CARE:

- Compliance with legislation regarding the protection of the youth.
- Motivating young people for a responsible drinking behaviour.

The goals for the specific target groups are:

- Training the risk competence of the adolescents.
- Strengthening the educational skills of the parents through a reflected attitude towards the alcohol consumption of their children.
- Supporting the key persons, so that they are capable of talking about alcohol consumption and initiating constructive talks with the adolescents.
- Informing and training retailers, caterers and owners of kiosks, so that they become aware of the problem and can act consequently.

SeM: Towards Success on Multiple Levels

The method of the multilevel approach had already been tested and successfully evaluated between 2004 and 2007 as part of the pilot project SeM (Secondary prevention in a Multilevel approach), which has been developed by the LWL Coordination Office for Drug-related Issues and ran in cooperation with the city of Münster. The idea for SeM was born after observing, that ethnic German immigrant adolescents from the former CIS-countries had been noticed for their risky way of consuming alcohol and could not be reached by conventional preventive measures. SeM tackled several levels and also targeted groups of people, who have an influence on adolescents – namely parents in the first place, plus important key persons from the social environment of the adolescents.

The scientific evaluation proved that all three target groups – adolescents, parents, and key persons – have been very satisfied with the prevention offers and that these offers have been effective: In many cases the young people changed their attitude towards alcohol and drugs, parents felt informed much better, and the key persons reported on a reduction of consumption among the adolescents.

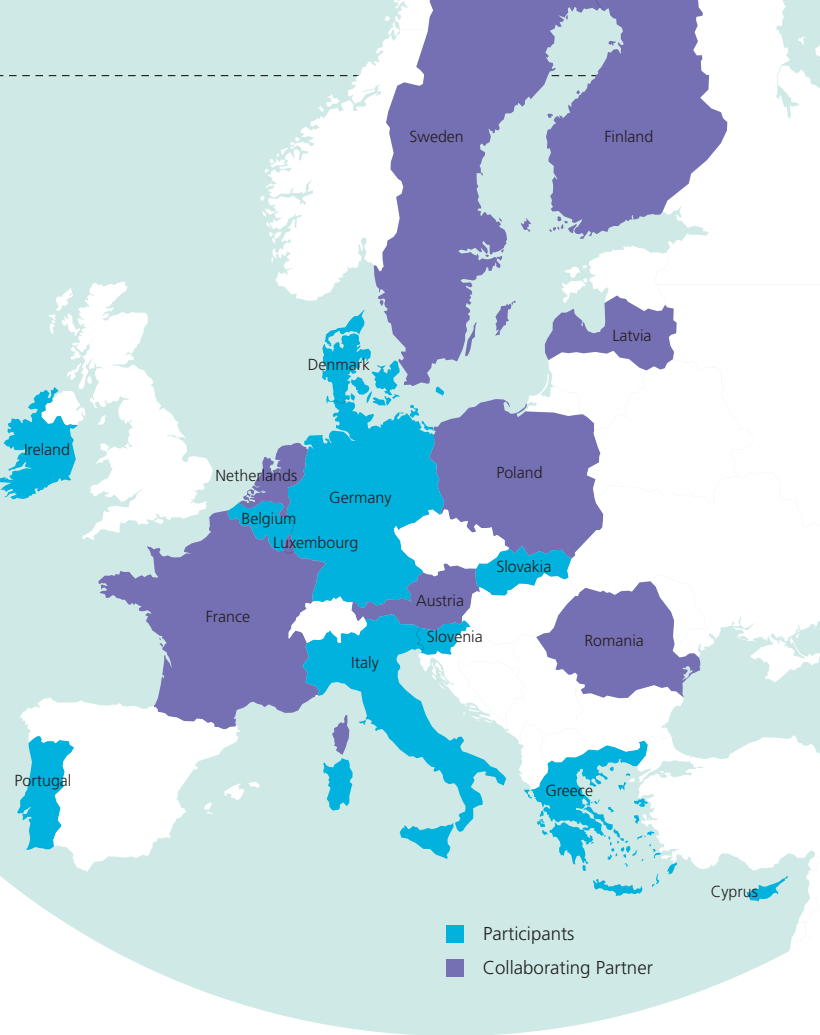
Therefore, SeM was successful and became a model for a European approach – complemented by a module for retailers.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partners

Ten countries in Europe, one project – an ambitious approach, because projects on the prevention of addiction rarely transgress the borders of countries. Therefore TAKE CARE has an important share in creating a joint expert base on the EU-level. This is especially, because this way the results of the project can be applied in all EU member states, even those, which have not been participating in the project.

All ten partners are also member of *euro net*, a European network for the prevention of addiction, which aims to further develop the European cooperation in the field of prevention of addiction by working on concrete projects. TAKE CARE has been developed and tested as part of this network. Additionally, TAKE CARE relied on the know-how and expert support by the collaborating partners. These partners, as the results are there, now play an important role in carrying on the findings of TAKE CARE to other EU member states.



Steering Group

The development and implementation of a multilevel approach within a project with many different participating countries in Europe, is a real challenge. After all, the cultural, social and legal framework differs from country to country. The project partners founded a steering group, whose members have been in charge of several different tasks. One challenge has been finding a common denominator without neglecting the cultural specifics. In order to do so, the steering group integrated many different perspectives, opinions and points of view, had a look into trends, initiated the expert discussion and attuned the decisions.

Steering group and key aspects

Management and Coordination

LWL-KS, Germany: Wolfgang Rometsch (project director), Nadja Wirth (project coordinator)

Training of retailers and materials

CAD, Belgium: Carlo Baeten (national project manager)

Evaluation

Youth Office, Italy: Klaus Nothdurfter (national project manager)

Scientific monitoring

PH Zurich, Switzerland: Walter Kern-Scheffeldt (advisor)



Key-person from Denmark after the Key Training

"I always thought that I am quite good in communicating with adolescents. Now I know that with my assumingly good advices and telling them what to do, I have been only driving them away."



15-year-old female from Portugal

"In school, the teachers talked a lot about sexuality. It would have been better to talk more about alcohol – because this topic is more relevant to us than sex."



Project partner from Italy on the coaching in retail

"The employees in retail have been mostly quite happy to be finally able to talk about their situation at work and to be taken seriously."

Conduct

Kick-Off in March 2010

The national project managers of the partner countries of this pilot project, which had a run-time of 33 months and which was organised by the LWL Coordination Office for Drug-related Issues, Münster, met in Luxembourg. At that point, the project management presented the details on TAKE CARE: What are the goals and methods? How is the project structured and organised? Quite soon, it became obvious, how prolific Europe-wide cooperation can be: The multilevel approach, which had already been successfully used in the German pilot project SeM, has been supplemented, among others, by the materials and training for retailers that have been developed by the CAD in Belgium.

Strong together

The project partners agree on the following: It is not that every country has to reinvent the wheel; it makes much more sense and is more efficient to develop a joint project. That is why the project team decided, in a good practice research, to look out for projects, which were already working, in order to put them together on the project web page.

Also, initially there has been the question, whether the multilevel approach, as it has been described by the pilot project SeM, could really be transferred into all TAKE CARE project countries. Where is the need for some adjustments? In order to find answers, the project team decided to run an analysis of the situation and needs in all partner countries. The methodological base for this has been the sociological approach of a "Rapid Assessment and Response" (RAR) – a method that combines different sources of information and different methods of data collection, so that it is possible to get quite quickly a picture of the situation.

The project partners also collected information about the cultural and legal context of the consumption of alcohol by young people and ran interviews with the target groups to find out about their needs. The result of the analysis: Each participating country supported – with some usually smaller adaptations – the transfer of the methods of the SeM pilot project. TAKE CARE made it to the European level!

Workshops

A project team can only work, if all participants know what to do; if there is a frequent exchange and update among each other. There have been several workshops during the project-time of TAKE CARE, in which the experts have been prepared for the method of RAR, presented the results of their research and in which they have been coached on the specific interventions for the four target groups of TAKE CARE.



Parent from Cyprus after a home-party

"We cannot always blame only the teachers or the retailers for the misconduct of our children. We, the parents, also have to take responsibility for their behaviour – but also our children themselves, as young adults, have to learn, what it means to accept self-responsibility."



Retail staff in Belgium

"I hope that you are also going to offer anything for parents."



Parent from Slovakia at a first contact. Before, the girl had been the first one in the group to talk about her experiences with major hangovers.

"My daughter does not drink. She is much too concerned about boys for that."



German adolescent after the climbing in the ro.pe-training.

"Climbing turns me on as much as drinking does."



Greek participant after the closing party of a ro.pe-Training®

"When the party was over, we looked at each other and could not believe how much fun we had, even without drinking any alcohol."

I. Adolescents

TARGET GROUP Young people between the age of 12 and 21, who consume alcohol, and sometimes other drugs, riskily. These are divided into 12- to 16- or 18-year olds, who are legally not allowed to buy or consume alcohol, and up-to-21-year olds, who are legal to consume, but who have been noticed as risky consumers.

"Care for adventure?" is the initial question on a flyer for adolescents. An unusual way of addressing them. Isn't it the purpose of all offers for the prevention of addiction to teach caution and warn about risks? And yet, TAKE CARE favours a different approach: the ro.pe-Training®. The term "ro-pe" refers to "risk optimisation and peer education", but also to the word "rope". The training itself relies on two approaches, which have been developed in Austria: Risflecting® and the adventure-based project Risk'n'Fun. The idea: The adolescents experience a training, which lasts four days and which is about experiencing unusual situations with risks – for example at very challenging climbing tours. The goal of this training is to develop the personal risk competence – especially in transferring it from adventure and experience at climbing to consumption of alcohol and other risky situations. It is crucial at this point to involve the adolescents into the programme actively.

II. Parents

TARGET GROUP Mothers and fathers of adolescents, who consume alcohol riskily.

Home-parties are known as a marketing idea for special products, especially "Tupperware-Parties" are well known. It is a method for the prevention of addiction, which has originally been developed for parents of adolescents with a migration background in The Netherlands in the 1990s and which tries to think this idea further. The key question: How do I access fathers and mothers of adolescents, who consume riskily, if they do not feel attracted to normal offers? The home-party takes place in the home of a family. A contact to the parents has been established, e.g. after the child participated in the ro.pe-Training®. The host parents invite other parents; an expert on the prevention of addiction provides some know-how and moderates the discussion, during which the parents talk on their respective experiences. The goal of the home-parties: Improving the decision-making skills and responsibility of the fathers and mothers, so that they can tackle the consumption of alcohol by their children reflected and constructively. "The topics of these evenings are wide-spread", reports the Italian project partners about the home-parties. "It is about knowledge and trends of consumption, about the status of alcohol today and before, about the exchange of experiences among parents, negotiation tactics for discussing curfews, about locations and social hotspots, where adolescents can be found."

III. Key-persons

TARGET GROUP Key-persons, who have an influence on adolescents that consume riskily, for example professionals of youth facilities, street-workers, teachers or coaches in sports clubs.

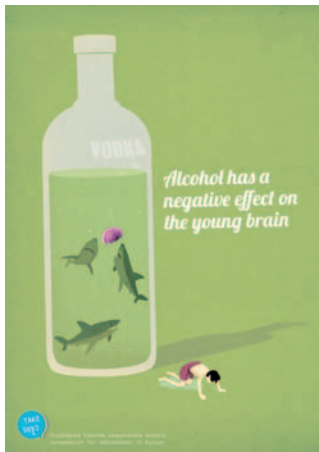
Key-persons, who have been identified in the social environment of the adolescents, receive a multipliers-training, so that they can influence the adolescents in an adequate and motivating way. After this Key Training key-persons shall also transfer adolescents into the ro.pe-Training®, if necessary. They are taught some know-how on different intoxicants, as well as legal aspects, and practise some communication skills, similar to the advisory concept of Motivational Interviewing.

IV. Employees in Retail

TARGET GROUP Employees in retail and catering

The Belgian expert office CAD Limburg drafted several information materials for employees in retail and catering on the one hand, and developed the training "First-Rate Retailer Tools": The employees in retail receive quite vivid information about the legal norms on the sales of alcoholic beverages to adolescents. Additionally, they are coached in handling difficult situations appropriately, for example, if adolescents want to purchase alcoholic beverages.

This tool works as a fifteen-minutes short intervention, but also as a training that lasts one to two hours. "The aim of this tool is to explain to the retailers, why there is youth protection law and why we consider them partners in compliance with that law. It has been important to us to change the attitude of retailers towards selling alcohol to adolescents", says CAD Limburg about the idea. Also, it has been important to develop a tool, which the employees in retail can really make use of in everyday life.



Coach of a ro.pe-Training® in Belgium

"One evening, all adolescents came up with the same haircut. Now they were a group, with a bond between them."



Student from Slovenia and staff in a youth facility after the Key Training

"I am asking myself, why there is no similarly distinct code of behaviour about alcohol-abuse in my dorm as there is for the abuse of illegal drugs."



Parent of a participant in ro.pe-Training® from Ireland after a home-party

"For a long time, I have been drinking a bottle of wine every evening. Neither have I been aware of the fact that my children noticed that, nor how my drinking behaviour had a negative impact on them."

EVALUATION



Whether a project has been successful after all or not, can be verified by the evaluation. In the TAKE CARE project, the Department for Research and Development of the University of Teacher's Education Zurich (PH Zurich) has been in charge of the evaluation.

Key questions of the scientific monitoring of TAKE CARE have been, whether the interventions had a positive influence on ...

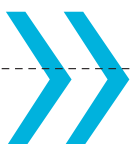
... the knowledge about the topics of youth law and effects and risks of the consumption of alcohol,

... the attitude towards this legislation and the consumption of alcohol,

... the consumption behaviour of young people and the responsible handling of alcohol.

All target groups have been interviewed about their knowledge, their attitudes and their behaviour regarding the topic of alcohol and consumption of alcohol after the end of the intervention with short questionnaires. Additionally, the adolescents have been re-interviewed three month after the end of the ro.pe-Training®, in order to evaluate changes.

The Main Results for Each Target Group



I. Adolescents

- » The interviews three months after the ro.pe-Training® showed that the adolescents had changed their behaviour in a positive way; three months later they consumed less alcohol on average.
- » After the ro.pe-Training®, the adolescents knew more about the risks and effects of alcohol and had an improved knowledge on the topics of legislation and youth protection regarding the sales and consumption of alcohol. But the adolescents did not only know more: It can be also stated, that this target group considered these laws significantly more appropriate after the ro.pe-Training® and announced to try complying with these laws.
- » The risk competence – this is the ability to handle risky situations constructively and responsibly – increased significantly. These positive changes can be noticed with adolescents, who are teetotaling or who have low-risk consumption patterns as well as with adolescents, who consume riskily.
- » Only very few adolescents did not complete the ro.pe-Training®; this indicates that the training has been well-received by the adolescents: Based on the usable evaluation sheets at the end of the training, 94 % of the adolescents completed the training.
- » 250 adolescents (77 %) reported in the re-interviewing that the ro.pe-Training® has been a topic among their friends. Because of the high level of satisfaction, it can be assumed that it has been a topic with positive connotations.

II. Parents

- » The outcome of the interviews at the end of the training showed, that 88 % of the parents are aware of the legislation regarding the sales and consumption of alcohol by adolescents.
- » When asked, whether they will pay attention that their children respect the laws on the consumption of alcohol, the parents clearly agreed: On a scale between 1 (do not agree at all) and 4 (agree completely) the average has been at 3.55.
- » When asked, if parents will be able to cope better with the alcohol consumption of their children, the level of agreement on the same scale was on average 3.24.

III. Key-persons

- » The key-persons are behind the project goals with firm conviction: On the scale between 1 to 4 they agree significantly with an average of 3.24 to the idea that a constructive talk with adolescents makes sense, in the way that they trigger some thinking about the consumption of alcohol.
- » The key-persons feel well-prepared by the Key Training, when it comes to address the topic of alcohol with adolescents in an open and understanding attitude, may this be in the workplace or in a more leisurely context: Again, on the scale between 1 and 4, the level of agreement has been at a high 3.50 on average.

IV. Employees in Retail

- » 600 employees in pubs, small shops and shopping centres have been accessed by longer interventions (one to two hours) or short interventions of around 15 minutes. They have been satisfied with this intervention about the handling of difficult situations at their workplace (average of 3.26 on the 4-level-scale).
- » The comparison of long and short interventions shows, how appropriate resources of time can support the knowledge transfer significantly: Whereas, after the short intervention, only 77 % of the employees were able to reproduce the legal age for the consumption of alcohol correctly, this figure increased to 95 % of correct answers at the long interventions.
- » A key aspect of this intervention has been the drafting information materials on the legislation regarding alcohol and the handling of difficult sales-situations with drinking adolescents. The material has been received majorly positive: About 90 % of the employees consider them helpful for the handling of difficult situations at the workplace.

Summary of the Results

- » The level of agreement with content and goals of the TAKE CARE project is positive with the target groups at all levels.
- » All target groups have been accessed in the required number: 440 adolescents, 176 key-persons, 474 parents, 600 employees in retail.
- » The main goal of TAKE CARE has been the reduction of the consumption of alcohol at adolescents, who drink riskily. The evaluation proved that this goal could be reached during an evaluation period of three months. TAKE CARE initiated and supported a more responsible and less risky consumption of alcohol at the adolescents.
- » With parents, key-persons, and employees in retail, the project improved the competence to deal with alcohol consuming adolescents, confidently and with better know-how. Additionally, there has been more readiness to comply with the legal norms.
- » The overall satisfaction with the interventions is very high at all target groups. Also, the experts, who were involved in TAKE CARE, identified themselves with the project quite strongly.

TAKE CARE

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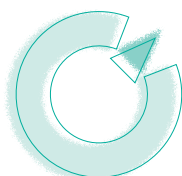
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for Drug Related Issues

Editor: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, LWL Coordination Office for Drug Related Issues
Editorial staff: Wolfgang Rometsch and Nadja Wirth, LWL Coordination Office for Drug
Related Issues / Text: André Boße, Köln (www.ag-text.de) / Design: Kristina Selcho, Münster
October 2012

This publication arises from the project TAKE CARE which has received funding from the
European Union in the framework of the EU Health Programme 2008–2013.

