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This month's edition features an article by Dr Erik Skovenborg on the recent 'Expert Report on Lifestyle and Cancer' on P 3. The article explores evidence on which reasonable recommendations for women's drinking can be based. This month also saw the publication of the latest results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) that monitors trends of adolescent substance use in European countries and to compare trends between countries. The report is on P 14.

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Switzerland

The Council of States, the upper chamber of the Swiss government, has voted in favour of a ban on alcohol advertising on Swiss television. This ban would include beer and wine. The vote goes against the opinion of the Swiss Federal Council, the seven-person body which forms the head of the Swiss state. The Federal Council has said that as there is not much alcohol advertising on Swiss television there is little need to ban it. Swiss television stations have supported the opinion of the Federal Council and expressed concern that the revenues they received from alcohol advertising will be lost to foreign competitors.

Costa Rica

The number of deaths caused by traffic accidents in Costa Rica declined in the first three months of 2009, on the previous year. According to figures from the Traffic Police, this is attributable to the introduction of several reforms to the Traffic Law in December 2008, which establish prison sentences for those people driving under the influence of alcohol. It is estimated that only six deaths were caused by alcohol-related traffic accidents in the period between January and March 2009, which compares to 14 deaths reported a year earlier and 20 deaths in the same period in 2007.

Belgium

Belgian Minister of Public Health, Laurette Onkelinx, has decided to completely prohibit the sale of alcohol to young people under the age of 16. Onkelinx will present the new law at the Council of Ministers in the near future, and the law should come into effect in 2010. It would also prohibit the free distribution of alcohol to under-16s at cultural events such as festivals. Those who infringe upon the law will need to pay a fine of between EUR 130 (USD 177.18) and EUR 1,500.

Ireland

Ministers have backed a new bill that would see licensed premises in Northern Ireland facing tougher sanctions on underage and irresponsible drinking. Under the bill, which would come into force in 2010, police would have the power to immediately close premises for 24 hours because of disorder or noise nuisance. A new proof-of-age scheme would be put in place, as well as a penalty-points scheme which would see businesses that sell alcohol to underage drinkers facing a licence suspension.

Social development minister Margaret Ritchie said that new laws would be drafted within months to help combat the problem of irresponsible drinking.