

Draft resolutions for NordAN GA 2026

Resolution proposal nr 1

Towards more comparable alcohol data in the Nordic and Baltic countries

Reliable data is essential for understanding alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm and the effects of alcohol policy. However, alcohol data from Nordic and Baltic countries are often difficult to compare, not to mention with the wider Europe and the world.

Countries use different definitions, data sources and calculation methods. For example, total consumption may be estimated using surveys or sales data, legal sales may exclude unrecorded or cross-border purchases, and age-specific data may be collected or reported differently. This applies not only to estimates of alcohol consumption, but also to alcohol-related deaths, hospitalisations and other harms. In some countries, important information is incomplete, published irregularly or not available at all.

As a result, differences between countries may reflect differences in methodology rather than real differences in consumption or harm. This makes it harder to identify trends, evaluate policies, learn from one another and communicate the scale of alcohol-related problems accurately.

NordAN calls on Nordic and Baltic governments, statistical authorities, public health institutions and relevant regional bodies to:

- improve the availability and regular publication of alcohol-related data;
- make definitions and calculation methods clear and transparent;
- strengthen cooperation and the comparability of key indicators across countries;
- and work towards more consistent methods for measuring alcohol consumption, deaths and other alcohol-related harms.

Better and more comparable data would support stronger research, more informed public debate and more effective alcohol policy across the Nordic and Baltic region.

Resolution proposal nr 2

Protecting young people through strong alcohol age limits

Age limits are one of the basic safeguards of alcohol policy. They recognise that children and young people are particularly vulnerable to alcohol-related harm and should be protected from early exposure, easy availability and alcohol-centred environments.

However, alcohol-related age limits are increasingly being questioned or weakened in different ways. Proposals may concern lowering the minimum purchase age, allowing younger people to sell or serve alcohol, or expanding their employment in bars, restaurants and other settings where alcohol use is central.

These changes may be presented as practical solutions to labour shortages, employment barriers or inconsistencies in existing legislation, and are sometimes framed as helping young people gain their

first work experience or as an expression of trust in young people. However, economic and administrative arguments should not outweigh the protection of young people. Lowering age limits may increase young people's exposure to alcohol, place them in situations involving intoxicated customers, increase the likelihood that they start drinking at an earlier age, and weaken the wider public health message that alcohol is not an ordinary product.

Strengthening the evidence base for alcohol policy

In recent years, the scientific evidence on the negative effects of alcohol has grown significantly. Research continues to demonstrate clear links between alcohol use and a wide range of health and social harms, including impacts on brain development, mental health, injury risk and long-term disease. Young people are particularly vulnerable, as their bodies and brains are still developing, making early exposure especially harmful.

This expanding evidence base reinforces the importance of maintaining strong and effective alcohol policies. Rather than providing justification for weakening existing measures, it clearly supports the need to uphold and, where necessary, strengthen protections such as age limits.

In light of this, there is no evidence-based rationale for lowering age limits or otherwise reducing safeguards that protect young people from alcohol-related harm. On the contrary, policy decisions should reflect the growing body of knowledge and prioritise prevention, health and safety over short-term economic or political considerations.

While it is important to recognise and support young people's growing independence and capacity for responsibility, trust should be expressed in ways that do not expose them to unnecessary risk, especially in a field where there are already longstanding and widely recognised problems related to youth and alcohol. Providing safe, age-appropriate opportunities for work, participation and decision-making is a more constructive way to build trust than placing young people in environments where alcohol use is central. Protecting young people through clear age limits does not undermine trust; rather, it reflects a commitment to their wellbeing and acknowledges that safeguarding their health and development must remain the priority.

NordAN calls on governments and legislators in the Nordic and Baltic countries to:

- maintain strong minimum age limits for purchasing alcohol, and in countries with low limits, work towards increasing them;
- prohibit the employment of young people in conditions that require them to sell, serve or handle alcohol in inappropriate or unsafe environments;
- assess proposed changes from a public health, child protection and occupational safety perspective;
- ensure effective age verification and enforcement, including in distance sales and home delivery;
- and avoid weakening established safeguards in response to short-term economic or commercial interests.

Strong and consistent age limits are one of the cornerstones of effective alcohol policy, helping to delay the onset of alcohol use, reduce harm and make clear that the protection of children and young people must remain a central priority of alcohol policy.