

**NordAN Conference 2004
Saturday October 9th**

**Democracy in a Bottle.
Attitudes towards Alcohol Regulation in the Baltic Sea Region.**

**Therese Reitan
Stockholm Centre on Health of Societies in Transition (SCOHOST)
University College of Southern Stockholm (Södertörns högskola)**

Publications:

Reitan, T., Does Alcohol Matter? Public Health in Russia and the Baltic Countries before, during, and after the Transition. *Contemporary Drug Problems* 27 (2000) 3: 511-560.

Reitan, T.C., The operation failed, but the patient survived. Varying assessments of the Soviet Union's last anti-alcohol campaign. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34 (2001) 2: 241-260.

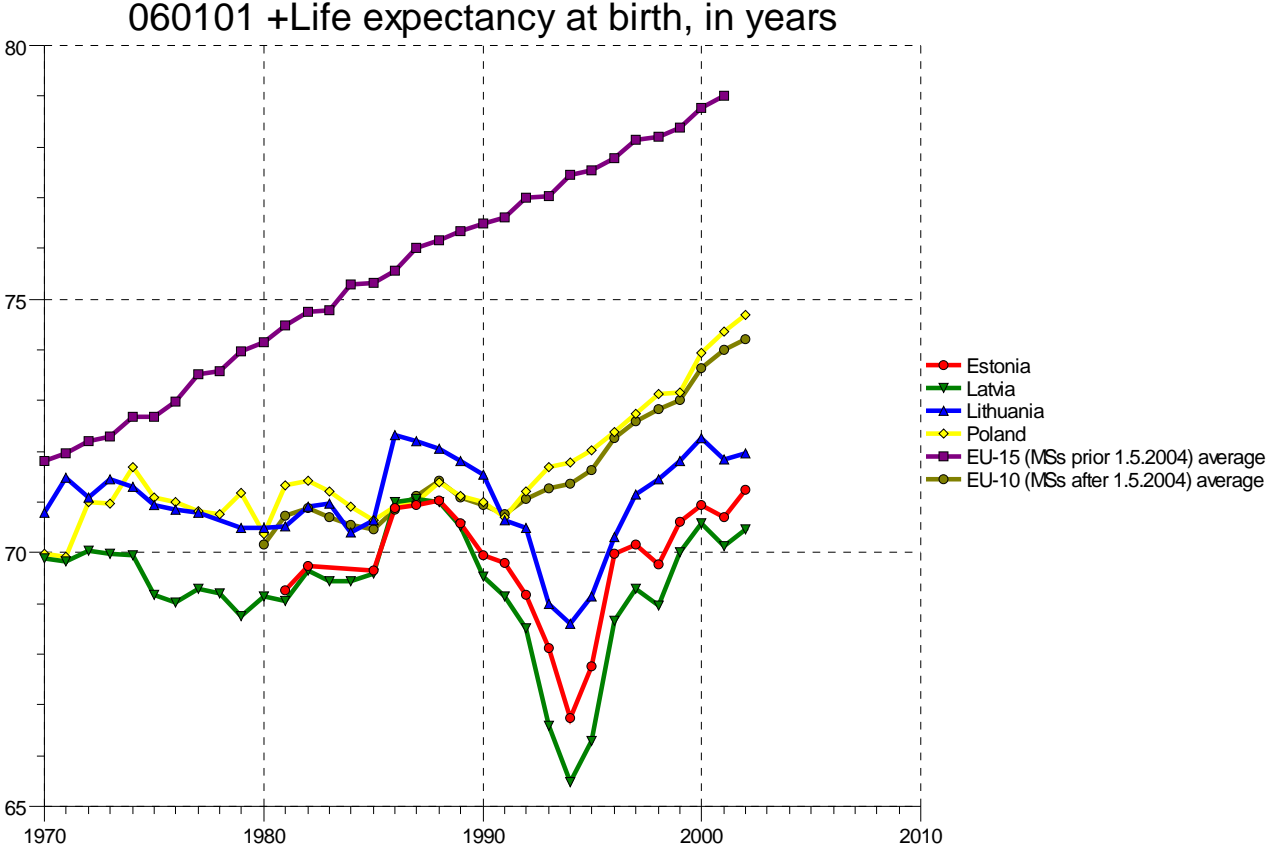
Reitan, T.C., Too sick to vote? Public health and voter turnout in Russia during the 1990s. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003) 1: 49-68.

Reitan, T.C., Democracy in a bottle. Attitudes towards alcohol regulation in the post-communist Baltic Sea region. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 34 (2003) 2: 131-158.

Reitan, T.C., On the verge of EU membership. Alcohol cultures in the Baltic Sea region in a European perspective. Forthcoming, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 2004.

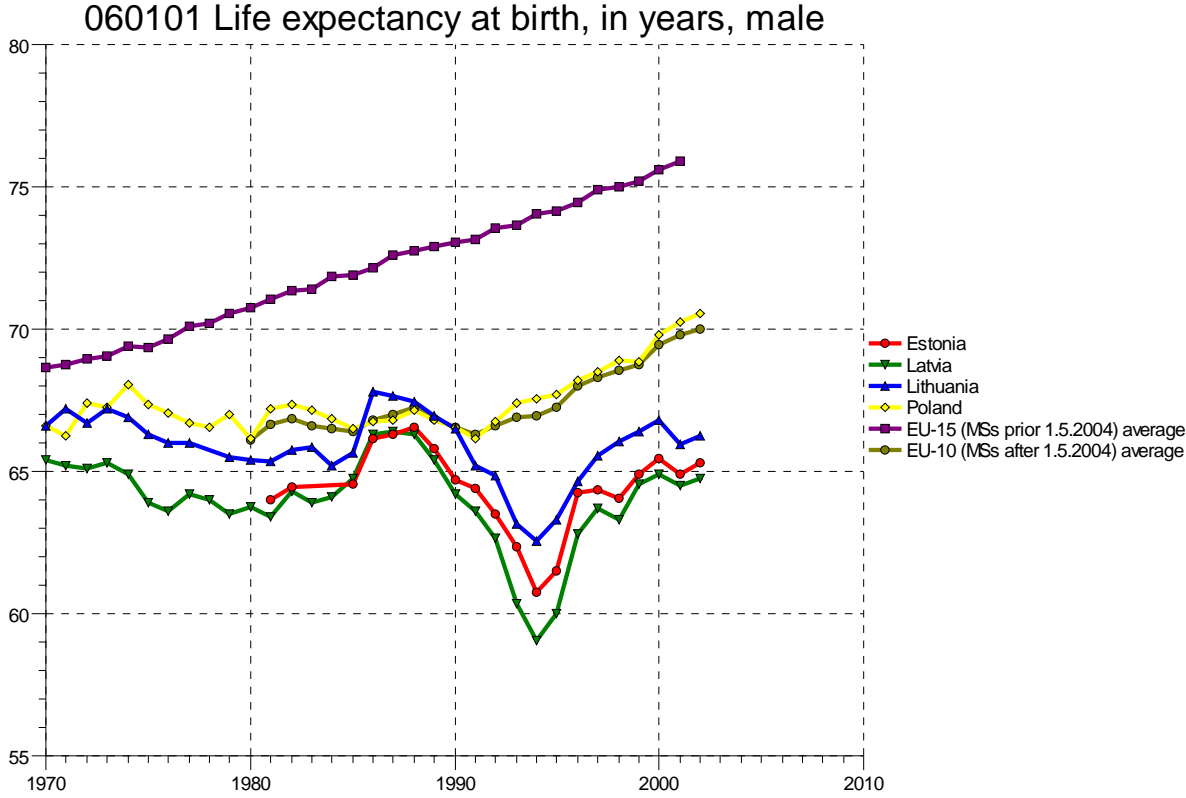
For further information, see SCOHOST home page at www.sh.se/scohost

FIGURE 1



Source: WHO Health for all database (www.who.dk/HFADB)

FIGURE 2



Source: WHO Health for all database (www.who.dk/HFADB)

Table 1 Population in old and new EU member states 1990-2002

	1990	1995	2002	Change 1990-2002
Austria	7 729 200	8 046 500	8 053 106	4.2
Belgium	9 967 400	10 136 800	10 332 785	3.7
Cyprus	579 400	650 700	709 600	22.5
Czech Republic	10 362 740	10 330 800	10 200 774	-1.6
Denmark	5 139 900	5 227 800	5 375 931	4.6
Estonia	1 569 174	1 436 634	1 358 644	-13.4
Finland	4 986 400	5 107 800	5 200 598	4.3
France	56 735 100	58 139 100	59 670 000	4.9
Germany	79 364 496	81 661 000	81 990 000	3.3
Greece	10 160 500	10 454 000	10 631 000	4.6
Hungary	10 373 988	10 328 965	10 158 608	-2.1
Ireland	3 502 700	3 601 300	3 917 200	11.8
Italy	57 661 300	57 300 800	57 450 000	-0.4
Latvia	2 663 151	2 485 056	2 338 624	-12.2
Lithuania	3 697 838	3 629 102	3 469 070	-6.2
Luxembourg	381 800	409 700	446 184	16.9
Malta	354 100	370 800	395 968	11.8
Netherlands	14 951 500	15 459 000	16 148 928	8.0
Poland	38 118 800	38 587 600	38 634 756	1.4
Portugal	9 896 200	9 916 500	10 368 403	4.7
Slovakia	5 297 774	5 363 676	5 379 161	1.5
Slovenia	1 999 900	1 983 012	1 995 718	-0.2
Spain	38 959 200	39 209 700	39 324 000	0.9
Sweden	8 558 800	8 827 000	8 925 000	4.3
United Kingdom	57 395 672	58 578 792	59 228 984	3.2
EU, old 15 members	365 390 176	372 075 776	377 662 112	3.4
EU, new 10 members	75 016 864	75 166 344	74 640 628	-0.5
EU, post-communist members ¹	74 083 365	74 144 845	73 535 355	-0.7

¹ Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

Why alcohol is likely to be associated with the public health crisis in former communist countries (Soviet republics)

Parallel development across countries

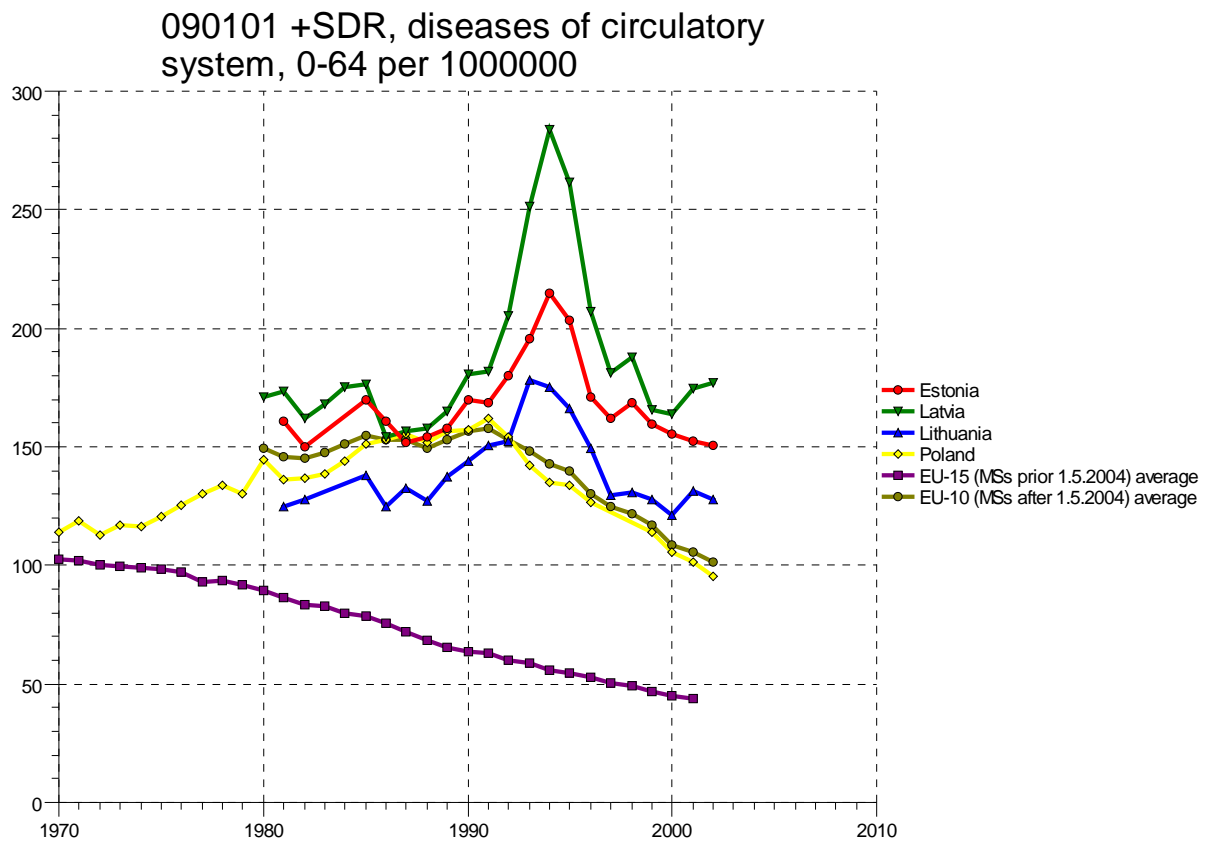
Sharp fluctuations related to varying alcohol policies (anti-alcohol campaign and following liberalizations)

Mortality rates particularly high among men in working ages

Mortality increases particularly in European parts of former Soviet Union

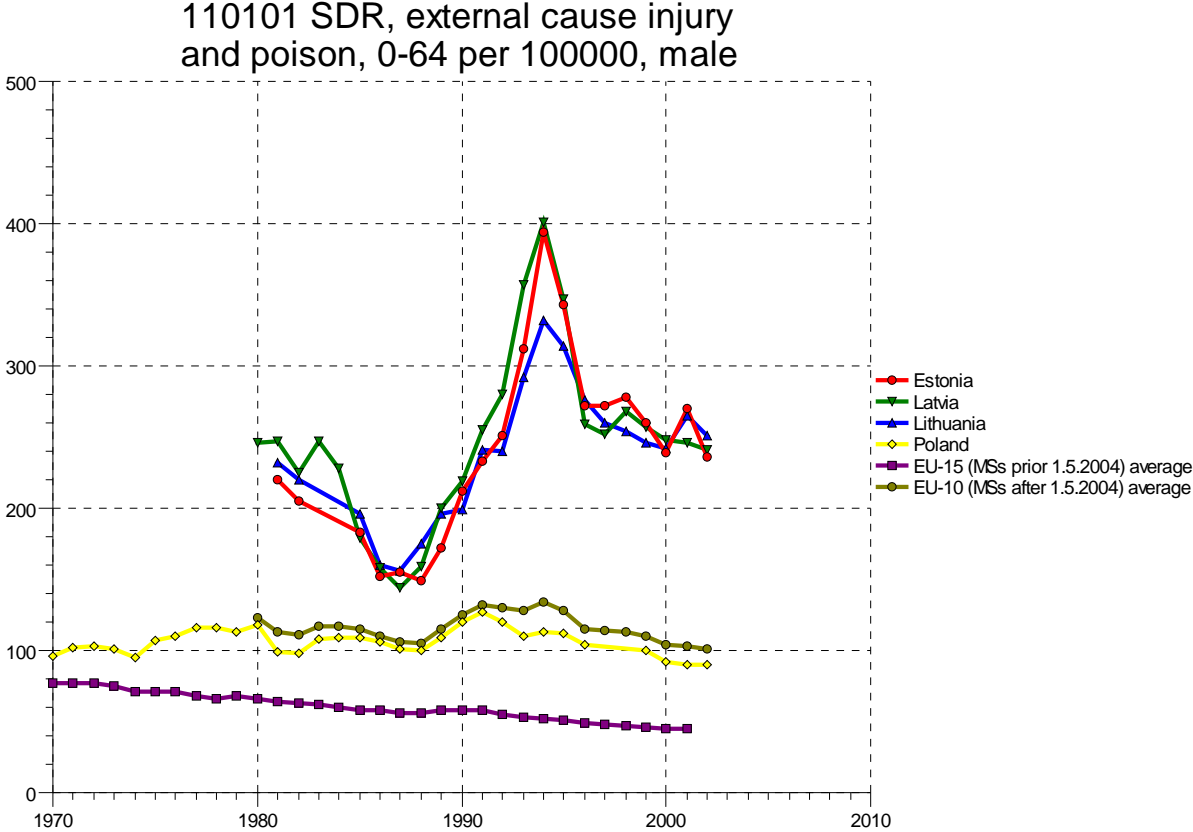
Causes of death are alcohol-related: circulatory diseases, external causes

FIGURE 3



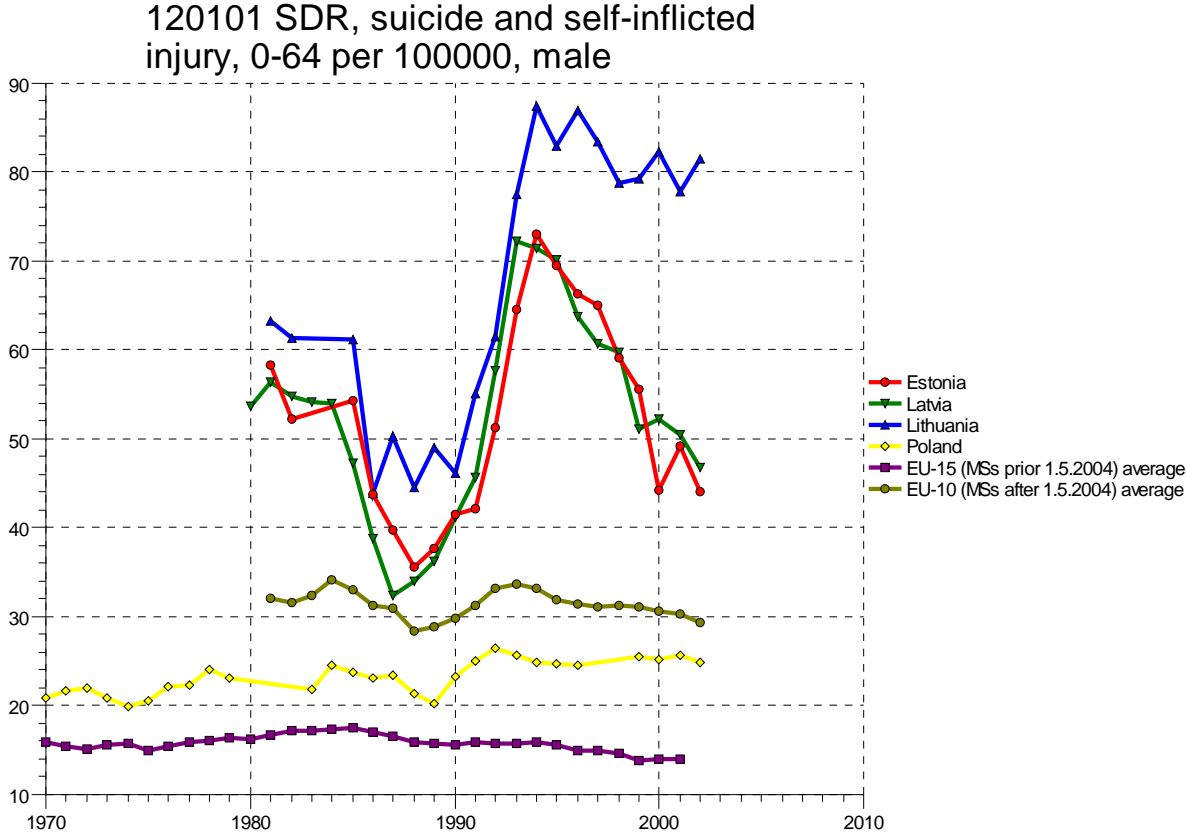
Source: WHO Health for all database (www.who.dk/HFADB)

FIGURE 4



Source: WHO Health for all database (www.who.dk/HFADB)

FIGURE 5



Source: WHO Health for all database (www.who.dk/HFADB)

Table 2 Perception of alcohol-related problems.
Percent considering problem very serious, by gender.

	Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania		Poland	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Alcohol-related health problems	38	25	60	42	46	34	49	41
Alcohol-related domestic violence	46	28	64	49	69	49	74	60
Drinking and driving	60	51	76	65	71	60	79	67
Alcohol smuggling	48	48	55	54	46	38	44	41
Availability of poor quality illicit alcohol	55	52	63	60	54	44	45	39
Drinking among children and youths	74	68	81	76	77	67	77	69
Drug problems	86	84	90	86	87	80	84	75
N	656	458	549	551	576	554	552	516

Table 3 Attitudes towards regulation of alcohol Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland.
Percent who strongly agree to statements about alcohol policy, by country and gender.

	Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania		Poland	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
The government has a responsibility to keep alcohol consumption down	34	26	50	32	24	13	36	27
The number of outlets selling alcohol should be reduced	30	18	41	25	12	9	35	18
Advertising of alcohol should be restricted	46	37	51	37	15	12	41	28
The state should have monopoly on alcohol sale	49	42	55	54	19	16	43	36
Home distillation should be legal	12	18	14	15	8	14	16	19
Taxes and duties on alcohol are too high	24	39	8	15	7	11	28	42
There should be strict blood alcohol limits for drivers	77	71	85	74	62	53	93	84
N	656	458	549	551	576	554	571	529

Table 4 Attitudes towards government responsibility for limiting alcohol consumption, by country¹.

Country	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Finland	13	24	20	42	1
France	36	21	12	26	4
Germany	12	16	27	42	2
Italy	48	29	11	11	1
Sweden	38	36	7	18	1
UK	20	26	26	24	3
Estonia	31	30	22	9	7
Latvia	41	31	17	6	5
Lithuania	19	33	26	7	15
Poland	31	29	14	22	4

¹ Respondents in the ECAS countries were asked to react to the following statement: “The government has a responsibility to minimize how much people drink”. Data were retrieved from Hemström, Leifman, and Ramstedt: “The ECAS-survey on drinking patterns and alcohol-related problems”, in: Norström (ed): *Alcohol in Postwar Europe. Consumption, Drinking Patterns, Consequences and Policy Responses in 15 European Countries*. Stockholm: National Institute for Public Health, 2002. The corresponding statement in the Baltic survey was: “The government has a responsibility to keep alcohol consumption down”.

Table 5 Average number of harms and proportion (%) reporting adverse consequences of own alcohol use during past year, by country and gender¹

	N	Average number harms	At least one harm	Considered cutting down	Alcohol harmed health	Regretted things said or done	Got into a fight	Been in accident	Alcohol harmed work or studies ²	Alcohol harmed home life/ marriage
MEN										
Finland	463	0.93	47	33	17	25	4	3	5	7
Sweden	508	0.54	36	11	8	26	1	4	3	2
Germany	451	0.51	34	18	17	7	6	1	3	3
UK	434	0.95	45	25	19	28	8	4	9	7
France	431	0.58	27	15	18	13	2	4	3	3
Italy	441	0.43	18	11	10	5	1	2	6	4
Estonia	412	1.21	47	17	27	25	5	11	7	18
Latvia	462	1.60	57	30	42	27	6	8	5	28
Lithuania	486	1.86	54	30	37	35	12	16	11	31
Poland	438	0.90	41	10	25	22	7	2	10	9
WOMEN										
Finland	444	0.50	29	19	7	17	1	1	2	3
Sweden	417	0.28	19	6	6	13	1	1	1	1
Germany	393	0.33	20	12	10	6	2	1	2	2
UK	406	0.61	33	20	9	22	4	3	4	5
France	363	0.20	12	5	8	4	0	0	0	0
Italy	389	0.17	9	4	4	4	0	0	2	1
Estonia	446	0.44	22	7	11	12	0	3	1	5
Latvia	323	0.48	23	9	17	11	2	2	1	6
Lithuania	419	1.01	27	13	22	16	9	12	9	12
Poland	313	0.35	22	5	15	7	1	1	2	5

¹ ECAS data retrieved from Ramstedt: “Alcohol consumption and the experience of adverse consequences – a comparison of six European countries”, *Contemporary Drug Problems* 29(2002)3: 549-575.

² The phrasing was somewhat different in the two studies.

Table 6 Alcohol norms and expectancies, by country¹.
Percent strongly or somewhat agreeing.

	It doesn't matter how much you drink as long as you don't show the effects ²	People who are drunk should not be considered as responsible for their actions as when they are sober ³	Anyone might become violent after drinking too much/Anyone can become an alcoholic
Finland	29	31	45
Sweden	22	23	54
Germany	24	36	66
UK	17	20	53
France	16	11	65
Italy	25	48	73
Estonia	39	63	45
Latvia	31	65	62
Lithuania	54	53	56
Poland	49	58	70

1 Data from ECAS countries retrieved from Room & Bullock: "Can alcohol expectancies and attributions explain Western Europe's north-south gradient in alcohol's role in violence?", *Contemporary Drug Problems* 29(2002)3: 619-648.

2 Phrasing in Baltic survey: "It doesn't matter how much people drink as long as they don't show the effects"

3 Phrasing in Baltic survey: "A drunk person is not as responsible for the consequences of his/her actions as a sober person".