



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
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Mr Jakob Forssmed
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
The Government Offices
SE-103 33 Stockholm
Sweden

Dear Sir,

At the outset, let me congratulate Sweden on its actions in taking forward evidence-based alcohol policies, including population-level measures with a focus on limiting access to alcohol through the government-owned retail monopoly system Systembolaget. Alcohol consumption and its related burden of disease continue to be responsible for some of the greatest health and societal challenges faced by Member States in the WHO European Region, especially the Member States of the European Union (EU). It is clear that there is no room for complacency in holding firm on evidence-based alcohol policy measures.

With this in mind, I am concerned by reports of discussions that may prompt changes in the current alcohol retail monopoly model. I urge you to consider the public health risks that would be associated with the suggested deregulation through allowing farm sales of alcohol, and the weakening of the monopoly that they will bring. There is compelling evidence to suggest that weakening the government alcohol retail monopoly will result in increased alcohol consumption and harm, with serious public health consequences, leading, for example, to a substantial increase in healthcare costs and pressures on health systems.

The European Framework for Action on Alcohol 2022–2025, which was unanimously adopted by all 53 Member States in 2022, urges Member States to prioritize actions to regulate availability of alcohol, including considering the provision of state-operated alcohol outlets. As emphasized in international research and rating systems such as the global Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity project, government retail monopoly stores are effective in reducing alcohol availability and health and social problems related to alcohol use.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe stands by you in this important and challenging period and is ready to provide support and advice to Sweden to ensure continued commitment to effective alcohol control policies.

Yours very truly,

Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge
Regional Director

Copy for information to:

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