



International alcohol conferences from 1885 onwards began a process of internationalisation in understanding the concept of addiction, but this influence declined as national differences and tensions between European countries became sharper in the 1930s

**internationalisation
addiction
concepts
temperance**

The aim of this sub-project was to analyse the alcohol question and its responses through a series of international anti-alcohol conferences from 1885 onwards. How did they view the alcohol problem and its causes; what were the consequences for the individual and the society as a whole; and which solutions merited discussion?

The conferences before the First World War can be seen as an arrangement for the modern state where the temperance movement placed itself in the service of the state and at the same time demanded that it be given some responsibility for the future development of society. These were years when the nation acted as a point of reference in several questions that were chafing within the modern project: population qualities and the condition of future generations, the notion of citizenship, industrial strength and competitiveness, the role and the strength of the state.

The first inter-war conferences enjoyed an optimistic and internationalist atmosphere, added to by American prohibition, which had given the temperance movement plenty to be hopeful about. But when the 1920s turned to the 1930s, the conferences were transformed into arenas for national solutions and into outright propaganda pieces. The responses to the alcohol problem debated in the inter-war conferences built on a combination of scientifically masked ideological conviction and ideologically inspired passion for science.

Several themes from the early part of the twentieth century also dominated the post-war conferences: much of the presented research could easily fall into categories such as control, treatment and prevention; women and youth (who still hold positions as extraordinary but frequently discussed problem groups); and traffic and working life. All these themes are recurrent arenas for the formulation of alcohol and drug problems. But sociological and psychological perspectives are more common now, epidemiological research has grown steadily, the drug problem is ever present and a comprehensive addiction concept has opened up for topics beyond substance misuse.

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Berridge V, Edman J, Mold A and Taylor S. (2015): *Addiction through the Ages: a review of the development of concepts and ideas about addiction in European countries since the nineteenth century and the role of international organisations in the process*. *Addiction and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe: Reframing Addictions Project (ALICE RAP)*: [Deliverable 1.1](#)