

Children's Rights Alliance

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Minister urged to impose ban on broadcast advertising of alcohol products

The Children's Rights Alliance today called on Minister for Health and Children Micheál Martin to impose a ban on the advertising of alcohol products by broadcasters in Ireland.

"The rights and well-being of children and young people must take precedence over the financial interests of the alcohol and advertising industries," said Raymond Dooley, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance, in a letter to Minister Martin.

"Given the devastating health impacts associated with the abuse of alcohol and the dramatic increase in the consumption of alcohol products in Ireland in recent years, particularly among young people and children, it is essential that meaningful steps be taken to curb the promotion of alcohol products and to reduce the pressure to drink.

"These steps should include a complete ban on the advertising of alcohol products by broadcast outlets in Ireland.

"The advertising industry's proposal to restrict alcohol advertising only on programmes viewed by children in numbers greater than their share of the population would certainly protect the revenues and profits of the advertisers, but it would do nothing to protect the health and well-being of children. Under the industry proposal, alcohol adverts would still be broadcast during programmes for which children made up as much as 33% of the viewing audience."

Eurostat has noted that countries with greater restrictions on alcohol promotion tend to have lower rates of alcohol consumption, particularly among young people.

The first national study on alcohol advertising and children, *The Impact of Alcohol Advertising on Teenagers in Ireland (2001)*, commissioned by the Health Promotion Unit, showed that the favourite advertisements of all boys and girls between twelve and seventeen were those for alcohol.

Advertisements for alcohol were perceived by the young people in the study as promoting a desirable lifestyle and image, as portraying alcohol as a gateway to social success, as helping to provide confidence and social skills and to enlarge one's circle of friends, as increasing sexual attractiveness, and as giving people more energy.

International research has indicated that advertisements for alcohol have a high appeal to children and young people, being considered humorous, stylish, having plenty of action and using music appealing to children and young children.

Research studies, including those recently done for the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland in relation to the development of the Children's Advertising Code, have also shown that significant numbers of children and young people under the age of 18 watch television throughout the evening and night time hours, well past watershed hours of 7:30 or 9:00 pm.

According to the Department of Health and Children, the economic damage caused by alcohol related problems costs Ireland more than 2.3 billion euro per year. A pilot study of alcohol related attendance in A&E wards showed that alcohol was a factor in 25% of cases. Other studies have shown that one in every three 16-year olds is a binge drinker. The recent Eurostat report indicates that Ireland has the highest percentage of regular drinkers with 52% of people surveyed stating that they drank alcohol regularly, compared with an EU average of 25%. Among Irish females between the ages of 15 - 24, half drink regularly, a percentage ten times greater than found in Italy.

"How many more studies are required before meaningful action is taken? The same type of courageous public health policymaking displayed in relation to tobacco control should now be applied to the advertising and promotion of alcohol products, regardless of the political clout of the drinks and advertising industries," said Dooley.

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires the Government to take effective steps to ensure that children enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Banning broadcast advertising of alcohol products would represent an important step in achieving that goal and in promoting best health for children.

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of 75 non-governmental organisations concerned with the rights and needs of children. The Alliance works to secure the full implementation in Ireland of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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