

Alcohol Policy Update Finland 05/2025

**EHYT Finnish Association for
Substance Abuse Prevention**





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**National non-governmental
expert organisation
specialised in substance
abuse prevention**

- We carry out substance abuse prevention among people of all ages and backgrounds, from schoolchildren to the elderly, throughout the country.
- We offer the latest reliable, research-based information to support both substance abuse prevention and decision-making.
- We introduce the aspect of people's well-being into substance abuse discussions.
- We have 135 member associations around Finland.



Substance abuse prevention takes place everywhere

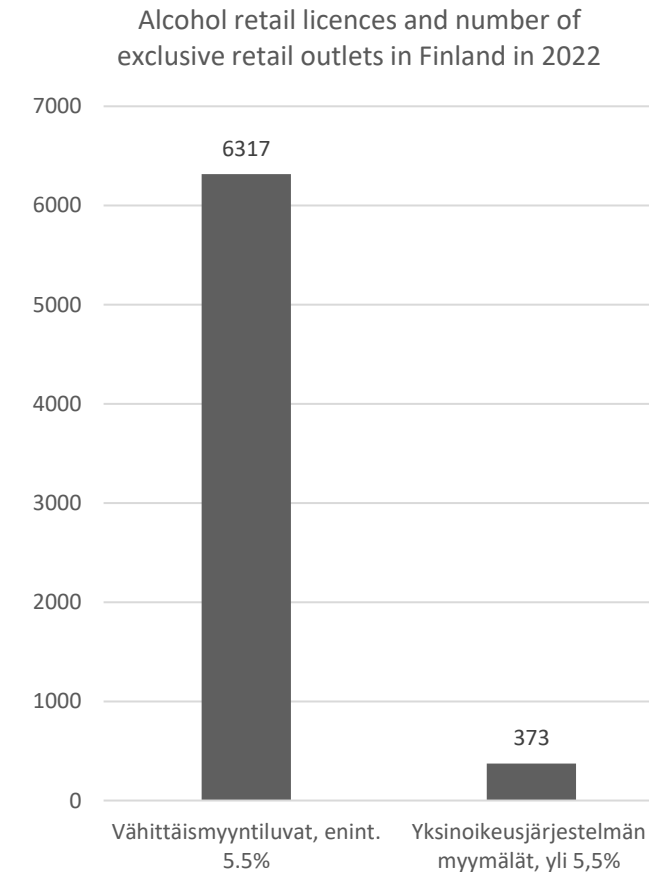
- Substance abuse prevention is carried out in educational institutions, homes, workplaces and free-time activities.
- We provide activities and services for children, adolescents and their parents as well as students, working-age people and the elderly.
- We organise substance abuse prevention training to professionals and volunteers in social and healthcare services, youth work and education and many other fields.

The Government Program shifts alcohol policy framework from social and health policy to competition and trade policy



FINLAND: Changes in Alcohol Policy

- The most immediate legislative action was to allow "the sale of beverages containing up to 8% alcohol produced by fermentation in grocery stores." (Earlier: 2018-2024: 5,5% and 1969-2018 4,7%)
- On-going: "Enabling Alko and domestic retailers licensed for alcohol sales to engage in online sales and introduce new retail concepts based on delivery and pickup."
- Beer taxation reduced by 25 million euros, while taxes on spirits and wines will increase by 40 million euros.
- A review on the liberalisation of the sale of 15 % wines (Published in March 2025).
- It is important to recognize that liberalizing wine sales would likely lead to the expansion of spirit sales and the erosion of the current monopoly system.



Alcohol policy in the government programme



- Fermented beverages containing up to 8% alcohol may be sold in grocery stores. (p. 105) (**IMPLEMENTED**)
- By the mid-term review, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment will prepare a report on the liberalisation of the sale of 15 % strength wines (p. 105). (**DONE**)
- Independent report on the transfer of regulation of alcohol policy from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (p. 105)
- Clarify the prevailing ambiguous interpretation to make it unambiguous that Finns have the right to buy alcohol through distance selling from companies in other EU countries (p. 105). (**ONGOING**)
- Allowing Alko and domestic licensed retailers to sell alcohol online and other retail concepts based on delivery and collection, while ensuring age limit controls (p. 105). (**IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**)
- Extending the tax liability of purchasers in online alcohol sales. +20M € (p. 237)
- Tightening taxes on spirits and wine +€40M (p. 237)
- Beer tax cut -€25M (p. 237)
- **The Government will not change Alko's public health mission and role. (p. 105)**
- **Comment:** In practice, the status is already being changed and further changes are being sought.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/governments/government-programme#/>



Farm sales and small breweries: up to 12/13 %

- The amendment would also allow microbreweries and vineyards in Finland to deliver their farm wines and beers directly to the delivery address indicated by the consumer up to the percentage limit approved for their retail sale.
- Previously, Finnish small vineyards and microbreweries have had the right to sell their alcoholic beverages under their retail licence so that **small vineyards** have been allowed to sell alcoholic beverages with **an alcohol content of up to 13 %** and **microbreweries** have been allowed to sell alcoholic beverages with **an alcohol content of up to 12 %** at the place of production.
- The change would enable small vineyards and microbreweries to sell their alcoholic beverages within the above-mentioned percentage limits to consumers also by delivery from the farm.

Domestic vs foreign sellers



- The proposal would thus also increase the business opportunities for domestic operators who legally sell alcoholic beverages, as well as for domestic vineyards and microbreweries.
- Furthermore, the Proposal **would create a level playing field for domestic operators vis-à-vis foreign alcohol sellers**, as previously it was possible, under certain conditions, to purchase alcohol by delivery to the address chosen by the customer from foreign alcohol sellers, but not from domestic alcohol sellers.
- In accordance with the Government Programme, **the Government will reform alcohol policy responsibly in a European direction** and continue the overall reform of the Alcohol Act carried out in 2018. The Government's objective is to promote "fair and open competition".

Home delivery and online sales



- Public health actors have been puzzled by the approach of amending the Alcohol Act through several separate bills during the government's term without an overall assessment of the impact of the changes. **The proposed amendment should also be assessed in relation to the distance selling from the EU to Finland.**
- The government programme states that the public health status of the current system of an exclusive monopoly on retail alcohol sales will not be changed. In reality, however, the government's proposals move in the opposite direction.
- The government's earlier proposal to expand the retail sales of (only) *fermented beverages* with up to 8% alcohol content has proven to be problematic under EU law. It is unclear whether the EU legal risks of the proposed legislative amendment have been assessed thoroughly enough

Home delivery



- The latest proposed reform would allow express couriers to deliver alcohol to homes.
- According to a Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) survey, **75% of respondents do not trust that age limits or intoxication levels can be effectively monitored in home deliveries.**
- Numerous international studies have reached similar conclusions. As alcohol consumption increases in society, so do the harms to families.

Earmarking for prevention?



It should be examined whether harm taxes could be earmarked directly for the prevention of substance abuse and gambling-related harms.

In Finland (2023):

- Revenue from alcohol tax was €1,463 million.
- Revenue from tobacco tax was €1,156 million.
- Gambling generated €625 million for the state.

In total, these revenues amounted to €3.24 billion.

SHOULD WE CONSIDER AN INITIATIVE: A certain percentage of the collected harm taxes and revenues should, in the future, be earmarked—following international examples—for the prevention of substance abuse and gambling-related harms, so that resourcing would match the actual need.