

Growing up without alcohol marketing

Dear policymakers,

For parents, nothing matters more than the health and well-being of their children. We want them to grow up, play and learn safely, free from harmful influences.

Yet children see **alcohol marketing wherever they go: in the street, in shops, at schools and libraries, at sports clubs, on TV and social media, and even on their own sportswear.** They cannot escape it. The WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission calls this kind of commercial pressure an existential threat to children worldwide. Alcohol companies advertise where children are. And it has consequences: the more alcohol marketing children are exposed to, the younger they start using alcohol, and the more they use.

This is not only a health issue. It is also a matter of children's rights. **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires authorities to protect children from harmful commercial practices** and to put the best interests of the child first when these clash with commercial interests (Articles 3, 6, 17, 24, 31 and 36; General Comments No. 16 and 25). **This is not a choice. It is a duty.**

Authorities across Belgium can do more to give our children the best start in life, so that they have every chance of good health, now and in the future.

Every level of government has a part to play:

> **Federal government, communities and regions:** phase out alcohol marketing completely, each within your own area of responsibility, and make our streets, sports grounds and screens free of it. Only then will every loophole be closed and children be truly protected.

> **Local authorities:** create an environment in which children can grow up safely. For example, make subsidies for sports clubs conditional on no alcohol marketing in the club or on our children's sportswear.

The fact that alcohol marketing is everywhere shows that self-regulation by the alcohol industry does not work. The new royal decree on alcohol advertising also falls short: sponsorship and 0.0 products are still allowed, and advertising is only restricted when at least 30% of the audience is under 18. In practice, very little will change. Wherever loopholes remain, alcohol companies will exploit them. That is why every loophole must be closed.

The facts are clear, children's rights are clear and public support is strong: more than 70% of people in Flanders think a ban on alcohol advertising is important, and the Flemish Youth Council is calling for a general ban.

As parents, we ask you to act for the more than 2.3 million children and young people growing up in Belgium. They cannot protect themselves. You can.

Yours sincerely,

A movement of parents
Growing up without alcohol marketing

kids-see-it.eu

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

"VAD, the Flemish Expertise Centre for Alcohol and other Drugs, endorses the requests and positions set out here, and considers the sheer amount of alcohol advertising reaching young people unacceptable, as the photos convincingly show." (translated)

— Katleen Peleman, Director of VAD

Most people don't realise it, but no law in Belgium forbids this.

Alcohol marketing on children's clothes



"WINE, CHAMPAGNE, RUM" ON CHILDREN'S SPORTSWEAR



WORN BY CHILDREN AT A FOOTBALL CLUB

Alcohol marketing where children play



YOUTH CUP: "BEER FOR CHAMPIONS"
AT A FINAL FOR 8-YEAR-OLDS



BEER MERCHANDISE
AT THE SPORTS CLUB



BEER MERCHANDISE
AT THE ICE RINK

Alcohol next to the sweets



IN THE SUPERMARKET

Not just the odd poster.
An avalanche of alcohol marketing.

On the way to school



BEER AD ON A BUS
OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL



0.0 BEER AD OUTSIDE
THE SCHOOL



BUS STOP OUTSIDE
THE SCHOOL



VAN WITH A BEER AD
IN THE SCHOOL ZONE

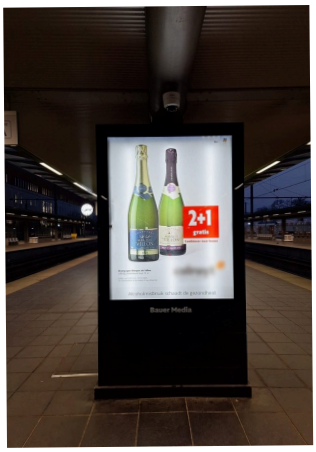
At school



BUS STOP NEARBY



BUS STOP NEARBY



STATION AT 8.15 AM



BEER BANNER
AT A COLLEGE

At the library and community centre



BEER MERCHANDISE
AT THE ENTRANCE

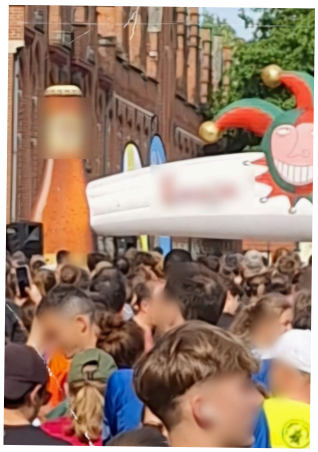


BEER MERCHANDISE
INSIDE, TOO



FLYER IN THE
LIBRARY CAFÉ

In their free time



BEER-BRANDED ARCH
AT A RUNNING RACE

What ends up in their hands



SCHOOL PRIZE WITH
A BEER BRAND



CHARITY HAT WITH
A BEER BRAND

In the shop



GNOMES ON
BEER PACKAGING



BELGIUM'S RED
DEVILS ON BEER CANS

On TV



LIVE AT 11 AM: A WARMEST WEEK CHARITY
BEER IS UNVEILED WHILE CHILDREN WATCH



BEER ON SCREEN DURING FOOTBALL AT 6.30 PM



BEER MASCOT DURING
FOOTBALL AT 6.30 PM



PITCHSIDE BEER ADS
AT THE WORLD CUP



PITCHSIDE BEER ADS
AT A FRIENDLY MATCH



MARKETING WITH
THE RED DEVILS

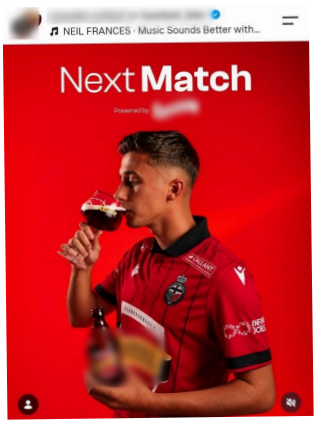
On social media



A RED DEVIL
PROMISES FREE BEER



A BEER CAN ON THE RED
DEVILS' INSTAGRAM



INSTAGRAM: A CLUB
WITH YOUTH TEAMS



SAME CLUB: BEER
BRAND ON THE SHIRTS

Key sources

Years of research: alcohol marketing influences young people's alcohol use

- Anderson, P., A. de Bruijn, K. Angus, R. Gordon, and G. Hastings, 'Impact of alcohol advertising and media exposure on adolescent alcohol use: A systematic review of longitudinal studies', Alcohol and Alcoholism, Vol. 44, No 3, 2009, pp. 229–243.
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- Sargent, J.D. and T.F. Babor, 'The relationship between exposure to alcohol marketing and underage drinking is causal', Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement 19, 2020, pp. 113–124.
- WHO Regional Office for Europe, Digital marketing of alcohol: challenges and policy options for better health in the WHO European Region, Copenhagen, 2021.

Commercial pressure is an existential threat to children

- Clark, H., A.M. Coll-Seck, A. Banerjee, et al., 'A future for the world's children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission', The Lancet, Vol. 395, No 10224, 2020, pp. 605–658.
- United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 1577, New York, 1989.
- Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, CRC/C/GC/16, United Nations, Geneva, 2013.
- Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, CRC/C/GC/25, United Nations, Geneva, 2021.

Self-regulation does not work

- Hoge Gezondheidsraad (Superior Health Council), Maatregelen om de schade van alcoholconsumptie te beperken: gezondheidsinformatie, verhoging van de leeftijd voor eerste alcoholconsumptie en minimumalcoholprijs, Advice No. 9781, Brussels, March 2024.
- Decorte, T., R. Kramer, M. Vlaemynck, E. De Donder, and M. de Duve, Assessment of alternative models for regulation of alcohol marketing in Belgium: Final report, Belgian Science Policy (BELSPO), Federal Research Programme on Drugs (ALMOREGAL), Brussels, 2019.

Advertising is only restricted when at least 30% of the audience is under 18

- European Commission, Technical Regulation Information System (TRIS), Notification 2026/0161/BE: Royal Decree on advertising for alcoholic beverages (draft), Brussels, 30 March 2026.

More than 70% of people in Flanders think a ban on alcohol advertising is important

- Braekman, E., C. Boone, and M. Vermote, Preventiebarometer 2025: Alcohol, report number D/2026.14.440/21, Sciensano, Brussels, 2026.

The Flemish Youth Council calls for a general ban on alcohol advertising, as with tobacco

- Vlaamse Jeugdraad (Flemish Youth Council), Advies 2607: Alcohol. Jongeren vragen een doordacht alcoholbeleid, Brussels, 6 May 2026.