

SUMMARY

Two baseline studies are described which were designed to support the Alcohol and Youth project in the region Zuidoost-Brabant. The results of these studies are to be compared to repeated measurements later in the project, to monitor the effects of the interventions regarding youth and alcohol.

The first study is a *compliance study*, focusing on the availability of alcohol to adolescents in the region. The study was designed to measure unobtrusively to what extent supermarkets, sporting clubs and bars/discotheques comply with the legal age restrictions for alcohol sales. To this end, a research protocol was developed based on the methodology of mystery shopping. Using the protocol, 59 sporting clubs, 83 bars/discotheques and 81 supermarkets were visited by 15 year old adolescents who tried to buy soft alcoholic beverages (legal age: 16).

The results of the compliance study show that alcohol is easily available to adolescents who have not reached the legal age to buy alcohol. Of all 223 buying attempts, 95% were successful. In sporting clubs, all attempts (100%) succeeded. In cafes, 95% of the purchase attempts were successful, while in supermarkets 91% of attempts succeeded. Female adolescents were more successful in buying alcohol than male adolescents. In the majority of the visits, the adolescents were not asked for their age or ID. And even if they were asked for their age or ID, they often could buy the alcohol.

The second study is a *policy support study*, focusing on the opinions of parents in the region about the issue of alcohol and youth. In a written survey (N=1550), parents of children between 0 and 18 years old were asked about their own norms regarding adolescents and alcohol, about their perception of the problem of alcohol use among adolescents, and about their support for measures to reduce the alcohol consumption of adolescents.

The topic of alcohol and youth appears to be a highly relevant issue to the parents. The majority of the parents seem to agree with the norm "No alcohol under 16". In family situations, however, parents indicate they sometimes buy alcohol for their underage children. There appears to be support among parents for an integral and collaborative project to address the problems of adolescents and alcohol. The parents agree with more stringent police action against intoxicated youth on the streets. They also support government measures to reduce illegal alcohol sales to adolescents.

The parents of Zuidoost-Brabant consider the alcohol consumption among adolescents (under 16) to be problematic. Besides, they indicate that the alcohol use among adolescents causes general nuisance.