



Underage drinking in Europe

There are two major studies on underage drinking which are published every 4 years: HBSC ([Health Behaviour in School-aged Children](#)) and ESPAD ([The European School survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs](#)).

A new HBSC study was published on 15 March 2016. It covers more than the EU (most of WHO EURO region country as well as US and Canada), and is based on the compilation of data from a survey done in 2014. The data focuses on social context (relations with family, peers and school), health outcomes (subjective health, injuries, obesity and mental health), health behaviours (patterns of eating, teeth brushing and physical activity) and risk behaviours (use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis, sexual behaviour, fighting and bullying).

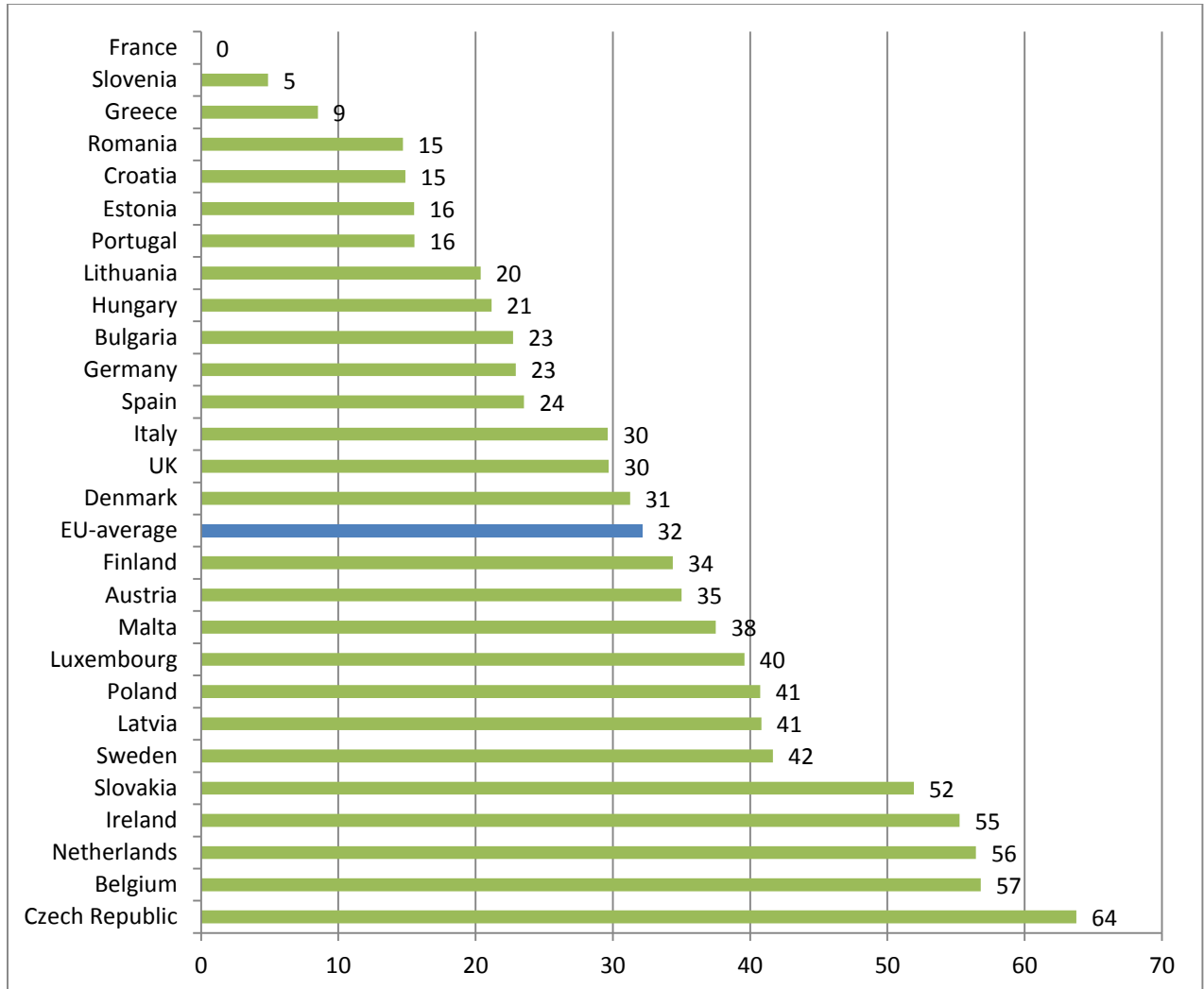
The HBSC survey has been conducted every 4 years since 2002, which allows for the monitoring of trends over generations of underage people. The key messages out of the present survey and comparison over the years are as follows.

First alcohol use at the age of 13 or younger by gender: eu-average (hbcs)





Decline in early alcohol use between 2006 and 2014 (%)



Less minors are drinking alcohol on a weekly basis

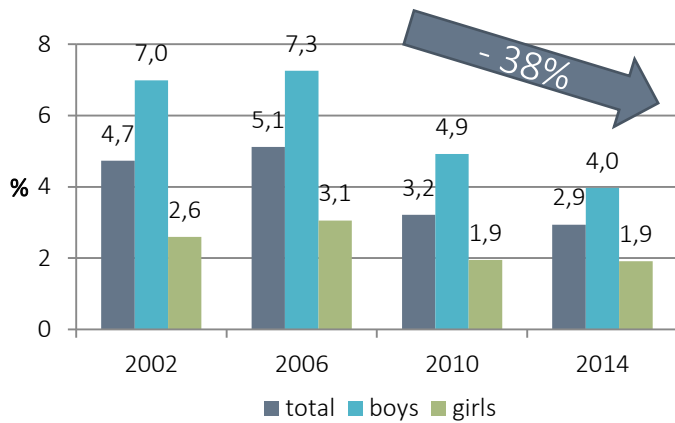
“Adolescent alcohol use has decreased in most European and North American countries and regions since the beginning of the 21st century. The findings indicate that the decrease is ongoing in all age groups and among boys as well as girls.”

Those reporting consumption at least once a week is on the decrease since 2002 for most age groups (11-13-15 years old) in most EU countries. Among those who do drink, boys still drink more than girls but the gap is narrowing.

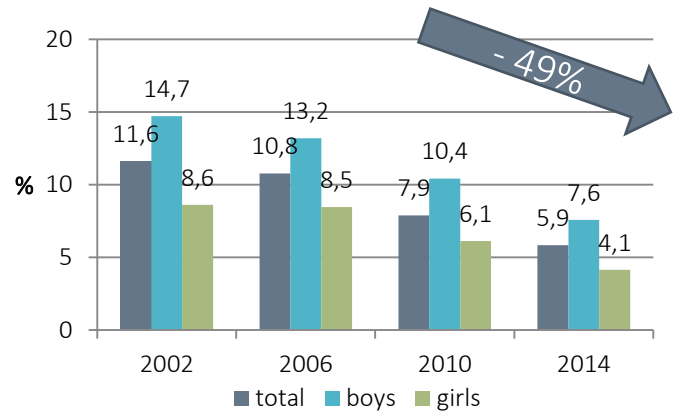


EU-average weekly drinking trends since 2002 by gender

11 year olds

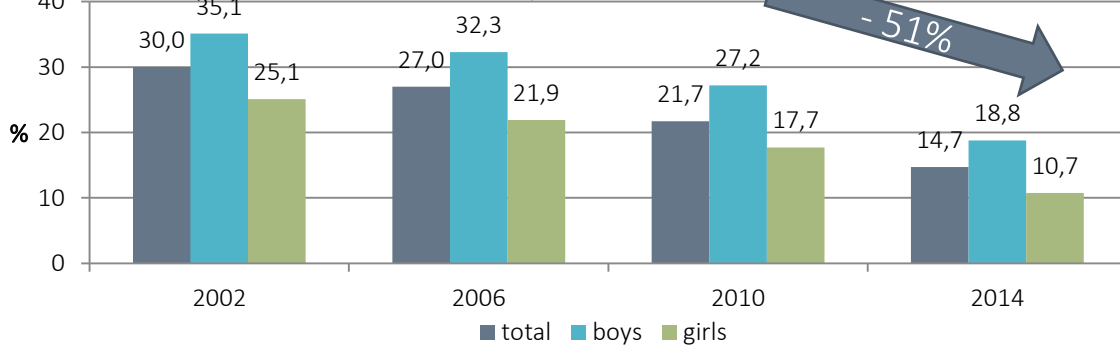


13 year olds



Percentage point decline in EU-Average weekly alcohol use by gender between 2002 and 2014

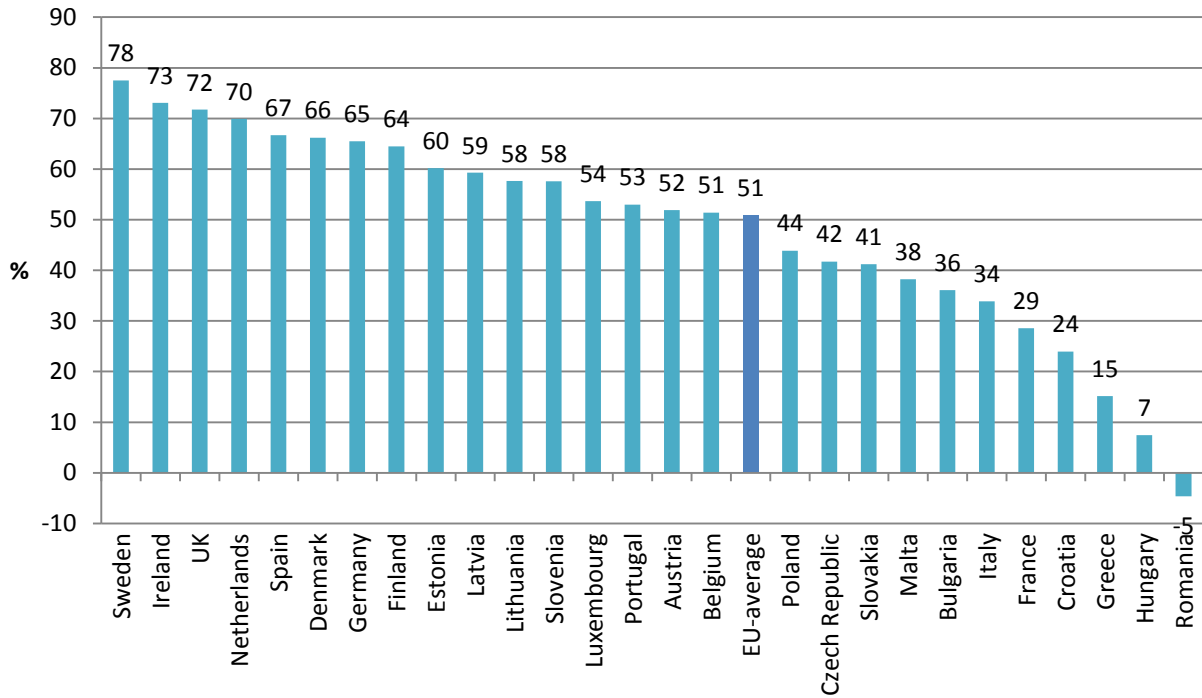
15 year olds



The percentage of 11, 13 and 15 year-olds who consume alcohol at least once a week has halved from in 2014. Put another way, that means more than 85% of underage European 15 year olds do not drink at all, compared to only 70% in 2002. The countries with the biggest decline are the **Sweden, UK, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain.**



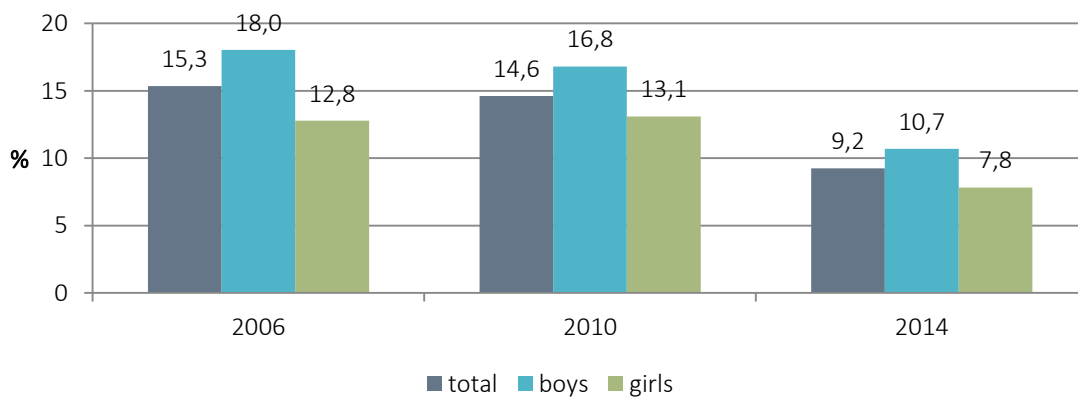
Change in weekly drinking by 15 year olds (2014)



Eastern countries such as **Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia** have also decreased weekly consumption rates but at a much lower pace. These 3 countries have recently introduced awareness raising campaigns and training for bar staff.

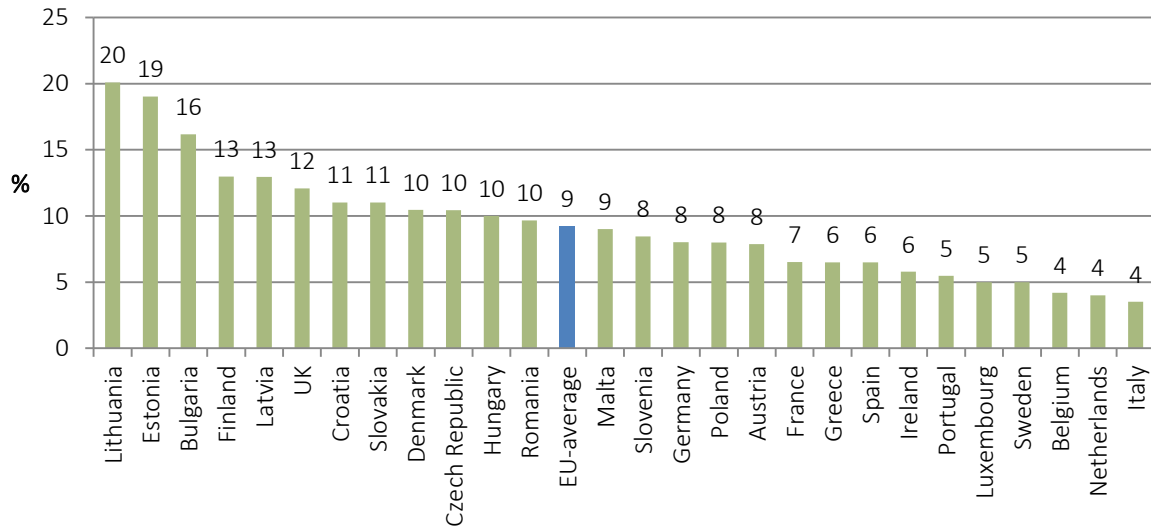
Fewer minors are reporting drunkenness but there are still great disparities between countries and gender, reinforcing the need for a local and targeted approach

First drunkenness at the age of 13 or younger by gender: EU-Average (2014)



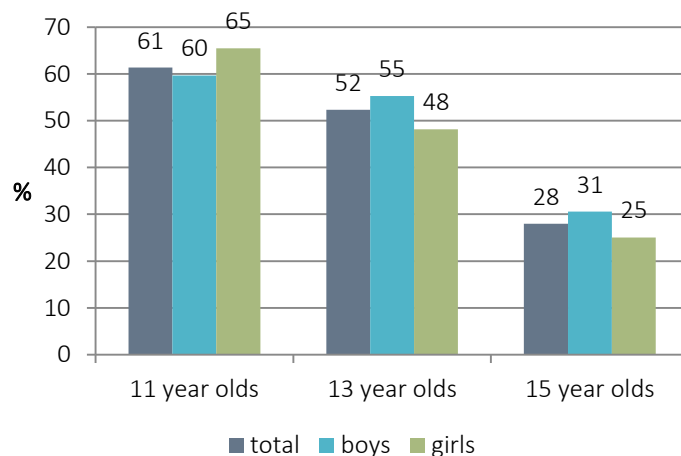


First drunkenness at the age of 13 or younger in 2014



In all EU Member States reported first drunkenness at the age of 13 or younger declined between 2006 and 2014. The sharpest decline can be observed for Austria, Ireland, Netherlands, and Belgium (between 66% and 67%).

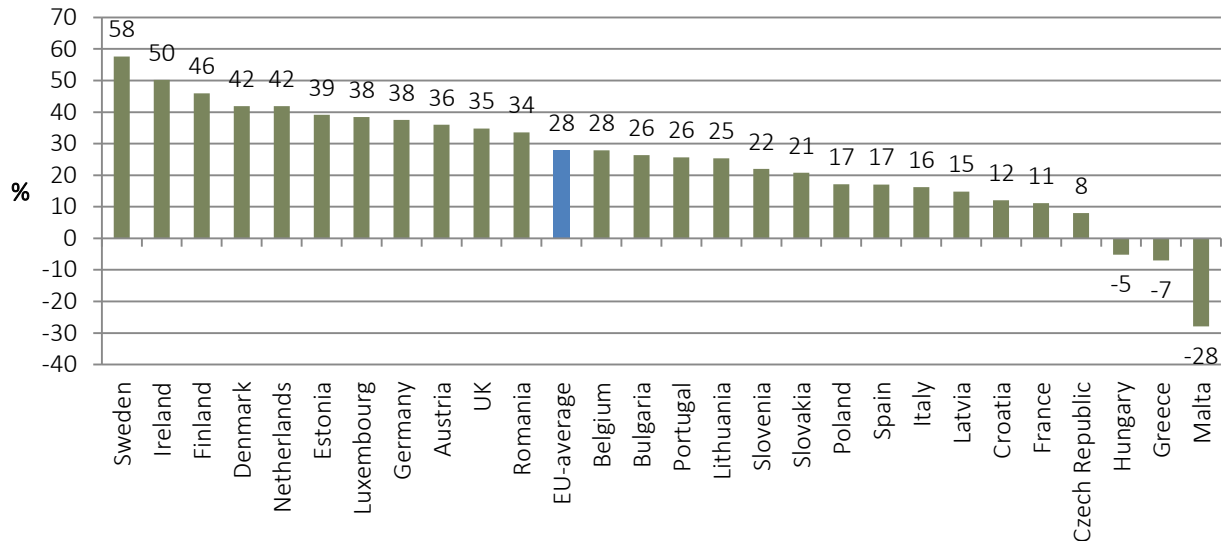
Decline in twice drunk by age & gender between 2002 and 2014 (EU-average)



By the time they are 15 years old, the reported drunkenness at least twice is higher but still on the decrease compared to previous surveys. Taking the UK again as an example, the percentage was respectively 55.1% for boys and 55.7% for girls in 2002 and is now down at 28.3% for boys and 32.6% for girls.



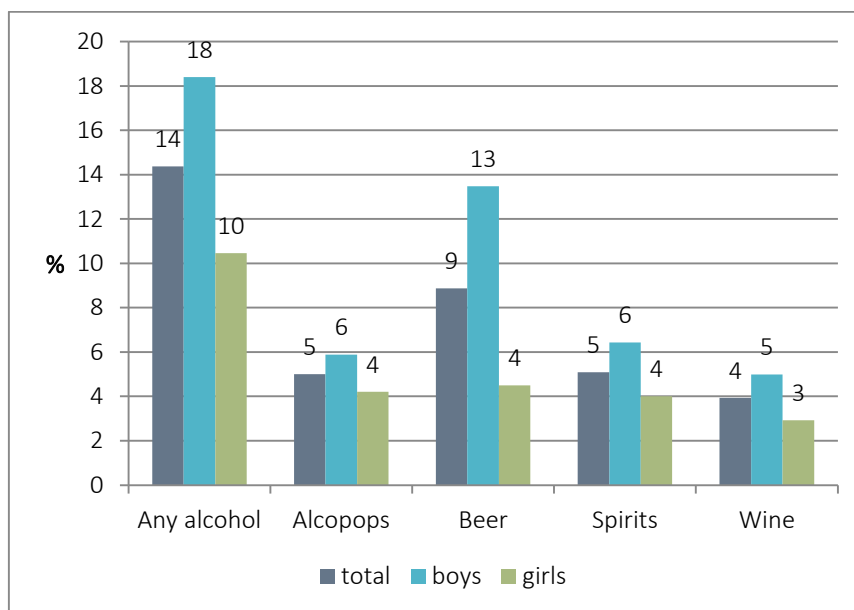
Change in having been drunk twice during lifetime reported by 15 year olds between 2002 and 2014



Beer appears to be the most common alcoholic beverage for 11, 13, and 15 year olds.

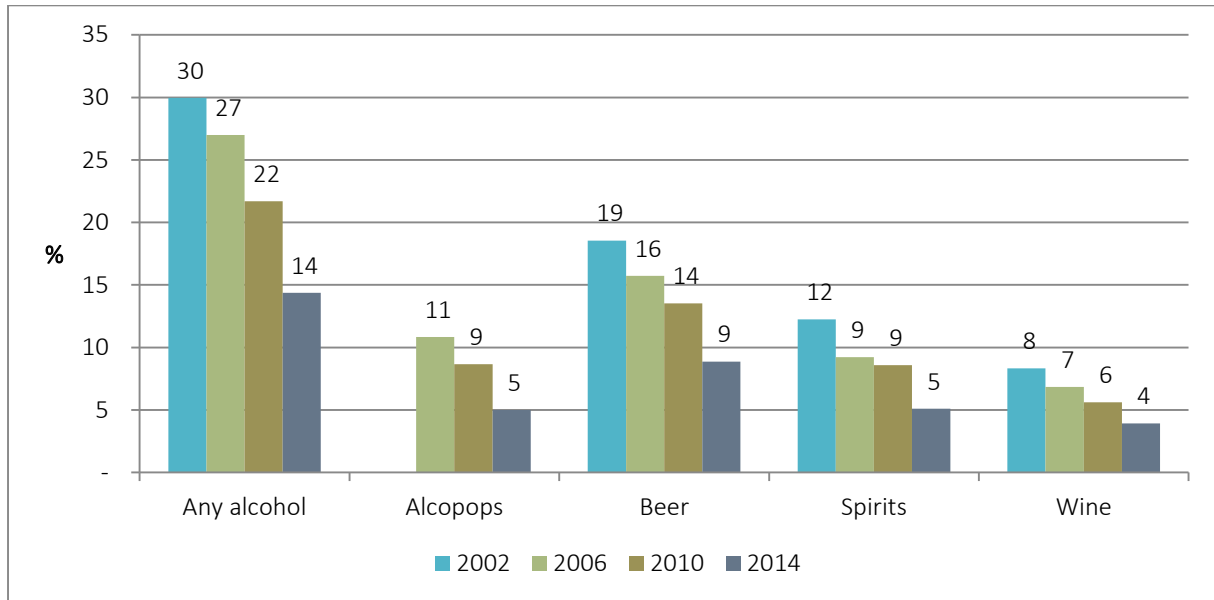
The preferred drink for European boys aged 15 in 2014 is beer (13%), followed by alcopops and spirits (both 6%) and wine (5%). The drink preference for 15 year old European girls is relatively equally spread amongst beverage types.

Type of drink consumed by 15 year olds by gender in 2014 (EU-average)





Drinks choice development over time for 15 year old Europeans





Better enforcement and change in social norms is recognised.

“Policies are in place in many countries and regions to limit underage access and restrict use among those of all ages, and stricter prevention policies are emerging. Changes in social norms, such as stronger societal disapproval of adolescent drinking, may also have contributed to the observed trends”.

It is not the family affluence but the parenting behaviour that influences underage drinking.

“Overall, family affluence is not found to have a large effect on adolescent use, a finding that is consistent with the literature. “Parenting behaviours, such as providing support and monitoring adolescents’ behaviour, and social position among peers may be more important than family affluences in predicting adolescent alcohol use.”

Programmes supporting parents as well as life skills programmes are important to achieve change

“Research on the effectiveness of school-based interventions is mixed, but programmes that target not only adolescents, but also their parents, can have considerable effects.”

“Some generic psychosocial and developmental prevention programmes on life skills and healthy lifestyle may also be effective and can be considered as policy and practice options”.

Conclusion: The HBSC survey is showing a positive trend which we hope will be confirmed by the ESPAD survey to be published before Summer this year. However, efforts must be pursued toward the objective of zero consumption by underage people in Europe. All stakeholders - policy makers, families, economic operators and society- collectively need to put an increased focus on this objective in partnership at the local level, in particular by engaging parents and promoting life skills programmes in schools.

Over the last decade the spirits sector engaged in more than 400 prevention initiatives to promote responsible drinking, including 76 education and awareness raising campaigns to fight underage drinking





THE SPIRITS SECTOR AT GLANCE

- ✓ **spiritsEUROPE** represents the interests of the spirits sector in 31 national associations and the 8 leading multinational companies. As the voice of the European spirits sector, we seek to maintain and advance the freedom to produce and market spirits in a responsible way.
- ✓ Distilled spirits are as diverse as the EU's Member States, with **46 product categories**, including a host of geographically-specific products (GIs). These contribute to the culture of their regions and the European Union.
- ✓ Brandy de Jerez, Grappa, Ouzo, Genever, Deutscher Weinbrand are just a few of the **200+ registered protected GIs**. These spirits are important exports outside Europe **generating a positive trade balance of €8.75bn in 2015**.
- ✓ 2 out of every 3 bottles distilled annually by small, medium and large producers are sold in the EU, **generating €23bn for Exchequers**. The sector creates **1 million jobs in production and sale**.