

NordAN conference  
Oslo  
November 8th 2024

**Online sale of alcohol in Iceland  
Private profit and political interests vs  
public good  
Do NGO's matter?**

Árni Einarsson



# Coalition of Icelandic organizations working with prevention and public health

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- **The Association for Prevention and Health Promotion (FRÆ):** Árni Einarsson GM, Siv Friðleifsdóttir former member of Parliament and minister of health and social security/minister of environment/Nordic cooperation minister.
- **IOGT in Iceland:** Aðalsteinn Gunnarsson GM, Björn G. Einarsson chairman.
- **The Parental Association Against Alcohol Advertising:** Árni Guðmundsson chairman.
- **The Collaboration of Preventive Associations (SAFF):** Hildur Helga Gísladóttir representative.
- **Former member of Alþingi and minister of justice Ögmundur Jónasson.**
- **First formal meeting November 14th 2023.**

# What is at stake?

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- **Undermines public health and alcohol prevention policies.**
- **Leads to increased availability and alcohol related harm.**
- **The existence of the alcohol monopoly is threatened. One of the pillars of Icelandic alcohol policy designed to minimize alcohol-related harm by controlling access through ÁTVR's monopoly?**
- **The online alcohol sale is illegal as it is implemented in Iceland. The question of rule of law.**

# The prequel: Why did we react?

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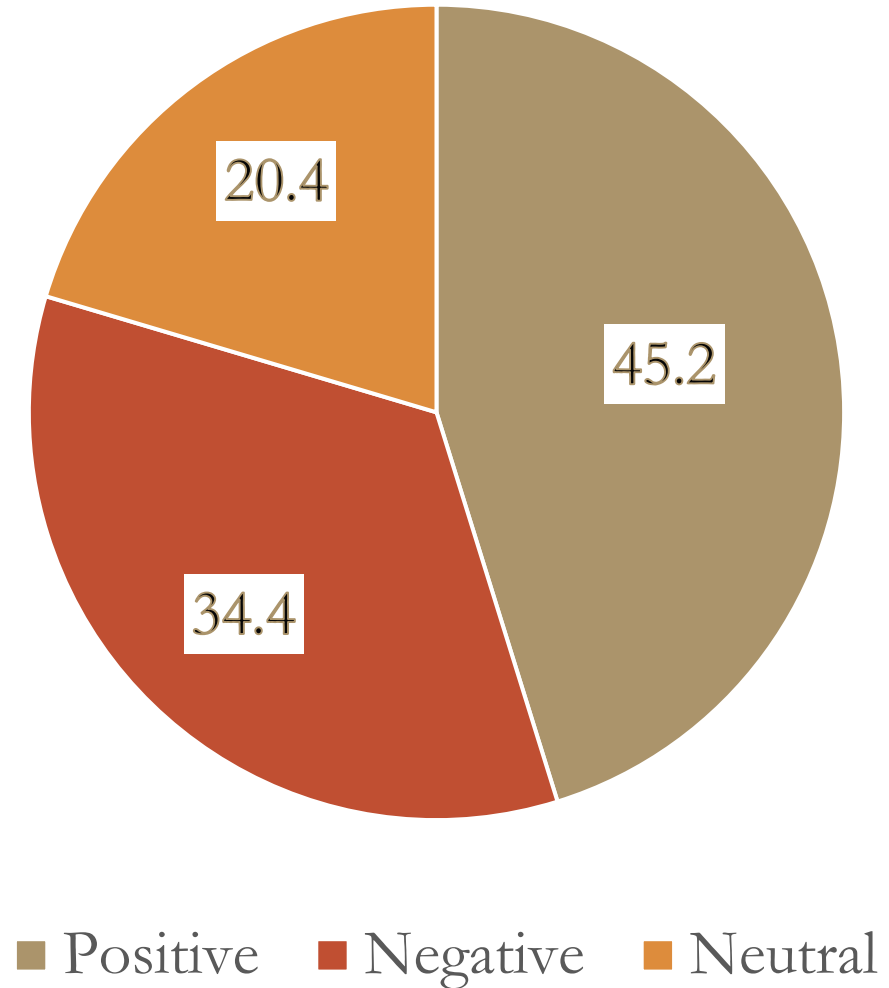
- **In 2020, online sales began operations and the number increased rapidly.**
- **June 16, 2020: ATVR tries to stop the online sale of alcohol by filing a complaint with the police and points out that only ATVR is allowed to sell alcohol in retail. The police has not finished the matter yet.**
- **July 9, 2021: ÁTVR requests an injunction on the activities of certain online sales in order to get the issue moving and points out that alcohol is one of the cornerstones of Icelandic alcohol policy.**
- **The then Minister of Finance decided not to further test the legality of online sales.**

# Our focus.

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- **The political parties.**
- **Individual members of the Alþingi, relevant ministers (Minister of Justice, Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, Minister of Social Affairs and the Prime Minister).**
- **The Alþingi -The Parliament: (The Constitutional and Supervisory Committee of the Parliament (Sept 9, 2024), the Parliamentary Ombudsman).**
- **Various institutions (For ex: The police, National Tax Administration; Arbitration Committee on Information Matters, The consumer agency ...).**
- **Media – public.**

**What is your attitude towards others than ÁTVR being allowed to sell alcohol online?** (Survey 2024)



# Meeting with members of the Parliament: (December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023)

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# Symposium (February 13<sup>th</sup> 2024)

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# Meeting with the Minister of justice (March 14<sup>th</sup> 2024)

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# Meeting with the Minister of health (May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024)

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# Meeting with the Minister of social affairs (April 29<sup>th</sup> 2024)

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# Meeting with the Minister of economy and finance July 3rd 2024)

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# Hagkaup (grocery store chain)

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**The retail chain Hagkaup announced in May 2024 that they intended to begin selling alcohol online to consumers.**

**Our reaction:**

- **Strengthen and expand our group**
- **Inform and engage shareholders. Of the 17 largest shareholders in Hagar, 13 are pension funds.**

**A statement sent to Members of Parliament, ministers, and the media (August 26, 2024) by a coalition of health professionals and prevention organizations calls on authorities to address the current public health threat posed by the significant increase in online alcohol sales**

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- **The Icelandic Nurses' Association**
- **The Public Health Association of Iceland**
- **The Icelandic Association of Physiotherapists**
- **The Icelandic Midwives' Association**
- **The Icelandic Medical Association**
- **The Icelandic Psychological Association**
- **The Icelandic Association of Hospital Workers**
- **The Icelandic Association of Social Workers**
- **The Icelandic Association of Pharmacists**
- **The Association of Alcohol and Drug Counselors**
- **SÁÁ (National Center of Addiction Medicine)**
- **FRÆ-Education and Prevention - an association of prevention and health promotion advocates**
- **The Parents' Association against Alcohol Advertising**
- **IOGT Iceland**
- **SAFF (Cooperation of NGOs in Prevention)**

# Pension funds as shareholders

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**The pension funds state that they invest responsibly and take into account:**

- **environmental issues**
- **social issues**
- **responsible governance**

**Our reaction:**

**Contacting the boards of the funds, both directly, in writing and personally, and indirectly through an open letter in media where we pointed out their investment policies asked if online sale of alcohol complied with that.**

# Did we make a difference? Or was this in vain?

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- **Two of the three government parties declared their opposition to the online sale of alcohol, and the ministers of the parties formally declared that they (and their parties) would not support bills to make it legal.**
- **The Minister of Justice withdrew her bill to legalize online sales.**
- **Attracted a lot of attention in the media.**
- **A special discussion program on RUV (the state television).**
- **Number of interviews, articles.**
- **Discussions and debate on social media.**
- **We mobilized a number of organizations working on public health and prevention.**
- **The issue was discussed in the Parliament number of times.**
- **Attention to the issue within a number of institutions in the administration.**





Thank you.



FRÆÐSLA  
& FORVARNIR