

**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**  
**FACULTY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Luigi Gagliardini

**ALCOHOL POLICY IN ITALY AND FINLAND**

*A Comparative Perspective*

Master's Thesis in  
Public Administration

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**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA****Faculty of Public Administration**

**Author:** Luigi Gagliardini  
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**ABSTRACT:**

The consumption of alcohol is often a burden for the society due to the negative effects it provokes and the consequent direct and indirect costs it causes to governments. On the other hand, alcohol is also an ordinary commodity which has been present in many cultures for centuries. Today, governments can engage the problem of alcohol in relation to excessive consumption with alcohol policies formed by different instruments aimed at limiting its detrimental effects.

In this research, public policies are considered as means for the safeguard of the public health. The method used is characterized by a comparative analysis of Finnish and Italian alcohol policies drawn from four sub-categories of policy instruments: market restrictions, market regulation, marketing control and environmental control. Therefore, alcohol policies are studied under a regulative point of view by describing the policy actions undertaken by Italian and Finnish governments. Laws and regulations are the most powerful instrument governments can use in order to pursue its values and alcohol policies are regulative in nature in the sense that their implementation strictly depends on the promulgation of norms aimed at imposing a certain behaviour on the citizens.

The research shows that Italian and Finnish social contexts in which alcohol policies are implemented are not equal. Finnish drinking patterns provoke relevantly higher direct and indirect costs. Issues related to alcohol consumption are also perceived differently in Finland and in Italy, both by citizens and governments. As a result, Finnish alcohol policy is relevantly stricter than the Italian. In both cases however, government behaviour seems to give into national culture although actions and inactions are motivated by different values. In this respect, the cultural variable as well as other socio-economic factors play a crucial role in defining the behaviour of both the government and its citizens, notwithstanding scientific acknowledgement about the effectiveness of certain policy instruments. Also, in spite of noble declarations, public health motivations are usually the weakest in influencing alcohol policies in both the cases of Italy and Finland.

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**KEYWORDS:** alcohol policy, public administration, Italy, Finland.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate what public executives in Italy and Finland do in order to prevent alcohol-related problems. Today, governments have in their hands a certain number of effective tools which can be used to reduce alcohol-related harm. However, different governments make different use of these instruments in terms of intensity while some governments use them only partially or not at all. Firstly, this is due to the intensity of the problem of alcohol in a nation and especially to the perception of the problem by public opinion and public administrators. In other words, as argued by Peters and van Nispen (1998: 50), the first problem which arises in choosing the right policy instruments is that *“a connection needs to be made between the effectiveness of policy instruments and the conditions”*.

Secondly, the choice in the use and the intensity of each different instrument derives from political, economical as well as cultural and social factors. In fact, as it will be explained later, not only elected and appointed officials and individual citizens have the power of influencing the public agenda. Rather, also other public and private institutions can create tensions in the alcohol policy formation as in any other public policy. In other words, as argued by Peters and van Nispen (1998: 208), often *“the selection of instruments (...) has nothing to do with optimization”*. In addition, often different policy instruments are not coordinated to realize common goals and values. In general in fact, all public policies usually provoke unexpected outcomes which then lead to contrasting results. Consequently, public policies become ineffective according to the aims prescribed before the implementation. Put more simply, very often other problems arise after public policy implementation, resulting in the failure in achieving the objective the public policy was implemented for. Furthermore, these problems can be noticed only *ex post* and, consequently, only a limited number of options of policy solutions can be successfully predicted *ex ante*.

According to Leichter (1979: 11), governments can engage in five different varieties of public policy activities: distributive (policies that involve the provision and allocation of goods and services), extractive (policies aimed at the collection of revenues), symbolic (policies that regulate the allocation of status and institutionalise achievement), regulatory (policies that involve at different degrees the control of human behaviour), administrative (policies that involve the organization of government). Alcohol policies, as it will explained later in the research, are regulative policies in the fact that through laws and regulations they control citizens behaviour.

In this research, I will analyse Italian and Finnish alcohol policies from a regulative point of view and will provide a comparison of the particular regulative outputs which constitute the whole. An alcohol policy output is a norm or regulation issued by the government which imposes a particular behaviour to its citizens. Therefore, it is also an instrument used by the government to reach the values to which a nation wants to comply. Consequently, I will enlighten the analogies and differences of the policy outputs in order to discover the reasons beyond each action, eventually relating in some cases policy outputs with policy impacts and outcomes. Generally speaking, this is equivalent to an analysis of the *status quo*. The analysis will be drawn according to four different sub-categories of policy instruments, each of them is regulative in nature as well as concerned with the control of the commodity of alcohol, from the production to the distribution and consumption. If the declared objective of alcohol policies is to limit alcohol-related problems, however it can often be observed also by a normal citizen that different policy outputs are often incoherent and contrasting. Comparing two different alcohol policies will enable us to enlighten main differences and similarities and therefore governments' general scopes and objectives will be clarified.

## 1.2. Methods of the study

The main purpose of this research is to analyse alcohol policies in Italy and Finland through a detailed comparison of the regulative premises of the two. According to Dunn (2004: 1) policy analysis is:

*“a process of multidisciplinary inquiry designed to create, critically assess, and communicate information that is useful in understanding and improving policies.”*

Therefore, as stated by Leichter (1979: 8), policy analysis should focus on the reasons causing certain kind of actions of governments, the purpose of these actions, the actions themselves and finally the consequences of the actions. However, this process is nothing but dispendious, long and very complicated, if useful at all. In fact, it is almost impossible to make a complete and comprehensive research which would include all the topics stated above. More in particular, it is very difficult to understand, explain and therefore communicate the behaviour of executives and the primary causes of certain actions, where actions are considered as consequences of a decision-making process. In fact, as stated by Lynn (1987: 161), public policies do not happen instantly after a single decision or after a systematic plan of action, rather they emerge over time as a whole as the product of multiple choices.

That is why, according to Lynn (1987: 24–28), it is extremely difficult to just describe *what* public executives do and, at the same time, practically impossible to describe *why* they do it. This is also due to the fact that government as a whole is somehow unimportant or inconsequential in the formation of public policy. Secondly, decision-making processes and more in particular good decision-making processes are indeterminate practices that cannot be labelled in any conventional model based on causes and effects. In fact, for example, the rational model which is often used as a basis for the explanation of the behaviour of public executives, is incomplete and lacks of empirical support. On the other hand, the models of leadership and management are untied from the environment in which public executives are interacting with. As a consequence management and leadership models are inserted in a vacuum and therefore are also incomplete, lacking considerations for instance about economic as well as social variables.

However, by investigating *what* is done by public executives, it is possible to a certain degree to discover *why* they do it. Examining *what* is done by public executives is synonymous of describing the status quo, therefore the focus of this research will be on monitoring policy actions in relation with the issue of alcohol. As stated by Dunn (2004:

284), monitoring is central to policy analysis and it is a way of approach towards the control over the variations of policy actions. Moreover, monitoring is aimed at investigating the status quo also due to the fact that it requires the use of available information and thus it does not need new information. It goes without saying that consequently, the method used in order to understand the reasons beyond policy actions will be mainly inductive. More in particular, we will rely on descriptive (both quantitative and qualitative) data about actual situations and behaviour and through inductive reasoning will move from particular observations to general considerations.

In this respect the comparative method is crucial, in fact, according to Sartori (1970: 1035) “*to compare is to control*”. Moreover, the comparison of one country’s policy with another will enable us to improve the “*understanding of possible choices and their limitations*” (Jreisat 2002: 81).

In other words, the research based on the comparative method will also be useful for understanding which is the degree of involvement of governments in the society as well as how much the state interferes in the regulation of the free market. More in particular, comparative analysis will inform us about the government control on the individual autonomy and possibly the reasons lying beyond the situation observed. Finally, although this is not the declared scope of this particular research, through the comparative method, information about public policy actions that work or do not work can be evinced and consequently public policies can be improved. (Jreisat 2002: 96.)

### 1.3. Limits of the study

According to Dunn (2004), the first step to be taken in analysing public policy is the definition of the problem. In this case, a problem is considered as having a normative value in the fact that it is defined by the impossibility of realization of an improvement that it can be attained through policy action (Dunn 2004: 4). This implies the preconception of the ineffectiveness of the policy considered due to the evidence of a problem in the society. It also means that policy analysis is aimed at the resolution of

the problem after it has been evidenced, studied and a plan has been made in order to solve it. Although this research was firstly thought to be drawn from the starting point of the general ineffectiveness of alcohol policies, however the problem of ineffectiveness was felt as explicit through intuition and personal experiences rather than through scientific evidence. This is the reason why the research is limited to the study of the status quo rather than being a complex and complete policy analysis. In any case, observing, describing the status quo and comparing two public policies will clarify the situation and eventually the nature of the problem. In other words, notwithstanding the impossibility of prescribing solutions, the comparative analysis will enlighten modes of actions and will be useful in understanding the problem better, if any problem has to be found.

More explicitly, this research will be limited to the interpretation of the concrete policy actions of the governments (see Lynn 1987: 44) or, better, to the structuring of the problem (see Dunn 2004) through comparative analysis and will therefore omit all the successive steps for a successful policy analysis. In fact, according to Dunn (2004), policy analysis is constituted of different phases which are (in chronological order): structuring policy problems, forecasting expected policy outcomes, recommending preferred policies, monitoring observed policy outcomes, evaluating policy performance, developing policy arguments and finally communicating policy analysis.

Another limit is faced within the use of the comparative method. According to Jreisat (2002: 51), a comparative research is composed of three different types of information: descriptive, explanatory, prescriptive. However, this research will engage mainly the first kind of information as in fact, as stated by Jreisat (2002: 51), descriptive information mainly deals with the "*facts of the situation*". Albeit its apparent simplicity, descriptive information requires in its gathering also evaluation of the facts, e.g. it requires value judgements regarding which kind of information is relevant and which is not. Therefore, even if this first step is made at a ground level, it is crucial in providing a successful policy analysis. Sequentially, also explanatory information will be provided. According to Jreisat (2002), explanatory information gathering involves the investigation of the *why* lying beyond the descriptive information and it is mainly

served by reasoned judgements. That is in fact the inductive method mentioned earlier. Moreover, according (Jreisat 2002: 82), a correct comparative public policy analysis should study the “*how, why, and to what effect different governments pursue particular courses of action or inaction*”.

According to Jreisat (2002: 82–83) the *how* refers to the mode of operation of the governmental structures, the *why* to the motivational factors and finally the *to what effect* to the impact or outcome of the policy. Few remarks are needed here. First of all, this framework is provided for the analysis of a general public policy of a government, that is, to the analysis of the whole system of governance of a state and its degree of democratization. Consequently, it is only partly applicable to the study of a particular public policy like an alcohol policy. Secondly, it does not consider what are the measures adopted by the government, what the government actually does in order to accomplish certain results, despite the decision-making process, the reasons behind the decisions and the results of these decisions. However, it does explain that a public policy analysis should focus also on the results of the policy and to its effects (the *to what effect* voice).

Yet, in this research we will not investigate the effects of the alcohol policies, or not into details, since that would require a too extended work compared to the space at disposal. In fact, in order to discover the payoff of a policy, the relation between the outcome of the policy (outcome is intended as the actions and inactions of a government) and its impact on the society have to be discovered. In other words, the relation between means and ends has to be explicated and quantified through technical tools. Furthermore, it does not only require the discovery of this relation, but also the analysis of the relation itself in order to evaluate its efficiency relatively to the scope ascribed to the policy. Finally, if a comparison has to be drawn, then also the study of the explication of the two or more policies compared has to be provided. Obviously, this type of complex work would require the collaboration of experts of many and disparate fields (sociology, statistics, history, public health, just to mention few) and a long study. In our case however, this is not possible.

## 2. FROM PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TO POLICY INSTRUMENTS

### 2.1. The development of public administration

If compared with other sciences, Public Administration is a relatively recent one. As a matter of fact, Public Administration was born with a paper written by Woodrow Wilson in June 1887 titled *The Study of Public Administration* (see Golembiewski 1977 Harmon & Mayer 1986; Shafritz, Hyde & Parker 2004). Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States of America and noble price winner for peace. According to Wilson (2004: 29) “*Public administration is detailed and systematic execution of public law*”. In this brief definition the distinction between politics and administration is already clear, as in fact he continues by stating that “*The broad plans of governmental action are not administrative; the detailed execution of such plans is administrative*” (Wilson 2004: 29). The consequence of such thinking will be the famous (in Public Administration science) dichotomy between politics and administration, which lasted for many decades, where politics were considered the art of deciding as opposed to administration, namely the art of doing or, as stated by Simon (1997: 1) “*the arts of getting things done*”.

The science of Public Administration has developed throughout almost hundred and fifty years of life and it has inevitably encountered many changes in focus of attention, scope, means and objectives. Robert T. Golembiewski (1997) tries to sum up the categories of Public Administration characterising its last half-century of life until the 70s (the period in which he published his work titled *Public Administration as a Developing Discipline*). He distinguishes (Golembiewski 1977: 8–28) four different phases in the development of Public Administration which is therefore seen as a dynamic science, ever changing in a sort of line of continuity throughout the years. According to Golembiewski (1977: 8) the basic themes of the four phases can be described as follow:

- Phase 1: “*analytic distinction of politics from administration*”
- Phase 2: “*concrete distinction of politics from administration*”.

- Phase 3: “*science of management*”.
- Phase 4: “*public policy orientation*”.

Phase 1 is a first period of thinking mostly based upon the work of Frank Goodnow, in particular upon his *Public and Administration*.

In reporting the ideas of Frank Goodnow, Golembiewski (1977: 10–11) states that in this first period, politics and administration are considered as two ideal categories. Each of them embraces different functions of the government. Furthermore, these functions are performed in different institutional places and at different levels. In other words, politics and administration are distinct one from the other while at the same time can both be present into all the three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial), at different degrees. In any case, politics has to do with policies and with the decision-making process regarding the policies. On the other hand, administration is the actual implementation and execution of the policies prescribed by politics.

As stated by Golembiewski (1977: 11–12), in phase 2 we face a more concrete distinction of politics from administration. In the literature of this period, public administration still focuses on both politics and administration. However, politics and administration are now thought to be performed in different places while, as stated above, it was not the same in the previous phase. In this case, politics are and take place in the institutional places of legislatures in which the members of the executive materially interact. On the other hand, administration is performed in the public bureaucracy and therefore does not have any policy-making functions. Beside the distinction between politics and administration, phase 1 and phase 2 have also in common the distinction of public from private in relation with the concept of administration. In other words, the distinction regards the definition of two different administrative spheres in human organizations: the sphere of private business and the public sphere. This last consideration leads us to the further third phase of the science of Public Administration.

According to Golembiewski (1977: 13), the new current of thinking patent in phase 3 was characterized by the science of management. This was the result of the important works of Herbert Simon whose *Administrative Behaviour* (see 1997) forced the attention of scholars to be put on a new definition of the general decision-making schema. In fact, according to Simon (1997: 1) the study of administration cannot be disconnected from the study of the decision-making processes. If before the term administration was used to emphasize the work of doing of all administrative organizations in contraposition with the work of deciding, with Simon both administration and politics require an analysis of the deciding process. This is due to the fact that decisions are taken within an organizational environment in which the presence of members of the organization influence the decision-making process in different ways at different levels.

However, according to Golembiewski (1977: 18) this switch in the focus of attention from the “*doing*” to the “*deciding*” in the premises of Public Administration still implies the perpetuation of the politics and administration dichotomy. In particular, this is due to the distinction made by Simon between fact and value or, better, between value judgements and factual judgments. In fact, according to Golembiewski (1977: 18) this schema parallels Goodnow’s distinction between politics and administration where the former corresponds to what Simon calls value and the latter to what Simon calls fact. Anyway, this distant diatribe is not useful in defining the premises of Public Administration and, may be allowed to note here that if a concept has to be overcome by newer and more progressive thinking, this will not happen quickly but inevitably in gradual small steps. And this can be said also for the solvability of the public and administration dichotomy. Undoubtedly, Simon’s contribution is in this case particularly important.

In any case, the common idea of phase 3 literature is the focus on the science of management as synonymous of public administration. As argued by Golembiewski (1977: 13–16), if in phase 1 and 2 public administration and private administration were clearly differentiated, in phase 3 they overlap and are unified by beliefs on common values. In other words “*administration is administration*” (Golembiewski 1977: 14) and

the attention has to be put solely on its principles rather than on its being public or private. It is important to notice here that the aforementioned principles have nothing to do with the ideological proverbs of public administration (Hyyryläinen 2006) and have a more technical and technological characterization. As a result, Public Administration becomes a field of inquiry built on the integration of many other scientific fields and swallows (or is swallowed by) political science, economic, sociology and psychology.

## 2.2. The public policy approach in public administration

Most important for our concern is the most recent approach towards the study of Public Administration, defined by Golembiewski (1977: 24) as the “*public policy approach*”. We can say in general terms that this phase of the study of Public Administration is a post-World War II phenomenon which united under one broad issue both Political Science and Public Administration. In other words, in this phase the attention has been mostly directed toward policy-making processes, political processes, policy analysis and therefore also toward specific public programs, where the latter are considered as the result of government activity.

According to Golembiewski (1977: 82), the public policy orientation is characterized by three varieties of the same theme:

- Public policy as a guiding metaphor.
- Descriptive policy analysis.
- Prescriptive policy analysis.

The explanation given by Golembiewski (1977: 82) about public policy as a guiding metaphor is very general and is defined as the usage “*of public policy as a convenient shorthand for a broad scholarly community of interest*”, where the expression “*community of interest*” refers to the scientific world of political science and public administration. Three narrower explanations are given further in relation with the public policy approach as a guiding metaphor. In the following description I will consider only

two, leaving apart the last one regarding the study of public policy as defining a field of inquiry. This is due to two reasons: firstly the difficult usability of the model, considered by Golembiewski (1977: 95–98) himself too general, and secondly the fact that it does not support the scope of this thesis.

The first explanation refers to an early usage of case studies borrowing this technique from policy research in political science. Here, case studies are seen as both processes and politics and are the means through which ties between Political Science and Public Administration are reinforced (Golembiewski 1977: 85):

*“Consider how case studies required an integration of empirical and value concerns, as via the notion of “public interest”. The complex relationships between interest groups, legislatures, and administrative agencies were highlighted on a case-by-case basis; the fact-value mix was inescapably demonstrated by tying concern with “public interest” to specific administrative ways of seeking the good civic life; and the subtle interplay of policy development and implementation was established by the ebb and flow of real-time narratives.”*

Secondly, a more structured analysis of public policies has been developed and refers to a very broad domain, summed up by Golembiewski (1977: 87) into two narrower themes such as impact analysis of specific policies and more ambitious analysis of classes of policies. For what concerns impact analysis, there is a general agreement on the definition of the term impact, considered for example by Leichter (1979: 7) as the *“consequences of governmental activity”*. The analysis of the impact of a public policy is necessarily the measurements of the success or failure of the policy considered in relation with different variables. Put simply, this means that policy analysis seeks to discover if a particular public policy do what is intended and if it is cause of unexpected consequences. Even though it sounds simple, this kind of analysis is an extremely complex duty in terms of methods used, and in terms of the numerous areas of investigation touched by any particular policy. A very severe criteria is given by Logan, as reported by Golembiewski (1977: 88), for defining the completeness of a policy impact analysis which should at minimum do the following:

- Define or describe adequately the policy.

- Make sure that the policy can be categorized and therefore applied by others.
- Divide the population objective of the study in treatment and control groups randomly.
- Establish that the treatment group is in fact touched by the policy while the control group is not.
- Provide measures for the behaviour of the treatment group before and after the policy.
- Define standards of success or failure in order to judge the policy objectively.

On the other hand, as stated above, more ambitious analyses seek to bound classes of policies in general categorizations featuring common characteristics for different policies. Golembiewski (1977: 91–85) distinguishes six general approaches of what he calls ambitious analysis, which differ in terms of content of policy analysis, or better, in the structuring of the policy analysis. Without going into details, suffice to say here that those different approaches regard: generalizations about differences in different classes of policies, structuring the general processes in the policy-making process, studying and analysing the policy-making relatively to different theoretical models (for example system models or rational models), discerning the different actors in the policy-making processes, discerning policies according to the areas of intervention and finally classifying the policies into different arenas. In this last case for example, Lowi, as reported by Golembiewski (1977: 94) distinguishes between power-redistributive, distributive, constituent and finally regulatory policies. In other words these analysis tend to draw attention to the kind and quality of the policies produced by the governments.

Very important for our concern is the public policy approach which deals with descriptive policy analysis. According to Golembiewski (1977: 99), descriptive policy analysis is

*“straightforward in concept, but single studies can deal with a hundred variables and hence often are complicated. Essentially, the focus is on individual public policies – or more precisely, on narrow indicators of some characteristics or outcomes of the implementation of public decisions in selected issue areas – both as dependent variables and independent variables.”*

Finally, prescriptive policy analysis is yet another step forward in relation with the public policy approach in the study of public administration, being in fact not restricted to the mere description of the policy. In general and bold terms, prescriptive policy analysis seeks to discover and to provide means for government to produce change in social conditions. It is therefore an extremely difficult and yet very useful approach which is not solely focused on the knowledge of the policies and their processes.

### 2.3. Public Policy

The terms public and policy, and public policy, have been given different meanings throughout the years, thus it is important to explain better how it is intended here. A general definition is that of Leichter (1979: 6) who argues that public policy is “*a series of goal-oriented actions taken by authoritative (usually governmental) actors.*” This definition presupposes the fact that policies can be made by both governmental and non-governmental organizations, although usually are governmental. Albeit the definition is very general and too broad, one important remark can be emphasized, in particular in relation with the specific meaning of the term public.

If sometimes the term public is related to the nature of the decision (see Lynn 1987), in this case it is given a broader sense. In fact, a public policy is not as such only due to its public nature and not only because is decided and implemented by public officials or political groups and administrators. Instead, we think that a public policy is public because aimed to change a course of action or a situation which regards public matters, or, in other words, ‘the’ public. As we intend it, public is not only the subject and actor of a policy somehow impersonated by public officials or politicians, but also the objective of the policy impersonated by the citizens and, more specifically, their general interests. This different definition would emphasize better the real aim of all the public policies which is without a doubt pursuing the general interest of a society, namely public interest<sup>1</sup>. In fact, even though the general interest is the sum of many particular

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<sup>1</sup> As reported above, the public interest is one of the most important tying means of Public Administration with Political Science.

and sometime conflicting interests, the former can still be recognized, revealed and, as a consequence, pursued.

Another definition of public policy is given by Lynn, who emphasizes the relation of any public policy with organizations. According to Lynn (1987: 14) in fact

*“Public policy can readily be viewed as the output of a political system that comprises individuals who come together in small groups within the framework of organizations characterized by hierarchy, division of labour, and specialization.”*

This last definition also introduces the concept of public policy as output of a political system which is common in most of the doctrine (see Golembiewski 1977: 99; Leichter 1979: 8; Jreisat 2002: 79). More specifically, Leichter (1979: 6–8) distinguishes between policy decision, policy output and policy impact. According to Leichter (1979) a policy decision is a first authoritative act which gives authorization and also content to public policy actions. Public policy actions are therefore the output of a government, in other words what political systems actually do in order to enforce their decisions. Consequently, as explained earlier, policy impact is the result achieved by the policy considered. However, again, this result is difficult to calculate, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and it is also difficult to describe due to the fact that any public policy has inevitably got immediate or long-term consequences as well as intended or unintended consequences. Leichter (1979) broadens the definition including in the concept of policy output not only the actions of government but also what we could call its ‘inactions’, or better, inactivity. In fact, if the state is expected to take action in regard of a certain problem felt as important by the citizens, the fact that nothing is in this case done has to be considered as a voluntary inactivity, the scope of which is to reach ends predetermined by the government.

Another definition is provided by Rose (1989: 12–13) who argues that the term policy should be used when speaking about the general activities of a government and not to refer solely to specific concepts that can be easily misunderstood. This is due to the fact that the term policy can be used in many different ways. Thus, it is better to talk about public programmes when referring to the outputs of government. Public programmes

are seen as a very important part of government activity aimed at providing benefits to the private citizens of a state. In fact, public programmes outputs are directed at things such as pensions, education, health care and so on. So to speak, public programmes are what citizens experience directly of the government activity. However, this is only partly true as in fact, as we saw earlier, also the inactivity of the government (see Leichter 1979) has, to some extent, effects on the life of its citizens.

Another important idea is introduced by Rose and that is of public programmes as inputs and not only as mere outputs of government. This will be explained in more details later since the concept is strictly related to that of wellbeing. According to Rose (1989: 15), wellbeing “*refers in a very general way to a condition of individual happiness, health and prosperity*”. This is a relatively new concept, difficult to quantify and to reveal. In fact, the concepts of happiness, health and prosperity are very subjective and can change from nation to nation, region to region, city to city and person to person. In other words, those concepts do not only depend on general cultures, but also on subjective and personal values and beliefs. However, wellbeing can sometime be easily recognized and it is explicit in a person in good health while it is not recognizable in a constantly ill individual. Similarly, material wellbeing is felt by someone who has enough money enabling him/her to satisfy his/her needs whereas it is not the same for someone always in debt.

As stated by Rose (1989: 15), public programmes are inputs to the wellbeing of individuals, and together with the social structure and the economic conditions are part of the societal inputs that concur to the wellbeing of the citizens. In other words, the state and the government are only partly responsible for the wellbeing of its citizens, who are therefore influenced by multiple inputs, not last by their personal actions. To sum up, from the point of view of public administrators, public programmes are outputs of the political system. On the contrary from the point of view of citizens public programmes are inputs to their wellbeing. In this respect, the best definition of policy is given by Harmon and Mayer (1986: 35): “*A policy decision is any decision made at your level or higher*”. Furthermore (Harmon & Mayer 1986: 35) “*Although the welfare*

*worker's decision is clearly administrative, from the client's perspective it is just as clearly a policy decision".*

In conclusion, in this research we will embrace the definition of public policy presented above given by Leichter (1979) and shared by Peters (1999: 4) who argues that a *"public policy is the sum of governments activities"* as they *"have an influence on the lives of citizens"*. This definition is the more appropriate since it considers public policies as the main instrument in the hands of a government used to achieve predefined ends in influencing citizens' lives.

In this respect, public policies are made of distinguished levels that form all together the action of a government. According to Peters, at a first level we have public choices which represent the result of the decision-making process in public administration. At a second level we have policy outputs which are represented by what the government actually does in order to pursue certain ends. In other words, policy outputs are the actual instruments of a government. Finally, at the third level, policy impacts represent the effects of a certain public policy as a result of the sum of the public choices and the consequent policy outputs. (Leichter 1979: 6–8; Peters 1999: 4–5.)

#### 2.4. Public policy instruments

*"It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order, this lukewarmness arising partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws in their favour; and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not truly believe in anything new until they have had the actual experience of it."* (Machiavelli 1505)

Governments have at their disposal a certain number of instruments which can be used in order to influence the lives of their citizens through the modification of the economy or the society or both. Naturally, these instruments are used according to their effectiveness in relation to the changes that are supposed to be reached. However, not

only the effectiveness is the main parameter taken into account (voluntarily or involuntarily by public administrators) in the implementation of public policies. Often in fact, other variables play a fundamental role in the definition of the public policy, and they can also derive from factors sited within the same political sphere in which the decision has been made. For example, traditions or the organizational environment can have a crucial influence in the policy actions of a government (see chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion about the forces in play in the formation of alcohol policies).

In addition, supposing that only the effectiveness of a measure would be taken into account in the implementation of a public policy, such effectiveness should be first related to common values and ends. In this respect, governments face two different issues. On one hand, as argued by Harmon and Mayer (1986), the definition of the problem is primarily important for its solution. In fact, the “*discrepancy between how we see that things are and how we think that they should be*” (Harmon & Mayer 1986: 10) make most of the problems faced by public administrators wicked<sup>2</sup> in nature. On the other hand, the effectiveness of a public policy can only partly be predicted *ex ante*, since its results will always be different when analyzed *ex post*.

A first categorization of the instruments in the hands of governments is given by Dunn (2004: 280–281) who argues that, when speaking about public policy, we should distinguish first between policy actions and policy outcomes. In Dunn’s case, policy actions correspond to what Peters calls policy outputs while policy outcomes correspond to what Peters calls policy impacts. Policy actions are the causes of policy outcomes and they are of two types: regulative and allocative. Regulative actions are those “*designed to ensure compliance with certain standards or procedures*” (Dunn 2004: 280). In other words they are authoritative decisions taken by the governments in order to regulate a certain issue of interest. An example is the regulation regarding liquor licences. Put simply, they are laws or authoritative acts imposing a particular kind of behaviour that has to be followed by the beneficiaries and target groups of the policy.

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘wicked’ is used here referring to the categorization of problems in tame and wicked provided by Harmon and Mayer (1986).

On the other hand, allocative actions “*are those which require inputs of money, time, personnel and equipment*” (Dunn 2004: 280). A further categorization is provided by Rose (1989: 13) who argues that public programmes are produced by government through the mobilization and organization of particular resources: laws, money and public employees. Most important for our concern is the resource represented by laws. In fact, the concept of money as a resource in the government’s hands for the implementation of certain public programmes involves concepts as taxation (the way governments collect the money for the disposal of its citizens), budgeting and distribution. On the other hand, public employees and their role in the government activity (or inactivity) relate mostly to concepts as bureaucracy, human resources and management. Moreover, laws seem to be the most powerful resource in the hands of governments, at least theoretically, since of course the application of laws involves again and inexorably money and employees.

More in particular, the effectiveness of the instrument of law is given by the fact that they are exclusive monopoly of the state (Rose 1989: 14; Peters 1999: 6). In fact, private agencies of any sort cannot make laws which would be effective upon everyone in the society. Furthermore, laws express the will of politicians who are elected by the citizens and thus supposedly express the will of citizens as well as they set the procedures by which public officials are expected to act (Rose 1989: 14). However, as argued by Peters (1999: 6), although issuing a law is in most cases sufficient in order to achieve conformity with the law by the citizens, also “*monitoring and enforcement are still crucial to the effectiveness of the instrument*”. In any case, if public programmes “*are means to the end of realizing more or less clear political purposes, goals and values*” (Rose 1989: 14), then laws, money and public employees are intermediate means for realizing the same ends, goals and values.

The two categorizations provided by Dunn (2004) and Rose (1989) about the instruments used by the governments for the implementation of public policies are very similar. In Dunn’s case however, the mention of allocative resources seems not very useful and tautological since budgeting is the first means for any governmental action as well as the starting point in the allocation of human resources and equipment. In other

words, allocation and regulation have to be considered has a good categorization albeit the fact that they can be swallowed in the definitions given by Rose (1989) of money and laws respectively.

In addition to the laws, money and public employees as public policy instruments, according to Peters (1999) we can also consider services and suasion. The former refers to education as well as security, protection and other institutions. The latter refers to the power of the government to persuade citizens to conform to a certain behaviour and which is legitimated by the government's will of pursuing the public interest. Naturally, suasion can be effective "*as long as the people regard the government as a legitimate expression of their interests*" (Peters 1999: 12).

In conclusion, the focus of this research will be put on those instruments that characterise alcohol policies. Moreover, regulative actions or outputs of the governments concerning alcohol matters will be considered in order to explore which are the tools at disposal of public administrators and how they are used in different contexts (Finnish and Italian territory in this case). In particular, the resource constituted by the law has to be investigated, since alcohol policies mostly deal with the regulation of the alcohol market and with the time, mode and way alcohol can be consumed by citizens. It has to be noted here that so far we have included what Peters and van Nispen (1998) call financial instruments in the broader categorization of regulative actions. In fact, financial instruments are regulative in nature in the sense that they are applied after a norm has been issued by the government.

However, financial instruments can be differentiated from more traditional regulations because they are not coercive (Peters & van Nispen 1998: 18). That is in fact the case of taxes levied on certain goods in order to produce a shift in the consumption. In this research, we consider financial instruments and more in particular taxes as regulative instruments therefore being swallowed by the general concept of law. Finally, by comparing the different measures applied by governments it will be possible to understand their intentions and by comparing the impacts of the measures taken it will be possible to discover their effectiveness in relation to two different environments.

### 3. ALCOHOL: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

In this chapter, the question of drinking in relation with the harms caused by alcohol will be discussed and a definition of the problem will be provided. The main argument is given by the belief that binge drinking and alcohol intoxication, even if sporadic, can cause more harmful consequences than other drinking behaviours. Consecutively, a brief excursus about the different definitions of alcohol policy given by previous authors will be provided. Also, the influencing forces in the formation of alcohol policies will be explained as well as the main actors in the decision-making process. It will also be explained why the cultural environment is particularly important. To sum up, the following chapter explains and highlights the complexity of the problem, proving how the problem of drinking is dynamic and ever changing, so that the definition of the problem is crucially important for its solution.

#### 3.1. The problem: harmful drinking

##### 3.1.1. Alcoholism

The concept of alcoholism varies in space and time. According to the National Council on Alcoholism (Fingarette 1988: 49), “*All attempts to identify and define alcoholism have failed (...) Alcoholism exists in our language and in our minds, but not in the objective world around us*”. In addition, according to the National Public Health Institute of Finland (2004), the percentage of people dependent on alcohol (if we can call it dependence) is very small if compared to the binge drinking phenomenon. Alcoholism, however, is a relatively new idea if compared with the long history of drunkenness.

In fact, the first idea of addiction was introduced and attributed to Thomas Trotter, a physician from Scotland, and Benjamin Rush, another physician from America (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 40). Their idea was that those who were deliberately getting drunk suffered from a disease of the will, and therefore were not able to

maintain a culturally acceptable self-control. This idea then became the root for the medical concept of alcoholism as a disease which has been clinically recognized during the nineteenth century. This scientific thinking led to the growth of many movements whose aim was to cure such disease. This is more true for countries as Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the UK, where the protestant (with some reserves for some countries) culture and its self-control value was more crucial than in the other European countries (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 41).

Nevertheless, the problem of addiction was marginalised and in the early twentieth century it gave space to broader political solutions such as the prohibition. Addiction theories came back into fashion after the prohibition era in the USA and consequently in Europe after World War Two, especially thanks to the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. This time, the ideology supporting the addiction theories was based on that of the new consumerism and personal freedom, therefore it was more focused on the sick individual than on the nature of the intoxicant. (Anderson & Baumberg 2006.)

Today, a new approach is to be taken under consideration and it is tied to the new public health movement according to which alcohol is not considered as the only end and where alcohol-related problems are not considered to be regarding only a small part of the population, the alcoholics. Instead, the whole spectrum of alcohol-related harms have to be considered in order to achieve a considerable improvement of the general public health (see Babor, Caetano, Casswell, Edwards, Giesbrecht, Graham, Grube, Gruenewald, Hill, Holder, Homel, Österberg, Rehm, Room & Rossow 2003).

### 3.1.2. Binge drinking

Many are the definitions of binge drinking and they vary from country to country according to the cultural (and therefore legislative) perception of alcohol issues. For instance, according to the Journal of Studies on Alcohol online, consuming an average of eight drinks a day is considered normal drinking in Italy and therefore not bingeing. On the other hand, in the USA consuming five or more drinks in one occasion (it is not

specified the period of time to which a drinking occasion corresponds, therefore it can refer to an entire day) is considered bingeing. Furthermore, in the UK the term bingeing refers to a significantly higher quantity of drinks consumed per occasion such as to eleven or more drinks. (Plant & Plant 2006: VIII–XII.)

However, there is not a special reason beyond the fact that in the USA five drinks would be a particular cut-off point defining binge drinking or moderate drinking. In other words, someone who would be a binger in Britain may not be the same in Italy, provided the same amount of alcohol consumed and according to the definition of binge drinking. Indeed, the problem of the definition may lead to disagreement on the further definitions of the consequences or the more general effects (positive or negative) of alcohol consumption.

In addition, also the effects of alcohol vary from person to person: five drinks may have a more negative effect on a pregnant woman than on a football player. This is to say that also the gender, the physical characteristics, the age and other biological variables play an important role in the definition of binge drinking. As a consequence, a general definition of binge drinking based on the number of drinks consumed is not sufficient. That is also due to the general disagreement on not only what bingeing is, but also on what drinking is, or better, what a drink is. In fact, this concept varies according to the national legislations applied in different countries. For instance in USA a standard drink contains 12 grams of alcohol while in UK only 8. As a consequence, five standard American drinks will not be the same as five drinks consumed in the UK, with a relative consequence on the concept of binge drinking.

Yet, the American NIAAA (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism) after a symposium in Washington DC in 2003 (Plant & Plant 2006: X) defined the term ‘binge’ as

*“a pattern of drinking alcohol that corresponds to consuming five or more drinks for a male and four or more drinks for a female in about two hours. A ‘drink’ refers to half an ounce of alcohol (e.g. one 12 oz. beer, one 5 oz. glass of wine, one 1.5 oz. shot of distilled spirits). For some*

*individuals (e.g. older people; those taking drugs or certain medications), the number of drinks needed to reach a binge-level blood alcohol content is lower than for a typical adult.”*

In addition, also the UK Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in a report on alcohol misuse (Plant & Plant 2006: XI) considered the problem in terms of quantity drunk by an individual and noted:

*“binge drinking is a debated term. Since alcohol will affect people in different ways, there is no fixed relationship between the amount drunk and its consequences. So although many people understand ‘binge’ to mean deliberately drinking to excess, or drinking to get drunk not everyone drinking over 6–8 units in a single day will fit into this category. Similarly, many people who are drinking to get drunk will drink far in excess of the 6–8 unit-based definition.”*

According to Plant and Plant (2006: VIII), the term ‘binge drinking’, besides its agreed meaning of excessive drinking, has been generally used in two different ways. On the one hand, it has been used by health professionals in order to describe a prolonged occasion of heavy drinking which eventually leads the individual to give up otherwise normal activities of his daily life for at least two or three days. This kind of behaviour refers also to people who are able to drink normally, not excessively and socially if not at all. Though, the same people can be involved in the so called binge drinking sessions which will then cause the neglecting of all their responsibilities at work or towards their family for a day or more. On the other hand, the term ‘binge’ has been used to describe a single drinking session (instead of a prolonged one) the consequence of which would necessarily be (intended or not) the intoxication of the individual involved. Even though a certain degree of confusion remains, this latter definition has been very common in the current academic literature (Plant & Plant 2006: IX).

In conclusion, there is not a definition of the term ‘binge’ that satisfies all the academics, the term remains open to subjective interpretations and it can be used according to the needs of the authors of the different researches. For instance, also the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (2008) had to emphasize the discrepancy of the many definitions and has adopted a particular policy in order to use the term ‘binge’ in a specific way. The definition has been fixed as following:

*“According to the policy, the term ‘binge’ should only be used to describe an extended period of time (usually two or more days) during which a person repeatedly administers alcohol or another substance to the point of intoxication, and gives up his/her usual activities and obligations in order to use the substance. It is the combination of prolonged use and the giving up of usual activities that forms the core of the definition of a binge.”*

This last definition focuses more on the consequences of binge drinking: giving up usual activities in order to consume intoxicating substances are some of these consequences (indeed, the negative consequences are significantly more complex and do not regard only forgetting what to do). Moreover, it fixes the period of time of ‘bingeing’ in at least two days. This two characteristics together are both necessary and sufficient elements of the definition of the term ‘binge drinking’.

However, this definition is very specific and somehow, too specific. As a matter of fact, it avoids the problems given by other definitions such as those based on quantity of alcohol drunk by so called ‘bingers’. Anyway, the escamotage used in the definition is adding the more objective characteristic of time: the period of time necessary to evidence the binge (again, two days or more). In fact, it is taken for granted that if an individual is involved in a drinking session for at least two days, he or she will necessarily drink more than five drinks (as five drinks is the limit mentioned in other definitions).

Yet, the core of the problem is not investigated and rather it is avoided. Even though the policy adopted by the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs is a mere disquisition on what has to be agreed on, the definition is not satisfactory. The reason is pretty simple and does not need particular evidence, if not a logical one, to be understood. In fact, when it is said (Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs 2008) that bingeing is the “*combination of prolonged use and the giving up of usual activities*”, that is to say something tautological. This is due to the fact that at least two days are considered as a minimum standard for the bingeing event. But the question arises spontaneously: if the individual, during these two days is actually focused on drinking, how can he or she do something else than that? The fact that getting intoxicated will be the main activity among others is implicit in the definition given. Also, if the use is prolonged, therefore

the time spent in getting intoxicated will be necessarily taken from the time spent for other activities. This is due to the obvious reasons beyond the fact that an intoxicated person cannot necessarily pursue normal activities which he or she would be engaging in sober conditions.

However, this definition could be applied for instance to those who deliberately decide to get intoxicated, like for example students who are going to party for a whole weekend or then for those who cannot avoid drinking, because are addicted, like alcoholics. Yet, the period of time given is too long and even one day could be a long enough period of time as a term for the definition of 'binge'. The Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (2008) specifies further that other terms can be used to distinguish binge drinking from other activities. These terms are such as 'heavy drinking' or 'heavy use', 'heavy episodic drinking' or 'heavy episodic use'.

In general, we would agree on using the expression 'binge drinking' as a synonymous of 'getting deliberately intoxicated by the substance of alcohol'. No matter if the period of the intoxication lasts two days or only one evening. This is due to the fact that the person intoxicated, as such, will not do anything else than 'bingeing'. Also, considering the fact that every individual reacts differently to the use of alcohol: this means that the abuse cannot be objectively and directly quantified while it can be discovered and evidenced through its consequences. In this case, the expression 'binge drinking' is related to a general heavy episodic drinking (where episodic stands for 'not every day', 'once in a week' or 'once in a while' and so on), and it is focused more on the consequences of the binges rather than on the quantities of alcohol units or drinks consumed, which often correspond to different definitions, as explained earlier in this paragraph. This is more appropriate if we consider the fact that binge drinking is more dangerous than the consumption on a daily base of a small quantity of alcohol (Edwards, Anderson, Babor, Casswell, Ferrence, Giesbrecht, Godfrey, Holder, Lemmens, Mäkelä, Midanik, Norström, Österberg, Romelsjö, Room, Simpura & Skog 1994; Babor et al. 2003; Plant & Plant 2006).

A good term of comparison for the effects of alcohol would be the BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) or BAL (Blood Alcohol Level) since the former (the effects or negative consequences) strictly depends on the latter (Dufour 1999). However, according to Dufour (1999) the same amount of drinks consumed will result in different BAL in persons characterized by different body weights. In addition, even same body weight and same number of drinks consumed often (if not always) correspond to different BAL due to the variations in the levels of water and fat in the body. Anyways, there are not enough data available in order to study the phenomenon according to the BAL since the recovering of the evidence would be in this case rather difficult. In fact, the statistics available about the effects of alcohol are mainly based on interviews and not on clinical examinations.

In conclusion, the meaning of the term ‘binge drinking’ is debated and as a consequence different definitions are provided by different institutions. Notwithstanding the importance of giving an exact definition, in this thesis we prefer to consider binge drinking as a type of behaviour characterized by the use of alcohol for getting deliberately intoxicated. This definition will suffice in considering the use of alcohol as harmful and dangerous for the health of the user and the people around him or her. The reason of this choice is given by the fact that it is impossible to give an objective definition of this behaviour which would enable us to quantify excessive drunkenness. Most of all, it has to be noted here that ‘binge drinking’, as explained previously, is more dangerous and by far accompanied by more harmful consequences than moderate drinking.

### 3.1.3. The mechanism of harm

In order to understand the reasons why binge drinking (as defined here) is a key factor in the broader topic of alcohol-related problems, we will discuss here the mechanisms of harms of alcohol, defined by Babor et al. (2003: 19) as the “*mediators of the relation between drinking and the different kinds of harm it produces*”. It is sufficient here to discuss solely the mediating factors, leaving on the side the objects of the mediation: on one hand the quantity of alcohol consumption (average volume of alcohol consumed)

and the quality of the consumption (drinking patterns)<sup>3</sup>, on the other the short-term as well as long-term negative consequences of the consumption. These mediating factors are firstly the alcohol's capacity of creating physical toxicity, secondly the intoxication it produces and thirdly the dependence as a result of sustained (in time and amount) drinking (Babor et al. 2003).

Regarding the toxicity, it is implicit in all the researches that alcohol is a toxic substance which can affect "*nearly every organ and system of the body*" and that "*not even tobacco has such wide-ranging adverse physical effects*" (Babor et al. 2003: 21). However, the toxicity of alcohol and then the intoxication or eventually the dependence, do not affect the individual only physically, but again, as argued by Edwards et al. (1994: 7) also psychologically and socially. This is emphasized also by Babor et al. (2003: 20) when they sum up the negative consequences of alcohol consumption listing them as following: chronic disease, accident/injuries (acute disease), acute social problems, chronic social problems.

Before proceeding any further, a short digression is needed. It is important to note here the complexity of the topic of alcohol intended as a cause of harm. In fact, just to cite the major studies about alcohol and public policies, when we speak about alcohol-related problems, with the term 'related' it is intended to mean everything surrounding the alcohol sphere and not solely alcohol as a malevolent chemical molecule (see Bruun Edwards, Lummio, Mäkelä, Pan, Popham, Room, Schmidt, Skog, Sulkunen, & Österberg 1975; Edwards et al. 1994; Babor et al. 2003; Plant & Plant 2006). This is due to the fact that alcohol involves a myriad of other factors beside its toxic characteristic: people react in different ways to the consumption of alcohol both physically and culturally and often generalizations are not good enough in clustering the problem.

The restrictions imposed by a scientific research should not let us forget that every individual has got his own history made of personal education, experience, character, biological characteristics, economic situation and so on, which all together can form a

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<sup>3</sup> In chapter 4 we will discuss the total alcohol consumption and drinking patterns relatively to Italy and Finland.

particular outcome (in general, this can be affirmed for both an individual and a government!). As well said by Edwards et al. (1994: 8),

*“within the abstract listings lie degrees and varieties of ill-health, unhappiness, loss, pain, deprivation, denial of self, family disruption, wound to others, and destruction. Much of the suffering is amorphous and inchoate.”*

In other words, the causes of alcohol-related problems are never singular, but always multiple as well as interconnected, and the consequences are never directly discoverable while unusual findings can be the result of supposedly predictable situations. In conclusion, similar outcomes can be the consequences of different causes while different causes can be the input to similar consequences.

#### 3.1.4. Alcohol intoxication

As pointed out earlier, alcohol is a toxic substance and as such it inevitably has adverse effects on a wide range of body systems and organs. Moreover, the toxicity of the substance of alcohol can have major negative impacts also on subjects who do not have longstanding drinking problems. This is the case of acute intoxication from alcohol, or as it has been said earlier, binge drinking. In fact, popular beliefs tend to picture alcoholism as the major cause of alcohol-related problems, while these problems are a part of a much broader universe, not solely bounded by the old concept of alcoholism. In addition, as argued by Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 29), alcoholism is today considered only one among many alcohol-related problems and not the alcohol-related problem par excellence.

Again, the issue of alcohol intoxication and as a consequence of binge drinking, plays a crucial role in the sphere of alcohol-related problems. In particular, binge drinking is to be taken under consideration given that, as argued by Babor et al. (2003: 22), *“The main cause of alcohol-related harm in the general population is alcohol intoxication”* and that *“most alcohol-related problems are attributable to the relatively substantial portion of the population that drinks to intoxication at least occasionally”*. As the authors specify further, intoxication is considered as *“a more or less short-term state of*

*functional impairment in psychological and psychomotor performance induced by the presence of alcohol in the body”* (Babor et al. 2003: 23).

In other words, the toxicity of alcohol can lead through an hazardous<sup>4</sup> use of the substance to the so called intoxication which, as a consequence, will be the cause of functional impairments for the individual. These functional impairments, as for example the lengthening of the reaction time, can be the straight consequence of a certain BAC (blood alcohol concentration). On the other hand, other impairments are the consequence of the previous personal experience of the individual (with alcohol) or of the social environment and expectations with which the individual is interacting. In the latter case, alcohol intoxication can push the individual into sudden emotional changes, and can decrease the responsiveness to the expectations given by the socio-cultural environment with which he or she is interacting, with obvious psychological and social consequences, not least the risk of violence (intentional or not) towards others and also self-harm.

Furthermore, intoxication can be recognized in different ways. For instance we can easily recognize an alcohol intoxicated person when he or she is walking with evident difficulties or when he or she is slurring rather than talking. On the other hand, other kinds of impairment are not always evident or easily recognizable as for example the ability of driving, which can be detected often only with laboratory tests (these tests can be ran also on the streets as police officers do during roads controls, measuring the level of alcohol in the blood through alcohol breath testers<sup>5</sup>). Although in this case psychomotor impairment may not be evident, the individual could be subjected to longer reaction time as well as to an impairment in judgement which will then result in dangerous and unnecessary risk-taking. (Babor et al. 2003: 22–23.)

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<sup>4</sup> According to Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 29), ‘hazardous use’ or ‘harmful use’ are terms to be used when referring to drinking as a cause of harm. Other terms such as ‘excessive drinking’ or ‘abuse’ are too general and presuppose that there is a straightforward dichotomy between the excessive use of alcohol and a risk-free use.

<sup>5</sup> Naturally, the alcohol breath tester is not as accurate as a laboratory test taken to measure the BAC (blood alcohol concentration) on a blood sample.

In conclusion, alcohol intoxication is the main cause of alcohol-related problems and it is the consequence of hazardous drinking, given that alcohol is a toxic substance affecting the biological functions of the body. However, although alcohol intoxication is the consequence of a biological interaction, its manifestations are strictly connected to the cultural norms of the environment in which it is evidenced. Therefore, in order to prevent alcohol-related problems, an alcohol policy should intervene in the first place on the alcohol intoxication which results from binge drinking, so that a large part of the harm given by alcohol would be insulated. Given that an important role is played by social norms and the environment in the perception of the issue in general, attention should be paid also on the cultural context, considered as an important variable in the broader range of alcohol-related problems.

### 3.2. Alcohol policy as one solution

The previous chapter leads us to the definition of alcohol policy which is strictly connected to the definition of public policy, if the latter is intended as a determinant of the public good. In fact, the definition of alcohol policy will help us to better understand what are the measures that will be included in such policy. In order to do so, I will try to sum up the definitions of alcohol policy given by different researchers in the last thirty years, ideas that changed constantly, broadening the spheres of action of an alcohol policy in economic, social and health terms, especially due to the parallel growth of empirical data and researches available on the widespread topic of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems.

Of major importance has been a seminal monograph that was published under the name of *Alcohol Control Policies In Public Health Perspective* (Bruun et al. 1975). In fact, the study was the first one to point out how an alcohol policy should be related to a public health strategy, considering a public policy as a strategy to pursue the public good. However, the main thesis of the book was based on the connection between the level of alcohol consumption of a certain society and the detrimental effects of the consumption in that particular society: “*the higher the average amount of alcohol*

*consumed in a society, the greater the incidence of problems experienced by that society*” (Babor et al. 2003: 5). The consequent idea of the book was that a general limitation of the availability of alcohol would prevent the incidence of the problems related to its consumption. Therefore, the study was focused on those policies which would reduce the average amount of alcohol consumed in a certain population. Notwithstanding the general conclusions of the research, the main breakthrough was due to the nature of the research, which indeed studied the alcohol policies from a public health perspective.

*Alcohol Policy And The Public Good* (Edwards et al. 1994) is a more recent research about alcohol policies provided by a group of scientists and commissioned by the WHO (World Health Organization).

In this research, alcohol policy is still studied under a public health point of view, even though the definition of public policy slightly changes. In fact, after reviewing the evidence about many different measures implemented as alcohol policies, it was concluded that: first of all, there are effective measures available for the administrators in order to prevent alcohol-related problems. Secondly, reducing the general level of alcohol consumption is not the only measure available for reducing alcohol-related problems. In fact, such measure has to be strictly connected and integrated with other measures aimed at regulating the drinking contexts and drinking behaviours. (Edwards et al. 1994: 212.)

A third research summing up the characteristics of alcohol policies is the most recent one *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity* (Babor et al. 2003). In this book, alcohol policy is defined as something that pertains “*to the relation between alcohol, health and social welfare*” (Babor et al. 2003: 6). According to the authors of this book, as in the preceding studies, an alcohol policy is an instrument of the public health and as such, it concurs to the protection of the individual from disease or injury as well as to the maximization of “*the biological, psychological, and social functioning of a person (...) in everyday life*” (Babor et al. 2003: 9). In this case, great importance is given to the concept of public health as an end. Consequently, alcohol policies are seen as deterrent

to the risks factors related to alcohol that can put at stake the wellbeing of the individual.

In general, if with Bruun et al. (1975) alcohol policy means fighting the consumption, with Edwards et al. (1994) it means fighting different kinds of consumption, with Babor et al. (2003) alcohol policy means safeguarding the broad concept of public health. Far from trying to define once more the concept of alcohol policy, I will embrace the three definitions given previously by those important scientists and will focus my research on different alcohol policy actions. Suffice to say here that, as argued by Babor et al. (2003: 10), any alcohol policy, in order to be effective, needs to take into account all the determinant factors of public health of an individual or a population, such as for instance the physical, social and economic environments, the personal lifestyle or the welfare system people have access to. As a consequence, alcohol policies cannot be limited to restricted area of intervention, e.g. the solely regulation of alcohol availability. In other words, the decisions of the administrators should influence not only the alcohol commodity as an agent and cause of different problems, nor should they focus only on the results provoked by the abuse of the commodity through repressive measures.

Instead, alcohol policies should intervene in order to modify and eventually limit those risk factors leading to detrimental effects of alcohol consumption on an economic, social, physical and cultural level. Unluckily, this is a typical case of wicked problem which seems easy to be solved while instead it is difficult to define, to describe and to be answered acceptably. In fact, the alcohol policymaking process is influenced not only by scientific evidence, but by a myriad of factors that often limit its effectiveness, not least the economic interests lying beyond the alcohol industry. In addition, the free trade market and the individual freedom of drinking in moderation are other factors that may influence public policies, considered the fact that today a new prohibition era seems inapplicable and not a measure to hope for, due to its previous proved failures (Thornton 1991).

In conclusion, as explained above, the definition of alcohol policy is still very subjective and open to interpretation. More in particular, it is the consumption of alcohol which is a very subjective matter, dependent on individual choices and culture. Furthermore, the alcohol commodity itself is very controversial, since it is a toxic substance which has been present in the life of many cultures for centuries. On the other hand, alcohol can be very dangerous, especially if consumed recklessly. As a consequence, also the definition and the structuring of the problem (again, if there is a problem) are very malleable.

### 3.3. Forces in play in the formation of alcohol policies

Alcohol policies, as any other public policy, are influenced in the process of decision making and in their implementation by different forces driven by the society in which those policies are placed (this means that an important role is also played by external forces, intended as forces coming from outside the national boundaries and depending on agreements with foreign countries signed by the country in which the policy is applied). This is due to the fact that the object of the alcohol policy is often perceived in different ways across different societies while often it is also perceived differently within the same society. The values and the beliefs change also over time and not only over space, and so do the needs of a given society. As a consequence there is a constant need of revision of the old policies in order to adjust them to the particular historical period in which they are to be applied.

In general, as argued by Chapman, Cook, Davis, Grant, Sulkunen, Vaillant and Delbanco (1989), two major forces place a constant constraining pressure on alcohol policies, creating tensions between them and the actual development of the policy. These forces are evidenced worldwide and are the same on an international level albeit they specify on a more local level. The first force in play is given by the cultural beliefs and values of a certain population towards alcohol. For example in some countries alcohol is seen as a daily commodity playing an important role in everyday life. This is the case of such countries as the South-Europeans, where wine is a commodity associated with a social meaning and where drinking wine is considered as a

fundamental part of consuming meals since an early age. In other countries instead, alcohol is perceived in a totally different way and it is often feared. For example, if in Italy drinking wine everyday during meals is normal also for women, a *“Moroccan or Israeli man is labelled an incipient problem drinker if he averages more than two beers a week at anything other than formal social occasions”* (Chapman et al. 1989: 50).

The second force in play is given by the political system. In this case the difference is highlighted by the general political ideologies which structure the political system of a certain state. Namely, the type of relation between the state and the citizens which runs from the extreme of total governmental control over the citizens to the other extreme of total autonomy of the individual from its government (Chapman et al. 1989: 50). For instance, in countries characterized by a tradition of strong governmental control (as for example the Scandinavian countries), a bureaucratic control on alcohol is more widely accepted, no matter if alcohol is perceived as something to be feared or as a daily commodity.

However, the political force and the cultural force do not place distinct pressure on the alcohol policies. Instead, they create tensions between each other, mirroring these tensions on the policy-making process. Furthermore, culture and political system are not the only source of tensions. In fact, also the economic factors together with health considerations play an important role in the policy-making process (Chapman et al. 1989: 53). As mentioned above, alcohol is a toxic substance and as such it is also a heavy burden for the general public health. On the other hand, it is also a commercial commodity which plays an important role in the economies of many countries. As a consequence, alcohol public policies always have to balance their goals: on one hand, they have to prevent the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption and on the other they have to protect the economic interests lying beyond the commerce of alcohol.

Yet, not always the safeguard of economic interests requires less governmental control and as consequence more liberal alcohol policies while, on the other hand, not always the safeguard of the public health is achieved through a strict alcohol policy and control over the individual autonomy. The answer is not straightforward and the causes of a

certain policy can be many. In Finland for example, “*the 1932 transition from prohibition to nationalisation of the alcohol trade was partly driven by the pressing need for generating funds to support social security and industrialization*”, namely in this case the “*state’s own economic interests (...) cloud[ed] its health concern*” (Chapman et al. 1989: 53).

In conclusion, culture, political systems, economic interests and public health all play an important role in the policy-making process (see Figure 1). These four major forces can be evidenced at an international level as regularities concerning alcohol policies worldwide. However, they do not distinctly influence the policy-making process, instead they interact with each other and influence the policies accordingly. It mostly depends on the historical time in which the policy is being applied. In fact, at some point the culture may come on the surface as a stronger source of innovation while at some point the economic interests may override the public health needs or vice versa. The aforementioned example of Finland is very explicative: in 1932 government was not worried about the consumption of alcohol, as the implementation of the monopoly and the end of the prohibition may suggest. Instead, government was more worried about how to increase its income and how to remedy a more material and less noble problem of money.

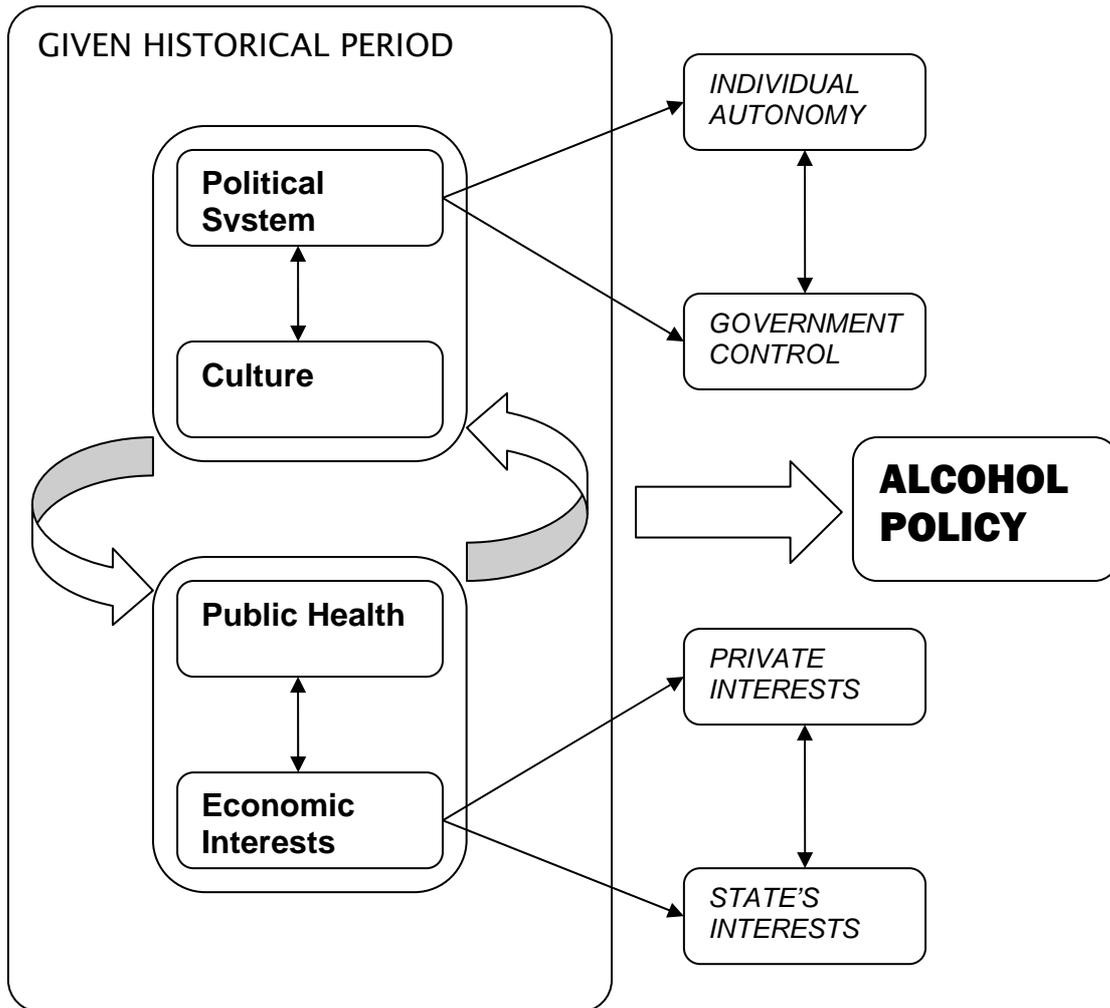


Figure 1: Forces in play in the determination of alcohol policy (Adapted from Chapman et al. 1989).

### 3.4. Who makes the policy

In the previous paragraph we have highlighted the major forces in play in the determination of alcohol policies. However, this theoretical framework is valid, as such, only on a theoretic and more general level. In other words, what has been argued by Chapman et al. (1989) can be considered as an universal framework of analysis which takes into consideration general variables such as culture, political system, public health and economic interests. In more practical terms, other forces can be evidenced as

concurrent to the formulation of the alcohol policies, forces that are taking place in the field as actual lobbies creating tensions in the decision-making process. These more specific forces can still be enclosed in the general framework provided by Chapman et al. and are crucial in the understanding of the wide range of interests involved in the formulation of any alcohol policy.

Before listing the particular forces concurring to the formulation of alcohol policies, a specification is needed. When we speak about alcohol policy, as argued in this research, we refer to authoritative decisions taken by a government in order to minimize alcohol-related harms. As argued by Österberg (2004), this kind of control can be labelled as formal as in fact alcohol policies are made of laws, rules and regulations. Furthermore, formal control, as such, is parallel to the so called informal alcohol control which “*takes the form of social norms or traditional customs*” (Österberg 2004: 6). That is in other words, culture.

In conclusion, if some aspects of a culture (social norms or traditional customs) play a role in the informal alcohol control, that means that culture is a very important variable in the broader issue of alcohol-related problems. In fact, culture is at the same time a force influencing the formal alcohol control and the informal alcohol control element itself. Moreover, this means that an universal alcohol policy, if proved as effective in a particular context, may not be as effective in a different context due to the unique cultural element. If the same forces are at play in the determination of alcohol policy in different contexts, yet the impact of these forces is different according to the particular environment in which they are placed, so that the input to the alcohol policy, the alcohol policy itself and the result or output of the alcohol policy are all different.

Regarding the actual forces influencing the policy determination, and as a consequence the forces concurring to the formulation of alcohol policy, Babor et al. (2003: 245–256) speak of a policy arena. That is the public sphere in which competing interests personified in different contending groups create tensions in the process of decision-making and implementation of alcohol policy. In fact, even though there is scientific evidence that support certain measures in order to reduce alcohol-related problems, the

former are not always applied, due to the influence of other forces and lobbies other than the scientific community (given that the scope of a policy is limiting alcohol-related problems). In addition, as argued earlier, not all the measures proved to be effective by scientific evidence can be applied indiscriminately in every context.

Yet, as implicit in the argument of the authors, not always these forces are at play in order to defend particular interests. Instead, sometime they might be the simple result of particular media campaigns (started for instance after a scandal or an event of particular emotional impact) or the result of a general public opinion (public opinions are often driven by other motives than the general interest of the public).

According to Babor et al. (2003: 245) the formation of alcohol policy involves the following forces:

- Commercial interests
- The media
- The scientific community
- Public interest groups
- Public opinion
- National governments
- Community coalitions

Commercial interests are represented by the alcoholic beverage industries, usually large-scale producers who distribute the product first through retailers and then through bars, restaurants and off-premises. Considering the vested interests of the alcoholic beverage industries and the amount of income they create, the constant increasing involvement of the latter in the policy-making process is not surprising. In the last decades alcohol producers have also been supported by free trade and competition values, that for example in Finland (with the joining of the European Union) led to the

1994 Alcohol Act<sup>6</sup> (Alavaikko & Österberg 2000). The mass media also play an important role of influence in the policy debate. In this case, Babor et al. (2003: 247) speak about “*media advocacy*”, referring to a strategic use of the media (mostly television and newspapers) in order to advance and render the policy goals as discourses of public dominion. In Finland for instance, the media advocacy might have had an influence in the policy-making process: according to Törrönen (2002) the concern on the media switched from one about freedom during the liberalisation of alcohol trade to one of security of public places after the realisation that some people responded irresponsibly to this freedom.

The scientific community, through studies and researches, offer to the policy makers the essential tools which direct the policy. In fact, according to Babor et al. (2003: 248), for instance in Eastern Europe where data about alcohol consumption are not available yet, alcohol is still considered an ordinary commodity, and as a consequence the governments do not feel they should do anything to control its marketing, price and availability. In other words, the problem does not exist as long as it is not studied from a scientific point of view. Furthermore, scientific researches and studies are useful not only in directing the policy, but also in evaluating its results. Yet, according to Babor et al. (2003: 248), the research “*produces arguments rather than logical conclusions regarding policy and action*”. This is to say once more that the scientific community is only one factor of influence in the policy-making process among many others and that, like all the other factors, concurs in creating tensions in the decision-making process. However, not even scientific studies are value-free and often researches are used and applied selectively and they are made to support with evidence preset decisions driven by cultural values.

It is not necessary here to go into details concerning public opinion and community coalitions considering that their influence in the policy-making is very marginal (Babor et al. 2003: 250–256). Furthermore, for the concern about national governments, it is

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<sup>6</sup> The alcohol act was drafted and accepted in Finland in 1994 and it was implemented in order to eliminate the state monopoly of foreign trade, production and wholesale distribution of alcohol, while the retail of alcoholic beverages was taken care of by a state company called Alko (see 1143/1994).

not the scope of this research to try to understand how governments actually reach their decisions within the bureaucracy of each national government.

Instead, it is worth a mention the role played by non-governmental organisations or public interest groups, where the latter are represented by the former. In particular, the importance of the temperance movement (which is the sum of public opinion, public interests and community coalitions all together) must be emphasized, considering that according to Babor et al. (2003: 249), it still contributes to the policy process in many countries. The temperance movement was important in Europe in particular in the early twentieth century, when the problems related to alcohol consumption started to emerge throughout the old continent. The temperance movement was more spread and more intense in the protestant countries (Nordic and English-speaking) rather than in the catholic ones (e.g. Spain and Italy). The influence of the temperance movement was also very strong in the alcohol policy-making process, as explained by Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 40):

*“Many of the countries where temperance was strongest adopted a prohibition of alcohol in the early years of the twentieth century (Finland, Iceland, the US, and Russia), while other countries adopted partial prohibitions (Norway) or allowed individual areas to vote on prohibition (including Denmark, Poland and Norway) (...) [w]here support was less strong, or after prohibition was seen to fail, political elites often adopted a compromise position of alcohol control (...) through such policies as state monopolies.”*

In conclusion, alcohol policies are the result of many different and competing interests and values, as any other policy. However, alcohol policies are particular and need significant attention due to the particularity of the commodity they treat. Often, governments are tied in the policy-making process by tensions created by different institutions which all try to defend their own particular interests. Even scientific evidence is often used to provide arguments supporting policy directions already set previously. Yet, the decision is in the hands of the public officials working in the government institutions and they should ethically be able to decide in order to defend the general interest of the population.

#### 4. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ALCOHOL POLICIES

As it has been argued in the previous chapter, the hypothesis on which this thesis is mainly based is the fact that culture does play a major role in the total account of alcohol policies in any country. This means that, notwithstanding the other variables involved in the formation, implementation and outcome of an alcohol policy, the most important element of these settings is the variable given by the culture in which they are inserted. In order to better understand the cultural variable in Italy and Finland in relation with the consumption of alcohol and the relative alcohol policies, this chapter will focus on the description of the social context of the alcohol policies in Italy and Finland and on their comparison.

Consequently, in order to understand the social context, data regarding total alcohol consumption and drinking patterns in Italy and Finland will be described and analysed. The choice regarding the total alcohol consumption and the drinking patterns is not casual, instead is based on the fact that, as according to Simpura and Karlsson 2001a: 15–16)

*“A major dividing line in alcohol policy perspectives runs between the regulation of consumption levels (...) and those who believe that specific patterns and specific contexts may contribute more to harmful drinking than does level of consumption (...).”*

Both the total alcohol consumption and the drinking patterns will be studied under an historical point of view, highlighting the trends of the last century in order to understand the reasons of the changes observed. However, drinking patterns will be analysed in deeper details since they better describe the so called drinking culture that can be observed in a certain group of people (in this case at a national level). In addition, according to Simpura and Karlsson (2001a: 11), drinking patterns are strictly dependent on and are at the same time cause of different variables such as: economic development, changes in living conditions, cultural changes (all these three are at the same time cause and consequence of each other), alcohol consumption (registered and unregistered) and alcohol policy. This means that alcohol policies are only one of the variables influencing the consumption of alcohol and therefore the harm caused by such

consumption in a determined environment. Finally, drinking patterns will be studied<sup>7</sup> according to the definitions given by Simpura and Karlsson (2001a: 12) which derive from the frequency of the use of certain variables in the research literature. The definitions are the following:

1. Prevalence and frequencies of drinking.
2. Socio-demographic patterns: gender, age, social class, regional variation.
3. Consumption volume, population distribution of consumption and heavy drinking.
4. Occasions of heavy intake (binge drinking).
5. Drinking contexts: time, place company and the nature of the occasion.
6. Beverage preferences.

#### 4.1. Italy

##### 4.1.1. Alcohol consumption

According to Allamani, Anav, Cipriani, Rossi and Voller (2007: 8), most of the literature have divided the European territory into two main areas relatively to the drinking habits that characterize them. These areas are on one hand the ‘dry area’, constituted by the Scandinavian countries<sup>8</sup> where the most common beverages consumed are beer and spirits, usually consumed during week-ends and outside mealtimes. On the other hand, Southern European countries represent the ‘wet area’ where wine is largely the most consumed alcoholic beverage, usually consumed during meals (Allamani et al. 2007).

In Italy, the total consumption of alcoholic beverages has been constantly decreasing during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 2). The main reason beyond this trend has been the main fall of the consumption of wine. In this case the increase in the

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<sup>7</sup> Naturally, the analysis can only be brief and general due to the limited space at disposal.

<sup>8</sup> As it will be noted later, Scandinavian countries, Finland in particular are now considered as ‘former spirits’ countries.

consumption of beer and the decrease in the consumption of spirits are partially irrelevant.

Moreover, the causes of the decrease of wine consumption in Italy are multiple and mostly due to socio-economic factors. The general modernisation of Italian society which took place in the country since the 1950s has played a major role in this transformation. Firstly, the process of urbanisation led to a change in the habits related to the consumption of meals. Therefore, as a result of the abandonment of traditional customs, also the consumption of wine has decreased, since wine was mostly considered as a food item. Secondly, the change of the labour market led to a change of the working environment and wine, once considered as a source of caloric support, has gradually lost its importance, also due to the belief that its consumption would cause a lack of efficiency. Thirdly, the new active role of women in the modern society has also supported the decrease of wine consumption as well as the general refusal of old traditions. (Tusini 2007.)

These sociological considerations might also explain why some studies have reported a higher alcohol intake level in rural rather than in urban areas in Italy (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 264). In addition, (Allamani et al. 2007; Tusini 2007), informal control has been very important in the reduction of alcohol consumption in Southern Europe in general. In fact, with the process of urbanization, also a new awareness about the harms caused by alcohol has emerged in the society, resulting in the changing of the drinking habits and in a more conscious use of alcoholic beverages. This new wave have been both supported and been supported by mass media, resulting today in the need of higher quality products in smaller quantities: more people drink less (Österberg & Karlsson 2003), better quality wines (Allamani et al. 2007: 12). For instance, this new awareness is supported by informal controls, like for example the belief that drinking alcohol between the main meals or in the morning are socially deviant practices (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 265).

#### 4.1.2. Drinking patterns

More important than the total alcohol consumption are the drinking patterns. Drinking patterns refer to the way people drink, for example what is the amount of the intake per occasion, the occasions in which the intake takes place, how frequently it takes place and so on. The reason of the importance of the drinking patterns is given by the fact that the study of the total alcohol consumption is not enough in explaining cultural differences. Otherwise, not many differences would be found between Scandinavian and Southern European countries. In other words, it is more a matter of quality than a matter of mere quantity.

According to Österberg and Karlsson (2003: 264), in Italy children are initiated to drinking at an early age, usually tasting a small amount of wine when they are about 10 to 14 years old. This particular type of initiation might be one of the reasons beyond the awareness of Italian people about the harms done by alcohol shown in the adult life. Although some studies have reported that not only in Italy but in the whole Europe the first drink is tried at a very early age (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 102), they do not explain the way the drink is tried and more in particular the amount drunk. As a consequence, the differences in the perception of young children towards alcohol beverages are not explained, beside solely noting the early age in which the first drink is tried. Indeed, we must suppose a very deep cultural difference between a Northern country and a Southern country in this process of initiation, taken for granted the cultural differences proved in the later stages of life of the individuals.

In Italy, older people represent the subgroup of individuals who drink the highest amount of alcoholic beverages. According to Österberg and Karlsson (2003: 265), the peak is registered among the age group between 45 and 54 years old. According to a report from the Swedish Presidency (2001), the peak is instead registered among the age group between 50 and 64 years old. The latter data seem more trustable, since they are more coherent with the data reported by the Italian Institution for Statistics (ISTAT 2008). However, all the studies agree on the fact that the level of consumption grows with age, so that younger people are the subgroup of people consuming the least amount

of alcoholic beverages. Again, also this particular division in the age of drinkers might be the result of the adherence to old traditions: obviously, older people are more tied to older traditions of Italian culture according to which wine was the main beverage used during everyday meals.

According to Allamani, Anav, Cipriani, Rossi and Voller (2007: 54–56), the so-called alcohol diseconomy in Italy has played an irrelevant role, being at least overestimated. In fact, they note that the entire alcohol system in Italy, produces and consumes wealth by less than 2% of the GNP. However, they refer to data sources relative to the year 1997 (see Osservatorio permanente sui giovani e l'alcol 1996), claiming that the values are valid for the year 2005, probably after having calculated them according to yearly inflation values. In any case, although more recent data are not available, we must suppose that older data might be quite close to today's trends since the total alcohol consumption in Italy has generally diminished.

## 4.2. Finland

### 4.2.1. Alcohol consumption

According to Allamani et al. (2007: 8), Finland belongs to the Northern 'dry area', where the most consumed alcoholic beverages are spirits and beer. Another categorization is that of considering Finland as a 'former spirits country' (Simpura & Karlsson 2001b). The second definition seems more appropriate since beer is nowadays the most consumed alcoholic beverage in Finland, being so since the 1980s (see Figure 2). In general, alcohol consumption in Finland has been constantly growing with the aforementioned change in the preferences from spirits to beer. A first increase of the total alcohol consumption in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was registered in the 1960s, in particular after the implementation of the 1968 Alcohol Act and the Medium Beer Act (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 141), although a constant increase trend has been registered since the early 1960s.

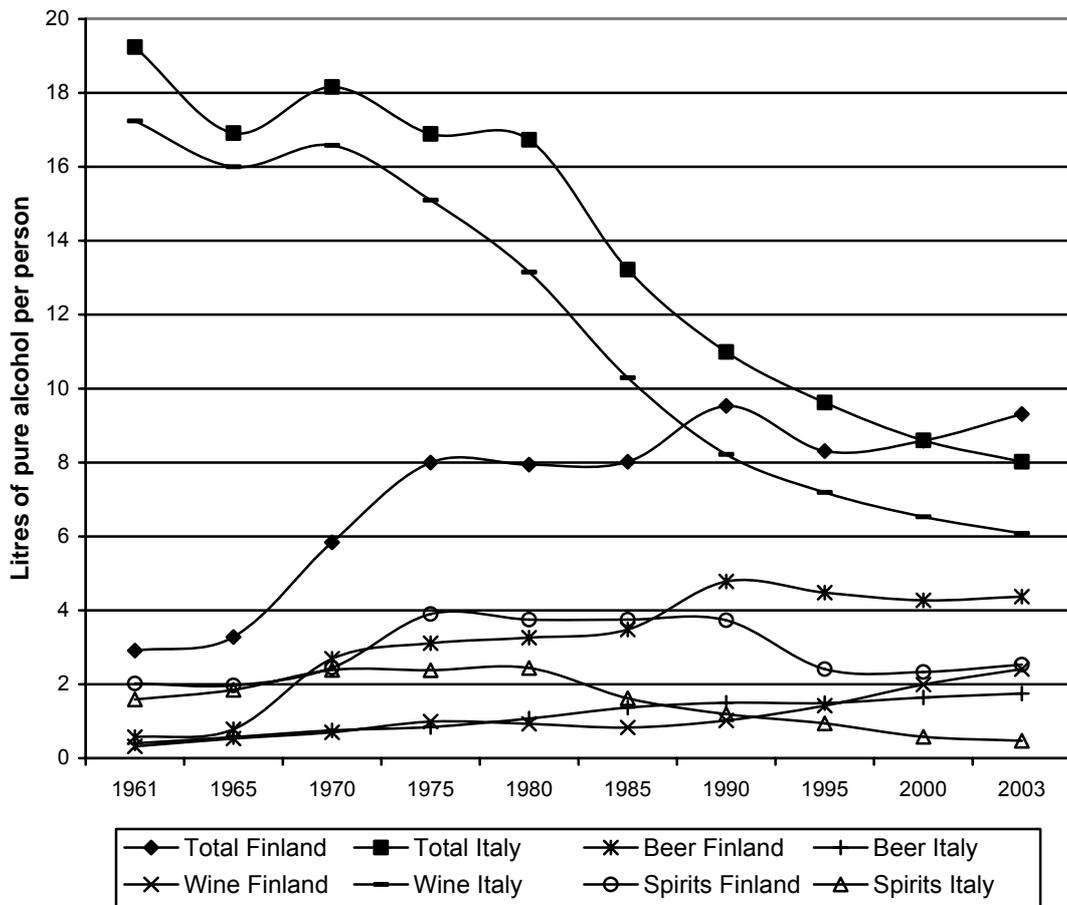


Figure 2: Total recorded alcohol consumption of the adult population (more than 15 years of age) in Italy and Finland (Adapted from WHO 2008).

According to Österberg and Karlsson (2003), other economic factors were the cause of other changes in the trends in the following decades. In particular, a fast economic growth led to an increase in the consumption in the mid-80s while the economic recession of the early 1990s led to a partial decrease (Österberg & Karlsson 2003). In other words, the wealth of the population has always corresponded proportionally with the amount of money spent for alcoholic beverages. It seems that during the economic growth in Finland, urbanization and wealth led to a switch in the preferences so that beer started to be the most consumed beverages if compared with wine and spirits (see Figure 2). However, in Finland the decrease in the consumption of spirits during the 90s might be somehow imprecise. In fact, in Finland a big amount of alcohol consumption

relatively to those years derived from unrecorded alcohol consumption whether it be illegally produced alcoholic beverages or imported beverages. According to Österberg and Karlsson (2003: 143), although official records show a decrease in the total alcohol consumption during the second half of the 1990s, in reality it increased of about 10%.

#### 4.2.2. Drinking patterns

Drinking patterns in Finland follow a trend mostly common to all the Scandinavian countries, although showing some peculiarities. The age subgroup of people who drink the most in terms of quantity are those between 19 and 29 years old (Swedish Presidency 2001). In general, people drink outside meals as in the tradition of the aforementioned dry areas in order to socialize. Drinking occasions are not frequent, in fact according to the study commissioned by the Swedish Presidency (2001), drinking occasions occur in average 1,4 times per week. In addition, one third of the drinking occasions leads to the intoxication of the consumers and is characterized by the phenomenon of binge drinking (Swedish Presidency 2001).

Binge drinking in Finland, as in the other Scandinavian countries, is a broad phenomenon in which people getting together drink to the intoxication so that socialization takes place thanks to the chemical effects of alcohol (Allamani et al. 2007: 8). Also, binge drinking is a generally accepted habit which is driven by particular common rules and behaviours that vary according to the gender and the situation in which it is observed (Törrönen & Maunu 2007). The fact that binge drinking is a behaviour regulated by social norms must suffice to note that it is an institutionalised habit and that is therefore socially accepted.

According to Salomaa (1995), the total cost of the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption in Finland (including both direct and indirect effects) amounted in 1990 to 17,25 billion FIM. This is the result of the sum of the average of the cost of the direct effects (2,8–3,7 billion FIM) and the indirect effects (9,9–18,1). Considering that 1 Euro corresponds to 5,94573 FIM, therefore, in 1990 the total cost of the detrimental effects

of alcohol consumption amounted to almost 3 billion Euros (inflation is not taken into consideration).

#### 4.3. Comparing countries

Many differences can be noted in the social context of alcohol policies in Italy and Finland. These differences are of various nature both in terms of quantity and in terms of quality. Firstly, the total alcohol consumption is higher in Finland than in Italy. Considering that higher levels of total alcohol consumption correspond to higher levels of harm done by alcohol (Edwards et al. 1994; Babor et al. 2003; Anderson & Baumberg 2006) the aforementioned difference would already suggest a difference in the intensity of the problem in the two countries. However, the difference in the total alcohol consumption per se does not explain deeper cultural differences. Those differences are more understandable looking at the trend of the total alcohol consumption in the past half a century. The trend shows an increase in Finland and a decrease in Italy, proving a totally different approach to alcoholic beverages as commodities. The most striking difference in this case is given by the fact that, while in Italy the economical growth together with wealth and urbanization produced a decrease in the total alcohol consumption, in Finland happened the exact contrary. In fact, more wealth and economic growth in Finland always corresponded to an increase in the total alcohol consumption.

However, this might not be as surprising as it seems if we consider what is alcohol associated with in the two different contexts. In Italy, wine (the main responsible in the decrease in the total alcohol consumption) was associated with rural life and poorer classes of people, therefore a refusal in consuming such goods for Italian families corresponded to the refusal of the old status of agricultural workers. This is also particularly tied with the type of beverage which was mostly drunk, wine, since it was a precious source of energy giving especially important caloric support to an often very poor diet. On the other hand, in Finland, before the process of urbanization and economic growth started, spirits were the most consumed alcoholic beverages and were

probably used for hedonistic purposes rather than merely nutritional. This might explain why alcohol consumption increased at the same time as salaries grew, workers had more free time and as a generally more modern way of life imposed new values and customs. This explanation is coherent with the data available about the age groups consuming the highest amount of pure alcohol relatively to both Italy and Finland, where in the former are the older people and in the latter younger people.

This is why, most important are the quality differences in the alcohol consumption, such as the type of beverage drunk the most, the frequency and modes of drinking occasions, the age groups who drink the most and so on. In other words, what has been called here drinking patterns. Drinking patterns are particularly useful in understanding a drinking culture, the way alcohol is perceived and therefore the values it is associated with. In fact, according to Allamani et al. (2007: 45), “*A drinking pattern is built up on local traditions transmitted during the centuries through generations.*” The differences in the drinking patterns in Italy and Finland (see Table 1) demonstrate deep cultural differences between the two countries. In Finland, drinking occasions are less frequent than in Italy and the amount of alcohol drunk per drinking occasion is in average significantly higher than in Italy.

Moreover, it is clear that in Finland alcoholic beverages are drunk for hedonistic purposes since they are consumed mainly not in connection with meals and in bars or restaurants, while in Italy people drink mostly during lunch or dinner and supposedly in a family context. Moreover, in Finland bars and restaurants are important arenas of sociability (Törrönen & Maunu 2005: 26) and this explains why people who drink the most are generally young, why people drink large amounts in one occasion and also why they are more affected by wealth and income. Usually in fact, young people are affected the most by prices fluctuations (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 264).

In conclusion, alcoholic beverages have different roles in Italy and Finland. In Finland alcohol beverages are drunk in social contexts in large quantities in order to loose tensions and favour socialization. This last consideration related with the Finnish general drinking patterns is coherent with a study that proved how Finnish people tend

to get intoxicated the most among the other Scandinavian countries and how an intoxicated behaviour (different from an every day code of behaviour) is socially more accepted (Mäkelä, Fonager, Hibell, Nordlund, Sabroe & Simpura 2001). In Italy on the other hand, alcohol beverages and wine in particular, are drunk on a daily base in connection with meals and in limited quantities. So, the conviviality in its whole is a means to socialization while alcoholic beverages are a necessary but not sufficient part of this conviviality.

The differences in the drinking patterns might also explain the differences in the costs related to the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption. In fact, according to Holmila (1995), those who drink seldom large amounts on a single occasion experience harmful consequences fairly often. In proportion, the direct and indirect costs due to alcohol harm in Finland are much higher than in Italy, as they can be roughly estimated to 600 Euros per person in the year 1990 in the former case and to about 120 Euros per person in the year 1997 in the latter case (this calculation is based on the data reported by Allamani et al. 2007 for Italy and by Salomaa 1995 for Finland and on the total amount of citizens living in the two countries in 2008).

Table 1: Drinking patterns in Italy and Finland (Adapted from Swedish Presidency 2001).

	<i>Age group consuming the highest amount of pure alcohol per year</i>	<i>Frequency of drinking occasions per week</i>	<i>Average volume of pure alcohol drunk per drinking occasion</i>	<i>Most common environment where consumption takes place</i>
<b>FINLAND</b>	18–29 years old	1,3	14,3	At home not in connection with meals or in bars and restaurants
<b>ITALY</b>	50–64 years old	3,4	4,6	During lunch and/or dinner

## 5. MARKET RESTRICTIONS

In order to analyse alcohol policies under a regulative point of view, a general categorization of the measures and strategies which can be labelled as alcohol policy has to be drawn. In this case, many authors have previously tried to provide a general framework of analysis which could be applied to all the alcohol policies worldwide. However, all the frameworks provided are different in the formal definitions given to the same type of measures while are rather similar for what concerns the content. For example, age limits for the purchasing of alcohol are in some cases grouped under measures defined as personal control (Österberg, & Karlsson 2003) and in other cases are defined as measures for young people (Anderson & Baumberg 2006).

In this research, the categories of alcohol policies on alcohol are drawn according to the main important need of being able to group the measures that refer to the Italian and Finnish system, so that a comparison can be consecutively done. The consequent framework of analysis is based on that provided by Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 377) and it is adapted to the needs of this research. The categories which will be taken into account are the following:

1. Market restrictions.
2. Market regulations.
3. Marketing control.
4. Drunk driving.

The first category, market restrictions, will take into account three sub-categories of restrictions. They are the following: production, distribution and availability. In the availability category, also the regulations about the age limit for purchasing alcohol will be provided. This is due to the fact that, according to this research, the term availability should include measures aiming at limiting the availability for all the different categories of people. In fact, in the availability of alcohol products, not only the age limit will be provided but also the hours of sale, places of sale and so on. Secondly, market regulations differentiate from the previous category in the fact that

they are not restrictive, but merely regulative. In fact, this category will comprehend the study of the tax rates levied on alcohol products according to further sub-categories: beer, wine, intermediate products and ethyl alcohol. The reason of this subsequent division is given by the European Union's minimum rates set for all alcohol products and by the tax rates applied by Finnish and Italian government. Thirdly, in the marketing control category, regulative norms about the advertising of alcohol products will be described and analysed. Finally, drunk driving measures will be analysed as they are considered in this research the most important measures in what has been labelled in some studies as social and environmental control (see Eurocare Bridging the Gap Project 2006)<sup>9</sup>.

In addition, it has to be noted that there will not be any mention about what in the BtG scale is called public policy, intended as measures taken by the government for alcohol prevention and education. Two are the reasons for this choice: first of all, both Italy and Finland do have a national alcohol prevention or education programme. However, in both cases the programmes are ran and implemented mainly at a local level, so that a detailed analysis is impossible to be done in a research based on a national level. Eventually, both in the case of Finland and Italy, programmes are forecasted in the national norms, respectively in the Finnish Alcohol Act (1143/1994) and in the Italian alcohol frame law 125/2001. Secondly, public policy is a term which seems in this case inappropriate due to the meaning given to this expression in the previous chapters.

### 5.1. Effectiveness

One means of control exerted through public policy instruments on the commodity of alcohol is the control of the market. That is the control exerted by the government over the production and the distribution of alcohol products. In the regulative nature of the restrictions relative to the market environment, it is implicit the confinement of alcohol products into certain official limits. These limits are placed both at the starting point of the chain, the production (which includes also the cultivation of the plants used for the

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<sup>9</sup> For reasons of convenience, from now on we will refer to the Bridging the Gap Project simply as BtG, or BtG scale when referring to the scale used in the project to assess the strictness of alcohol policies.

production of alcohol) and at the delivering premises, regulating the sales and the availability. Furthermore, the sales of alcohol is constituted by the wholesale and import on one hand, and by the retail on and off-premises on the other. In general terms, market restrictions appeal to the use of granted licences in the case of the production and sale, while the restrictions on the availability of alcohol products are prescribed by national norms. The restrictions on the availability of alcohol products include various measures such as the limitation of the density of outlets, limitation of the quantity to be purchased and restrictions on the eligibility to purchase alcohol. As for all the various alcohol policy measures, the effectiveness of market restrictions vary according to many different variables: for example the place (region, country, municipality etc...) in which they are applied or the target of people on which they are directed.

In general however, all the measures that can be labelled as market restrictions are considered to be useful and effective in reducing the consumption of alcohol and the harm caused by the consumption of the substance (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 269). Particularly important in the case of the market restrictions is the reinforcement of the measures. For example, in the case of the availability, more precisely in the case of the sales to people below a certain age, it has been noticed that in most of the European countries it is fairly easy for youngsters to procure themselves alcoholic beverages despite the age limits set by the governments (Hibell, Andersson, Bjarnason, Ahlström, Balakireva, Kokkevi, Morgan 2003). According to the study made by Hibell et al. (2003), in both Italy and Finland most of the students answered 'easy' or 'very easy' to the questions about the perceived availability of beer, wine and spirits.

In addition, concerning the production and distribution of alcohol products, if before in Europe state monopolies were present in order to restrict and therefore control the market, those definitely disappeared during the 90s due to the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement and the membership of countries such as Finland and Sweden in the in European Union (Norström 2002). However, the case of Finland is particular in the European context, since the question of the monopoly seems to be complicated in relation with the wholesale and retail voice. This will be explored in deeper details in the following paragraphs. Also, description of the regulations about production,

distribution and sales (wholesale and import on one hand and retailing on the other) and availability of alcohol products will be provided (see Table 2).

Table 2: General review of the measures regarding the market restrictions for the commodity of alcohol in Italy and Finland.

	Production	Distribution		Availability
		Import and Wholesale	Retail	
<b>Finland</b>	Licence	Licence	a) Monopoly for spirits	a) Detailed regulations about the serving on-premises
			b) Licence for producers (alcohol in products <13% by volume)	b) Hours of opening (on and off-premises)
			c) Licence for grocery stores (alcohol in products <4,7% by volume)	c) Age purchase limit: 18 years for beer, wine & spirits on-premises; 18 years of age for wine & beer off-premises; 20 years of age for spirits off-premises
<b>Italy</b>	Licence	Licence	Licence	a) Hours of serving in highways shops and on-premises b) Age purchase limit: 16 years of age for beer, wine and spirits on and off-premises

## 5.2. Restrictions on the production

### 5.2.1. Italy

In Italy, the production of alcohol products is controlled through a licensing policy by the Italian government. In this case, Italian government is represented by the Ministry of

Finance who is responsible in granting permanent licences for the production; licences are reconfirmed and paid on a year base and are fairly cheap: 260 Euros for the production of spirits and 104 Euros for the production of beer and wine (Allamani et al. 2007).

### 5.2.2. Finland

The situation in Finland is similar, even though it became so only quite recently, more precisely in January 1995, when the Alcohol Act became effective. In fact, before 1995 the production of wine and liqueurs in Finland was licensed by Oy Alkoholiliike Ab (Alko) and the production of distilled spirits was monopoly of Alko (formed in 1932). The Alko Group Ltd. today is a state owned company (see Parker 2003) whose functions are described in the Alcohol Act. Today, after the implementation of the Alcohol Act, all persons can apply for a licence for the production of alcohol products for business activity, unless requisites such as required qualifications and reliability are not satisfied (as stated in the Alcohol Act 1143/1994). The licenses are granted by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health and cost *una tantum* about 1,680 Euros (in the year 2000); in addition, a control fee has to be paid yearly and it varies according to the quantity produced, being at its highest 16,800 Euros (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 150).

To sum up, before 1995 Alko was the only producer of distilled spirits and at the same time the licences granter for the production of wines and beers. This latter condition was due to the impossibility of Alko of producing wine and liqueur from domestic agricultural products. Therefore, Alko licensed private companies to produce alcohol products from Finnish ingredients (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 151). Today, anyone eligible for granting a licence is able to produce distilled spirits, wines, liqueurs and beer for business purposes. In addition, mild alcoholic beverages can be produced privately for other than sale purposes.

### 5.3. Restrictions on the distribution

#### 5.3.1. Italy

Also the distribution of alcohol products is regulated in Italy through a system of licences. In Italy, according to Allamani et al. (2007), Municipalities are responsible of granting licences both for the retail and import of alcohol products; the only requirement for the requester is to be enrolled in the Chamber of Commerce of the Municipality of residence and the compulsory checking of the fiscal deposit by the Ministry of Finance, which then authorises the licence through the municipality. The licence has to be renewed yearly and costs about 34 Euros (Österberg & Karlsson 2003; Allamani et al. 2007). Naturally, in order to be enrolled in the Chamber of Commerce, a citizen has to fulfil certain parameters which recall to its integrity and reliability (as stated in the law 287/1991); however, those parameters are similarly set for the granting of other licences than the one for the sales of alcohol products and therefore they do not seem to be especially set for alcohol matters. Rather, they are general and formal principles which are not aimed at the restriction of the market of alcohol and consequently are not of any particular interest for this research.

Furthermore, according to the law 287/1991, the system of licences has been simplified: only one licence is now required for selling all types of alcoholic beverages and the so called 'delivery tax' to be paid by retailers has been eliminated (see also Allamani et al. 2007). Before the law 287/1991 was passed, individuals who wanted to be able to sell alcohol products had to be granted two different types of licences: one for wine and beer and another for the sales of spirits. In addition, the law 287/1991 has discerned into three different categories of stores that can apply for a licence to sell alcohol products, as follow:

1. restaurants where meals are consumed and that can sell foods, milk and any other kind of alcoholic beverage;
2. pubs and bars where all kind of alcoholic beverages are served as well as other foods and gastronomy products;

3. premises in which the sales of alcoholic beverages and foods are combined with entertaining activities (it is the case for example of dancing halls and nightclubs).

Finally, concerning off and on-premises, a permanent licence is granted by the Municipality Office for the Public Stores to medium size wholesalers and retailers of alcoholic beverages (a maximum of 150 square meters stores in cities with less than 10000 inhabitants and up to 250 square meters in cities with more than 10000 inhabitants) as well as to trade centres (Allamani et al. 2007).

### 5.3.2. Finland

Also in Finland the distribution of alcoholic beverages is regulated by a system of licences. However, the situation is a bit more complex than in Italy and stands out among the European general policies on alcohol due to the peculiarity of the state monopoly in the retail sale, which will be described in this paragraph. Concerning the import and wholesale of alcoholic beverages, a licence is granted by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health as it is stated in the Alcohol Act. The cost of the licence was in 2000 of about 840 Euros (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 152). As stated in the Alcohol Act, in Finland the retail trade of alcoholic beverages is restricted by the state alcohol monopoly. However, the monopoly takes place only in respect of alcoholic beverages which contain over 13% by volume ethyl alcohol, in other words, spirits<sup>10</sup>. The shops of the state monopoly are called Alko and in 2008 there were 344 shops open in Finland; in addition, there are 125 so called order points, which are places where alcoholic products can be delivered and picked up by customers if an Alko shop is too far to be reached (Alko 2008).

The consent for the retail trade is given by the Municipal Council and mostly depends on logistic considerations, such as for example the facility of control to be exerted on the premises. In fact, also in petrol stations and kiosks is allowed to sell alcoholic beverages through a licence, unless the alcohol contained in the beverages exceeds the

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<sup>10</sup> Only producers can sell beverages with a gradation between 4,7% and 13% in the location in which they are produced. Therefore, the monopoly in the retail sale also concerns wines.

percentage of 4,7. Furthermore, whomever produces alcoholic beverages containing a maximum of 13 percentage by volume ethyl alcohol can also sell the products produced, when granted a licence by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and health.

#### 5.4. Restrictions on the availability

##### 5.4.1. Italy

According to a law implemented in 1998 (see Österberg & Karlsson 2003), in Italy alcoholic beverages containing more than 21% alcohol by volume cannot be sold from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. on-premises built along highways (this regulation is now inserted in the frame law on alcohol related issues 125/2001). In addition, according to the law 160/2007, it is forbidden to sell after 2 a.m. any kind of alcoholic beverages in any premise in Italy. Moreover, according to the same law (160/2007) each premise in which the sales of alcoholic beverages and foods are combined with entertaining activities has to provide at the entrance a machine through which it will be possible for customers to test the level of alcohol in their body (naturally through the expiration into a proper machine).

Also, posters with the descriptions of the symptoms of alcohol intoxication according to different levels of blood alcohol concentration have to be exposed at the entrance, exit and inside the premise, as well as tables which describe the most common alcohol products and the effect of them on the blood alcohol concentration, even associated with different hypothetical weights of the individuals. In any case, the regulations on the availability of alcohol in Italy are included into more general laws regulating the safeguard of driving and are aimed at trying to avoid road accidents. In other words, these regulations seem to be driven by the need of safeguarding road safety and to prevent car accidents. On the other hand, in Finland, the availability of alcoholic beverages is aimed at actually preventing the drinking, since the times and modes of

retail sales and serving are strictly regulated and limited, notwithstanding their ties with driving behaviours.

Concerning young people, in Italy the minimum legal age for purchasing alcohol is 16 years of age, both on and off-premise. It has to be noted here that the minimum legal purchase age set in Italy is the lowest in Europe together with other European countries.

#### 5.4.2. Finland

More detailed and somehow restrictive are the regulations concerning the availability of alcohol products in Finland. In fact, in the Alcohol Act are also described rules and regulations about the serving of alcoholic beverages on licensed premises. First of all, it has to be noted that according to the Alcohol Act, in order to be able to serve alcoholic beverages on the premises, a licence has to be issued by the Municipal Council to a person, under special conditions which assure the integrity and reliability of the requester. In any case, as for the licence granted by Italian authorities for the distribution of alcohol products, the conditions of general reliability of the requester of the licence are more tied to formal individual requirements than to alcohol issues and therefore are not especially implemented in relation with the commerce of alcohol.

Moreover, the Finnish law distinguishes from retail sale off-premise (it is the case of the retail monopoly of Alko) and retail sale on-premise, characterized by the serving of alcohol products. In this latter case, licensed premises can procure alcohol products from the state alcohol monopoly, licensed producers and wholesalers (see Figure 3). The licence has to be renewed yearly. In addition, there are two types of licence for the selling on-premise of alcohol products: an A-licence which is granted for the selling of alcoholic beverages that can exceed 22% by volume ethyl alcohol and a B-licence for products that contain less than 22% by volume ethyl alcohol.

The serving of alcohol products on-premises is strictly regulated and detailed. For example, according to the decrees issued by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health (2008), it is prohibited to serve more than one drink at a time per person. In addition, each drink cannot contain more than 4 cl (centilitres) of spirits

(alcohol products with a percentage exceeding 22 by volume ethyl alcohol) or 8 cl of mild alcohol products (containing a percentage of less than 22 by volume ethyl alcohol). Bottles can be served only to large groups and it is generally stated (National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health 2008) that “*Dispensing by bottle must not lead to over-extensive dispensing or over-intoxication of customers.*” Also, according to the alcohol act (1994), alcohol cannot be served to people who are “*behaving disturbingly or are clearly intoxicated*” and if there is a “*reason to suspect abuse of alcoholic beverages*”.

In addition, alcohol products can be sold on-premises only between 9 a.m. and 3.30 a.m. according to the licence granted to the owner or to the company owning the premise. Also, opening hours of Alko shops are restricted to week days and Saturdays and can vary according to festivities and special occasions. However, alcohol products are sold in Alko between 9 a.m. and maximum 8 p.m. during week days and from 9 a.m. to maximum 6 p.m. on Saturdays. Grocery stores where alcoholic beverages containing less than 4,7% by volume ethyl alcohol are sold, can sell these products only from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., also on Sundays.

Concerning young people, in Finland the minimum legal age for purchasing alcohol is different according to the place in which it is purchased. Off-premises the minimum legal purchase age is 18 years for beer and wine and 20 years for spirits. On-premises it is 18 for beer, wine and spirits. This difference is probably due to the fact that youngsters are allowed to get into bars and restaurants in which alcohol is served at the age of 18 and it would be almost impossible for the government to control every single drink consumed in such kind of premises. In sum, people younger than 20 years of age could still purchase spirits, but that can be done only on-premises.

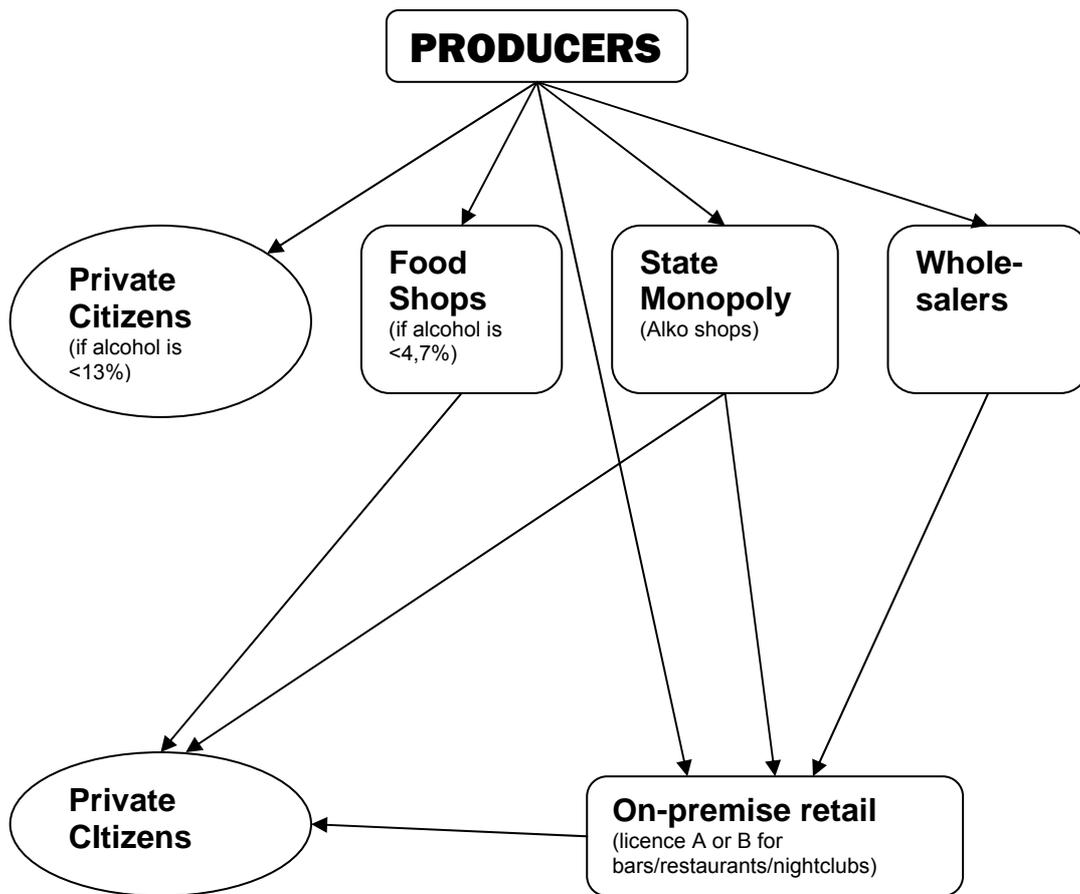


Figure 3: Distribution of alcohol products in Finland, from the producers to private citizens.

### 5.5. Comparing countries

Both in Italy and Finland there are market restrictions concerned with the commodity of alcohol. However, the degree of these laws and regulations implemented by the government is different in many cases. First of all, it has to be noted that the regulations implemented by the Italian government are given by different laws, each of them concerned with different matters. For example, as stated above, the regulations concerning the serving of alcoholic beverages during night times and on the highways are inserted in more general frame laws regarding road safety.

This means that, in the case of Italy, there is not a coordinate plan for the prevention of alcohol related problems. Instead, regulations that can be labelled as alcohol policy are addressed on a case-by-case basis, according to more general issues faced by legislators. This is more evident if we compare the case of Italy with the case of Finland. In fact, in the latter case, most of the regulations which are aimed at the control of the alcohol commodity (if not the prevention of detrimental effects of alcohol consumption) are inserted in the Alcohol Act, so that they are coordinated and easily recognizable. As a consequence, it can also be stated that, in Finland, priority is given to the problem of alcohol as a commodity and to all that surrounds such commodity.

On the other hand, in Italy, the problem of alcohol seems to be secondary and overshadowed by more general regulations about other issues which in specific cases happen to be in contact with alcohol-related issues. If stating that this is a result of the different cultural views of alcohol in the two countries would be a wild guess, it is certain that in Finland alcohol is considered by the legislators as the main problem. On the other hand, in Italy, the problem is what people do with it.

The production of alcoholic beverages is regulated both in Italy and in Finland by a system of licences. The differences concern only practical matters, such as the prices of these licences, which are clearly more expensive in Finland than in Italy. This is due to geographical and historical reasons: Italy is one of the biggest wine producer in the world and alcohol products account for 1,3% of the total volume of Italian GNP (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 259; Allamani et al. 2007: 25). In Finland on the other hand, geographical reasons do not permit to cultivate vineyards extensively and the production of alcoholic beverages is therefore limited, if compared to that of Italy. As a consequence, a very strict system of licences would undermine Italy's production which is extended throughout the whole peninsula. On the other hand, as stated above, in Finland the production of alcohol products had been a state monopoly until 1995 and the market had been controlled very strictly since 1932. It can be guessed that if the production of alcohol products in Finland would have been as big as the Italian, then also the system of licences would have been naturally more loose in order to safeguard a

big stake of the national economy, especially if this was a means of survival for a big part of the citizens of the country.

However, in the case of Finland, a more detailed explanation of the production of alcohol products has to be made. In fact in Finland, Alko was the only producer of spirits and the licence granter for the production of other alcoholic beverages until 1995. Between 1995 and 1999, the Alko Group Ltd. had been restructured with the creation of other sub-companies: Havistra and Primalco were created for the distribution and wholesale of alcohol products in Finland and in the Baltic region. At the same time Alko continued with its retail sale activity in a monopoly regime while Arctia (a branch of the company active in the hotel and restaurant business) was sold to the Swedish Scandic (Österberg & Karlsson 2003). In 1999, the Alko Group Ltd. was definitely divided into two companies: Alko for the off-premise retail (still acting in a monopoly regime as written in the 1994 Alcohol Act) and Altia Group, a totally state owned corporation for the wholesale, import and production of alcohol products (Österberg & Karlsson 2003). Naturally, both Alko shops and Altia Group are also granted licences by the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health and work under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Health. In particular, the Altia Group is able to produce 60,5 million litres of alcoholic beverages per year, 32,7 million litres of which are produced for the export (Altia 2007).

According to the 2007 Altia's annual report, in 2007 in Finland 35 million litres of spirits were consumed. If we consider that the major production of Altia is characterized by the production of spirits (according to the same report, for instance the Koskenkorva plants are able to produce 20,8 million litres of spirits), then we can roughly calculate that most of the spirits consumed in Finland are produced by the state owned corporation Altia. Even though the Altia Group claims clearly to be a totally independent company, it seems like in Finland there is a monopoly, or at least an imperfect competition regime in the production of alcoholic beverages. This situation seems to be more unfair if we combine it with the off-premise retail monopoly of spirits detained by Alko. Although Altia is an independent corporation, both Alko and Altia are connected with the Finnish government. This means that the producer, the seller and

the controller are the same juridical person and that the seller can deliberately choose to sell its own products or other company's products (alcoholic beverages with alcohol percentage by volume over 13). This situation leads us to state that, concerning the commodity of alcohol, a regime of free market is explicit in Finland *de iure*, so that the aforementioned country can be legitimately part of the EU and EEA (see OECD 1997). However, this is not true *de facto*. In fact, although anyone can be granted a licence for the production of spirits, the status quo suggests that the Finnish national corporation Altia is still largely the major producer of spirits in Finland and can in addition unfairly take advantage of the juridical connection with Alko, the national off-premise retail monopoly seller of spirits. Furthermore, we can state that we are facing in this case the presence of a clear conflict of interests<sup>11</sup> within the market economy, the subject of which is the Finnish public administration. This situation contrasts with the values guiding the Finnish public administration, reported by Temmes and Salminen (1994) to be:

*“The three pillars of government in today's Finland are a constitutionally governed state, a democratic model which guarantees further democratic development, and an economic system which furthers the precepts of a market economy.”*

Concerning the distribution of alcoholic products, both in Italy and Finland there is a system of licences which are granted by the central government and the local municipalities. In Italy, the distribution is less restricted than in Finland since the licences can be granted by many different types of shops, grocery stores and entertaining premises. In this case the regulation generally distinguishes between three different types of premises. In addition, the regulation concerning the licences for the retail of alcoholic products became more flexible. In fact, only one licence is now required in order to be able to sell beer, wine and spirits (there are no specifications about the alcohol gradation of the products).

Similarly, in Finland licences are needed for the import and wholesale of alcoholic products and for the retail. However, licence for the retail of spirits is granted only to Alko, consequently creating a state monopoly (in the 1994 alcohol act the state retail

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<sup>11</sup> For a definition of conflict of interests see Bruce (2001).

alcohol monopoly is explicitly mentioned). In other words, full bottles of spirits (in any quantity) can only be sold in Alko shops. In fact, if a licence for the sales of any alcoholic product can be granted to an individual or a juridical person in relation with an on-premise activity, yet the sales of full bottles in this latter case is basically forbidden. In fact, as stated above, the availability of alcohol on-premise in Finland is very limited and only one bottle of spirits can be sold only to a large group of people, taking also care that the dispensing will not lead to the intoxication of the customers (National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health 2008). This latter issue is part of the availability voice of the measures aimed at the market restrictions.

Concerning the availability, in Finland the legislation differentiates between on and off-premise retail, giving very detailed indication about the time, the quantity and the quality (in terms of alcohol gradation) of the serving of alcoholic beverages. On the other hand, in Italy it is not given any indication about the quantity and quality. However, indication is given about the time of serving, which is in fact forbidden on-premises built on the highways during night time (from 10.00 p.m. to 6 a.m. for strong alcoholic beverages). In addition, the serving of alcoholic beverages must stop at 2 a.m. on all the on-premises in the country (this regulation clearly refers to entertaining premises, even if it is theoretically extended to all the premises). In this case, the availability of alcoholic beverages on-premises is generally more limited in Italy than in Finland, where the serving must be stopped latest at 3.30 a.m. (according to the type of licence granted). However, in Italy this particular regulation is aimed at limiting road accidents caused by the consumption of alcohol and not to the consumption *per se*. In any case, statistics about the effectiveness and the efficiency in implementing this particular regulation are not yet available (anyway, the outcome of such measure would be very difficult to calculate as well as to calculate how effectively it is applied, so our guess is that statistics will never be available and that such measure is just a demagogic tool of the government to show that the problem has been put into the agenda).

## 6. MARKET REGULATIONS: TAXATION OF ALCOHOL PRODUCTS

### 6.1. Effectiveness of tax measures

As agreed by most of the literature about alcohol policies (see Babor et al. 2003; Österberg 2004; Anderson & Baumberg 2006), one of the most effective and cost-effective tools used to control alcohol consumption are the taxes levied on alcohol products. This is due to two main reasons. Firstly, excise duties on alcohol effect the final price of the products. Therefore, higher taxes usually correspond to a higher final price in the retail sales. Consecutively, higher prices usually correspond to an overall lowering of alcohol consumption. Also, the consumption of alcoholic beverages is more easily controllable through tax rates (and therefore through changes of the price levels) in the Nordic countries than anywhere else (Simpura 2001: 8). This means also that in Finland, Sweden and Norway, the effects of the price on the consumption and of the consumption on the harm done by alcohol are significantly stronger than in the Mediterranean countries (Anderson & Baumberg 2006). In fact, in the wine-producing countries (which of course include Italy) the demand of alcohol products are relatively inelastic<sup>12</sup> with respect to the final price if compared with the Nordic countries.

Secondly, higher excise duties levied on alcohol products correspond to higher tax revenues for governments. Governments are therefore able to reinvest higher amount of money in alcohol policies in order to implement parallel measures aimed at the control of alcohol consumption and its detrimental effects.

Yet, when comparing different levels of tax rates in different countries relatively to different kind of beverages, it can be evinced that lower tax rates do not always correspond necessarily to lower final prices for the consumers (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 385). This means that the state's tax income does not only depend on the amount of alcoholic beverages consumed, but rather on the tax rates levied on the products (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 55). Notwithstanding the proved effectiveness of high tax rates in procuring tax revenues for the government, in the Northern countries tax

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<sup>12</sup> The elasticity of a product is the per cent change in the consumption following a per cent change in prices or incomes (Leppänen, Sullström & Suoniemi 2001: 100).

rates are not set at their revenue-maximizing level (Simpura 2001: 8). Naturally, as it will be described later, the same can be said for other Mediterranean countries and in this case Italy is not an exception.

## 6.2. The categories set by the European Commission and the cases of Italy and Finland

Both Italy and Finland follow European Commission's directives in defining excise duty rates applied to alcohol products. In particular, they follow the Council Directive 92/83/EEC which was designed to specify the different categories of alcohol products subjected to the excise duties, in order to harmonise the structure of the taxation. In addition, Council Directive 92/84/EEC fixed minimum excise duty rates to be applied to each category of alcohol product. The categories of alcohol products are the following: beer, wine, fermented beverages other than wine and beer, intermediate products and ethyl alcohol (spirits included). In the following paragraphs, I will describe into deeper details the actual taxation structure in Italy and Finland relatively to each category of product. After that, I will highlight the main differences and similarities between the two systems. However, it should be noted here that a first difference is given by the different quantity of VAT (value added tax) applied in Italy and Finland for all alcohol products: 20% and 22% relatively. Naturally, the diversity of the VAT in the countries concurs in the price difference of the products in the retail sale.

### 6.2.1. Beer

Concerning beer products, Italy and Finland use two different methods for the classification of the amount of product on which excise duties are levied. The Italian system of taxation is based on the degree Plato measure while the Finnish system on the degree of alcohol by volume in the finished product. However, an equivalence for the comparison can be easily done: 2,5% by volume of ethyl alcohol is equivalent to 1 degree Plato. In fact, the minimum excise duty rates fixed by the European Council is coherent with this equivalence: 0,748 Euros per hectolitre per degree Plato of finished

product and 1,87 Euros per hectolitre per degree of alcohol of finished product (see Table 3).

Table 3: Excise duty rates levied on beer products in Italy and Finland (Adapted from European Commission 2008).

	<b>Standard rates</b>		<b>Reduced rates</b>	
	(Alcoholic strength by vol. exceeding 0,5%)		Independent small breweries (<200.000 hl yearly production)	Low alcohol (<2,8%)
	Excise duty per hl/degree Plato of finished product	Excise duty per hl/degree of alcohol of finished product	Excise duty per hl/degree of alcohol of finished product	Excise duty per hl/degree of alcohol of finished product
<b>Minimum excise duty</b> (set by the European Commission)	0,748 €	1,87 €	Rate may not be set more than 50% below the standard national rate	
<b>FINLAND</b>		>2,8% → <b>21,40 €</b>	≤2000 hl → <b>10,70 €</b> ≤30000 hl → <b>14,98 €</b> ≤55000 hl → <b>17,12 €</b> ≤100000 hl → <b>19,26 €</b>	0,5%–2,8% → <b>2,00 €</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>2,35 €</b>			

In Finland, excise duties are set at 21,40 Euros per hectolitre per degree of alcohol of finished product for products exceeding alcoholic strength of 2,8% by volume. In addition, reduced rates are set for small breweries according to the yearly production in terms of hectolitres produced, and for beers products not exceeding alcoholic strength of 2,8% by volume (see Table 3). In Italy on the other hand, there are not reduced rates for small breweries nor are there for low alcohol beer products. Excise duty rates in Italy are set at 2,35 Euros per hectolitre per degree Plato of finished product. In conclusion,

considering that one degree of alcohol is equivalent to 2,5 degree Plato, and considering a normal beer product of 5% of ethyl alcohol by volume, the resulting excise duty rates would be set at 107,00 Euros per hectolitre in Finland, and at 29,37 Euros per hectolitre in Italy.

#### 6.2.2. Wine

Wine products are those obtained from fresh grape. The minimum excise duty rates set by the European Council for wine products are none. In fact, tax rates levied on still wine, sparkling wine and fermented products other than wine and beer can be set at lowest at zero Euros.

The Italian taxation system, being the country one of the major wine producer in the world (see Allamani et al. 2007), does not impose any tax on wine products (see Table 4). Obviously, this is a means to safeguard the production and therefore the huge economy rotating around wine products.

On the other hand, in Finland excise duty rates are set at 233,00 Euros per hectolitre of finished product. In addition, reduced rates are applied to products (still wine, sparkling wine and fermented beverages other than wine and beer) not exceeding 8,0% by volume ethyl alcohol (see Table 4).

Table 4: Excise duty rates levied on still wine, sparkling wine and on fermented products other than wine and beer in Italy and Finland (Adapted from European Commission 2008).

	<b>Standard rates</b>	<b>Reduced rates</b> (Not exceeding 8.5% vol.)
	Still Wine – Sparkling Wine, Fermented beverages other than Wine and Beer	Still Wine – Sparkling Wine. Fermented beverages other than Wine and Beer
	Excise duty per hectolitre of finished product	Excise duty per hectolitre of finished product
<b>FINLAND</b>	<b>233,00 €</b>	<b>&gt;1,2%&lt;2,8% → 5,00 €</b> <b>&gt;2,8%&lt;5,5% → 113,00 €</b> <b>&gt;5,5%&lt;8,0% → 167,00 €</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>0 €</b>	<b>0 €</b>

### 6.2.3. Intermediate products

Intermediate products are intended to be all alcoholic beverages between 1,2% and 22% by volume ethyl alcohol. Those do not include wine or beer since they are set in their own categorization. More in particular, they generally refer to fermented beverages to which ethyl alcohol is added.

The European Commission has set minimum excise duty rates for intermediate products at 45 Euros per hectolitre of finished product. Also, minimum reduced rates have been set for intermediate products not exceeding 15% by volume ethyl alcohol (see Table 5). In Finland, standard rates are meant for intermediate products with ethyl alcohol between 15% and 22% by volume and are set at 467,00 Euros per hectolitre of finished product. In addition, reduced rates are levied on products not exceeding 15% by volume ethyl alcohol and are set at 283,00 Euros per hectolitre of finished product.

In Italy, the tax rate levied on intermediate products is 68,51 Euros per hectolitre of finished product.

Table 5: Excise duty rates levied on intermediate products in Italy and Finland (Adapted from European Commission 2008).

	<b>Standard rates</b>	<b>Reduced rates</b> (Not exceeding 15% vol.)
<b>Minimum excise duty</b> (set by the European Commission)	45 € per hectolitre of finished product	Not set more than 40% below the standard national rate of excise duty and not less than the rates on still wines etc.
	Excise duty per hectolitre of finished product	Excise duty per hectolitre of finished product
<b>FINLAND</b>	15%–22% → <b>467,00 €</b>	1,2%–15% → <b>283,00 €</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>68,51 €</b>	

#### 6.2.4. Ethyl alcohol

Ethyl alcohol stands for spirits beverages and pure alcohol used for instance for medical purposes. In fact, the European Council has set minimum excise duty rates for both pure alcohol and spirits, relatively at 1000 Euros per hectolitre for the former and 550 Euros per hectolitre for the latter (see Table 6). In Finland tax rates for ethyl alcohol are 3250,00 Euros per hectolitre of pure alcohol while in Italy they are four times cheaper, more precisely 800,01 Euros per hectolitre of pure alcohol.

Table 6: Excise duty rates levied on ethyl alcohol in Finland and Italy (Adapted from European Commission 2008).

	<b>Standard rates</b>
<b>Minimum excise duty</b> (set by the European Commission)	550 € or 1000 € per hectolitre of pure alcohol
	Excise duty per hectolitre of pure alcohol
<b>FINLAND</b>	>1,2% <2,8% → <b>200,00 €</b> >2,8% + others → <b>3250,00 €</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>800,01 €</b>

### 6.3. Comparing countries

When comparing the taxation system between Italy and Finland, it can be evidenced that there are more differences rather than similarities. Those differences are of both quantitative and qualitative nature. In terms of quantity, it can be easily noticed that Finnish tax rates are significantly higher than Italian tax rates relatively to all alcohol products (see Figure 4). In particular, tax rates on beer are in Finland 3.6 times higher than in Italy. Similarly, tax rates on intermediate products in Finland are 6.8 times higher than in Italy and tax rates on ethyl alcohol are in Finland 4 times higher than in Italy. However, the major difference concerns the tax rates on wine. In fact, in Italy taxes are not levied on wine products (both still and sparkling) nor on fermented beverages other than wine and beer not exceeding alcohol gradation of 15% by volume.

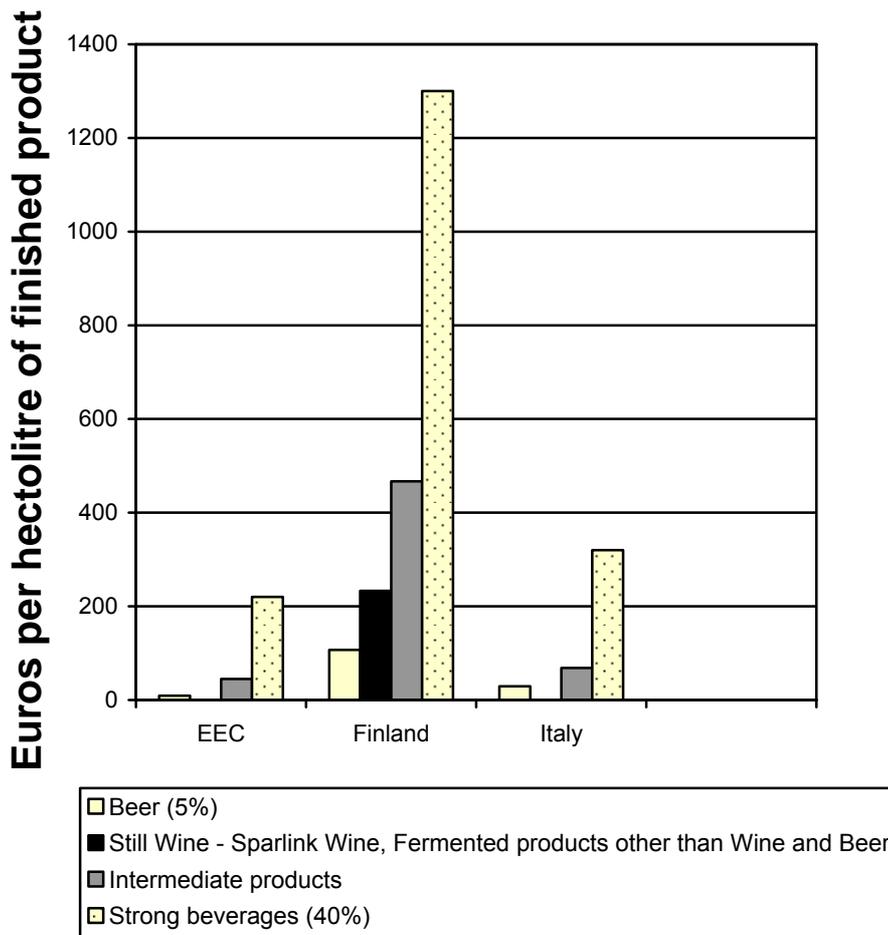


Figure 4: Tax rates levied on alcohol products in Italy and Finland and minimum excise duty rates set by the European Commission (2008).

Clearly, this is due to the government's will to support the production of wine and consequently to support a large part of the national economy. Also, the consumption of wine in Italy is far higher than the consumption of any other category of alcohol products and it has been so ever since (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 261). This means that the absence of taxes on wines is not the primary cause of the use of wine as a primary alcoholic beverage in the country. On the other hand, it is a consequence tied to cultural beliefs and customs which consider wine as an important part of everyday life.

In conclusion, in Italy tax rates are levied according to the type of beverages and the categorization of alcoholic beverages seems to follow a different criteria than in Finland. In Italy in fact, the categorization is not coherent with the alcohol gradation of the product: for instance taxes on beer are higher than taxes on wine while the former is a lighter product than the latter. Furthermore, the quantitative difference in the taxation of beer products in Italy and Finland is the least profound if compared with the quantitative differences in the taxation of the other alcohol products. In other words, this is due to the difference in the taxation systems in terms of quality: in Finland the categorization of alcohol products on which tax rates are levied is based on the volume of pure alcohol in the product. The higher the alcohol gradation of the product, the higher the taxes applied (see Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 158). Also in the case of Finland there is a cultural reason, among others, beyond its particular taxation system. In Finland in fact, alcohol products are mainly seen as intoxicant substances and are mainly used for their mood-changing effects (Ståhl, Wismar, Ollila, Lahtinen & Leppo 2006: 118). This might explain the weak responsiveness of consumers to the high tax rates of spirits in Finland, as it will be shown in the following paragraph.

### 6.3.1. Comparing tax rates and consumption level

According to Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 385), the importance of each drink within a country influences crucially the policy implications of different tax rates. In order to understand these implications in the case of Finland and Italy, in this study the level of consumption of different type of beverages and the tax rates applied to alcoholic beverages have been put in relation with the alcohol gradation of the products. This is due to the fact that the alcohol gradation characterizes somehow better the products instead of a categorization based on other variables. In fact, the alcohol gradation of the beverage used in a drinking occasion is strictly related at least with the harm caused by the consumption and the amount of the consumption. According to Mäkelä, Mustonen and Österberg (2007), the consumption of stronger beverages (for instance spirits) leads to more aggressive and violent behaviour (therefore causing more harm) and usually results in higher levels of consumption. Consecutively, a comparison of the case of Italy and Finland will be provided and some conclusions drawn.

The consumption levels have been taken from the database of the World Health Organization (WHO) website and refer to the recorded consumption of the adult population (more than 15 years of age) in the year 2003 in Italy and 2007 in Finland. This is due to the fact that in Italy there are not available data for the years following 2003. It could be noted that some problems might be created by putting in relation different years for tax rates and consumption. However, tax rates have been at the same level for several years and in the case of Finland a major change has occurred in 2004. This latter fact does not create problems of any sort since the available data is more recent for both tax rates and consumption. On the other hand, in the case of Italy the most recent data available have been considered for the consumption and the changes occurred in the last five years can be considered irrelevant. The levels are categorized according to the type of beverage (beer, wine and spirits) and according to the total amount of pure alcohol consumed per each category. On the other hand, the values of tax rates are the same as in Figure 4. The results are shown in the following figures.

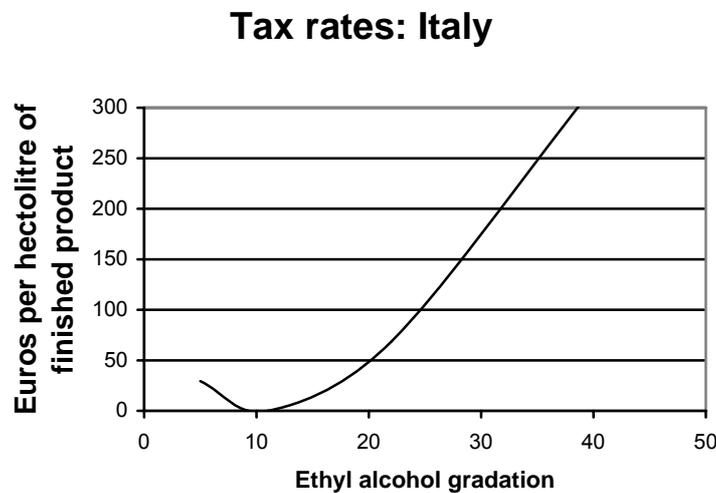


Figure 5: Tax rates in Italy in relation with the alcohol gradation of the products (Tax rates are calculated from the excise duty rates set by the European Commission 2008).

### Consumption: Italy

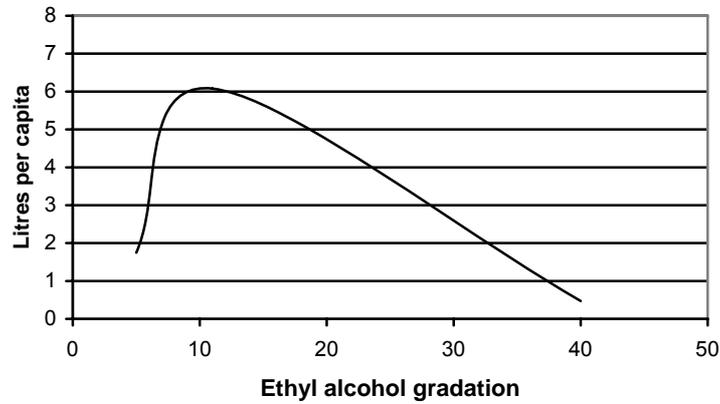


Figure 6: Recorded consumption per capita per type of beverage among the adult population (+15 year of age) in Italy in 2003 (WHO 2008) in relation with the alcohol gradation of the products.

### Tax rates: Finland

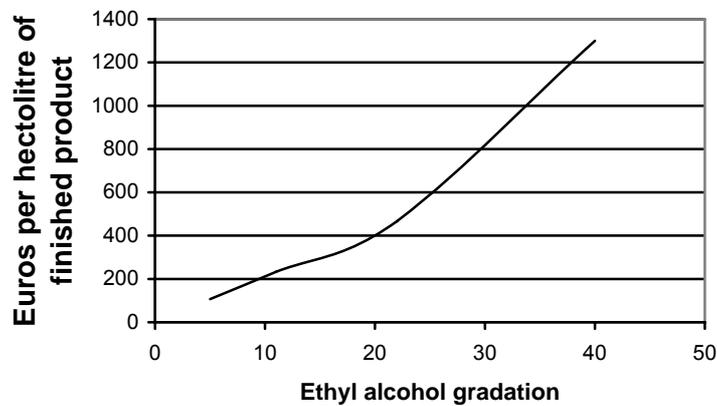


Figure 7: Tax rates in Finland in relation with the alcohol gradation of the products (Tax rates are calculated from the excise duty rates set by the European Commission 2008).

### Consumption: Finland

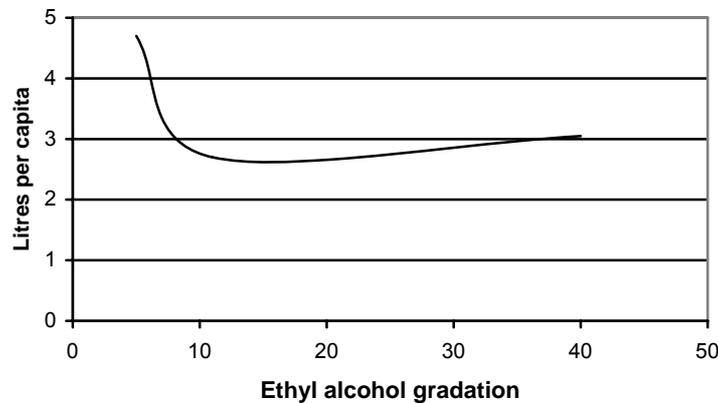


Figure 8: Recorded consumption per capita per type of beverage among the adult population (+15 year of age) in Finland in 2007 (WHO 2008) in relation with the alcohol gradation of the products.

In the range of drinks containing 5% to 10% by volume of ethyl alcohol (from beers to wines), the relation between taxes and consumption levels shown by the curve is both in the case of Italy and Finland inversely proportional. Only, the proportionality is not the same. In fact, while in Italy the consumption grows at the same time as the tax rates decrease, in Finland happens the contrary: the consumption decreases while the tax rates increase. These two cases would suggest that truly taxes influence the consumption for this range of beverages. In fact, the lowering of the taxes and the increasing of the taxes respectively correspond to a stronger and weaker preference of beverages.

Consecutively, also in the range between beverages containing 10% to 20% by volume of ethyl alcohol, in the case of Italy an inversely proportional relation can be observed. Yet, the relation is the opposite than the previous: in Italy the consumption decreases at the same time as the tax rates grow. However, only in the case of Italy, lower taxes and higher taxes seem to correspond respectively with higher consumption and lower consumption. On the other hand, in the case of Finland, the relation becomes directly proportional, with the curves showing an increase in both consumption and level of taxation with the growing of the alcohol gradation of the products considered.

Finally, in the last range from 20% to 40% by volume of ethyl alcohol the relations remain the same. In the case of Italy, the relation is once again inversely proportional. In fact, the consumption decreases at the same time as the tax rates increase. In Finland on the other hand, the relation again is clearly directly proportional: the higher the gradation, the higher the consumption despite the increase of the tax rates applied on the products. This means that, in the case of Finland, tax rates do not influence crucially the consumption of alcoholic beverages with a gradation exceeding 20% by volume. In other words, people tend to consume more spirits even though the tax rates (and consequently the final price) are set at a higher level, given the proportion in terms of prices with lower gradation alcoholic beverages.

At this point, some conclusions can be drawn according to these empirical findings. In sum, in the case of Italy the curves are always inversely proportional in all the gradation ranges, so that higher taxes always correspond to lower consumption. On the other hand, in the case of Finland the inverse proportionality can be observed only in the range of gradation between 5% to 10%. This observation would suggest that Italians are more elastic than Finnish drinkers, which means that the former are more relevantly influenced in their drinking patterns by taxes (and therefore final prices of the products) than the latter. Yet, this conclusion contrasts with more authoritative studies (see Simpura 2001; Anderson & Baumberg 2006) which explain the stronger elasticity of Nordic countries compared to that of Southern countries. However, those studies consider the change of the excise duties comparing their outcome in two different periods of time. Here instead, only the status quo is considered. Therefore, it can be stated here that other deeper reasons are the cause of drinking patterns and alcohol consumption.

For instance, Italy is considered a wine country due to the preference of wine in the drinking patterns. On the other hand, albeit Finland is a beer country, it has been considered as such only since the last decade and a half (see Österberg & Karlsson 2003), and spirits still play a major role in its drinking culture<sup>13</sup>. Also, these two different kind of preferences are coherent with the drinking patterns shown in the two

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<sup>13</sup> In alcohol studies Finland is categorized as a 'former spirits country' (Simpura & Karlsson 2001b).

countries. In fact, for example in Finland, binge drinking occasions are more frequent than in Italy (Simpura & Karlsson 2001b) and spirits are the most used type of beverages which is drunk in order to get intoxicated, while wine in Italy is drunk during meals and is commonly considered a food item.

This means that most of all the cultural variable has to be taken into account. In fact, if the status quo is not affected by tax rates (as the case of Finland shows), then the tendency of a culture in preferring a certain type of beverage seems to be more important than tax rates. Therefore, the first conclusion is that excise duties levied on alcohol products are effective in the short-term in directing the preference of beverages, but in the long-term they are not effective in changing drinking patterns or a particular drinking culture. This is also explained by the fact that tax rates levied on alcohol products and the relative change in prices do not have the same effect on all type of beverages and therefore do not influence the consumption of wine, beer and spirits, in the same way given the same proportional change. Otherwise, in the case of Finland, with the increase of tax rates also a decrease in consumption should be observed in the range of alcohol products with a gradation between 10% to 40%.

Therefore, the second conclusion is that taxes levied on alcohol products, are more effective for the collection of tax revenues for the government than in changing the drinking patterns. This means that in the long-term, the efficiency of tax rates in reducing the harm done by alcohol is not as crucial as it is thought to be. This is due to the fact that the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption depend more on the drinking patterns and drinking culture (the way alcohol is used) than on the total alcohol consumption.

In observing the curves of the tax rates in relation with the consumption and the type of beverage in the cases of Italy and Finland, it can be noticed how effective each government is in collecting tax revenues. Finland system of taxation is more effective in collecting revenues efficiently at least for three reasons: all the products are more heavily taxed than in Italy, the consumption is higher than in Italy and in some cases the most taxed products are also the most consumed. However, it can be stated that in both

cases taxes give into consumption, assuming different values for the application of tax rates. In the case of Italy, the government gives into consumption in the sense that the most consumed alcohol product (wine) is also the most supported. Supposedly, the aim of the government is to support the economy of wine, given that its consumption and drinking patterns are not considered as a cause of detrimental effects.

On the other hand, in the case of Finland, taxes give into consumption in the sense that their application depends on the effectiveness of collecting tax revenues. Therefore, the aim of the government is to be efficient in the collection of tax revenues. In sum, the main conclusion is that, according to this comparison, taxes levied on alcohol products do not effect the drinking patterns, but are very useful in collecting tax revenues if applied according to the consumption. Finnish and Italian government seem to follow different values in applying tax rates on alcohol products but, in any case, neither of them does that in order to change the drinking patterns of the country and therefore to reduce the harm done by alcohol.

## 7. MARKETING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

### 7.1. Effectiveness of alcohol advertising

Marketing control policies are part of the broader issue of the communication about alcohol products and their consumption. The communication can be done by private businesses in advertising their products and by governments in raising public awareness about the risks related to alcohol consumption. In general, marketing control policies are mainly aimed at restricting the advertising of alcohol products. The debate about alcohol advertising mirrors the issues raised by alcohol policies in general. In particular, the question on the clash between free-trade principles and health issues. In fact, in the case of advertising, the question is if on one hand, advertising of alcohol products have to be fully allowed in order to support free-trade principles as for other normal goods, or on the other hand if it has to be restricted in order to limit the harm done by alcohol. Today, the second option seems to be supported by recent research which proves a connection between alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption (see Anderson 2007).

For example, some studies have found out that alcohol advertising indirectly affects people's views about alcohol and therefore also their intentions to drink. Other studies have pointed out that young people are affected by advertisements of modern products more than by advertisements of traditional products such as wine. (Van Dalen & Kuunders 2006.)

Therefore, it is clear that alcohol advertisings have an effect on the population to which they are directed. In particular, the effect is stronger on young people: recent studies have proven that alcohol advertisings (both in volume and content) are able to influence significantly young adults and children (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 270–287; Anderson 2007).

The issue of advertising control is felt as important by alcoholic beverages producers due to obvious business motives. In fact, the conflict between private interests and public interests takes place in the different scientific argumentations given in explaining

the effects of advertising on the population. Private companies argue for a self-regulation of advertising (for example through codes of ethics) since they believe advertising only influences the brand chosen and not the amount of the consumption (Van Dalen & Kuunders 2006). Also, they argue for a self-regulation due to their deeper knowledge about the alcohol issues and due to a question of higher efficiency level in producing regulations (Anderson & Baumberg 2006).

Another distinction concerning the control of alcohol products advertising has to be made according to the volume and the content of advertising. According to Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 270–287), controlling the volume of advertising (naturally in a restrictive manner) is an effective tool for alcohol policies. On the other hand, there are not available data for the understanding of the effectiveness of the control of content advertising (Anderson & Baumberg 2006). In fact, such data are very difficult to retrieve and are subjected to imprecision. This is due to the fact that advertising content often appeal to emotional and personal feelings such as for instance identification and so on, therefore difficult to quantify and discover in a population sample.

#### 7.1.1. Italy

In Italy, advertisements about alcohol products were not regulated at all before 1991 (Allamani et al. 2007: 71). The first national law was approved in 1991 in order to line up with a directive of the European Community. In the article 2 of the law 425/1991, some broad indications are given about the content of advertising of alcoholic beverages. According to those indications (425/1991), advertising of alcohol products should not appeal to underage people and portray them while consuming alcoholic beverages; it should not relate alcohol consumption with relevant physical performances and driving situations; should not give the idea that alcohol enhances sexual and social success; should not give the impression that alcoholic beverages are therapeutically useful in stimulating or calming one's behaviour (in other words that they could be psychologically helpful); should not induce to binge drinking or portray abstinence as a negative behaviour and finally should not use the alcohol gradation as an indicator of the quality of the product advertised.

Other regulations were introduced later in 2001, when more restrictive indications were inserted in the frame law on alcohol related issues (125/2001). In particular, in integrating the previous norms about alcohol advertising, more attention is paid to the exposure of underage people to alcohol products advertising and therefore control is exerted not only on the content but also on the volume of the advertisement. In fact, it is now prohibited to advertise any alcohol product in places where the majority of the people is underage. In addition, alcohol product advertising is prohibited within radio and TV programs appealing to underage people and fifteen minutes before and after the transmission of the programs.

Finally, there is a total ban of alcohol products advertising on radio and TV between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. and on newspapers or magazines and in cinemas, when those mostly appeal to young underage people. However, most important is the imposition ordered by the law on the radio and TV networks, both public and private, on advertising agencies and alcohol industries to adopt a self-regulation code for the content and the volume of alcohol products advertising. More in particular, this imposition is explicitly related to the need of valorising Italian typical production and to DOC<sup>14</sup> (denominazione di origine controllata) products. In this latter case, it is explicit the government's intention of supporting wine products and especially Italian wine products more than other alcoholic beverages. However, the self-regulation code which was adopted, only reinforced the same norms listed in the laws 425/1991 and 125/2001 without adding any other particular regulation (see Codice di autodisciplina della comunicazione commerciale 2009).

In conclusion, in Italy alcohol advertising control measures are constituted by regulations about both the content and the volume of the advertisements. In addition, all the regulations derive from the need felt by Italian government of protecting young people from messages that can influence negatively their relationship with alcohol products. The measures are mainly targeting underage people, and in particular, attention is given to behaviours such as drunkenness and more specifically to all those beliefs that enhance a positive view of the drunkenness. The regulations apparently do

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<sup>14</sup> DOC is an Italian quality label applied on food products and on wines.

not take into consideration other media such as billboards and the internet. In particular, the latter is becoming more and more important (Anderson & Baumberg 2006), especially if we consider that young people are particularly familiar with this media.

#### 7.1.2. Finland

The regulation of alcohol advertising in Finland is mainly prescribed in the Alcohol Act. In the section 33, a ban on advertising of spirits is explicit. In this case, advertising means all the communicative tools used by companies in order to market a product: advertisement campaigns, sponsorships and such. In fact, products with an alcohol gradation higher than 22% by volume can be advertised only on magazines and brochures related to the trade of alcohol products. Also, spirits can be advertised on-premises where alcohol products are retailed or produced (with restrictions and regulations that will be described later).

Other milder products can be advertised both directly and indirectly (for example through sponsorships) only if following particular requisites. These requisites are exactly the same as the ones set by Italian government as according to the law 425/1991 and the alcohol frame law (or Italian alcohol act) 125/2001. In addition, one more requisite is added in the Finnish regulation as according to the Alcohol Act: the advertising of alcohol products is prohibited if

*“it is contrary to good manners, it uses methods that are inappropriate from the viewpoint of the consumer or otherwise gives untruthful or misleading information about alcohol, its use, effects or other properties.”*

Also, particular attention is given to the advertisement of alcohol products when this is done indirectly. According to the Alcohol Act, for indirect advertisement of alcohol products is meant the use of other beverages to convey the promotional message of a particular alcoholic beverages. Although in the alcohol act this latter regulation is explained in a very complicated manner, it is explicit the reference to alcoholic beverages such as cocktails, especially those made of a part of a certain alcoholic beverage and the other part being an energy drink. According to the law, although

cocktails usually assume different names regardless of the alcohol product present in the drink, the alcoholic beverage can still be recognized so that advertisements of this kind of products has to be included in the ones regulated by the law.

In addition, norms are set for the regulation of alcohol products advertising on-premises. As mentioned above, spirits can only be advertised on-premises where strong alcohol products are produced or sold; therefore, in the latter case, only in premises holding a licence for the retail sale of strong beverages (National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health 2008). However, it has to be made sure that the advertising made on-premises will not have effects outside, so that for example promotional gadgets which can be taken outside cannot be given to the clients. Moreover, mild-alcoholic beverages can be advertised only if the advertisements are coherent with the indications listed in the general guidelines for alcohol advertising (National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health 2008).

In general, on-premises promotion of alcoholic beverages (including spirits) has to be done following certain restrictions in addition to the general outlines for the advertisement of all alcohol products. For instance, two drinks for the price of one cannot be served, on drinks' advertising posters the size and price must be clear, bonus cards can have a maximum of 5% bonus which derives from all the products sold in the premise (not only alcohol products), special offers can be advertised only inside if lasting less than two months (Alcohol issues in licensed premises 2008). In conclusion, in Finland there is a partial ban for the advertising of strong alcohol products (lower than 22% by volume ethyl alcohol) which can be promoted with restrictions only in places where the product is traded or produced.

## 7.2. Comparing countries

Both Italy and Finland, in the regulations of alcohol products advertising follow the indications given by European directives. In particular, concerning the content and the way alcohol products are advertised, they follow the indication listed in the article 15 of

the Television Without Frontiers Directive<sup>15</sup> (TVWF) which was passed in 1989 (Council Directive 89/552/EEC). In fact, both Italian and Finnish regulations report accurately the norms given as guidelines by the European TVWF which were set in order to safeguard children and consumers in general from misleading communications about positive characteristics of alcoholic beverages. In addition, in the Finnish regulations one more indication is given about the content of alcohol advertising and it specially appeals to the consumers' right to receive a truthful and complete information about the product advertised. However, the regulation of the content of alcohol advertisement is basically the same in Italy and Finland.

On the other hand, differences can be noted in the regulations of the volume of the advertisements. If in Finland the advertisement of spirits is prohibited and therefore partially banned (as stated above, advertising of spirits can be done in particular places according to particular regulations), in Italy spirits can be advertised as any other alcohol products. However, the advertising of spirits follow the same rules set for the advertising of other alcoholic beverages, which means that they are totally banned from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. on radio and TV and also totally banned in places or during events organised for underage people. This means that in Italy, for example during a music festival or in cinemas where movies for young people are transmitted, alcohol advertisements are totally banned.

In Finland on the other hand, advertising of mild-alcohol products is permitted so that for instance beer can be promoted in such places or events as cinemas or festivals attended also by young people. In conclusion then, Finnish marketing controls on the volume are stricter than in Italy concerning spirits, but are significantly less strict concerning alcohol in general since alcoholic beverages can be advertised also in places where the density of young people is high. This gives companies the possibility to target better their advertisements in order to make them more efficient. In fact, as stated above, alcohol advertising is particularly effective on young people, regardless of the type of alcohol products advertised (Anderson 2007).

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<sup>15</sup> The TVWF has been under revision and became the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) in 2007; EU governments will have to adhere to the new directive latest by december the 19th 2009 (2007/65/EC). However, there will not be any changes in the provisions about alcohol advertising.

Moreover in Italy, radio and TV networks, both public and private, advertising agencies and alcohol industries must subscribe a self-regulation code where the content of the advertising is regulated according to the norms set by the Italian law. On the other hand, in Finland a self-regulation code is not adopted. However, the Italian self-regulation code does not add any significant rule to the control of the marketing apart from those listed in the Italian law and also, as noted earlier, self-regulation codes have proved inefficient were applied (Anderson & Baumberg 2006). This means that the Finnish deficiency is not negative in the final account of the alcohol policy.

In conclusion, concerning the volume of advertising, in Italian regulation codes the location, time, media channel and type of product subjected to the bans are specified. On the other hand, in Finnish regulation codes only the type of product subjected to the ban is specified. For what concerns the content of advertising, the two countries have applied the same rules which reflect the European Council recommendations. In fact, regulations in Italy and Finland about the content of alcohol advertising both refer to the style of drinking portrayed, the mention of young people as well as other attitudes related to alcohol consumption such as success and drinking encouragement.

So, the main difference in the alcohol advertising control measures between Italy and Finland is given by the approach of the two countries towards the regulation and its aim. On one hand, Finnish government bases the approach on the difference between types of beverages. In fact, spirits are considered more dangerous since the advertising of such products is partially banned with some irrelevant exceptions. All the other alcohol products with gradation lower than 22% by volume can be indistinctly advertised without quantity limitations and with exceptions about the content. On the other hand, in Italian regulations about the advertising of alcohol products, all the types of alcoholic beverages are given the same status so that for example strong alcohol products and beer or wine follow the same norms. This means that the norms set by Italian government are stricter than the Finnish despite the partial ban on spirits advertising applied by Finnish regulations.

### 7.3. Environmental control: drunk driving

Measures aimed at reducing drunk driving belong to the branch of alcohol policy measures in the sense that they limit road accidents related to alcohol consumption, therefore limiting detrimental effects of alcohol consumption. According to Anderson and Baumberg (2006: 249) the most effective measures for reducing drunk driving are those which tolerate low blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and those which include random breath testing (RBT). In addition, in order to make these measures effective, publicity and information of the public about the initiatives taken by the government are crucial, since without information about the type of control exerted the public does not adapt the behaviour to the new norms (Christ 1998; Anderson & Baumberg 2006).

In Italy, the maximum BAC level tolerated for driving is 0,5 grams/litre (as according to the law 125/2001). This new limit was introduced in 2001 while before it was set higher at 0,8 g/l. Also in Finland, the BAC limit is set at 0,5 g/l (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 162). More in particular, in Finland also an upper limit is set at 1,2 g/l above which drivers can be sentenced also to prison for a maximum of two years (Österberg & Karlsson 2003: 162). The 0,5 g/l limit is the same in most of the European countries (except for UK, Luxemburg and Ireland) and it is also coherent with the recommendations of the European Union (Anderson & Baumberg 2006: 378). In addition, in Finland RBT is allowed (Christ 1998) while in Italy it is performed if public officials suspect the driver might be intoxicated (as stated in the law 125/2001).

As mentioned earlier, enforcement is particularly important in drunk driving measures due to the fact that a higher possibility of being controlled leads to a more probable adaptation to the law. As stated by Christ (1998) in his study about drunk driving made for the SARTRE project in collaboration with the EU, the estimated chance felt by drivers to be stopped and breathalysed is very high in Finland and very low in Italy, which means that road controls are significantly more widespread in the former than in the latter. In addition, most of the people interviewed in Finland declared not to drink before driving (Christ 1998). In Italy on the other hand, even if a small percentage of people declared to be drinking before driving, most of them declared that the amounts

drunk were lower than the limit tolerated by the law (Christ 1998). In the case of Italy therefore, even if the control exerted by the police on the roads seem to be quite poor when compared to that of Finland, people seem to control their drinking, being aware of the dangers of drunk driving. The same happens in Finland, where people declare not to drink at all before driving. According to the study made by Christ (1998: 56) in fact, in Italy 54% of persons interviewed declared not to drink before driving, in Finland on the other hand, the persons who declared not to drink before driving accounted for 88% of the total.

#### 7.4. Comparing countries

In general, the legislation is similar in Italy and Finland. Yet the outcomes in terms of effectiveness are different (see Table 7). In fact, according to the Swedish Presidency (2001: 30), in Finland a higher percentage of road accidents than in Italy was in 1998 caused by the consumption of alcohol, more precisely five times higher than in Italy. However, data concerning the causes of road accidents and more in particular the relation of the accidents with alcohol consumption are difficult to compare since they derive from subjective measurements done by polices in the different countries. In any case, in Italy road accidents caused by alcohol account for only 1,42% of the total accidents (Aci-Istat 2006). In Finland, 24% of fatal accidents are due to alcohol consumption (Swedish Presidency 2001). Similar data are not available for the Italian case. However, according to the data available for both countries, it is obvious that drunk driving is a more significant problem in Finland than in Italy. It is not possible here to determine the causes of this result since many could be the variables involved.

Table 7: Drunk driving in Italy and Finland: legislation, enforcement and outcome (Adapted from Christ 1998; Swedish Presidency 2001).

	<i>BAC limit</i>	<i>Chance to be tested</i>	<i>Number of Road accidents caused by alcohol per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
<b>FINLAND</b>	0,5 g/l	None for 11% of the interviewed	19,7
<b>ITALY</b>	0,5 g/l	None for 70% of the interviewed	4,3

Possibly, drinking patterns are somehow responsible of the higher rate of accidents caused by drunk driving in Finland. In fact, a higher rate of large amounts of alcohol consumed per drinking occasion in the country of Finland could result in a higher possibility that the drunk driver has also consumed large amounts, so that the possibility of an accident is more probable. In other words, it is possible that in Finland usually a drunk driver is at the same time a binge drinker. This would be more coherent also with the data available gathered in the SARTRE project.

In fact, according to Christ (1998), when people were asked if they drunk before driving, a large majority of Finns answered that they did not drink while Italians answered that they would drink amounts lower than the limit allowed. This fact alone would suggest that the road accidents due to drunk driving would be in proportion lower in Finland than in Italy. But that is not the case. The questions then are: Finns lied to the interviewer or rather those who drink and drive represent a minority of people that causes accidents more often than they do those in Italy. Taken for granted similar driving skills for Italians and Finns (still arguable) we would tend to believe that the amount of alcohol beverages drunk could somehow influence the probability of causing an accident. In other words, higher amount drunk per drinking session, higher

probability of causing an accident. In any case, this could be proved only comparing the average BAC level of all the drivers in Italy and Finland who were involved in a road accident, in order to see which country would score the higher level and then evaluate the difference.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1. Strictness of alcohol policies in Italy and Finland

The European project Bridging the Gap (BtG) was funded in the years 2004–2006 by Eurocare in order to create an alcohol policy network in Europe. 30 Countries participated to the project so that the level of strictness of the alcohol policy in each country could be provided according to a common scale of values. This enabled the commissions participating to the project to retrieve comparable data about alcohol policies for each country. The scale used in the BtG project is a new scale which further develops the old ECAS scale (see Swedish Presidency 2001). In the new BtG scale created for evaluating the strictness of the alcohol policy new variables are inserted in respect to the old ECAS scale. For instance, now also variables regarding the excise duties levied on alcohol products are considered. According to the data collected in this thesis, the differences in the strictness of the alcohol policy between Italy and Finland are quite strong (see Figure 9). However, the results are different from the official results provided by Eurocare.

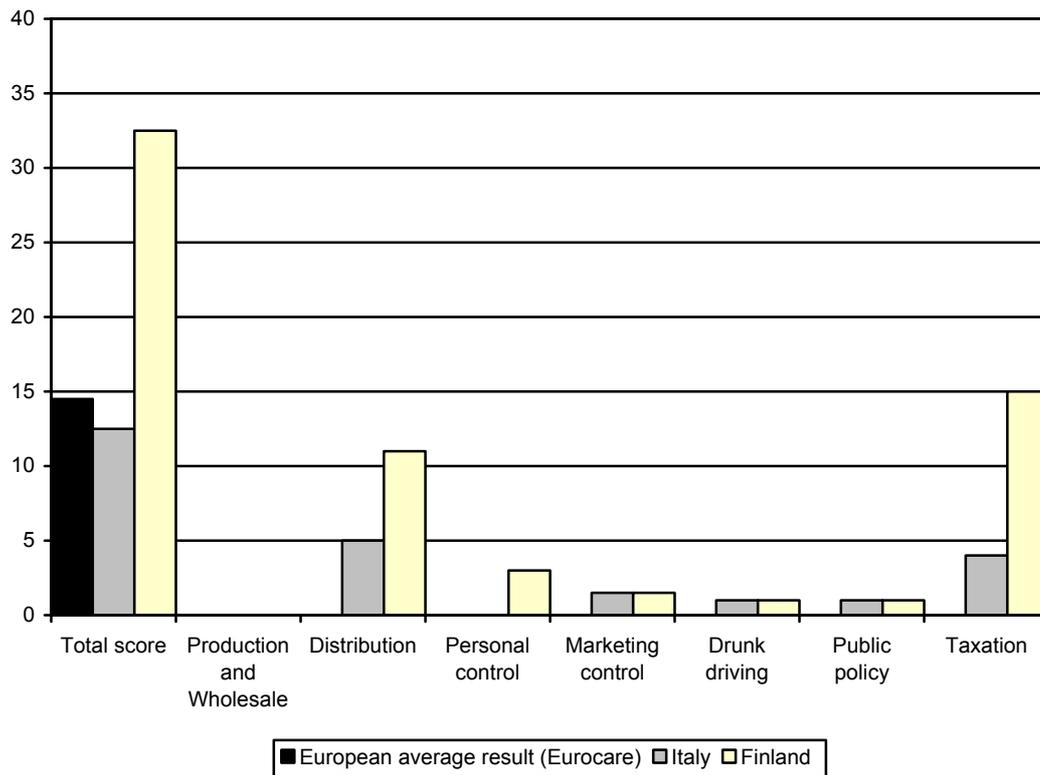


Figure 9: Strictness of alcohol policies in Italy and Finland calculated with the BtG scale.

The difference in the strictness of the alcohol policies in Italy and Finland is particularly significant since the former is below the European average (14,5/40) with a score of 12,5/40 points, while the latter is well above the average with a score of 32,5/40. However, it is important to investigate into deeper details and according to the various variables the reasons of this difference.

The most significant differences derive from the data about the distribution, the personal control and the taxation system. In the distribution variable, Finland scores 11/12 points while Italy only 5/12. First of all, it has to be noted here that the results collected for the distribution in Italy is 2 points higher in this research than in the official BtG scale for Italy reported by Eurocare. This is due to the fact that in the Eurocare report, restrictions on sales hours for both on and off-premises are not reported (see Eurocare Bridging the Gap Project 2006). It is so because the new law which forbids the sales of alcohol after

2 a.m. was introduced in 2007, while the BtG project anticipated its implementation. However, regulations about the sales of alcohol on shops built along highways was already implemented in 1998 (see chapter 5). If those were taken into account, they would anyway lead to a score of 4/12 points instead of only 3/12. This is due to the point gained from the voice “*Special permanent restrictions on sales hours in off-premise sale of alcoholic beverages*”.

The significant difference in the strictness of distribution is given mostly by the Finnish state monopoly in the retail sale of wine and spirits and on the restrictions concerning the places and hours of sale. In Finland in fact, hours of sales and days of sale are strictly regulated while in Italy, as mentioned, recent regulations only concern restrictions on the hours of sale. Secondly, in the personal control variable, Finland scores 3/4 points while Italy 0/4. In the BtG scale reported by Eurocare, the score for Finland was 2/4, due to the fact that the 20 years age limit for purchasing strong alcoholic beverages off-premises (see chapter 5) was not considered. In Italy on the other hand, the limit is set at 16 years of age. Thirdly, in the taxation system variable, Finland scores 15/16 while Italy scores 4/16 points. The score is due to the mere quantity of excise duties levied on wine, beer and strong alcohol. However, as noted earlier, the effectiveness of tax measures is questionable in their efficiency to change a certain drinking culture or in reducing the consumption of certain type of beverages, notwithstanding their efficiency in collecting tax revenue (see chapter 5).

On the other hand, similarities are found in the score of the following variables: production and wholesale, marketing control, social and environmental control (drunk driving), and public policy. Both Italy and Finland score 0/3 points in the production and wholesale variable, 1,5/2 in the marketing control, 1/2 in the drunk driving measures, and 1/1 in the public policy. Also in this case some specifications are needed. First of all, for what concerns the production, it has been noted earlier how the Finnish system is somehow characterized by an imperfect competition regime in the production of alcoholic beverages, due to the juridical relation and the consequent conflict of interest between the alcohol monopoly structure of retail sales and the major producer Altia group (see chapter 5). If this situation could be *de facto* considered in the BtG

scale, then the strictness of the alcohol policy in Finland would be relevantly more significant. Secondly, for what concerns the marketing control, it has been noted earlier how the Italian system of control is stricter than the Finnish (see chapter 5), while on the BtG scale the score result is the same. More precisely, the same score is due to the selection of the same voice in the BtG scale. In this case, the variable voice considered is the following (see Eurocare Bridging the Gap Project 2006): “*Ban on alcohol national advertising for some alcoholic beverages*”. This is true for both Finland and Italy since in the former case there is a partial ban of the advertising of spirits and in the latter there is a ban of all alcohol products in specific media channels and locations during specific periods of time (see chapter 5).

As a consequence, according to the findings of this research, the BtG scale should be reviewed for what concerns the assignments of the points relatively to the marketing control variable. For instance, the application of a voluntary code on national advertising and sponsorship should not be taken into account since it has been proved to be inefficient (see chapter 5). Secondly, neither should be taken into account the application of a statutory control on national alcohol advertising since the implementation of certain regulations is implicit in the adoption of a statutory control. Rather, points should be assigned not only according to the ban of different types of beverages, but also according to the location, time and media channel of the ban relatively to each type of beverage. In fact, as noted earlier, alcohol advertising has a stronger effect on young people. As a consequence, if a different drinking culture has to be created or if the old drinking culture has to be influenced, then regulations about alcohol marketing should mostly target this subgroup of people.

Supposedly, a ban on spirits is not sufficient in doing so if at the same time indistinct advertising of alcohol beverages are allowed. In fact, supposedly, in this case youngsters are still in contact with alcohol advertising, while that should be possibly avoided. That is why, in order to quantify the strictness of alcohol products advertising, more specific variables have to be taken into account. These variables should categorize better and therefore explain better the aim of the bans on the products to see if they satisfy the needs of efficiency in terms of influence towards young people.

A final remark has to be made about the method used in defining the BtG scale. In fact, the BtG scale assigns indistinctly more points to stricter measures. In other words, the more the measures adopted by the national government correspond to the recommendations resulting from specific research, the higher the points assigned to the alcohol policy implemented by the government considered. This means that according to the BtG scale, higher strictness corresponds to more efficiency in fighting alcohol consumption. This is partially true, although this kind of perspective raises some questions. As it has been argued previously in this research, alcohol policies should not focus only on reducing the alcohol consumption. Instead, they should be a means for reducing the harms done by alcohol in order to safeguard the public health.

In fact, making an absurd argument in considering the BtG scale, we would conclude that a prohibition system would score the maximum level of points available on the scale. Yet, a prohibition system, beside being not effective in reducing the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption, is also incoherent with the current ideologies (supposedly better than the old ones). This is to say that the implicit argument in considering a stricter policy also a better policy is, if not wrong, at least misleading. This is even more true if we consider the results of this research which clearly demonstrate in many cases how a strict policy has in some cases positive outcomes and in other cases negative outcomes, according to the context in which they are applied.

## 8.2. Summary and findings

The theoretical foundation of this research is that of the public policy approach in public administration. Alcohol policy is considered as an ensemble of different instruments which are analysed from a regulative point of view. This kind of approach leads to the use of the descriptive method which characterizes the analyses. Moreover, a comparison is drawn between two different systems constituted by different policy outcomes or measures that can be contextualized and understood. In addition, thanks to this method it has been possible at some degree to understand the reasons beyond governments' decisions as well as the values supporting the decisions taken.

Alcohol policies are studied from a public health perspective. This means that the aim of the policies is or should be the safeguard of the wellbeing of the individual rather than the limitation of his/her freedom. Consequently, they should limit the risk factors leading to the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption instead of merely limiting the consumption. This consideration is related to the definition given in the research of binge drinking: getting deliberately intoxicated by the substance of alcohol. The reason for considering binge drinking as the main problem is proved by the data available about the intensity of the problem and by the refusal of the old idea of alcoholism as the main cause of the negative effects of alcohol. This is why the main hypothesis of this research is that in order to reduce the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption a change in the drinking culture is crucial while the change of the drinking culture cannot be led by restrictive measures aiming at limiting the freedom of choice of the individual.

Moreover, alcohol policies are particularly interesting because a myriad of factors are involved in their formation and implementation. In this case, most important are the cultural idea of alcohol in a certain society, the political system and the economic interests related to the commerce of alcohol. The comparison is drawn according to a framework of analyses adapted from previous studies to the Italian and Finnish systems. So, social context, market restrictions, market regulations, marketing control and social and environmental control (drunk driving) are the policy instruments considered.

The first general conclusion of the research is that the consumption of alcohol has different outcomes in Italy and Finland. In addition, also the intensity of the problem is perceived differently by the two governments. This consideration implies at some degree the consideration by the governments of different values in the choice of different measures for dealing with alcohol issues. In fact, through the study of the social context in Italy and Finland, it is proved how different cultures and different approaches towards the consumption of alcohol necessarily result in different drinking patterns. Consecutively, different drinking patterns lead to different outcomes. In this respect, the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption are more intense in Finland where the costs (direct and indirect) derived from the consumption of alcohol are almost six times higher than in Italy. According to this study, the costs are mainly caused by

cultural reasons, such as the way people drink and the reasons for doing so. Binge drinking and its relation with the consumption of spirits, as it is hypothetically stated, is the main cause of the negative effects of alcohol and a very strict policy is not able to limit the phenomenon. Moreover, for what concerns the restrictions applied to the market of alcohol, Finnish regulations are more organic than Italian regulations so that alcohol and its consumption are considered the main problem. Instead, in Italy the issue of alcohol is addressed according to the problems it creates. This means that the regulations are not aimed at restricting the consumption and that people are free to make use of alcohol as long as their behaviour does not cause problems for the collectivity.

Market regulations are constituted by the use of taxes levied on alcohol products by the governments. The comparison between the Italian and Finnish taxation system demonstrates how the mere use of taxes does not change or influence significantly the drinking patterns. Instead of influencing relevantly consumption patterns, governments themselves give into consumption if we observe them in their taxation behaviour. As a consequence, we see how for instance in Finland taxes are more useful in collecting revenues than in limiting the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption. Therefore, government's aim in Finland seems to be efficient in the collection of tax revenues rather than in safeguarding the public health. On the other hand, in Italy the taxation system and the aim of the government seem to support the commerce and production of alcohol, in particular wine. In both cases however, neither Finnish government nor Italian seem to aim at limiting the negative effects of alcohol consumption.

Marketing controls are stricter in Italy than in Finland. In Italy all alcoholic beverages are given the same status in relation to the regulations about alcohol advertising. On the other hand in Finland, advertising of spirits is banned while other alcoholic beverages can be indistinctly advertised. This particular situation can be considered from two different points of view. On one hand, the ban of the advertising of spirits, together with the retail sale monopoly and a *de facto* monopoly in the production of spirits (see Chapter 5), would suggest the presence of a totally closed market of spirits in Finland, which reminds of the prohibition era in some respect. On the other hand, the ban of the advertising of spirits would also suggest a particular attention would be given to more

dangerous beverages and the will of limiting their consumption. However, it is shown in this research how advertisings are particularly effective on young people, no matter the type of beverage it is advertised. Again, it seems like Finnish government aims at supporting its own interests (related to Alko and Altia Group) rather than public health issues. On the other hand, in the Italian case, in giving the same status to all alcoholic beverages the government makes explicit its awareness about the dangers provoked by alcohol advertisings.

Drunk driving measures are the same in Italy and Finland and their study is useful in order to understand better how different drinking patterns lead to different outcomes and how the same regulations applied in different contexts do not have the same outcomes.

The second general conclusion of the research is that the instruments of alcohol policy in Italy and Finland are not equal, despite the possible categorization of general policy instruments used in both the countries considered. In fact, the comparison of the Finnish and Italian alcohol policies according to the BtG scale reveals their different level of strictness. Finnish alcohol policy is significantly stricter than the Italian. A review of the BtG scale relatively to the marketing control variable is suggested and recommended (see previous paragraph). In general, according to this research, alcohol policies are only one element among many in the influence of the drinking patterns and therefore of the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption. In addition, restrictive measures are mostly ineffective in changing certain behaviours which are rooted in deeper cultural beliefs and customs.

More in particular, they are the weakest, as the comparison between the Finnish and the Italian case demonstrates. Also, Finnish and Italian governments follow different values. Finnish government aims at safeguarding mostly its own interests, as the research demonstrates, in particular in the study of the market restrictions, of the market regulations and of the marketing control. On the other hand, Italian government aims at safeguarding private interests towards the limitation of governmental control and the support of individual autonomy. In both cases however, public health issues seem not

to be considered in most of the measures, despite governments' declarations in respect of this particular issue.

According to the results of this research, a government whose aim would be to pursue the values of the free market, of the freedom of the individual and at the same time the safeguard of the public health should allow alcohol policies not to be restrictive. On the contrary, governments should aim at changing citizens' behaviour and the drinking culture (if that is considered to be a problem) although alcohol policies have a minor influence in doing so. However, high taxes levied on alcohol products and the ban of alcohol advertising (especially advertising directed to young people) seem to be the most useful and effective policy instruments for pursuing the aforementioned values.

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