USI Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2016-2019

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# About USI

"The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience."

# Objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland 1. An education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realize their full potential. 2. An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland. 3. The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland. 4. The defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights. 5. The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership. 6. To represent the interests of the students if Ireland at international level.

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### USI Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

This strategy aims to provide a framework for good practice for the support of students, the promotion of well-being and prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm, to be implemented by both the Union of Students in Ireland and affiliated Students’ Unions.  
  
USI will promote ‘low risk drinking’ behaviour and increase awareness of the potential harmful or negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption.   
  
The alcohol aware ethos of USI events shall fall under the responsibility of the relevant organising officer.

The USI Vice President for Welfare must follow the USI Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the beginning of each year.

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# Collaborations and Partnerships

# *USI acknowledges the importance of collaborations and partnerships when it comes to organisations working to reduce alcohol related harm. USI recognises the need to work with others in the sector to further our aims and ambitions. However, as declared at Congress 2015, Congress has no confidence in public bodies advocating on the issue of alcohol misuse and abuse which are funded by the drinks industry.* Objectives:

# To build support for the work that USI does in the area of Alcohol Harm Reduction.

# To develop new initiatives through collaborations with Students’ Unions and external organisations.

# To sustain USI’s role as a key partner in REACT**.**

* USI will not partner with the industry when creating campaigns or communicating messages around alcohol to young people.

# Actions:

# Seek support from external organisations to strengthen campaigns on the issue.

# Collaborate and consult with external organisations to support and develop new campaigns, resources, research and training.

**Suggested Actions For Students’ Unions:**

* To aim, where possible, to establish links with local organisations and resources and promote local supports to students in campus community.
* To support the development of local coalitions and committees that aim to promote alcohol dependency supports, resources and preventions.
* To support the implementation of the REACT action points at campus level.
* Reject partnership with the industry when creating campaigns or communicating messages around alcohol to young people.

# Training and Supports - Students’ Unions *USI encourages students’ unions to run campaigns and/or distribute information to students on alcohol and the dangers of high-risks so that students can make informed decision and take necessary precautions.*

**Objectives:**

* To equip officers in their work on alcohol harm reduction.
* To equip officers to support students at risk of developing alcohol dependency.

**Action:**

* Provide training for relevant officers during the summer term on the issue of alcohol awareness and alcohol abuse.
* Support officers in establishing links with local, community based support services.

*Training shall not be undertaken by an agency with a vested interest in, or one that is funded by, the alcohol industry.*

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Where possible, attend training events promoted or organised by USI.
* Utilise appropriate resources and supports provided through USI or locally by relevant organisations and support services.
* Aim to establish local links with community based services and identify a referral path for students in need.
* Seek, where possible, representation on campus decision making boards/committees in relation to health promotion.
* Aim to develop and review new or existing campus health policies.

# Prevention *USI aims to promote a social, academic, and residential environment that supports health-promoting norms. Three people die in Ireland every day as a result of alcohol use. Hald of all suicides in Ireland involve alcohol and alcohol costs the state €3.7 billion annually in health, policing and other services.* Objectives:

* To raise awareness amongst the student population on alcohol harm prevention and to encourage Students’ Unions to run local campaigns on the issue.
* To encourage alternatives and choice amongst the student body.

**Action:**

* Continue to work with national bodies on the issue of sexual assault and drink-related aggression.
* Co-ordinate a national campaign to promote awareness of alcohol harm and promote help seeking
* Support unions in promoting and developing a programme for campus-based alcohol free events.
* Support and promote alcohol-reduction campaigns and initiatives such as #OffTheBoozeOnTheBall, #GiveYourLiverABreak and #OnTheDry
* Support unions in developing Re-hydration Stations at campus events and provide event guidelines for alcohol harm reduction.
* Facilitate an alcohol free social activities for USI’s Annual Congress.

**Suggested Action for MOs:**

* Source accurate information that is relevant to the student body in relation to alcohol.
* Promote resources to inform students of the dangers associated with high-risk drinking and support relevant national campaigns and initiatives that aim to do the same.
* Facilitate, with support from USI, training modules identified for alcohol harm reduction for student leaders.

# Supply, Access and Availability

Currently Ireland has one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption in the European Union. By ensuring that key factors influencing alcohol supply, such as price, availability and marketing, are regulated and controlled, alcohol-related harm can be reduced.

**Objective:**

* Protect members from the effects of low cost selling, over-availability and excessive and subliminal marketing practices.

**Action:**

* Lobby for a mandatory code of practice in alcohol marketing.
* Lobby for the banning of alcohol sponsorship of sporting events.
* Lobby for improvement of access to support services.
* Lobby to discourage student-targeted marketing, promotion and sponsorship by the alcohol industry.
* Provide Responsible Host Training to all relevant officers in conjunction with REACT and support unions in delivering training to their members on campus.
* Provide policy training and support to unions to encourage the development of on-campus alcohol policies and distribute the “National Framework to Develop A College Alcohol Policy” document.
* Continue to collaborate with REACT and support unions in realising the action points set out in the report.

**Suggested action For MOs:**

* Strive to remove high-risk alcohol promotion from their campuses.
* Ensure that on campus events and promotions are responsible and do not promote high risk drinking.
* Assist clubs and societies in sourcing sponsorship from sources other than the alcohol industry.
* Facilitate Responsible Host training for student leaders on campus.
* Track and report any high-risk promotions on campus or in the catchment area.
* Liaise with college authorities to develop a college-wide alcohol policy where one is not already in place.

# Screening, Treatment and Support Services

*The availability and quality of appropriate campus and community support services is vital in the promotion of student well-being. The promotion of these services is equally important to inform students of their availability and encourage them to seek help.*

**Objectives:**

* Improve access to good quality support services for students.
* Promote help seeking to students in need.

**Action:**

* Liaise with the REACT team to map support services available to campuses across Ireland.
* Support unions in creating a referral path for students affected by addictions and at risk of developing an addiction.
* Promote the use of an online brief intervention tool such as Drinks Meter, etc.
* Provide training for relevant officers in SOAR through collaboration with the HSE.
* Liaise with unions and ISHA to promote brief intervention screening services on campus.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Engage with the REACT programme to realise the action points set out to respond to excessive alcohol consumption in third level.
* Establish a referral pathway for students affected by addictions and at risk of developing addiction.
* Promote the use of an online brief intervention tool such as Drinks Meter, etc. on a campus level.
* Support the introduction of brief intervention screening services, online or through support services, on campus.
* Support the formation of local support groups for alcohol dependency issues.

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# Research, Monitoring and Evaluation *It is vital for USI to review progress under the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy on an annual basis. By providing basic annual progress reports on the action points outlined in the strategy, progress and effect can be tracked and with the provision of annual reviews, updates or changes can be suggested if deemed necessary.* Objectives:

* To monitor the impact of USI campaigns to reduce alcohol related harm.
* To evaluate and review each campaign yearly and to update the strategy accordingly.
* To continue to collaborate and partner with organisations to collect research and data to guide USI’s work in alcohol harm reduction.

**Actions:**

* Map progress of the strategy and produce a yearly progress update document.
* To review all campaigns and evaluate impact with support from external expert groups.
* To sustain partnership with the REACT programme.

**Suggested Action For MOs:**

* Where possible, review local campaigns on campus level to ensure messaging is effective, appropriate and relevant to students.

**Previous Mandates:**

* To campaign against this body ‘Role Models’ and the continuation of such bodies based on this model.
* The Vice President for Welfare to work with various bodies including Alcohol Action Ireland and Alcohol Forum to update the USI Alcohol Policy.
* The Vice President for Welfare to include proposed actions on pricing, availability and marketing, training and support for local Students’ Unions and proposed actions on a national alcohol awareness campaign. This must be completed before November 2014.
* To engage with the Department of Health (RoI), the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI), before July 2013 in addressing the issue of alcohol abuse.
* To develop and implement a USI National Drink Responsibly Campaign before July 2013, and to carry out same on an annual basis thereafter in order to create awareness around alcohol consumption rates, and encourage its responsible consumption.
* To both follow the USI Alcohol Policy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations and action points by disseminating the policy at the start of the year as well as providing support and training throughout the year.
* The Welfare Officer to hold 4 regional forums to gather student feedback, opinions and ideas on how best to approach this issue and to present a campaign idea to Welfare Working Group.

**Reporting and Progress**  
To ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing priority is placed on the health and wellness of students in Ireland clear and consistent communication on the progress of the implementation of the USI Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy and its initiatives is vital. The strategy’s progress will be documented in USI’s annual report, along with highlighting individual campus initiatives as they are launched throughout the year.

The strategic objectives for Alcohol Harm Reduction in 3rd level between now and July 2019 are set out in this strategy and reflect the ambition and intent of the Union of Students in Ireland to deliver on its mandate for its members.  
  
*In preparation, a range of significant / strategic risks facing the strategy’s implementation were identified.*

* Budgetary and insufficient or inadequate budgets to meet campaign delivery costs.
* USI having to discontinue work and downsize campaigns/Officer resources
* Failure to achieve collaborations on the action points set in the strategy. For the strategy to be effective USI will need to foster support from external organisations and establish links with institutions and external stakeholders.
* Failure to ensure that the strategic and operational policies of the USI are properly developed and implemented, and that targets are met.

**Risk Mitigation:**

The Union of Students in Ireland will, over the life of this Strategic Plan, evaluate the above risks and will ensure that all actions and initiatives undertaken manage these challenges pro-actively, with actions being identified and implemented without delay, so that our mandate can be pursued and effectively delivered for our members.