ATTACHMENT 4

Report from Work Group 2;

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Tasks

1. Reviewing existing methodologies and identification of methodologies most feasible and promising for a comparative survey related to:
   - volume of alcohol consumption
   - context of drinking
   - unrecorded consumption
2. Planning further steps to be taken to elaborate or to standardise survey instrument

Volume of alcohol consumption

A lot of problems with measurement of alcohol consumption was identified, among them problems related to intercultural differences. There are huge differentiation of functions of alcohol and drinking context in Europe as well as even inside particular countries. For example in same countries like Italy wine drinking is rather regular as an usual element of daily diet. In other countries like Finland drinking has occasional character. Even the term of drinking occasion seems to be not universal in this respect. It is a great challenge to find common way to measure volume of alcohol consumption when the drinking patterns are in so differentiated.

It was agreed that various alcohol beverages are drunk differently (frequency, quantity, context) in most countries hence beverage specific approach to measurement would be relevant.

It is proposed to distinguish three types of alcoholic beverages for purpose of question:

   - Spirits

–   Wine

–   Beer

Optionally country specific beverages could be added like cider, alcopops or other if such beverages constitute important part of alcohol consumption.

Two types of approaches were discussed: the first one – a question on last drinking episode(s) and then the algorithm for frequency estimation and second one the question on typical frequency and quantity of beverage consumed during certain period of time for example last 12 months or last 30 days.

As a result of the discussion the frequency x quantity question was recommended as a starting point for further discussion. Some additional question on last week or last occasion (episode) of drinking should be also taken into consideration.

The unsolved question is how to measure the volume of beverage used during one occasion (drinking episode). One of the possible solution is the question on number of standard drinks. Standard drink concept seems to be helpful, but it is not common in Europe. For example in Poland, Estonia or Czech Republic respondents are not able to think in terms of standard drink. Question on quantity in terms of number of glasses rise the problem of huge differentiation of glasses capacity, not only among countries but also within them. When the data are collected using face-to-face interview there is possibility to explore this issue by interviewer-respondent interaction, but when self-administered questionnaire or phone interview technique are applied it is much more difficult or even impossible. This problem needs further discussion.

Context of drinking

It is recommended as a result of discussion to cover following elements of drinking context:

–   duration of one drinking occasion (episode),

–   hours of drinking,

–   place of drinking,

–   solitary versus drinking in a company,

–   drinking with meals,

–   reason for drinking.

Unrecorded consumption

Unrecorded consumption was identified as difficult issue to be measured using population survey method. Often consumers don't know about status of alcohol consumed or purchased. Only part of unrecorded consumption could be captured using survey method. Nevertheless, taking into account importance of this issue we should try to cover it even if we know that our estimation will very be limited.

The first problem to be solved is to identify clearly which alcohol is recorded and in which way. There are differences between countries how alcohol sale statistics are constructed and how big part of alcohol consumed is covered. It was noted that unrecorded consumption is not equivalent to consumption from illegal sources.

Two approaches to the question on unrecorded consumption were identified. First one focused on alcohol purchasing and second one focused on alcohol consuming.

First approach was successfully applied in Finish survey were question on purchasing alcohol during travels abroad was used:

   – question on total amount of spirits, wine and beer purchased
   – last 12 months time frame

The second approach could be used to explore amount of alcohol drank from unrecorded sources like wine produced for own needs in rural area.

Due to limited time the discussion was not finished and it will be continued by e-mail.