Current alcohol policy debate in Norway

Stig Erik Sørheim



New government in February



- From coalition (Labour party/Center party) to one party rule
- Consequences for alcohol policy unclear:
 - Labour party among the architects of Norwegian alcohol policy
 - But faces pressure to «modernize»
- Popuarity of govt has increased



Alcohol policy discussions

Farm sales

Alcohol sales in grocery stores

 Other issues: Opening hours, drinking in public places, alcohol serving at sports events, advertising rules



Farm sales

- Norway is bound by EU rules through the EEA agreement
 - Agricultural products are not covered
- Norway already allows sales of certain alcoholic agricultural products above 4,7 %
 - Ciders, fruit wines and mead,
- Farm sales of grape wine and spirits not allowed for now...
- Politicians pay attention to other countries
 - Parliament has ordered the Government to review the possibilities of introducing a «Swedish model»
 - Goal: to support local producers and agritourism
 - However, the issue has been reviewed before, and it was seen as «problematic»



actis

Alcohol sales in grocery stores

- Norwegian politicians have also paid attention to developments in Finland:
 - Previous policy platform of the Conservative party included the sale of alcoholic products up to 8 percent by volume in grocery stores
 - Goal: to modernize alcohol policy and to support local producers
- A real threat to the Monopoly the Conservative party could form the next government together with the even more liberal Progress Party...
- However, the new policy platform has deleted this paragraph
 - Probably because they realized that local producers did not want it
- Threat seems to be over for now
 - Buys time to evaluate developments in Finland...



Push to «modernize» or loosen regulations

- Ongoing debate about opening hours and days of sale of alcohol
 - Gradual extension of availability over many years...
 - Discussions about serving times on public holidays (e.g. opening alcohol service earlier on the 17th of May)
 - Discussions about alcohol service at sports events
 - Commercial pressure, source of income for sports clubs, a way to «control» alcohol use at events
 - But also: a tradition that sports and alcohol don't match, and a wish to create a safe arena for children and young people
- Lifting the ban on drinking in public spaces?
 - Labour party platform open to allowing drinking in certain areas of parks etc. Already supported by the Liberal party (Venstre), the Conservative party (Høyre) and the Progress Party, i.e. a majority
 - Last week: Labour party decided to go against it and wait for the result of an expert commission



The alcohol advertising ban

- Recurring calls to «modernize» the alcohol advertising ban
 - allowing producers to use social media to present their production and their products
 - Allowing advertising for alcohol free products with same brand as alcoholic products
 - →but: difficult to design new rules that don't open a lot of new loopholes
- New tool in the enforcement of the alcohol advertising ban:
 - Until September 2024: Violations were met with a warning and a threat of a fine if the violation is repeated
 - From September: An infringement fine for violations of the alcohol advertising ban finally implemented

First case: The band Ballinciaga threatened with 2,5 mill NOK fine for extensive illegal marketing of their own range of alcoholic drinks

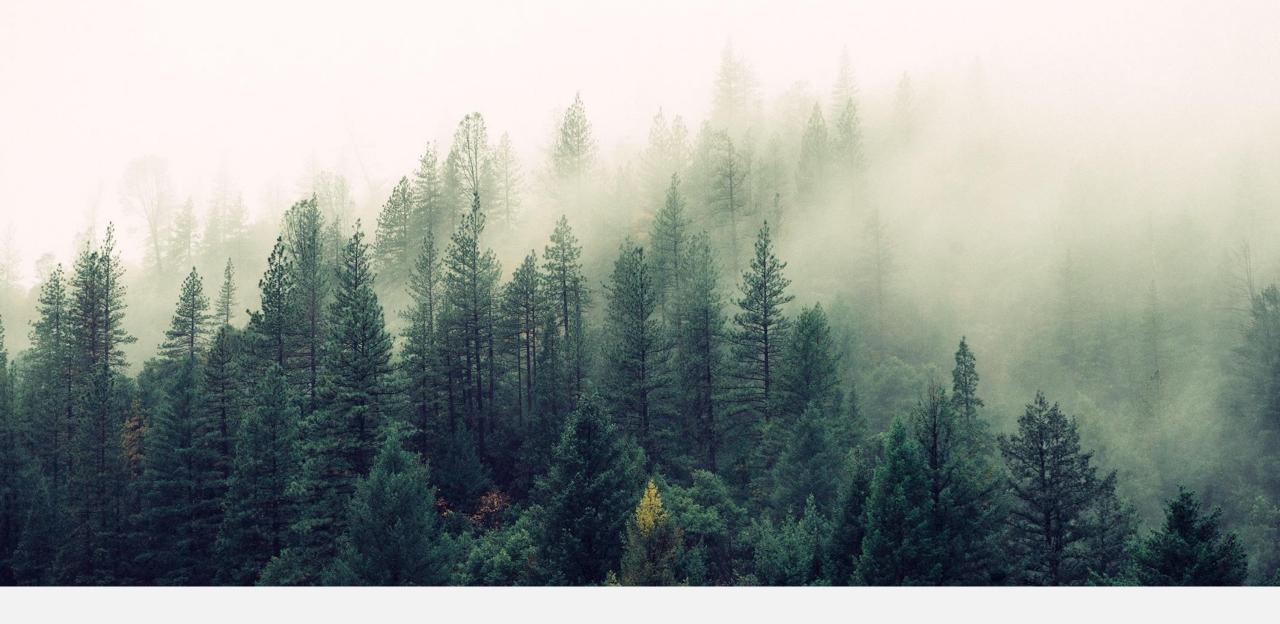


Foto: Frode Hansen / VG

Ballinciaga risikerer millionkrav: Derfor slettet de alle innlegg

Ballinciaga og deres partnere risikerer bot på nesten 2,5 millioner kroner. Nå svarer gruppen på kritikken, etter å ha gjort en rekke endringer.





actis