

# IMAGES OF ALCOHOL IN DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIES

## Reflections from a Mediterranean drinking culture

Sara Rolando & Franca Beccaria - Eclectica (Torino, Italy)



Euroopa Liit  
Euroopa Sotsiaalfond



Eesti tuleviku heaks

*Tallinn, 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2015*



# Contents

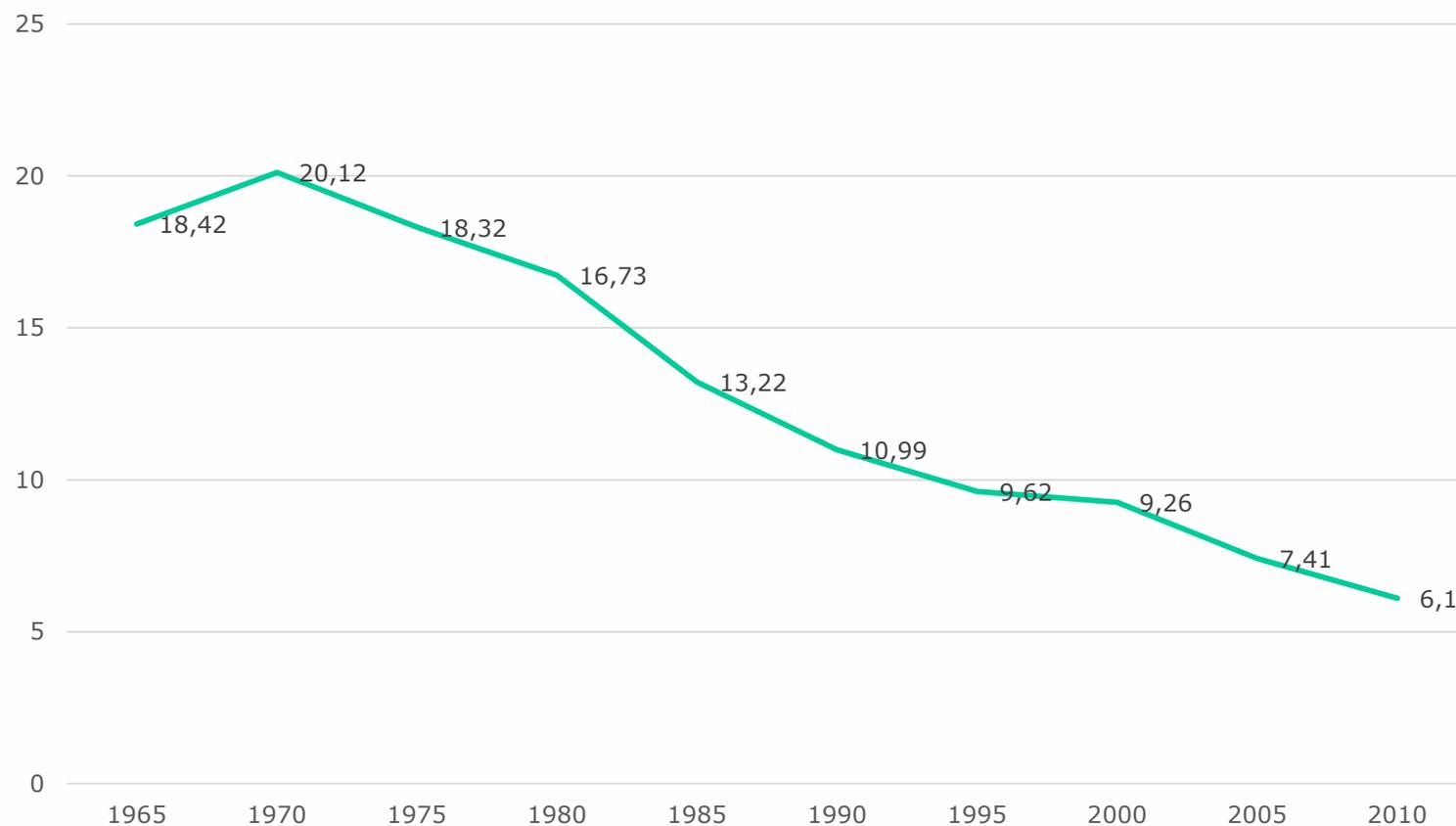
1. The evolution of the Italian drinking culture in the last 40 years
2. Youth drinking cultures: Southern vs Northern geographies
3. Take home concepts



# 1. The evolution of the Italian drinking culture in the last 40 years



# Per-capita alcohol consumption in Italy (litres per year)



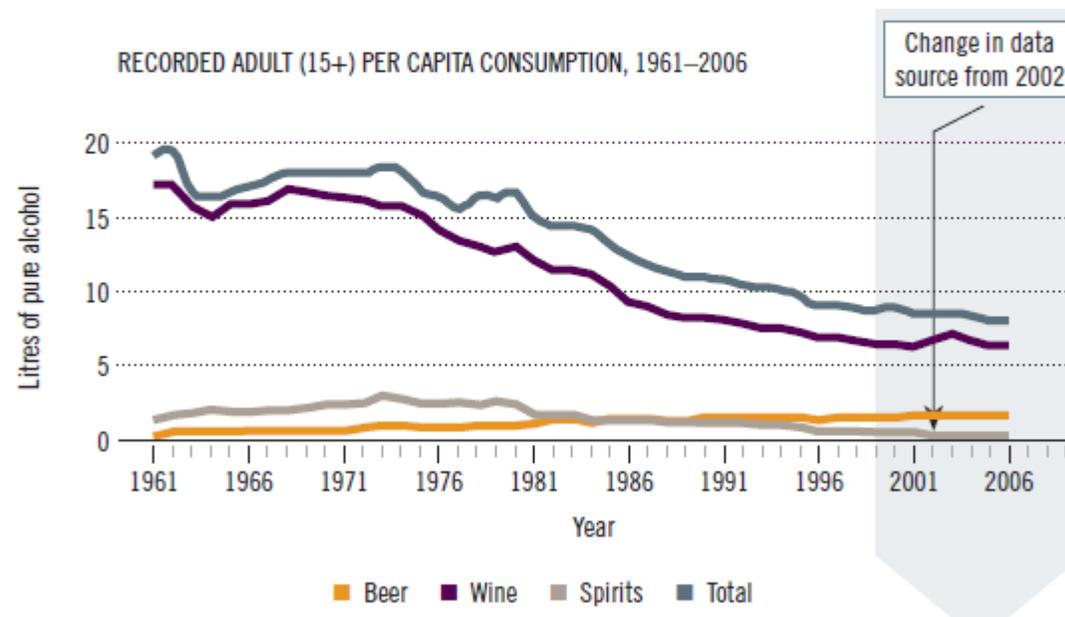
Source: WHO HFA DB 2015



# Per-capita alcohol consumption in Italy

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Population data (refer to the population 15 years and older and are in litres of pure alcohol).



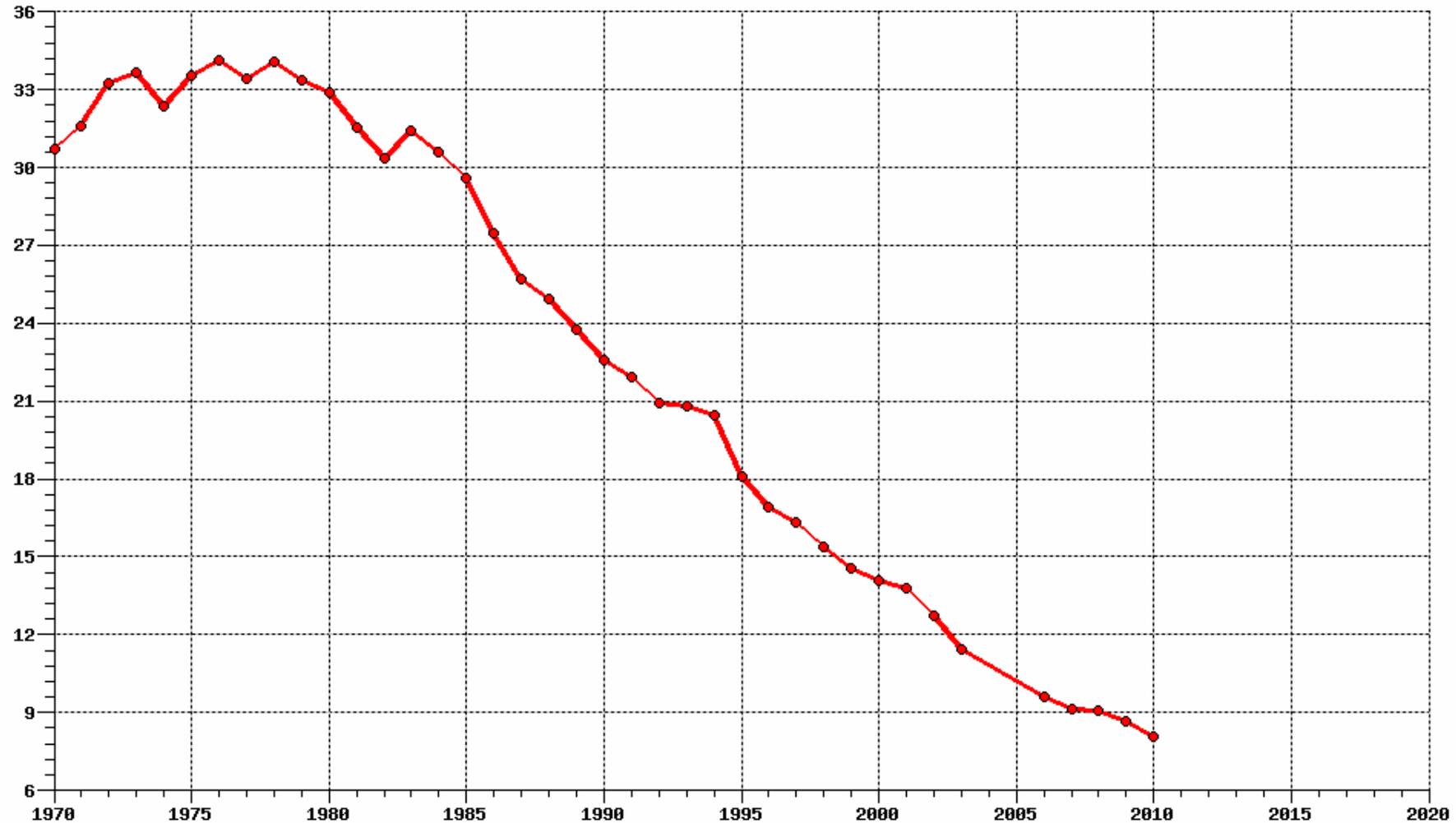
## PATTERNS OF DRINKING SCORE

Patterns of drinking score*	Least risky	<b>1</b>	2	3	4	5	Most risky
-----------------------------	-------------	----------	---	---	---	---	------------

\* Given the same level of consumption, the higher the patterns of drinking score, the greater the alcohol-attributable burden of disease for the country.



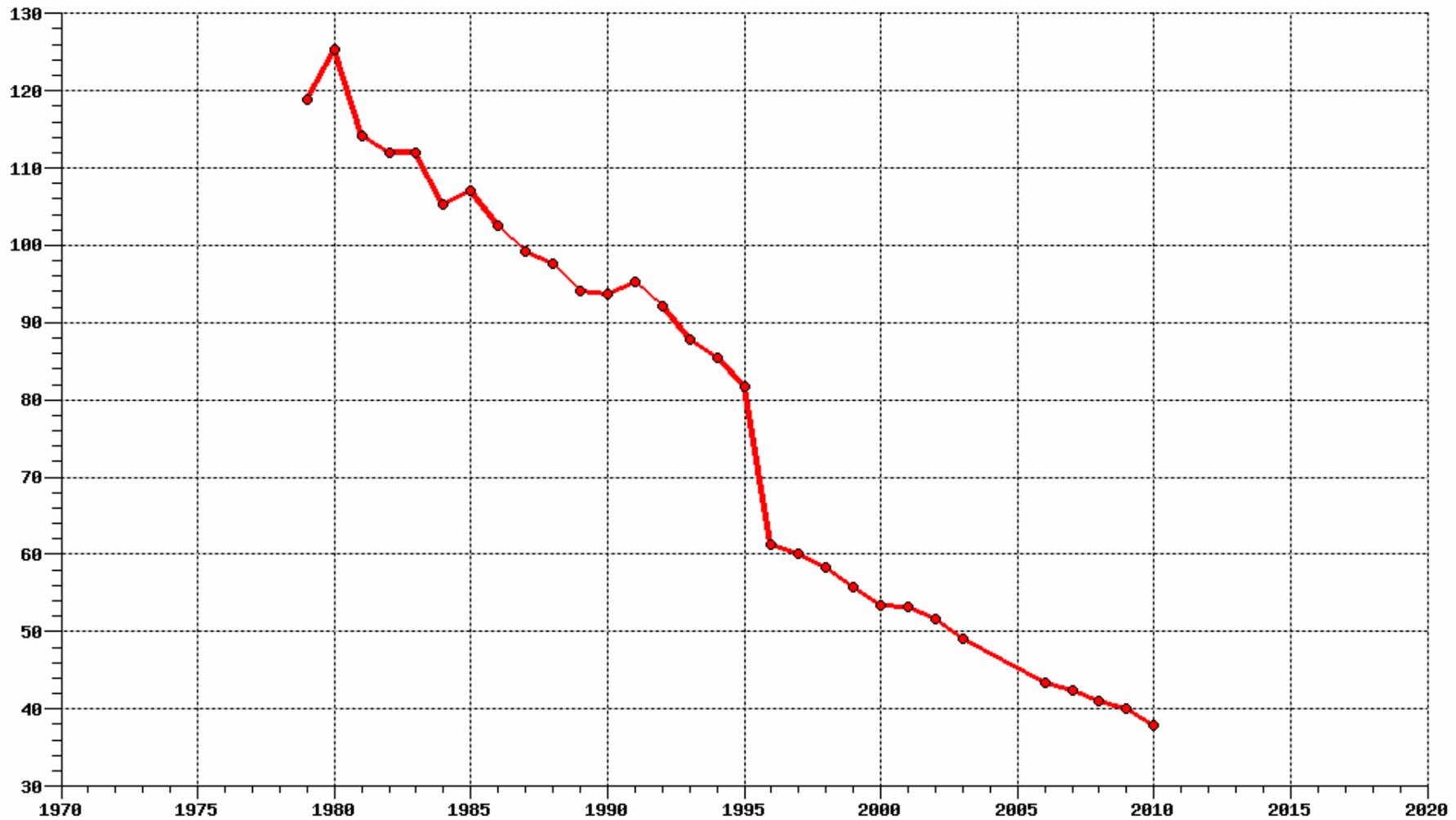
## Mortality: deaths for chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis



Fonte: WHO HFA DB 2014 – Deaths for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis in Italy, all ages per 100,000 (1970-2010)



## Mortality - selected alcohol related causes

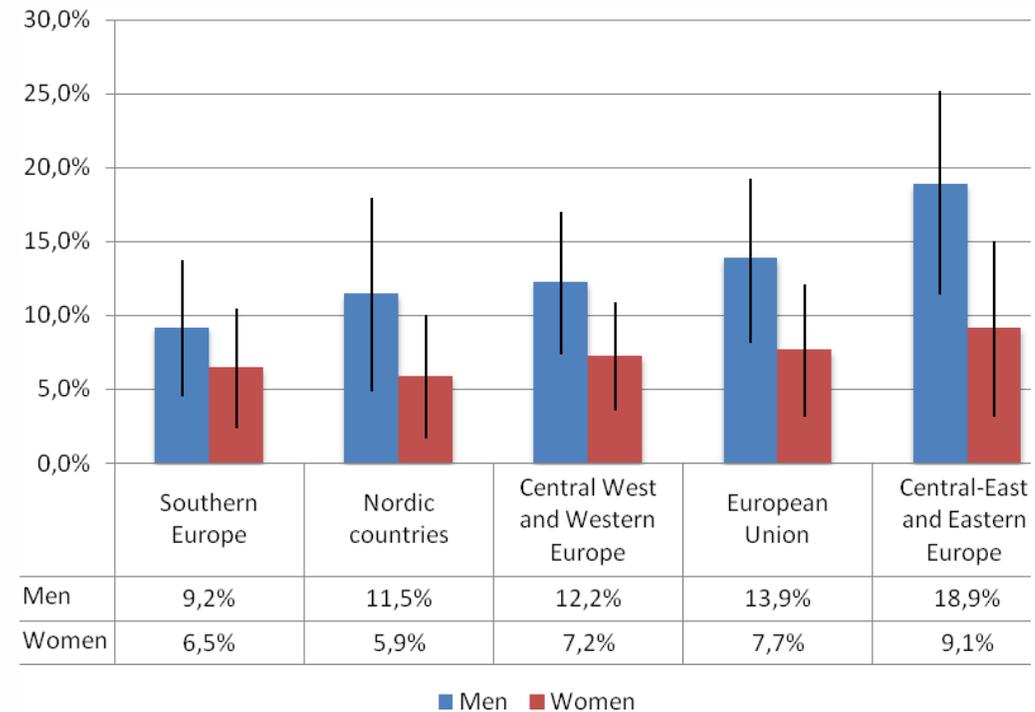


Source: WHO/Europe, European HFA Database, 2014. SDR, selected alcohol related causes, per 100000



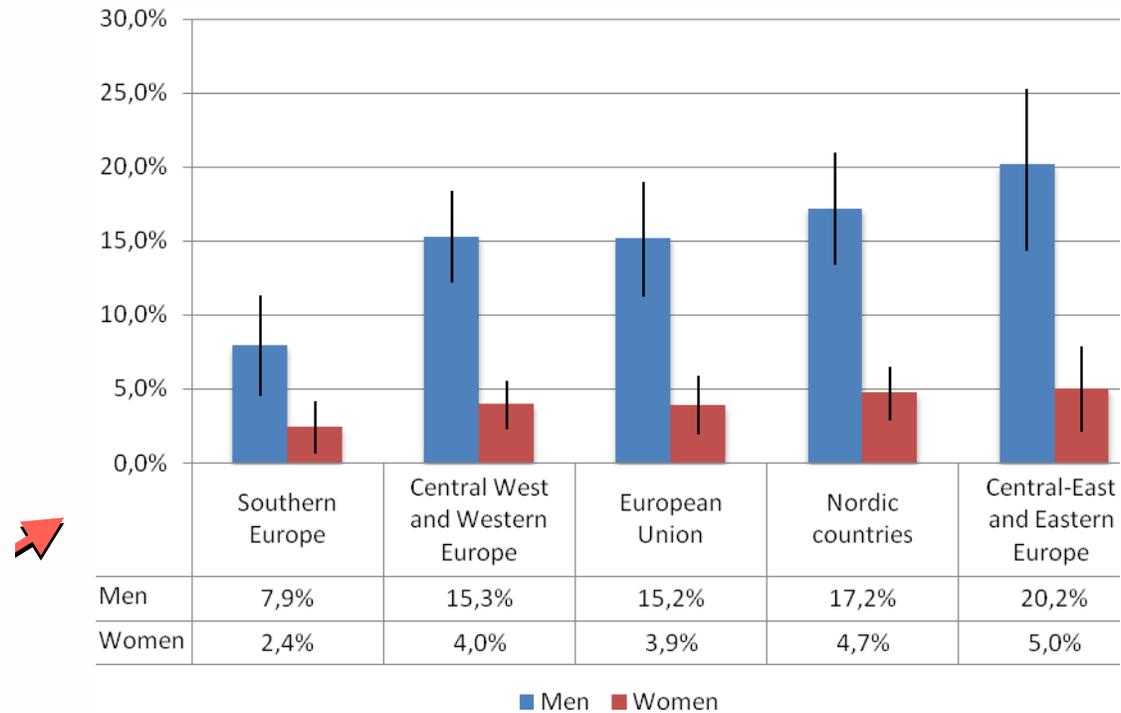
# Proportion of premature deaths related to alcohol

Figure 1. Proportion of all premature deaths (defined as deaths in people 15-64 years of age) in the EU caused by alcohol consumption by sex and region



# Proportion of DALYs related to alcohol in different geographical areas

Figure 2. Proportion of all DALYs (in people 15-64 years of age) in the EU caused by alcohol consumption by sex and region



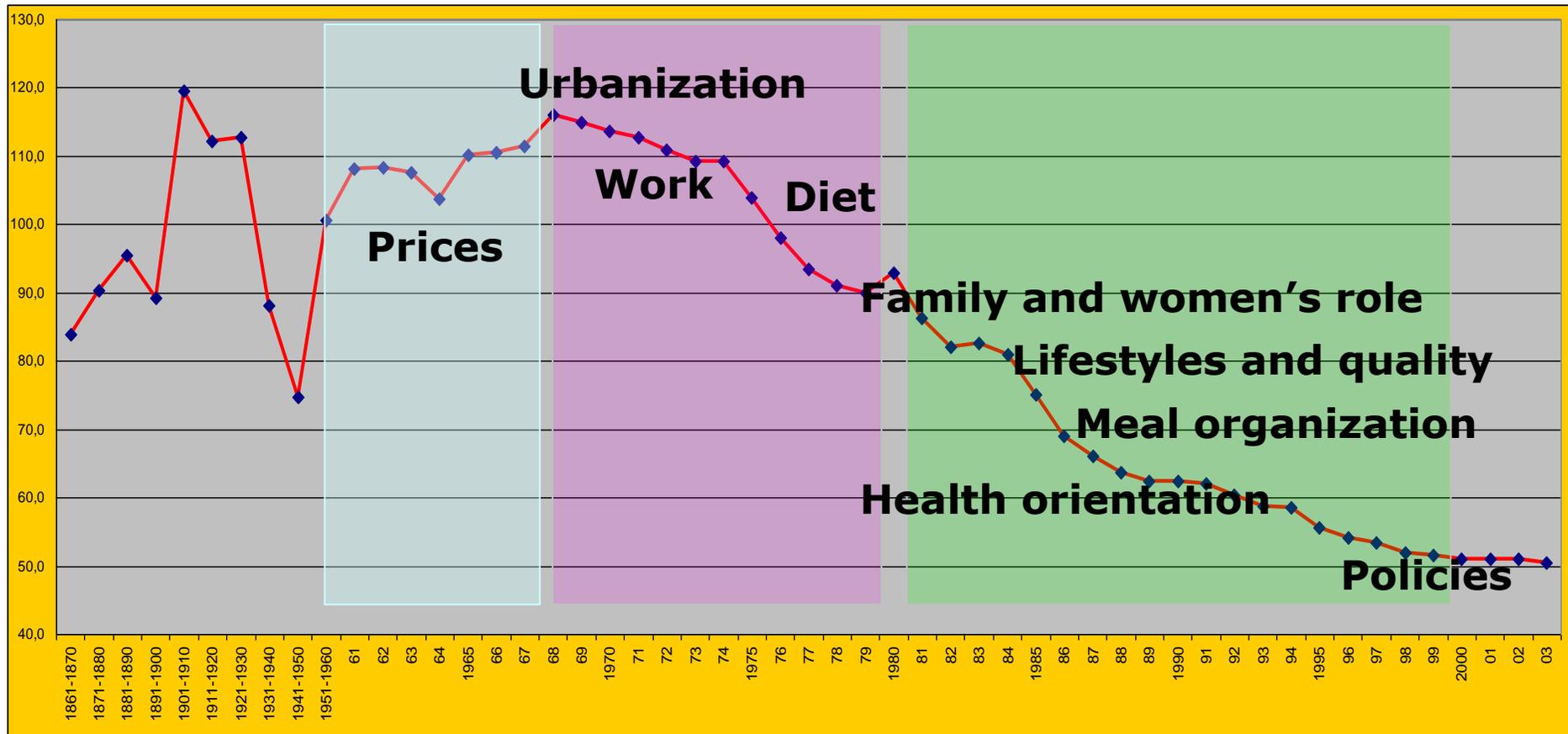
Fonte: Rehm J. (2012), What alcohol can do to European society. In Anderson P, Braddick F., Reynolds J., Gual T. (eds), Alcohol Policies in Europe: Evidence from AMPHORA

[http://www.amphoraproject.net/view.php?id\\_cont=45&PHPSESSID=05rkkdsvkvvd3ngakcpt3o9o7](http://www.amphoraproject.net/view.php?id_cont=45&PHPSESSID=05rkkdsvkvvd3ngakcpt3o9o7) (anno rif. 2004)



What has caused the dramatic decrease of alcohol consumptions  
(particularly of wine) in Italy  
in the last 40 years?





Source: Allaman A., Cipriani F., Prina F. (a cura di), *I cambiamenti nei consumi di bevande alcoliche in Italia*, Quaderno n. 17 dell'Osservatorio Permanente sui Giovani e l'Alcool, Casa Editrice Litos, Roma - Allamani A., Beccaria F. (issue eds.) (2007), *Contemporary Drugs Problems*, 34 (2).



The reduction of consumption can be attributed to:

- Relevant social and economic changes
- New lifestyles

Self-control process of the society



## What has changed

- Reduction of consumed quantities
- Shifts among different beverages
- Decreased number of drinkers and heavy drinkers
- Increase of the quality
- Increase of female consumptions
- Increase of out-of-meals consumptions

## What has NOT changed

- Main meanings and functions attributed to drinking
- Main attitudes towards drunkenness
- Main informal norms regulating drinking
- Main characteristics of the alcohol socialization process (first images and tastes)



## Today. The age of the «competent drinker»

Results from a mixed-method research that has investigated epidemiological data and perceptions of three age cohorts in wine-production vs. non production areas

In production areas:

1. Lower levels of risky drinking (such as binge drinking) and lower rates of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality (even if the same areas show the higher prevalence of consumers)
2. More persistence of the typical alcohol socialization process (within the family)
3. More marked orientation towards quality («revolution» of wine-making)
4. (wine) Drinking as cultural experience → knowledges and competences
5. The wine-expert is a competent drinker who stands out socially and become a trend-setter, contributing to spread a moderate consumption style



## 2. Youth drinking cultures: Southern vs Northern geographies

Results from a systematic bulk of comparative qualitative studies IT-FI



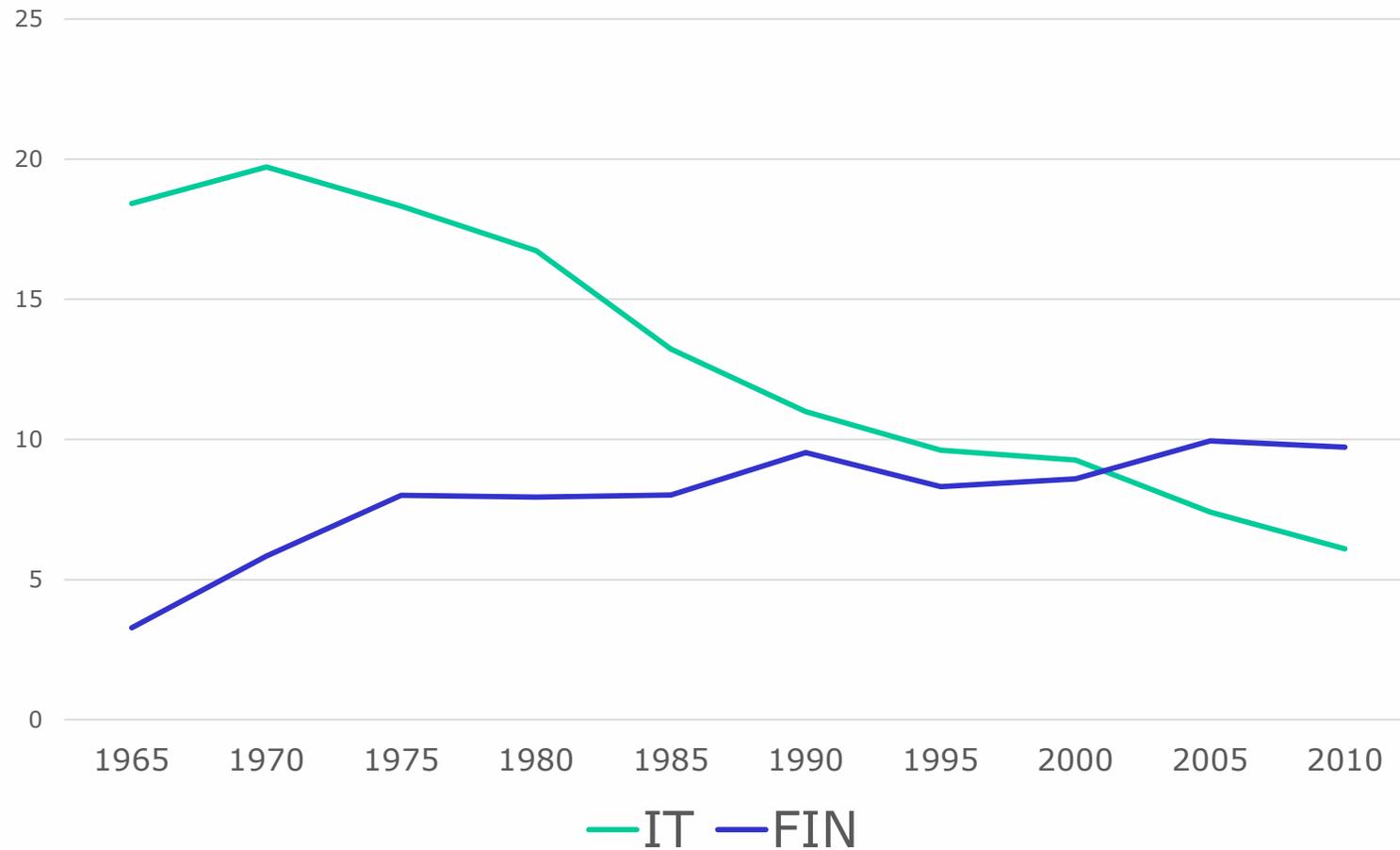
## Italy vs. Finland as different drinking geographies

- Italy and Finland traditionally represent paradigmatic cases of Mediterranean (wet) culture and Nordic (dry) drinking culture (Sulkunen 1976)
- Hypothesis of a global convergence
- Northern vs Southern youth drinking cultures have been described as “Intoxication cultures” vs. “Non-Intoxications cultures” (Jarvinen & Room 2007) → different expectations, risk perceptions (Hibell et al. 2013)

patterns of and norms about drinking, as with other social behaviours, are not uniform in a large modern nation...



*Recorded alcohol consumption per capita in Italy and Finland, 1965-2010 (L)*



Source: Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH), 2013



# Individualistic - Collectivistic cultures

«two different sociopolitical-cultural systems» in which individuals are expected to develop an independent personality vs. to comply with norms, values, and familial authority (Dwairy, 2002).

## **Individualistic personality**

Individual goals

Focused on individual rights

Behaviour related to personal disposition

## **Collectivistic personality**

Collective goals

Focused on interpersonal responsibilities

Behaviour adapted to the context

In a global perspective:

- **'individualisation'**: increasing reliance on personal autonomy and self-reflexivity, and decreasing emphasis on traditional forms of collective identity such as family (Beck, 2000).
- Increasing individual **"responsabilization"** (Rose 1996) and decreasing social responsibility.



# Results from comparative studies

## First memories related to alcohol

- Different forms and meanings attached to the first memories: positive and **related to parental and moderate drinking** in IT vs. ambiguous and **related to peers and intoxication** in FI .
- Whereas IT parents and relatives play an active role in shaping the first drinking experiences of their offspring, allowing children to taste wine or beer within the family context and using the occasion to teach them the rules of moderation, FI parents are more likely to prohibit the consumption of alcohol among young people within the family.

## Conceptualisations of drinking aims

- **Personal desires** and self-maximisation among ITs are secondary to compliance with both the social-drinking context and **interpersonal responsibilities**.



## Representation of risk related to drinking

- IT adolescents distinguish several levels of risk based on the context, on the various drinking practices and on the type of beverage. FI seem to be convinced that anyone who drinks in the right way and for the right reasons runs no risk of becoming an alcoholic.
- FI adolescents conceptualise risk mainly in terms of level of intoxication and **personal risk**, whereas IT adolescents evaluate it **in relation to the context and the others' needs and expectations**.
- In IT the strongest influence on the development of addiction problems was identified as **the context in which people grow up**, while FI int. refer to alcoholism mainly as attributable to **personal shortcomings and problems**.

## Conceptualisation of proper vs. improper drinking

- Various boundaries separate what is considered normal or deviant drinking habits among the IT groups (about quantities, context, time, company, age, and beverage type).
- Drunkenness considered acceptable (only if not frequent) **only among young people**, not in adulthood. Apart from that, drinking norms are **the same** for young people and adults.
- Boundaries proper and improper drinking are typically unclear in FI.
- In FI heavy drinking was not described as irresponsible, neither related to the drinker's age.
- Youth and adult drinking perceived as **separated**.



## Conceptualisations about self-control in drinking

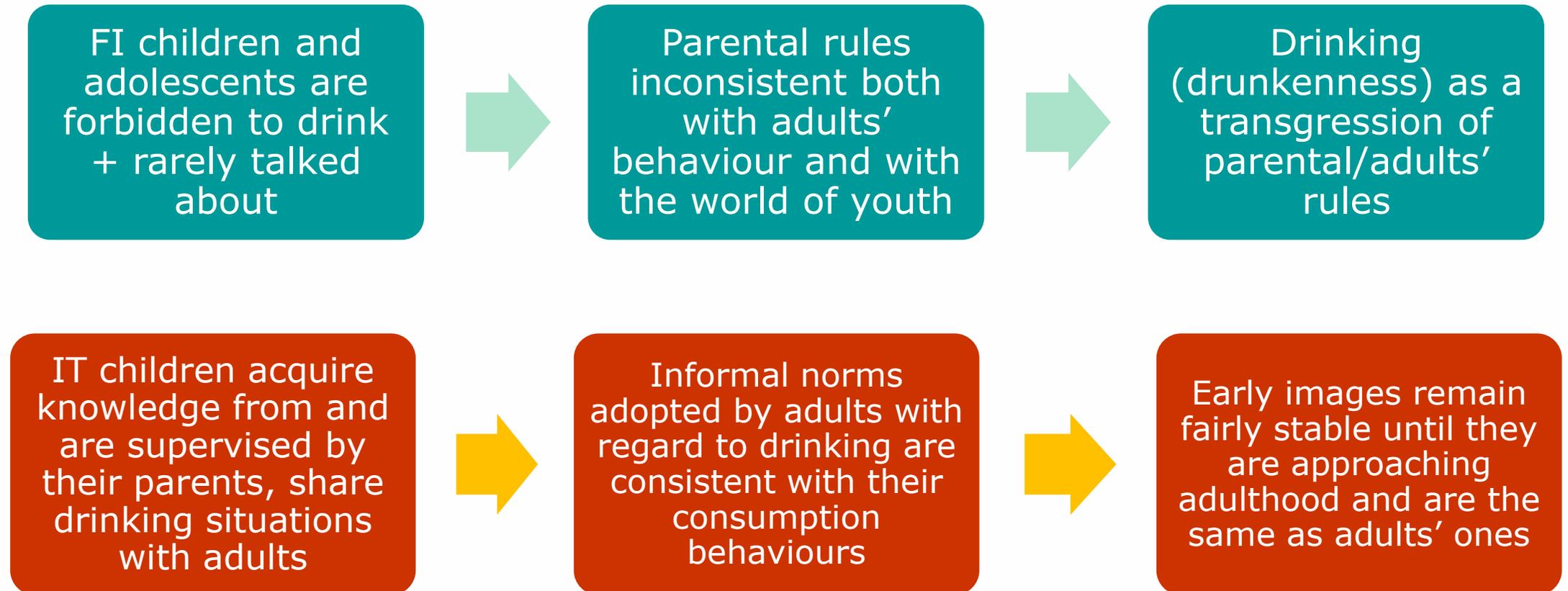
- Self-control is perceived in FI as the ability to **maintain the right level of intoxication**, whereas in IT it connotes **not getting drunk**, drunkenness being perceived as something that spoils the pleasure of being with friends.
- The IT adolescents discussed many **external aspects** that could influence the capacity for control, such as social pressure, alcohol properties, lack of experience, and negative emotions. FI interviewees put more emphasis on **individual competence**: if you drink for the right reasons (for fun and of your own free will), you are safe because you can manage alcohol.

## Adults' images of youth drinking

- IT parents seem more confident than parents from Northern Europe in their ability to protect their children from the risk associated with drinking alcohol.



## The alcohol socialization process in I-C cultures



***Social values  
(I-C cultures)***

***Collectivistic (IT)***

- Family and social norms
- Interpersonal responsibilities
- Family ties

***Individualistic (FI)***

- Self-efficacy
- Self-maximisation
- Intergenerational gap



***Drinking cultures  
(alcohol-socialisation  
process)***

***Southern (IT)***

- Active and consistent communication about alcohol.
- Shared drinking occasions between adults and young people

***Northern (FI)***

- Lack of communication & ambiguity of messages
- Separation between adults' and young people's drinking



## Conclusions in global perspective

- The global process towards individualisation (i.e. growing emphasis on self-efficacy and self-maximisation) constitutes a real challenge for all Western societies
- We should wonder about the consequences of the increasing complexity of the transition towards adulthood.
- The economic and welfare crisis, combined with a lower social protection and a larger intergenerational gap could affect drinking patterns and use values (e.g. anxiolytic).



### 3. To take home concepts



# Whatever the drinking culture is...

1. Key-role of the informal social regulation
2. importance of the alcohol socialization process
3. be aware that youth drinking reflects adults' drinking
4. complexification of transition towards adulthood requires attention

Changing a drinking culture requires acknowledgement of "the social and normative nature of most drinking" (Room, 2015)

To change a drinking culture is not sufficient to «borrow» the rules from other cultures: unintended consequences...



Thanks for your attention!

rolando@eclectica.it  
www.eclectica.it

