

Calling On The UK To Implement Minimum Pricing For Alcohol

According to WHO, **liver cirrhosis accounts for 1.8% (i.e. 170,000) of all deaths in Europe**. In recent years liver cirrhosis has become a serious health threat in some Western European countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, where over the last 10 years the associated mortality has increased.

The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) urges the UK government to press ahead with its proposed implementation of the minimum unit pricing of alcohol. EASL's most recent publication *The burden of liver disease in Europe: a review of available epidemiological data* highlights the fact that alcohol consumption is one of the leading causes of cirrhosis in Europe. In the UK in particular, all studies agree on the worrying increase in the incidence of liver cirrhosis. Alcohol is the main cause of liver disease, including liver cirrhosis, and there is a clear correlation between an increase in alcohol-related cirrhosis and increases in alcohol consumption.

Prof. Mark Thursz, EASL Secretary-General, emphasised that "although the incidence and prevalence of liver disease in Europe is alarming, what is encouraging to see is that each of the major causes of liver disease is potentially amenable to prevention and treatment. This means we all have an opportunity to make a difference, through implementing the right policy changes. The Minimum Unit Pricing of alcohol is an example of the urgent measures needed and we continue to draw attention to the importance of its implementation. We urgently call on the UK government to stand firm to pressure of the alcohol industry lobbying and to consider above all the health of British citizens" Prof. Thursz also noted that "a 45p per unit minimum price would only raise the cost to a 21 unit/week drinker by £2. This is most definitely not going to affect living standards".

Also urging the UK Government to take a proactive stand before it is too late, Prof. Markus Peck, EASL Vice-Secretary, noted "there are clear initiatives which need to be implemented to curb the growing problem of alcohol consumption. These include alcohol pricing, availability and marketing. Alcohol not only affects the liver but is a risk factor in over 60 diseases and conditions. It is in the interest of all European citizens for alcohol, a major risk factor for disease, to be better regulated, as is already the case with tobacco, and in this governments are the only ones with the power to take the necessary steps to do so".