

Dutch drink offenders to get teetotal tag to keep them dry

Esther Verkaik

2 MIN READ



AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - People in the Netherlands convicted of crimes related to alcohol abuse will have to wear a special ankle bracelet to monitor their drinking habits once the government has passed the necessary legislation.



Probation officer Tony Rubino adjusts an ankle strap, called "alcoholmeter", that can measure alcohol consumption from sweat due to control consumption of people who have been convicted for a crime and whose sentence includes a ban on alcohol consumption, in Zutphen, Netherlands June 12, 2020. REUTERS/Esther Verkaik

The Dutch justice ministry has said the electronic bracelet or tag will keep track of any sign of alcohol consumption by analysing the sweat of the person wearing it.

Data from the bracelet will be sent to a central server once a day, giving probation officers a clearer picture of the wearer's behaviour than the current system which relies on blood or urine tests which are done twice a week.

“Clients are continuously aware of the fact that they have something that is measuring their alcohol consumption. That helps them to keep away from alcohol abuse,” probation officer Tony Rubino told Reuters.

The bracelet can also help offenders to show they have changed their ways.

A mother of two boys, who took part in the government's pilot studies for the bracelet, who asked to remain anonymous, said: “I have two young boys and had to show that I don't drink anymore.”

“The alcohol anklet was an excellent opportunity for me to show that I do not drink 24/7.”

The justice ministry said its pilot studies showed that 71% of the participants did not drink alcohol during the test, even though some were allowed access to alcohol.

Around half of the participants said they did not drink for at least three months after the anklet was taken off.

Studies, cited by the justice ministry, have shown that 26% to 43% of all violent incidents in the Netherlands are related to alcohol, while the cost of alcohol abuse to Dutch society is estimated to run to 6 billion euros (\$6.75 billion) a year.

Reporting by Esther Verkaik, writing by Bart Meijer. Editing by Jane Merriman