



SOPA

Together for a responsible
attitude towards alcohol
consumption - TRATAC



SKUPAJ!

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SOPA



Foto: Matej Pušnik

**Head of the SOPA
Project – Together for
a responsible attitude
towards alcohol
consumption - TRATAC,
Tadeja Hočevar**

Dear Sir/Madam

This is a booklet about the SOPA project and approach – Together for a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption - TRATAC.

Slovenes consume alcohol very frequently, on a daily basis, and regardless of the opportunity. Alcohol consumption is widely accepted in Slovene society unless there are obvious severe consequences for the health of an individual and society such as fatal road accidents, domestic violence and accidents at work.

This project brings together over 600 expert representatives of different fields, who are regularly faced with problems related to excessive drinking in Slovene society. We are aware that each one of us can help tackle this problem as a member of society. We can accomplish most if we tackle this issue systematically and comprehensively – all members of society together.

Nobody drinks to become addicted and nobody becomes addicted to alcohol overnight. We are aware that issues related to excessive drinking are usually recognised only when they are present to such an extent that they influence the health of an individual and society and when stopping or reducing drinking presents a big effort for an individual. The latest, ground-breaking research shows that there is no safe zone and that any kind of alcohol consumption presents a certain risk level and negative consequences for the health of an individual and society as a whole. Being aware of our responsibilities, we wish to share these latest findings with you. Alcohol consumption is not a sign of a healthy lifestyle, even if it is consumed in small quantities. We should therefore be able to access all known and necessary information to decide in a given situation whether alcohol consumption really is a good choice that supports our health when we want to relax, when we experience stress and other daily problems or when we just wish to socialize.

What is the goal of the SOPA project?

The basic idea of SOPA is to draw attention and raise the question about our drinking habits. Do we drink too much alcohol, which damages our health, even if our society accepts and in certain situations even encourages it?

We wish to provide all necessary information about the negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption to all members of the society.

The aim of the SOPA project is to raise awareness. If it turned out that someone was living an unhealthy lifestyle, detrimental to their health, they could reduce their alcohol consumption or inform one of the relatives. They could get in contact with an expert to find suitable ways to reduce or quit excessive drinking and instead make healthy decisions. These decisions are related to health care, spending time in nature, hanging out with relatives and friends, relaxing and dealing with stress and personal issues. We could thus avoid the damaging consequences of excessive drinking for ourselves and others and thus improve personal health and contribute to a healthy society, to a healthier attitude to ourselves and to better interpersonal, especially family relations.

Come, let us walk the SOPA path together. Everyone can contribute to establish a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption in society. The following pages present ways of doing this.

Head of the SOPA Project
– Together for a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption - TRATAC, Tadeja Hočevar

Dear reader

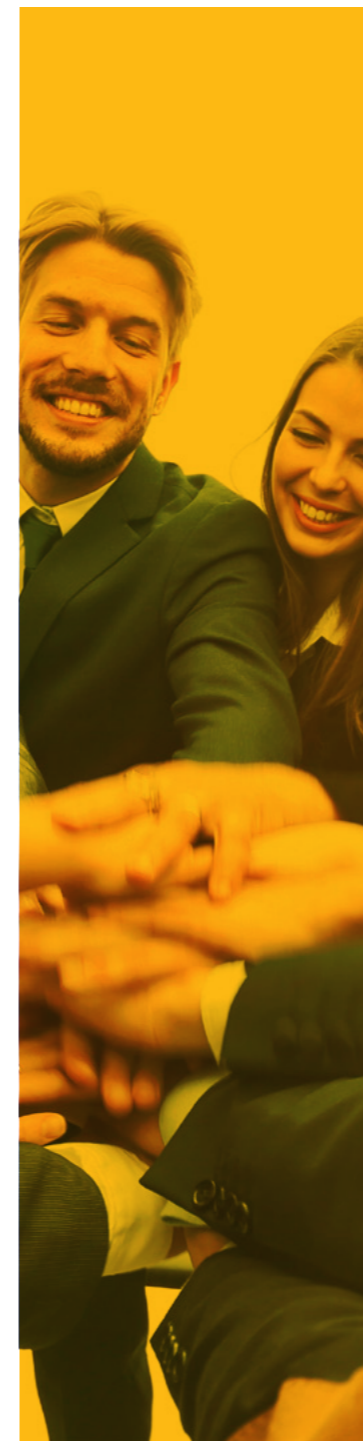
Harmful alcohol consumption is one of the main preventable factors of chronic diseases, injuries, accidents, violence, murders and suicides. Worldwide, alcohol consumption is one of the most common causes of morbidity, reduced ability, disability and mortality. In Slovenia, 40% of surveyed children (15-year-olds) said they first drank alcohol before they were 13, half of adolescents were drunk at least twice before turning 17. Therefore, it is not surprising that 43% of adult Slovenes (aged 25 to 64) drink alcohol in a highly dangerous way. The consequences for the common health and well-being as well as financial damage are severe. Harmful alcohol consumption costs the Slovene healthcare system 153 million euros annually on average.

The extent and consequences of alcohol consumption are unevenly distributed amongst different regions and socio-economic strata in Slovenia and Europe. Compared to the Western part of the country, Eastern Slovenia shows a 1.7 times higher mortality risk and a higher percentage of premature deaths due to alcohol-related causes. The consequences of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption are more common amongst less educated citizens and people from a weaker socio-economic position.

Slovenia lacks a comprehensive strategy to effectively address hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption. The WHO alerted us in 2016 that Slovenia is still one of those countries that are not active enough in limiting advertising, raising prices and limiting the availability of alcoholic beverages. To take action in these fields proved to be most cost-efficient. Less efficient but very effective measures are quick interventions that can be carried out by different profiles in the healthcare and social services. It is most effective amongst people who are not yet addicted to alcohol but drink in a way that presents a risk to their health and well-being and that of their families, relatives and others.



**Vesna Kerstin Petrič,
Head of Health promotion
and chronic non-
communicable diseases
and conditions control
sector at the Slovene
Ministry of Health.**



The Slovene Ministry of Health managed to obtain 6 million euros of European funds for the SOPA project via operational implementation of the European cohesion policy for 2014–2020. In this way, we managed to create a network of Slovene healthcare and social institutions that will address the alcohol consumption issue both on an individual and community level.

We invited all key parties from the fields of healthcare, the police, social welfare and road safety as well as representatives of the employment services and local communities to join the project. Alcohol misuse does not only cause health problems and material damage due to accidents and alcohol-related vandalism, but also affects the social inclusion, employability and prosperity of an individual and the productivity of society. To effectively monitor and guide the project, the Slovene Ministry of Health appointed a so called Guidance Commission which includes prominent experts and decision-makers in this field.

I am certain that using these working methods, the SOPA project also leads the way to the successful establishment of a comprehensive approach on a national level. In the future, it can be applied to other areas of public health, especially to chronic non-communicable diseases and other related risk factors.

**Vesna Kerstin Petrič,
Head of Health promotion and chronic non-
communicable diseases and conditions control
sector at the Slovene Ministry of Health.**

Slovenia is high in alcohol consumption.

Slovenia, together with the European Union, Norway and Switzerland belongs to a region with the most alcohol consumers in the world. Alcohol consumption in this region is twice the world average. Slovenia also stands out in this region. Between 2003 and 2014, Slovenes aged at least 15 consumed more pure alcohol in litres per capita than in the above region and also the EU.¹ According to The National Institute of Public Health data, the registered alcohol consumption in 2016 in Slovenia was 10.5 litres of pure alcohol per inhabitant, older than 15.

Excessive alcohol consumption is also a high burden for the Slovene state. Alcohol-related costs estimate for the period 2011–2014 amounted to EUR 153 million per year,² but if we add the costs of traffic accidents, domestic violence and other criminal acts, this estimate grows to EUR 234 million per year (!).



10,5
l / adults



¹National Institute of Public Health, 2017. Registered alcohol consumption in Slovenia increased in 2015 and remains too high for public health (www.nijz.si).

² Sedlak, S, Zaleteš, M., Zorko, M., Kasesnik, K. Economic impact of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption in Slovenia. Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2014. V Roškar, M et al. Alcohol politics in Slovenia. Opportunities for harm and costs reduction. Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2016.

What is excessive, hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption?

Hazardous alcohol consumption is an act with a probability that an individual will suffer damage due to alcohol consumption. Harmful alcohol consumption is behaviour, which has already caused alcohol-related damage.

Where are the limits?

Alcohol consumption influences individuals differently. Nevertheless, experts set the rules and limits for less hazardous alcohol consumption for healthy adults, based on scientific research. Taking them into account lowers the probability of damage to health for the majority of healthy adults.

Limits for less hazardous alcohol consumption

Applies to: healthy adults

Does not apply to: children and minors, pregnant women and nursing mothers, professional drivers, ill people...



Not more than 2 units per day
Not more than 14 units per week*

Not more than 1 unit per day
Not more than 7 units per week*

Standard alcohol drink unit

*The above quantities consider at least one alcohol-free day per week.

Why focus on the issue of excessive alcohol consumption?

In Slovenia, two people die every day for reasons that are exclusively alcohol-related. Annually, this amounts to 650 individuals and the mortality rate is above the European average. In Slovenian hospitals, ten hospitalisations are recorded every day due to alcohol-related damage, yearly 3,876 on average.³

Data from research on tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs (2015) indicates that in Slovenia, 43% of inhabitants aged between 25 and 64 drink alcohol over the limits of less hazardous alcohol consumption or got intoxicated in a highly hazardous way.⁴ According to the CINDI 2016 study, the percentage of persons who get intoxicated once or three times per month or more often is increasing in Slovenia which is worrying.

According to NIJZ data, the registered alcohol consumption in 2016 in Slovenia was 10.5 litres of pure alcohol per inhabitant, older than 15.

³ Zorko, M. Hočevar, T., Tančič Grum, A., Petrič, V.K., Radoš Krnel, S., Lovrečič, M., Lovrečič, B. Alcohol in Slovenia Trends of drinking patterns, health consequences of harmful drinking, opinions of actors and suggestions of measures for a more effective alcohol politics. Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2014 V Roškar, M. et al Alcohol politics in Slovenia Opportunities for harm and costs reduction Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2016

² Koprivnikar, H Zorko, M., Drev, A., Hovnik Keršmanc, M., Kvaternik, I., Macur, M. Uporaba tobaka, alkohola in prepovedanih drog med prebivalci Slovenije ter neenakosti in kombinacije te uporabe. Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2015

³ Vinko, M Kofol Bric, T., Korošec, A., Tomšič, S., Vrdelja, M. Kako skrbimo za zdravje? Z zdravjem povezan vedenjski slog prebivalcev Slovenije 2016 Ljubljana: NIJZ, 2018.

What is SOPA?

SOPA stands for Together for a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption - TRATAC. The SOPA project began in October 2016 and ends in December 2020.

The main goal of the project is to reduce the excessive drinking of Slovene adults and thus prevent the negative consequences of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption for an individual, his relatives and broader society.

We aim to achieve this by establishing an interdisciplinary approach and by linking different sectors, such as the healthcare and social sector, non-governmental organisations as well as municipalities, the police and the media. We will prepare a complete proposal to implement the SOPA approach on a systematic level after the end of the project as well.

How is the SOPA project functioning?

SOPA trains different experts and other active members of the society in such a way that one is informed about what alcohol consumption means for health on many different occasions and can check their "drinking status". If one discovers that it would make sense to reduce alcohol consumption, one is empowered to do it without any strong feeling of giving up but with a good feeling of awareness about the meaning of better personal health and better well-being in general. In the next 3 years, the project's activities are set on a national, regional and local level because we want to be effective, work with individuals, their relatives and people in the field. This is the only way to change attitudes towards alcohol consumption in our society. Furthermore, we will collaborate actively with the media, as they



training experts



giving guidelines for the media



linking all project collaborators in local communities



forming a common approach to treat an individual

(brief intervention Nr. 1 - brief intervention Nr. 2)

influence reality by choosing content and ways of presenting it and consequently our attitude to a certain topic or content.



the media who report responsibly
the healthcare sector acting in the fields of health and welfare
the social sector caring for quality of life and relationships
non-governmental organisations working for inclusion
municipalities establishing healthy communities
the police ensuring safety and accountability
the Slovene Agency for Employment by notifying people of employment opportunities

Who is the SOPA approach for?

With the SOPA approach, we wish to reach adult Slovenes who directly or indirectly suffer from the negative consequences of excessive alcohol consumption and offer them support to change hazardous and harmful drinking habits and thus help them on the path to a better quality of life. Adults can reach for help with different organisations and experts.

By raising awareness via the media, by organizing public events and by cooperating with the non-governmental sector, we wish to indirectly reach all members of society: children, the youth, and the elderly. We will also address experts and different groups of people with certain vulnerabilities. During the project, special attention will be given to the media as we wish to create recommendations for responsible reporting on alcohol-related topics.



Linking locally, regionally and nationally

The SOPA approach includes measures and support for individuals who drink alcohol in a hazardous or harmful way and their relatives. It is based on linking different sectors by organising various events and meetings on a local (in involved local areas), regional (in NIJZ regional units) and national level. Besides health facilities, social care centres, employment services offices and non-governmental organisations, we are establishing connections in the field with municipalities and the police who are implementing several preventive programmes to raise awareness on alcohol-related topics.

Events and meetings around Slovenia wish to promote an exchange of experiences amongst representatives of different professions and SOPA approach implementers. We wish to pass on the latest information on alcohol-related issues.



Which goals do we pursue?

- We are enhancing existing and establishing new capacities to deal with hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption on a national, regional and local level.
- Training for experts from different branches (healthcare and social sector, non-governmental organisations) is taking place to individually handle hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption. During the pilot period, this approach is being implemented in 18 local areas around Slovenia. We are bringing together the healthcare and social sectors, non-governmental organisations, municipalities, the police and Slovene employment services offices.
- With representatives of the mass media, we wish to create recommendations for responsible reporting on alcohol-related topics which will help raise awareness among journalists.
- We are raising awareness amongst the general and specialised public regarding alcohol in Slovene society. We are addressing the general public by taking action in the healthcare and social sectors, non-governmental organisations and Slovene employment services offices and cooperating with the mass media and by marking important days devoted to hazardous or harmful alcohol consumption topics.
- We wish to establish protocols that address hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption within professions and ensure collaboration between different professions.
- Furthermore, we plan to present a proposal after the end of the programme in 2020 to implement the SOPA approach at system level, encompassing its long-term aspect and contributing to promoting and maintaining health in the field of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption. We wish to do this together with the Slovene Ministry of Health.

Three brief interventions of the SOPA approach

The approach to treating individuals who drink hazariously or harmfully consists of three brief interventions.

Brief intervention 1 deals with the individual who drinks hazariously or harmfully on the deepest level. It refers to identifying adults who drink alcohol hazariously or harmfully and to support in the form of consultations to stop excessive drinking habits. These brief interventions are being executed in participating health facilities and social care centres in 18 local areas around Slovenia.

Brief intervention 2 informs about the harmfulness of excessive alcohol consumption and directs patients to where they can be helped to quit hazardous or harmful alcohol consumption. We thus wish to provide information to healthcare workers. As experts, they meet patients who drink hazariously or harmfully on a daily basis.

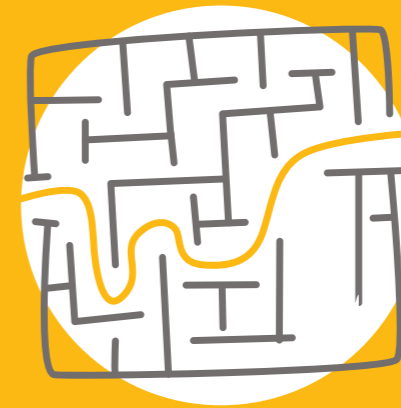
Brief intervention 3 refers to an approach which takes place in the non-governmental sector and employment services offices. It is based on informing and guiding individuals by sharing materials and organizing training/workshops on the topic of healthy living. Individuals who need help to stop abusing alcohol are being directed to experts who deal with the matter in depth.

Brief intervention Nr. 1



An in-depth conversation with an individual.

Brief intervention Nr. 2



Brief advice: informing and guiding an individual.

Brief intervention Nr. 3



Informing individuals and the public.

Who carries out these brief interventions?

Brief intervention 1: family doctor, occupational physician, registered nurse/registered family caregiver, registered nurse/registered community caregiver, individual consultant in the health education centre or health promotion centre, workshop performer in health education centre or health promotion centre, associate professionals in social care centres.

Brief intervention 2: obstetrics and gynaecology specialist, cardiology specialist, healthcare worker in urgent care centres, healthcare worker in blood establishments, dentist, oncology specialist, gastroenterology specialist, otolaryngology specialist.

Brief intervention 3: non-governmental organisations that work in different fields and carry out programmes which also deal with vulnerable groups. The Slovene Employment Service is participating in the SOPA approach with experts from the field of career orientation, employment and unemployment.



How to join SOPA activities?



You are welcome to visit the SOPA project webpage at www.sopa.si.

The SOPA project website is intended for anyone who wants to find out more about the patterns and consequences of alcohol consumption and about our SOPA programme, activities and events.

The website includes a quick survey on alcohol consumption habits where everybody can check their status. A friendly quiz is also available on the website, where anybody can check their knowledge about alcohol facts.

In the Sources of help section, we have gathered useful information from the non-governmental organisations where anybody can seek advice locally all over Slovenia.

We invite members of community to look out for events that will be organized in their area and friendly invite them to ask questions, read informative material and contact us at any time - via website or in the field.

Much can be done by an individual who is aware about this issue and who spreads the news about this project amongst relatives and in their local area.

SOPA – Together for a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption - TRATAC

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The National Institute of Public Health is exclusively responsible for the content of this document. More about the SOPA project – Together for a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption – at www.sopa.si.

