

# Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018

## FAQ document

### **Q. What are the objectives of the Act?**

**A.** The primary policy objectives of the Act are to:

- reduce alcohol consumption to 9.1 litres of pure alcohol per person per annum by 2020,
- delay the initiation of alcohol consumption by children and young people,
- reduce the harms caused by the misuse of alcohol, and
- regulate the supply and price of alcohol in order to minimise the possibility and incidence of alcohol related harm;

These objectives were developed in recognition that alcohol causes harms to health, significant costs to the Exchequer and that alcohol consumption in Ireland remains high.

The principles guiding the objectives are that the harms of alcohol make it unlike other grocery products, that consumers should be able to make informed choices about their drinking and that it is time that children and young people's relationship with alcohol was addressed.

### **Q. What elements came into law on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020?**

In mixed retail outlets alcohol products and advertising will be confined to one of the following:

- an area separated by a 1.2m high barrier or
- units in which alcohol products are not visible up to 1.5m height, or
- up to three units that can be a maximum of 1m wide by 2.2m high.

In addition, alcohol products can be contained but not be visible in a unit behind the counter.

### **Q. Why are we doing this?**

**A.** We want to create an environment free from alcohol advertising in areas frequented by children. We want to ensure that our children can grow up in circumstances where they are not regularly exposed to alcohol advertising.

### **Q. What are the penalties for breaching these provisions?**

**A.** On summary conviction, a person shall be liable to a class A fine, up to a maximum of €5,000 or up to 6 months imprisonment or both.

On conviction on indictment, a person shall be liable to a fine of up to €250,000 or up to 3 years imprisonment or both.

A fixed payment notice may be served for an offence under the provision on children's clothing. The amount of the fixed payment is €1,000 and where payment is made within the 28 days no prosecution will be initiated.

**Q. Who ensures the law is enforced and how is it monitored?**

**A.** The Environment Health Officers of the HSE are responsible for monitoring compliance and enforcement of this legislation. If you have a query regarding enforcement or if you wish to make a complaint, please contact the HSE at [ehs.alcoholunit@hse.ie](mailto:ehs.alcoholunit@hse.ie)

**Q What are the main provisions of the Act?**

**A.** They are:

- minimum unit pricing;
- health labelling of alcohol products;
- the regulation of advertising of alcohol products;
- the regulation of sponsorship;
- separation and reduced visibility of alcohol products in mixed trading outlets; and the regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol in certain circumstances.

**Q. What are the harms from alcohol?**

**A.** Alcohol has major public health implications in Ireland.

In terms of health harms:

- [2,700 deaths](#) in Ireland are attributable to alcohol - equivalent of seven deaths per day;
- Alcohol is a contributory factor in half of all suicides and in deliberate self-harm. In 2014 one in three self-harm presentations were alcohol-related;
- 1 in 8 breast cancers are attributable to alcohol;
- The rate of alcohol liver disease discharges trebled between 1995 and 2013. The highest rate of increase was seen among 15 - 34 year-olds;
- Alcohol-related cancers estimated to more than double for females & increase by 81% for males up to 2020.

From a financial perspective:

- Alcohol-related discharges from hospital cost €1.5 billion in 2012;
- €1 for every €10 spent on public health in 2012 is due to alcohol-related discharges;
- Cost of harm due to others' drinking at €862.75 million annually;
  - One in twenty workers had to take time off due to another's' drinking - €77m;
  - Having to work extra hours due to co-workers' drinking - €46m;
- The estimated direct cost of alcohol-related absenteeism was €41 million in 2013;
- The cost of alcohol-related accidents at work is estimated to be €197m.

#### **Q. What other provisions of the Act have been commenced?**

**A.** 23 of the 31 provisions of the Act have been commenced and some of these will come into operation over the next two years.

#### **A.** Three sections came into law on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

- alcohol advertising is banned on all public service vehicles, at all public transport stops or stations
- alcohol advertising is banned within 200m of all schools, early years centres or at local authority playgrounds.
- alcohol advertising is banned in all cinemas except around films with an over18 classification or in a licensed premises in a cinema.
- children's clothing that promotes alcohol is banned.

#### **A. From 11 January 2021: The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Products Regulations will**

- ban the sale of alcohol at a reduced price or free of charge on the basis of the purchase of another product or service
- ban the awarding of loyalty card points for alcohol purchases, and
- ban short term (3 days or less) price promotions on alcohol products.

#### **A. From 12 November 2021:**

- A ban on alcohol advertising in the following: a sports area during a sporting event, at events aimed at children or at events in which the majority of participants or competitors are children.
- A ban on alcohol sponsorship of events aimed at children, events at which the majority of participants or competitors are children
- A ban on alcohol advertising at events involving driving or racing motor vehicles

**Q. What about the other provisions of the Act, when will they be commenced?**

**A.** There are some 8 provisions of the Act yet to be commenced. These include:

**Labelling and advertising regulations**

A public consultation was held on regulations to be made on the labelling and advertising of alcohol products under the Act. The submissions received are now being examined. Once the regulations have been drafted, they must be submitted to the European Commission for assessment and cannot become operational until this process is completed.

**Minimum unit pricing**

It is a matter for the Minister to implement minimum pricing.

**Broadcast Watershed**

Prior to commencement of the broadcast watershed, the Minister for Health is required to consult with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. This consultation is currently ongoing.

**Q. Where can I find more information on these provisions?**

**A.** Guidance has been developed and is available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/89335d-healthy-ireland-alcohol-policy/>

**Q. Where can I find out more health information about alcohol?**

**A.** The Health Service Executive [askaboutalcohol.ie](http://askaboutalcohol.ie) provides evidence-based, expert information on a low risk approach to alcohol.