

# Dear Mr Barroso, Here's why you should seriously consider cutting down on drinking:



Alcohol-related problems cost the EU countries at least 200 billion euros every year, according to an estimate by the WHO. That's a lot of money.

As strange as it may sound, coming from one of the world's biggest buyers of alcohol, we're quite worried about the drinking habits on our continent.

Europeans actually drink *twice as much* as people on other continents. And according to figures from the WHO, more than 600,000 Europeans die of alcohol-related causes every year.

The situation varies a great deal from country to country, partly because of differences in culture. But on the whole, alcohol-related problems in Europe are significant.

And they're growing fast.

Especially in Northern Europe, where a lot of people have started to buy their beer, wine and spirits in

neighbouring countries with lower prices, often in huge quantities.

In Sweden, where people used to drink much less than in other countries, alcohol consumption has increased by more than 30% over the last ten years. As a result, alcohol-related problems have grown (although they're still less severe than in most EU countries).

The low consumption figures in Sweden had little to do with Swedish culture, as anyone who's ever spent a Friday night in our country can attest.

The reason lies in the way alcoholic beverages are sold: Only in our stores. Without profit motive. On a restricted schedule. And with high taxes.

Swedes probably wouldn't be as supportive of this system if it didn't also bring benefits to the customer, such as one of the world's largest selections of beer, wine and spirits.

As we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, surveys indicate that our employees do a better job than ever at our two main tasks; keeping customers happy with our service and keeping minors from shopping in our stores.

Yet problems related to alcohol have accelerated.

That's why we decided to put our anniversary ad in the Financial Times.

When you turn 50, you get to wish for something. And our wish is that you, and other Europeans, consider

what the EU countries stand to gain if alcohol-related problems are reduced.

We know the EU isn't primarily concerned with issues like this one.

But the health and well-being of citizens has a way of affecting the health and well-being of the economy.

Nobody knows the exact cost of alcohol-related problems, but the WHO has estimated the price tag at between 2 and 5% of GNP.

In monetary terms? Somewhere between 200 and 500 billion euros every year, for the EU as a whole.

What if some of that could be saved?

We've sent you an interesting book on the subject. It's a WHO-sponsored report which outlines options for reducing the problems.

But since it's 290 pages long, and since we know you're extremely busy, we've done something else as well.

*We've made a film for you!*

*You can see it at [www.DearMrB.se](http://www.DearMrB.se)*

To save you time, we've created a five minute "crash course" and put it on a website called [www.DearMrB.se](http://www.DearMrB.se)

We hope you'll find it useful.

And we hope the headline didn't startle you. (We promise not to do anything like this again until 2055 at the earliest.)



\* The Swedish Alcohol Retail Monopoly, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.