Does Alcohol Policy Affect Alcohol Related Diseases?
A Comparative Analysis for 15 European Countries
Jan Bentzen, Valdemar Smith
Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus
jb@asb.dk, vs@asb.dk

Abstract:

Since the 1960s wine consumption has decreased dramatically in especially the Southern European countries whereas the countries in the northern parts of Europe have experienced a substitution from beer and spirits toward wines. In this sense there has been a process of convergence taking place regarding per capita consumption of wine among the European countries. Also for the total consumption of alcohol, i.e. the per capita consumption of beer, wine and spirits, a hypothesis of convergence seems to hold.

In the same time span the number of alcohol related diseases as e.g. liver diseases, have changes relatively much – and in the same direction as the developments in alcohol consumption. The changes in the consumption levels of alcohol - and wine – are influenced by many factors but the health arguments have probably been the most influential and generally, the alcohol policies of the European countries have become more restrictive during the last decades.

Using data for alcohol consumption, alcohol related diseases and alcohol policies of 16 European countries the questions of whether policies affect the intake of alcohol and whether alcohol is associated with (liver) diseases are discussed. From the empirical analysis there seems to be some evidence of both effects – that a restrictive alcohol policy is associated with decreasing levels of alcohol consumption, and that the latter is significantly related to the development in liver diseases.

Paper prepared for the VDQS Oenométrie XV Meeting in Collioure (France), May 2008.