

# Final Report

## EuroHealthNet Thematic Working Group on Social Marketing to Address Addictions (SOMAD)

Co-led by Trimbos Institute (Netherlands) and Santé publique France (France)

Period: 2021 - 2025

### 1. Background and Rationale

The EuroHealthNet Thematic Working Group (TWIG) on Social Marketing to Address Addictions (SOMAD) was established in 2021 following approval by the EuroHealthNet Board. The TWIG was initiated by Santé publique France and Trimbos Institute in response to shared public health challenges related to addictions, particularly tobacco and alcohol use, which remain major drivers of premature mortality, morbidity and health inequalities across Europe.

At the time of its establishment, the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted national prevention strategies and altered consumption patterns, often exacerbating existing social, economic and territorial inequalities. Against this backdrop, social marketing approaches — including mass media public health campaigns — were increasingly recognised for their potential to influence behaviour, while also raising concerns regarding ethics, effectiveness and equity.

The SOMAD TWIG was therefore conceived as an informal, practical and inclusive platform for accountable European public bodies to exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices on the use of social marketing in addiction prevention, under the authority and coordination of EuroHealthNet.

### 2. Objectives and Scope

As set out in the original TWIG application, the objectives of SOMAD were to:

- Facilitate structured exchange of knowledge and best practices on social marketing approaches in tobacco and alcohol prevention;
- Explore how social marketing can contribute to reducing, rather than exacerbating, social and health inequalities, in line with a proportionate universalism approach;
- Address issues related to vulnerability, health literacy, accessibility of services and ethical considerations;
- Strengthen links between research, policy and practice across European public health institutes;
- Contribute to and align with EU-level policy initiatives and funding opportunities, including EU4Health and Horizon Europe.

While tobacco and alcohol prevention formed the core thematic focus, the TWIG remained open to emerging issues relevant to addiction prevention and social marketing.

### 3. Organisation and Working Methods

The TWIG was co-chaired by Santé publique France and Trimbos Institute, with support from the EuroHealthNet office. Meetings were primarily held online, complemented by some in-person sessions linked to major events hosted by TWIG members.

In line with the original proposal, the TWIG:

- Met regularly (on average three to four times per year);
- Operated on the basis of jointly agreed agendas, with members free to propose topics;
- Functioned as a trusted and non-competitive space for peer learning and discussion;
- Used a dedicated digital workspace to share presentations, materials and relevant resources.

From 2023 onwards, and following feedback from members, the TWIG gradually shifted from a broad exchange format towards a more thematic and, where relevant, output-oriented approach.

### 4. Activities and Key Milestones (2021–2025)

Between November 2021 and February 2025, the SOMAD TWIG convened multiple online meetings, alongside several key in-person events.

**Table 1. Overview of Themes per SOMAD TWIG Meeting (2021–2025)**

Meeting	Date	Main themes addressed
<b>1st Meeting</b>	19 Nov 2021	Launch of the TWIG; definition of social marketing; scope and objectives; overview of national programmes; tobacco and alcohol prevention
<b>2nd Meeting</b>	10 Dec 2021	Tobacco control during COVID-19: national responses; Stoptober campaigns; reaching disadvantaged groups
<b>3rd Meeting</b>	14 Jan 2022	Tobacco denormalisation; evaluation of behavioural change; campaign effectiveness; vulnerable populations
<b>4th Meeting</b>	18 Feb 2022	Denormalisation strategies; evaluation methods; social inequalities; access to cessation services
<b>5th Meeting</b>	25 Mar 2022	Youth-focused substance use prevention; multi-substance campaigns (tobacco, alcohol, drugs); national case studies
<b>6th Meeting</b>	12 May 2022	Preparation of in-person meetings in Paris during French National Public Health Days
<b>French National Public Health Days &amp; TWIG sessions</b>	15–17 Jun 2022	Tobacco prevention in vulnerable populations; social marketing strategies; evaluation; professional targeting; European perspectives
<b>7th Meeting</b>	19 Oct 2022	Evaluation of year 1; reflections on added value; adjustments for year 2; EU policy developments

<b>8th Meeting</b>	13 Dec 2022	Gambling and sports betting prevention; community approaches; behavioural science in campaigns
<b>9th Meeting</b>	7 Feb 2023	WHO Knowledge Hub on tobacco; evaluation of gambling campaigns; alcohol prevention resources; vaping prevention
<b>10th Meeting</b>	4 Apr 2023	Alcohol prevention policy; exposure to alcohol in media; legislative frameworks; EU and WHO developments
<b>11th Meeting</b>	6 Jun 2023	Vaping policies; incentives for smoking cessation; prevention in prisons; evidence-based prevention (EUPC)
<b>12th Meeting</b>	19 Oct 2023	Evaluation of year 2; roadmap for year 3; thematic focus and deliverables; tobacco, alcohol and gambling
<b>13th Meeting</b>	9 Jan 2024	<i>Meeting cancelled</i>
<b>14th Meeting</b>	12 Mar 2024	Alcohol prevention; digital environments; preparation of alcohol-related deliverables
<b>15th Meeting</b>	23 Apr 2024	Digital marketing of alcohol; regulation and policy responses; cross-border challenges
<b>16th Meeting</b>	8 Oct 2024	The prevention of sports betting
<b>17th Meeting</b>	4 Feb 2025	The ban of disposable cigarette in France: an advocacy campaign.

### *French National Public Health Days (Paris, June 2022)*

In June 2022, the SOMAD TWIG convened in person alongside the French National Public Health Days in Paris, marking an important milestone in the group's activities. The TWIG organised and contributed to a Tobacco Prevention Workshop focusing on social marketing strategies to reduce tobacco use among vulnerable populations and address health inequalities. The workshop facilitated exchange of national experiences, discussion on campaign evaluation and implementation challenges, and reflection on the European perspective. This event strengthened professional networks and increased the visibility of the TWIG within the wider public health community.

## 5. Key Themes Addressed

Across its lifespan, the TWIG addressed a wide range of topics, including:

- Temporary abstinence campaigns (e.g. Stoptober) and national adaptations;
- Denormalisation strategies for tobacco and alcohol;
- Campaign evaluation and effectiveness;
- Reaching vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups;
- Ethical considerations and risks of counterproductive effects;
- Alcohol prevention and policy communication;
- Gambling and sports betting prevention;
- Vaping and emerging nicotine products;
- Digital marketing of alcohol and other addictive products;
- EU and WHO policy developments related to addiction prevention.

This thematic breadth reflected both member expertise and evolving public health priorities.

## 6. Achievements and Added Value

The TWIG contributed to:

- Knowledge exchange, by sharing national strategies, campaign approaches and regulatory contexts;
- Capacity building, through discussion of campaign design, evaluation and ethical issues;
- Network development, facilitating contacts and follow-up between participating organisations;
- Support to broader initiatives, including EuroHealthNet activities, country exchange visits and policy discussions;
- Adaptive learning, with periodic evaluation leading to adjustments in focus and working methods.

## 7. Participating Organisations

Over the course of its activities, the SOMAD TWIG brought together representatives from European, national and regional public health organisations, as well as selected international partners. Participation evolved over time, reflecting the thematic focus of meetings and the openness of the TWIG to relevant expertise.

Participating organisations included:

- EuroHealthNet (EU level)
- Santé publique France (France)
- Alliance contre le tabac (France)
- Trimbos Institute (The Netherlands)
- The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (Ireland)
- Bundesinstitut für öffentliche Gesundheit – BIÖG (Germany)
- The Institute of Public Health of Poland (Poland)
- Public Health Wales (Wales)
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities – OHID (England)
- Danish Cancer Society (Denmark)
- Austrian National Public Health Institute – GÖG (Austria)
- Federsanità (Italy)
- National Center for Public Health and Pharmacy (Hungary)
- National Institute of Public Health – NIJZ (Slovenia)
- Institut national de santé publique du Québec (Canada)

## 8. Acknowledgements

The co-chairs would like to thank all participating organisations and individuals for their sustained engagement and valuable contributions, as well as EuroHealthNet for its coordination, support and facilitation throughout the lifetime of the TWIG.