Solutions to alcohol consumption related problems at the municipal level

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„The search of effective control of alcohol consumption and prevention tools in modern society”, Vilnius, 2016, May 25th
• government agency subordinated to the Minister of Health (since 1993),
• operates in accordance with art. 3 of the "Act on upbringing in sobriety and counteracting alcoholism"

• **Main tasks:**
  – developing expert opinions on draft laws and action plans;
  – analyzing health, social and economic problems related to alcohol;
  – coordinating and initiating actions that boost effectiveness and accessibility of treatment for the addicts and their families;
  – developing and implementing new methods of prevention;
  – providing advice to local authorities, institutions, associations etc. that implement tasks related to alcohol-related problems;
  – cooperating with municipal and provincial authorities.
The administrative division of Poland
(since 1999)

16 voivodships
(black lines)
380 counties
(red lines)
2478 municipalities
(green lines)
Funding of activities deriving from the „Act on upbringing in sobriety and counteracting alcoholism”

- fees for using permits for retail sales of alcohol
- fees for using permits for wholesale trading
- own resources

2014 total = 702 966 176 PLN
(159 765 040 EURO)
Licensing of alcohol sale outlets by local governments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Off-premise</th>
<th>On-premise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>72412</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>239592</td>
<td>88675</td>
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 Researchers evidence indicates that alcohol outlet density is related to alcohol-related problems, especially violence. The evidence on relation between density and consumption is mixed.
The number of licenses for alcohol sale outlets pre-established by local governments are usually higher than business’ needs!

- limit lower than the number of alcohol sale outlets
- limit equal to the number of outlets
- limit 1/3 higher than the number of outlets
- limit 2 times higher than the number of outlets
What tasks are the local communities’ money spent on?

- Support for children from families with alcohol-related problems: 38%
- Support for adults with alcohol-related problems: 18%
- Prevention activities targeting children and adolescents: 27%
- Public education and trainings: 8%
- Sobering-up stations: 4%
- Countering domestic violence: 3%
- Functioning of municipal alcohol commissions: 2%
Support for children from families with alcohol-related problems:

- In socio-therapy centers - 53%
- In day care centers – 33%
- In street-working programs – 33%
Support for children from families with alcohol-related problems

• It is estimated that in Poland there are about 930 thousands children from families with alcohol-related problems (Wieczorek et al., 2015). Only 8% attend specialized socio-therapeutic programs.

• Effectiveness of socio-therapy depends on individualized, complex and long-term work with a child, in cooperation with parents/caregivers.

• This is not possible when:
  – There is no stable employment of professional staff;
  – Groups are too big;
  – Cooperation with parents is missing;
  – Center is open only 1 day per week (16%).
Prevention activities targeting children and adolescents

- lectures
- theatre, plays
- outdore parties
- sport activities
- sport events
- contests
- evidence-based programs
- activities for parents
- teachers trainings
- activities for risk groups

Number of municipalities

0 200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800
Prevention activities targeting children and adolescents

- Since 2010, the national register of evidence-based preventive and mental-health promoting programs has been available (a joint project of the National Bureau for Drug Prevention, Education Development Center, Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology and PARPA)
- In spite of this, evidence-based programs are rarely implemented and funded by local governments.
- According to the Ministry of Education, in 2014:
  - recommended universal prevention programs were implemented in 5% of school only
  - Selective prevention programs were implemented in 0.6% of municipalities
Support for adults with alcohol-related problems

- Consultation points: 39%
- Health programs: 13%
- Help-lines: 13%
- Treatment activities: 9%
- Staff trainings: 1%
- Employment: 8%
- Support for treatment centers: 11%
- Self-help groups/abstainers clubs: 4%
- Social integration centers: 11%
- Social integration clubs: 3%
Support for adults with alcohol-related problems

- Basic and extended therapy is free for alcohol addicts (funded by the National Health Fund).
- Addiction therapy units provide more services than contracted by National Health Fund.
- Some therapeutic and remedial activities, including psychotherapy, are funded from local budgets.
- In 91% of counties ambulatory therapy is available (76% of addicts are treated in ambulatories).
- 36% of municipal authorities cooperates actively with abstainers associations.
- Social reintegration of alcohol addicts is supported by 5%-8% of municipalities.
Public education and trainings

- leaflets / posters
- outdoor events
- national campaigns
- trainings for owners of alcohol...
- screening and brief intervention...
- other trainings

number of municipalities

25
20
Counteracting drunkenness in public places.

Sobering-up stations

- 106,363 people intoxicated in public places
- 167,447 taken to the sobering-up station in another municipality
- 46,079 taken to the sobering-up station in their municipality
- 66,318 sobering in a different municipal facility
Municipal alcohol commissions

Regulated by the "Act on upbringing in sobriety and counteracting alcoholism” (article 4’) stating that:

1. Carrying out activities connected with prevention and resolving of alcohol-related problems and social integration of alcohol-dependent persons belongs to the own tasks of communes.

2. The [municipal] activities (...) shall be carried out in the form of a communal program for the prevention and resolving of alcohol-related problems (...). The Program shall be realized by the social aid centre specified in the provisions regarding social aid or any other entity specified in the program. In order to realize the program the Head of the Commune (Mayor, President of the City) may appoint a proxy.

3. The Heads of Communes (Mayors, Presidents of Cities) shall convene communal committees on resolving alcohol-related problems, especially committees:

   – initiating activities within the scope of a communal program, and

   – taking actions aimed at issuing decisions on imposing the obligation to undergo treatment at a withdrawal treatment facility on an alcohol-dependent person.
Activity of special teams within municipal alcohol commissions

- Motivating to treatment
- Activities within a communal program
- Providing opinions on alcohol sale licencing
- Controlling alcohol sale outlets
- Involved in counteracting violence

Number of municipalities
Members of municipal alcohol commissions

- Clerks: 53%
- Social workers: 16%
- Others: 16%
- Teachers: 8%
- Health specialists: 3%
- Alcohol therapists: 2%
- Lawyers: 2%
Summary

• Decentralization of funds places the highest responsibility for the quality of alcohol problem-solving on local governments.

• Central institutions’ role is limited to data provision, counseling, monitoring and creating legal framework.

• Probably the most powerful „central” tools are related to the control of economic availability of alcohol (pricing, taxation) and regulations of alcohol advertising.

• Municipalities can control physical availability of alcohol by limiting the number of alcohol sale licenses – but this is against immediate financial gains. Health and social costs associated with alcohol use are rarely taken into account by local decision-makers.
Summary

• Polish decentralized system of alcohol problem solving results in wide spread of preventive, therapeutic and other activities, which are easily available across the country.
• Local decision-makers know better the specific needs of their community than more distant authorities
• But, of course, the system might be improved, by:
  – Amendments in the "Act on upbringing in sobriety and counteracting alcoholism" (from 1982), e.g.:
    • „imposing the obligation to undergo treatment” by municipal commissions is very controversial
    • Lack of clear indication that prevention should be based on scientific evidence allows implementation of ineffective activities
  – Increased cooperation between local authorities, specialists and central bodies
  – Empowering local decision-makers to:
    • Deal with business pressure
    • Pay more attention to research evidence
    • Evaluate their municipal programs
Summary

• A big challenge for the Polish system is to educate local stakeholders responsible for solving alcohol problems
  – There are more than 16000 of municipal commissions members
  – New people are coming at least every 4 years (in accordance to the elections calendar)

• And the last but not least – what is not possible at the central level, might be achieved at the level of municipalities, e.g.:
  – Interdisciplinary diagnosis and treatment of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)
  – Legal requirement enhancing implementation of evidence-based prevention