Yet another alcohol policy experiment in Finland

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As of June 2023, Finland has a new right-wing government. It is led by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo from the National Coalition Party (NCP). The NCP has long ties to the Finnish alcohol lobby, such as the Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry, the Finnish Food and Drink Industries Federation and The Finnish Grocery Trade Association. Traditionally, among the NCP party members you will find the most energetic proponents of an introduction of wines in grocery stores. The experts agree that moving the wines from the state alcohol monopoly company Alko to grocery stores would, in practice, implicate the dismantling of the monopoly company and with it one of Finland’s most important and efficient alcohol consumption regulation tools. This is alarming since alcohol already costs Finnish society an estimated annual €2 billion. However, and as a consequence of the Christian Democrats party’s determination in the governmental negotiations, the new governmental programme suggests that beverages with an alcoholic content up to 8% are to be available in grocery stores. This is a rise from 5.5%, which was introduced in 2018.

Finland has a long history of functioning as a social experiment environment for the regulation of alcohol taxes and availability in different ways. During the incoming government’s 4-year period, Finland will yet again serve as a social experiment laboratory. This time, the government has its highest priorities set on a stimulation of the economy and the labour market and a record savings in public expenses. All of this while citizens’ alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm are expected to rise.

This year the Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (NAD) will continue to invite discussion on state regulation in markets in the name of health and welfare. The journal is celebrating 40 years of research publishing. To honour this circumstance, we are arranging an anniversary webinar in November and announcing a call for papers for a thematic issue. Both concern the State’s ability and right to regulate markets, and the availability of products and services that can harm citizens’ health and well-being, and lead to inequalities and other social harm.

In this issue of NAD, Olsson and colleagues report a study on school efficiency and gambling among 11th grade students in Stockholm (Olsson et al., 2023). Bakken et al. (2023) have studied criminal thinking and psychosocial characteristics among young adults entering residential substance use treatment. In a study by Arve (2023), young people’s accounts of attempting to quit non-medical tramadol use is reported and Løseth et al. (2023) have studied barriers and facilitative factors in the provision of first-responder services to individuals bereaved after a drug-related death. Both studies are qualitative interview studies that give new information on the studied phenomena. The last article in this
issue concerns the prevalence and heritability of alcohol use disorders in 18-year-old Swedish twins, reported by Hildebrand Karlén et al. (2023). Readers can also enjoy a discussion piece by Doğu and Özkan (2023). Marionneau (2023) reviews Heather Wardle’s book on the convergence between gambling and gaming.

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**References**


