

## 1 **Drinking patterns in Europe are converging**

2 *(Original at*  
3 *[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=158](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displayStory.cfm?story_id=15868581)*  
4 *68581)*

5 Across Europe, economies are stagnating and unemployment is climbing.  
6 Reason enough, you might think, to hit the bottle. Europeans put away  
7 over nine litres of alcohol a year per person, twice the global average. The  
8 European Commission has declared that alcohol is a “key public-health  
9 and social concern”. Yet in most big EU countries drinking is in decline.

10 What explains the great sobering-up? In part, the drivers appear to be  
11 social and cultural. The decline in drinking is most marked in southern  
12 Europe, where there has been a notable dropping-off in wine-drinking,  
13 especially during the working day. Rising numbers of urban workers and  
14 the insidious spread of Anglo-Saxon fast-food habits are working against  
15 the old traditions of a glass with breakfast followed by a long lunch fuelled  
16 by a bottle or two.

17 Not only are Europeans drinking less, they are drinking differently. Their  
18 habits are converging: the old geography of drinking on the continent,  
19 with its well-defined wine, beer and vodka “belts”, slowly gives way to a  
20 patchwork quilt. Britons, for instance, now spend more on wine than on  
21 beer.

22 However, even though they may have adopted the tipples of southern  
23 Europeans, the British also retain a fondness for “heavy episodic drinking”  
24 (ie, bingeing). The difference is that they now do it with 12%-strength  
25 wine rather than 4%-strength beer. This seems to explain why alcohol is  
26 still a big public-health and social concern in the UK.

## Questions

- 1) What is the meaning of 'to hit the bottle' (line 6)?
- 2) What is the meaning of 'put away' (line 6)?
- 3) Is the overall alcohol consumption in Europe on the increase? Which parts of the article give you the answer?
- 4) What are the reasons for drinking given in paragraph 1 (lines 5 to 9)?
- 5) What are the reasons against drinking given in paragraph 2 (lines 10 to 16)?
- 6) How can Anglo-Saxon food habits influence alcohol consumption?
- 7) How have the drinking patterns in Europe been changing in relation to geography?
- 8) What is the consequence of these changes for Britain? From the British perspective, is this change a change for the good or for the bad?
- 9) What is your opinion on alcohol? Do you think it is a significant social problem in the Czech Republic? What should be done about it?

## Vocabulary

across Europe (line 5) – in Europe, throughout Europe

in decline (line 9) – falling, dropping, decreasing, on the decrease

most marked (line 11) – most significant, most pronounced, most visible

give way (19) – to yield to, to make room for

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

