



CONTROVERSIAL ACTIVITIES

ALCOHOL

0. Background

Alcohol producing and selling is a legal activity in most countries, but often submitted to strict controls. Most States also monitor product safety and implement appropriate measures against illicit production and sale.

Alcohol is not considered as a harmful product as such because it is possible to consume it in a safe way (below a limited threshold) contrary to tobacco. However, regarding biomedical, psychological and sociological aspects of alcoholism and alcohol¹, it can adversely affect a number of aspects of drinkers' lives, harming their health, home life, work, studies, employment opportunities and finances.

A major concern comes from the fact that alcohol use and alcohol-related harm are increasingly common among adolescents and young people. More particularly, 'alcopops' and 'designer drinks' lead² youngsters to start drinking earlier and earlier. These fashionable alcoholic drinks are trivialising the use of alcohol and can lead to sensible drinking.

Many alcohol producers are also involved in questionable marketing (eg. free drink distribution, sponsoring of music or adventure events destined at the youth) and lobbying practices (eg. towards limiting the legislative framework around advertising). With regard to the widespread appeal of alcohol to young people, the unsatisfactory result of self-regulation by the alcohol and advertising industries is the other major issue in this context.

1. Alcoholic beverages - Terminology

Alcoholic beverages include wines, beers, and spirits.

- Wines are fermented from the sugars in fruits or berries (most commonly grapes), from various plants or their saps, from honey, and even from milk.
- Beers are fermented from grains after the starch in them is first converted to sugar.
- Spirits are distilled from wines or beers.

The alcohol in all of these beverages is mostly ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, hereafter simply called alcohol. The strength of an alcoholic beverage is usually expressed as either the percentage of absolute alcohol by volume, i.e., the proportion of alcohol in the fluid volume, or as the amount of absolute alcohol in distilled spirits.

In beers, the alcohol content varies from 2% to about 10% in especially strong beers. Natural or unfortified wines usually contain between 8 and 12% alcohol. Vermouths and aperitif wines usually contain 18%, and dessert, sweet, and cocktail wines contain 20 to 21%. Since fermentation yields only 14% alcohol, the extra strength of fortified wines comes from the addition of alcohol or brandy. Spirits, including vodka, gin, and whiskies, rum, brandies, and liqueurs usually contain between 40 and 50% alcohol. Cordials, made of flavored spirits, usually contain between 25 and 40%.

¹ See also the European Alcohol Action Plan 2000–2005

² Independent research published in the British Medical Journal, 199x



Next to those conventional beverages, 'Alcopops'³ made their apparition recently, including:

- 'Designer drinks / alcopops (4-8% alcohol): limonades + soft or fermented/not distilled alcohol
- 'Pre-mix' (4-8% alcohol): mixed drinks containing strong alcohol (limonade or fruitjuice + strong or distilled alcohol)
- 'Shooters' (20% alcohol): liquors containing alcohol in 20 cc bottles
- 'Blasters (10% alcohol): mixed drinks containing alcohol (booster⁴ + distilled drink)

'Long-drinks' (mix of two drinks) and 'cocktails' (mix of various drinks) are to be considered according to the separate alcohols they contain.

Besides, quality of the products is not withheld as a discriminative aspect for classifying alcohol products.

2. Degree of involvement

2.1. Major involvement

Companies are regarded as major involved in alcohol related activities if they:

- 2.1.1 Have consolidated participation in other companies, activities in the field of production of alcoholic beverages: brewer, vintner, distiller and other manufacturer of alcoholic beverages and alcopops (no minimum revenue threshold).
- 2.1.2 Have non-consolidated participation in companies that are, directly or indirectly through majority participations, involved in activities in the field of manufacturing of alcoholic beverages AND these activities generate 1% or more of the company's revenue.
- 2.1.3 Have consolidated participation activities in the field of distribution, marketing and sales of alcoholic beverages AND if these activities account for 10% or more of the company's revenue.

2.2. Minor involvement

Companies are regarded as minor involved in alcohol related activities if they:

- 2.2.1 Have non-consolidated manufacturing participation in companies that can be considered as 'major involved' AND the alcohol related activities generate less than 1% of the company's revenue (if more: major involved).
- 2.2.2 Have consolidated participation activities in the field of distribution and/or sales of alcoholic beverages AND if these activities account for less than 10% of the company's revenue.
- 2.2.3 Have consolidated participation activities in the field of alcoholic beverages products advertising AND these activities account for more than 10% of the company's revenue.

2.3 No involvement

Companies are regarded as not being involved in alcohol related activities if they:

- 2.3.1 Have consolidated participation activities in the field of alcoholic beverages advertising AND these activities account for less than 10% of the company's revenue.

³ 'Alcopops' are "fizzy drink which allows alcohol to be introduced into the bloodstream while bypassing the taste buds" - Lisa Buckingham, *The Guardian*, 1996-11-26. They are also called 'F.A.B.' for 'flavoured alcoholic beverage'.

⁴ 'Boosters' (alcohol-free softdrinks containing stimulating substances) are not considered under those categories. They are also known as 'smart drinks'.



Summary

	Manufacturing of alcoholic beverages	Distribution, marketing and sales of alcoholic beverages	Advertising for alcoholic beverages
Major involvement	- Always in case of consolidated participation or own operations - In case of non-consolidated participation: if more than 1% of revenue	If 10% or more of revenue	Never
Minor involvement	- In case of non-consolidated participation if less than 1% of revenue	If less than 10% of revenue	If 10% or more of revenue
No involvement			If less than 10%

