

SHOULD PARENTS FOLLOW THE “EUROPEAN MODEL”?

Many parents struggle with the issue of whether to let their adolescents drink at home. This is a tricky subject — and one with potential legal ramifications (check your state laws).

For those in the “yes” camp, it often boils down to the perception that European countries, like France, have everything figured out.

The argument goes like this:

- Their teens can drink—ours cannot.
- Their teens exercise moderation—ours drink to get drunk.

Ergo, if we let our teens drink — at least at home — they will learn to drink in moderation like the European kids.

Even if the logic works in a weird way, the basic premise is flawed. The perception that European cultures, in general, have this problem under control is simply inaccurate.

The European Union (EU) recently commissioned a report on alcohol use among its 25 member states. The report was released last month — June, 2006.¹

Among EU members as a collective, the average age of first drink was 12.5 and the average age of first drunkenness was 14.

In Denmark, 70% of 15 year olds were drunk *at least twice* in the year before the data were collected.

Our kids look like teetotalers by comparison. In the 2005 Monitoring the Future Study, 34% of 10th graders in America reported being drunk *at least once* in the previous year.²

What about binge drinking? Isn't it the case that their kids drink more often but our kids are more likely to binge (5+ drinks)? Nope! According to a 2005 report from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, American teens were less likely to binge in a 30 day period than teens in 34 out of 35 European countries.

Turkey was the only country out of 35 with lower rates of heavy drinking among teens than the U.S.³

Ultimately, each parent or guardian must decide whether they will allow their kids to drink at home. Correcting the misperception that the Europeans have figured out how to do things better might help in the decision making process.

¹ Google “European Union Alcohol Report”

² www.monitoringthefuture.org

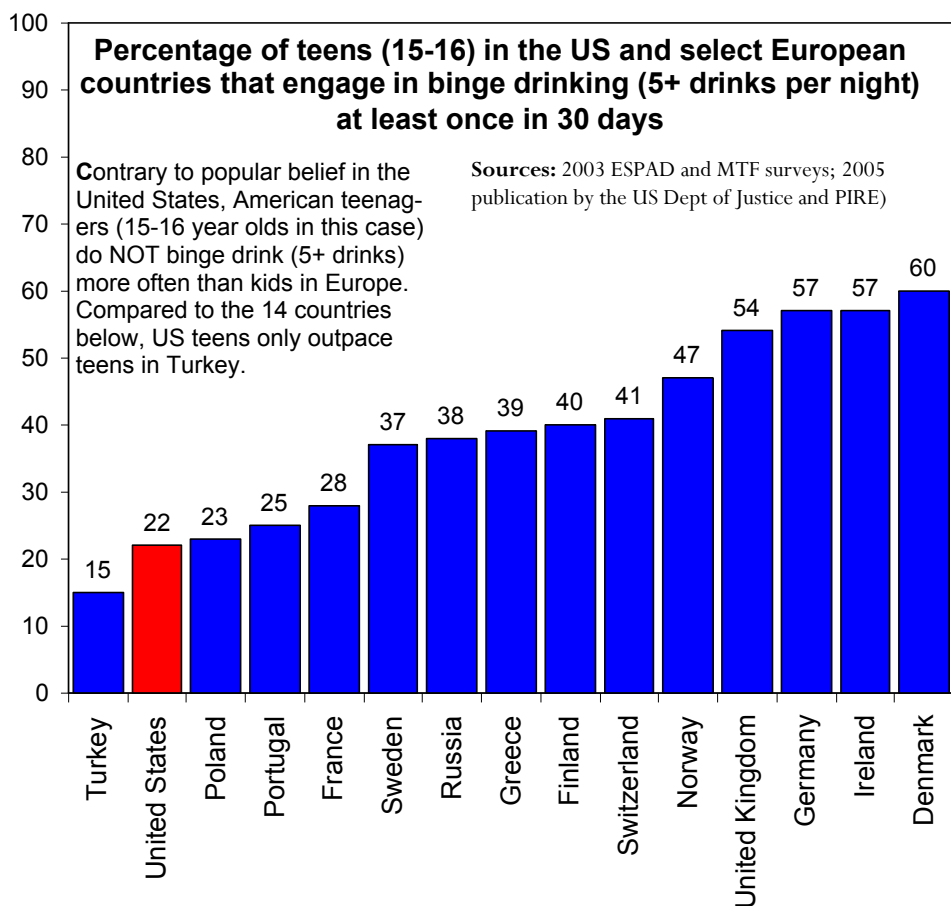
³ Google “PIRE Europe Binge” Add “USDOJ” if needed

ONE EU ALCOHOL POLICY?

European Union member states produce 1/4 of the world's alcohol supply and 1/2 of all wine, in particular.

The EU represents a diverse group of countries and cultures. Preferred beverages and drinking habits differ from country to country. In France, for instance, overall drinking rates have gone down while, at the same time, rates have gone up in other EU countries.

While the aforementioned EU report recommends tighter regulation, one can only imagine how difficult this would be in such a loose confederation of countries.



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MORE MATERIAL ON THESE TOPICS CAN
BE FOUND ONLINE AT:

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Current funding through NIAAA. This document summarizes work done dozens of researchers. Full references are not provided for every statement but are available on my website (see link at left) or by doing scholarly Google searches. If you discover an error in the text, please e-mail me so that I can correct it. Here is a partial list of researchers about whose work I really enjoy reading.

Jay Giedd, NIMH
Ron Dahl, University of Pittsburgh
Linda Spear, SUNY Binghamton
Susan Tapert, UCSD
Sandra Brown, UCSD
Fulton Crews, UNC-CH
Scott Swartzwelder, Duke University
Cheryl Kirstein, University of South Florida
Marisa Silveri, Harvard
Craig Slawecki, Scripps

...and many others

"No animal ever invented anything so bad as drunkenness — or so good as drink."

— G.K. CHESTERTON