

Media habits of young people may make them drink more -- what should be done?

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Media companies are increasingly targeting adolescents with TV shows that feature violence, alcohol and drugs. An interdisciplinary research project with researchers from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and colleagues from the U.K. is looking closer at how society and other actors should react to the link between young people's media habits and their alcohol consumption.

'There is a well-documented link between watching programmes that show [alcohol](#), such as TV reality shows, and increased drinking. But there isn't much research on what to do about it,' says Christian Munthe, Professor of Practical Philosophy and in charge of the Swedish part of the project.

The project, called Alcopop TV Culture, is funded by the European Commission's Daphne III program. It sets out to study the relationship between adolescents' (age 10-25) media habits and alcohol consumption. A central issue is how the responsibility for increased adolescent drinking should be allocated among different parties, such as state authorities, [media companies](#), companies in the [alcohol industry](#), families and the adolescents themselves.

'Our hypothesis is that the responsibility should be shared. The media companies have a major moral responsibility, but it is up to the government to decide on the accessibility of alcohol. Families and the adolescents themselves also have a certain responsibility.'

The goal of the project is to develop a draft policy roadmap on how to allocate shared responsibility for use across Europe. However, this is not an easy task. The explosive growth of the global [media landscape](#) (internet, social media, [satellite TV](#), the gaming industry etc.) implies that potential tools such as censorship, age limits and airtime regulations are becoming increasingly difficult to implement.

Another problem is that discussions about possible solutions are often carried out without any input from young people themselves. Thus, the researchers are meeting with adolescents in schools and various organisations in order to hear what they have to say about information campaigns about alcohol and the link between media habits and [alcohol consumption](#) – thereby offering an opportunity to reflect on their own media and drinking habits.

'It is pretty clear that adolescents often feel a bit belittled, for example, by societal campaigns and organisations that come to talk to them about alcohol. This is one reason why we have a Facebook and a Twitter page full of new research reports, news and debates. We hope that the [adolescents](#) will use the page both to gain information and to share their opinions,' says Munthe.

Alcopop TV Culture is a one-year project scheduled to end in February 2012. The project is a collaboration between the University of Gothenburg (Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of Science) and the Innovation in Society Unit at the University of Central Lancashire. Apart from Munthe, the Gothenburg team includes Karl Persson and Joakim Forsemalm, the latter linked to the School of Business, Economics and Law.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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