

## **The CLARION Declaration**

On 15 May 2008, 53 international experts from the fields of alcohol research, public health and NGOs gathered in Dublin to discuss the positioning of science, knowledge and policy in relation to the alcohol industry.

The Dublin group came to a number of important conclusions namely

### **The Conclusions**

- The twin aims of protecting the public from alcohol related harm and the alcohol industry's mission to promote and sell as much alcohol as possible are inherently incompatible
- Alcohol research plays a vital part in the development of alcohol public policy by bringing the harm associated with alcohol to the attention of policy-makers and political decision-makers. Research also informs the development of effective strategies to reduce alcohol related harm and their associated evaluation
- Therefore to protect the integrity and legitimacy of alcohol research, and the reputation of academic institutions in the field of alcohol research, as well as public health no funding relationships with the alcohol industry should be entered into.

### **The Observations**

- The alcohol industry is a powerful and complex multinational business that includes the producers of beer, wine and distilled spirits through to distributors, wholesalers and trade organisations all of whom are involved in disseminating information, collecting industry statistics, research and development activities, legislative and regulatory lobbying, information and education programmes, media relations, marketing, and scientific research; and the development of social aspects organisations which are funded by the alcohol beverage industry to manage issues from the industry's point of view ostensibly from a neutral position
- The industry's research-related activities often question or compete with social policy or public health views about alcohol problems and related policy options, particularly the need for effective strategies to prevent alcohol problems. Industry-supported research activities are used to enhance a false perception of corporate citizenship and thus gain political legitimacy for the industry. Industry involvement in research is therefore an efficient way for the industry to influence politics in ways that are favourable to the industry's commercial interests.

- The meeting noted that alcohol related industries have an overriding requirement to maximize profit for their shareholders. Therefore, they have a vested interest in ensuring that the knowledge of harm from alcohol is not generated, is not brought to the public and decision-makers' attention, and does not become the basis for effective public health policies since to do so would be to risk negatively impacting on the industries' profits.
- The methods for undermining research and for preventing the results of research from coming to the attention of the public and decision-makers are well established, and include:
  - attacking the scientific integrity of researchers who produce the research
  - paying other scientists to attack the research
  - attempting to stop or reduce funding for researchers who produce the research
  - promoting a disproportionate research effort in areas which do not generate any information about the harm done by alcohol, or which promote ineffective ways of dealing with the harm, so that dealing with such harm will not threaten profits
  - using credibility from being involved in funding research to amplify their ability to undertake the previous methods.
- There is evidence from the tobacco, pharmaceutical and medical fields that funding source of researchers may compromise their professional judgement and lead to results that are favourable to commercial interests; Alcohol research is not an exception. Not only does compromised funding jeopardise scientific integrity, it also decreases public trust in research, as well as contributing to the endangerment of public health.