

For Immediate Release



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AUB K2P Policy Dialogue on Alcohol Drinking among Lebanese Youth: Delaying Initiation and Reducing Harm

Youth in Lebanon are starting to drink alcoholic beverages at a very young age. They are even boasting about the quality and quantity of alcohol they are consuming during parties and at home among family members and friends. Evidence from many high quality local and international studies, compiled by the Knowledge to (K2P) Policy at the Faculty of Health Sciences, and Alcohol Harm Reduction Group at the American University of Beirut (AUB), has shown that early initiation of alcohol drinking and the frequent and heavy consumption of alcohol among youth is on the rise. In fact, in 2011, 1 in 4 middle school students in Lebanon, (13–15 years), reported having at least 1 alcoholic drink in the past month, with 87% of them having their first drink before age of 14. More evidence, from a study in 2005, showed that 1 in 5 students in middle school (7th-9th graders) reported having experienced at least one alcohol-related harm in their lifetime, including being hungover, feeling sick, getting into trouble with family or friends, as a result of their drinking.

In this regard, K2P Center, alongside with Dr. Lilian Ghandour, lead researcher at the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group, hastened to convene key decision-makers, partners and civil society, to participate in the K2P Policy Dialogue in order to inform the discussion about alcohol and youth in Lebanon and ultimately, protect young people from the harms of early alcohol drinking.

With the presence of the Director General of the Ministry of Public Health Dr. Walid Ammar, K2P Policy Dialogue brought together different stakeholders and representatives such as: Director General of the Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon Nada Sardouk, Director General of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Zeid Kheyami represented by the Director of Youth Department Joseph Saadallah, the Director General of the Lebanese Traffic, Trucks and Vehicles Management Authority Hoda Salloum represented by the manager of Traffic Management Center Jean Dabaghi, chief of Traffic Division at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Jihad Al Asmar in addition to representatives from each of Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the World Health Organization, local and regional NGOs, advocates and supporters, specialists in health law, researchers and students.

Prior to the dialogue, all participants received the K2P Policy Brief, a concise document that brings together the best available global and local research evidence and serves at informing the deliberations about the best policy elements. K2P Director and dialogue facilitator, Professor Fadi El Jardali, elicited participants' input on the overall problem and its underlying factors. He then presented 2 evidence-based elements of a comprehensive approach to delay initiation of alcohol drinking among youth: Implement programs at the school, family and community levels, And alcohol harm reduction policies at the national level such as regulating the availability of alcohol, decreasing alcohol affordability, decreasing drink-driving and regulating alcohol advertising and marketing.

While most developed countries are witnessing a decrease in alcohol consumption among their youth, in Lebanon however, between 2005 and 2011, there has been a 40% increase in the percentage of 7th-9th graders having at least one drink in the past month. Consequently, dialogue deliberations were action-oriented tackling implementation barriers, proposing counterstrategies at each level, and setting next steps toward delaying the initiation of alcohol drinking and preventing related risks among youth in Lebanon.

ENDS

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Note to Editors

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Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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