

Report on recent development in the field of alcohol and substance abuse policy development

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Comprehensive reform of the Alcohol act (1143/1994) is under preparation

1/2

→ Examples of planned means related to dismantling of norms ([More info](#)):

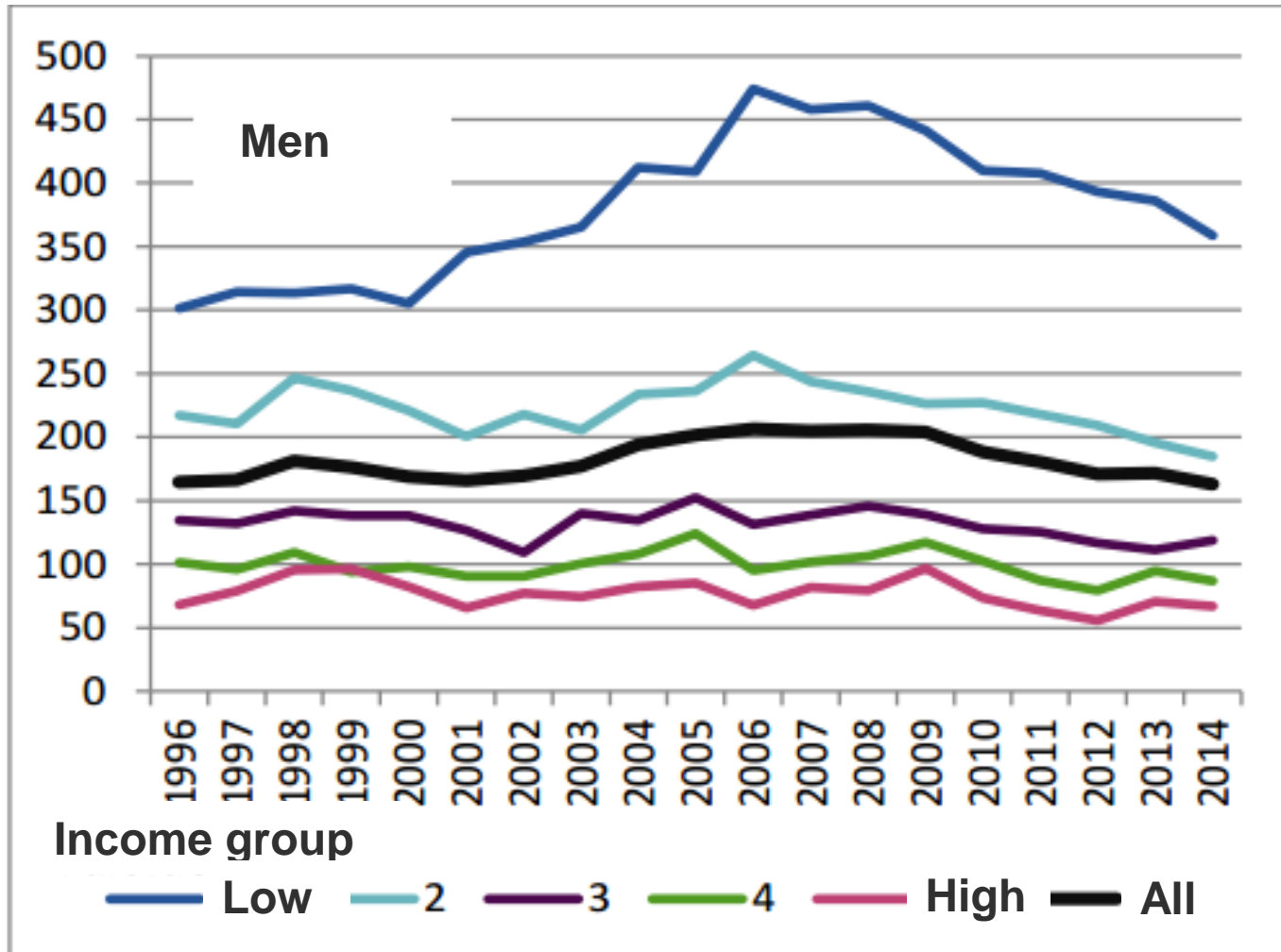
1. **Serving of alcohol beverages on the premises:** *retail sale of alcoholic beverages is allowed*, persons who are 16 years of age are allowed to serve alcohol under supervision, requirement for closing time is eliminated (continuation to serve alcohol until 4.00am by submitting a notification).
2. **Retail sale:** *the maximum strength by volume of alcoholic beverage is increased from 4.7% to 5.5%*, requirement that the beverage sold is prepared through fermentation is eliminated, Alko opening hours are extended by an hour with a closing time of 21
3. **Advertising:** advertising of happy hour discounts and online price lists of spirits is allowed, requirement that the beverage is prepared through fermentation would be eliminated.
4. **Production:** the production of beer and wine through fermentation in households is allowed.

How will the planned reform effect to alcohol consumption in Finland? (Source: THL's evaluation)

- The change planned in retail sale of alcohol increases the availability of stronger (4,7-5,5%) alcoholic beverages:
 - Before 300 retail sale places (=Alkos), **after** >13,000 (=food stores, kiosks, gas stations, restaurants...)
 - Estimated that this increases the total consumption of alcohol by 6%
 - 150 new alcohol related deaths per year
 - 1500-2000 new hospitalisations due to alcohol per year
 - The good development gained in alcohol related harm, socioeconomic differences of health problems and youth drinking will be endangered.

Mortality related to alcohol by income groups (1/100,000, > 25 year-olds 1996-2014)

(Source: Mäkelä, Martikainen & Peltonen 2017, [pdf](#))



Comprehensive reform of the Alcohol act (1143/1994) is under preparation

2/2

- A notification procedure for the Alcohol Act has started: the European Commission and other Member States will assess whether the proposed legislation is compatible with EU law.
- Draft for government proposal circulated for comments
 - Altogether 157 persons / organisations provided statements to the proposal by the beginning of March 2017.
 - Summary of the comments is released this week.
 - Working group of representatives of different parties decides how the comments are responded.
- Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis will give its' statements on selected government proposals and on their regulatory impact assessments → also for this proposal
- The final government proposal will be submitted to Council of state in May 2017 → Will consider if (and when) proposal is presented to Parliament
- The entry into force of the possible new Alcohol Act will be in the beginning of 2018 at the earliest.

THL is preparing to assess effects of the possible new law:

New data coming up from Finnish drinking habits

- Drinking Habits Survey conducted at 8-year intervals since 1968, latest data collected in the fall 2016
- Sample includes 3,900 people aged 15 to 80 drawn at random
- Drinking habits and drivers of the changes:
 - Alcohol use
 - Contexts and consequences of use
 - Perceptions of health risks related to alcohol use
 - Harms from drinking to others than drinker him/herself
 - Opinions related to alcohol
 - Other substance abuse
- First results (statistic report) out in May 2017.

Drug policy

- New Government Resolution on Drug Policy was released in late 2016: no changes to national policies
- New Hepatitis C Strategy was launched in Nov 2016 ([more info](#))
 - Background: nearly 30,000 diagnosed cases of hepatitis C infection, and more than 1,100 new infections are diagnosed every year.
 - Aim: to strengthen and harmonise practices related to HCV prevention, testing and treatment, especially among risk groups: injecting drug users and prisoners.
 - Actions e.g.
 - need for current care guideline on treatment of HCV and national treatment register
 - access to sterile injection equipment and to opioid substitution treatment harmonised and available nationwide
 - clear clinical pathway from testing to treatment and therapy (also new expensive antiviral drugs for drug users)
 - more and higher quality low-threshold health services for drug users
 - drug users involved in the planning and implementation of services

Tobacco policy

- Main task now is the execution of the new Tobacco Act (incl. assessment)
- "New" challenges and more focus in
 - support and treatment for those wanting to quit smoking, especially pregnant women and patients with mental health problems and other addictions