

CONTROVERSIAL CRITERION

ALCOHOL

Forum ETHIBEL position statement

Alcohol is not considered as inherently harmful, because the quantity and frequency of the alcohol consumed determine its effect. Hence, it is possible to consume alcohol in a safe way (contrary to tobacco for example). However, overconsumption of alcohol has a number of well-known effects such as impairing a person’s ability to think rationally and, over time, causing severe medical psychological and social costs.

Alcohol companies sometimes use questionable methods to increase alcohol sales. Examples include **irresponsible marketing techniques** (e.g. distributing free drinks, sponsoring music events to reach young people) and **lobbying practices** (e.g. to limit the legislative framework around advertising). Of particular concern is marketing that targets young people and influences them to consume alcohol. Producers and distributors should create awareness amongst users of alcohol about the risks of consuming alcohol and refrain from targeting children and teenagers. For these reasons, Forum ETHIBEL has decided to include alcohol as a controversial criterion in its methodology.

Eligibility

Alcohol producers and distributors may be eligible for inclusion in the Ethibel Register. This depends on their involvement in unethical and irresponsible practices regarding alcohol production, distribution, marketing and lobbying practices.

In addition to positive criteria used for screening company’s corporate social responsibility profiles, alcohol producing and distributing companies are also screened for involvement with irresponsible practices.

Controversial criterion	Sub-category	Case-by-case
Alcohol	Production and distribution of alcoholic beverages	Always

Definition

Irresponsible practices are: marketing of alcohol to children and teenagers, influencing children and teenagers to start or increase alcohol consumption, marketing or communication practices and/or lobbying activities to reduce and limit legislation regarding alcohol advertising.

The severity and frequency of involvement in irresponsible practices, company transparency on the issue, and corrective measures being taken will all determine whether the company is eligible for inclusion in the Ethibel Register.