

**NordAN resolution: Airline companies should ban free alcohol**

**NordAN resolution adopted at the 2012 General Assembly in Malmö (Sweden).**



Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN), with over 80 member organisations from Nordic and Baltic countries, call airline companies to rethink their policies on alcohol and end giving out free alcohol on board as alcohol is no ordinary commodity and may cause serious problems in this extraordinary situation.

Most airlines do have a policy on alcohol. This usually comprises not admitting onboard intoxicated persons and not serving excessive amounts. However, experience shows that airline staff often do not adhere to policies, one reason being that they have pressure to be service-minded. Many examples can be found on persons who have become intoxicated on flights to the point of posing a threat to passengers and the flight itself.

Alcohol is no ordinary commodity and flight altitude is no ordinary condition for human beings. Changes in air pressure, fatigue from flying, and especially dehydration all cause alcohol to be more potent than usual. With less water in the body, the effect of alcohol will be stronger, leading to quicker intoxication and increased potential for a hangover. People feeling thirsty may also drink more alcohol instead of water, when served freely.

Flying is a stressful event for many and alcohol may only heighten this stressful experience. Under increasingly stressful conditions, too much alcohol can make a simple annoyance into a serious problem.

Majority of people avoid places where others are drinking and getting drunk. Anywhere else, you can walk away from an unruly drunk. But not on a plane.

People who do not want to consume alcohol or be harassed by others who drink and especially children who also fly should be protected from this.

As alcohol is an addictive substance there are many recovering alcoholics travelling among others. They also might otherwise knowingly avoid places where alcohol is served, especially for free, and for them, any flight could become a place for possible relapse.

Especially in the Nordic countries where alcohol availability is decreased through the monopoly retail system and restrictive alcohol policy has been successful in cutting alcohol-related harms, serving free alcohol in aeroplanes clearly contradicts policies that are enforced on the ground.

For these reasons, NordAN believes that flying should be made safe for everybody, and limiting access to alcohol is an important step. Requiring payment for alcohol drinks is at least one way to restrict access, if not totally abandoning. Staff should also be appropriately trained to serve limited amounts. We also think that if alcohol is sold it is not ethical to put commercial interests above safety and public health.