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YOUTH HEALTH AHEAD OF PROFIT: A MYSTERY SHOPPER MANUAL

Prevention of alcohol sales to minors through consumer protection

Project leader: Center for youth work (CZOR)
Project partners: Media & reform centar Niš (MRCN)
and Association for consumer protection in Vojvodina (UZPV)
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#ЕУ ЗА ТЕБЕ

Youth Health ahead of Profit:

A Mystery Shopper Manual – Prevention of alcohol sales to minors through consumer protection

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PUBLISHER:

- CZOR – Center for youth work
  Svetozara Ćorovića 6
  21000 Novi Sad
- UZPV – Association for consumer protection in Vojvodina
  Ravanička 11
  21000 Novi Sad

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

The **''Youth Health ahead of Profit: A Mystery Shopper Manual''** is born out of a shared conviction that the health, safety and well-being of young people must take precedence over commercial interests. Under the banner of the "Youth Health ahead of Profit" initiative, civil society organisations, academic researchers, young people and decision makers have come together to tackle a persistent challenge: despite clear legal prohibitions, minors continue to gain access to alcoholic beverages, often with harmful consequences.

This Manual represents the collective expertise and hard lessons learned during CZOR's extensive experience in protection of young people from alcohol-related harm. Since 2014, we have worked closely with:

- Youth volunteers, whose courage and active participation have made this work possible;
- Civil society organisations, who, over the years, have dedicated their time and resources to improving their practices and supporting young people;
- Decision makers, who have enacted and enforced evidence-based policies, allocated resources for enforcement and prevention, and championed inter-sectoral cooperation to protect youth from alcohol-related harm;
- International agencies and organizations, who recognize the importance of protecting youth from alcohol-related harm;
- Public-health researchers, whose rigorous analysis of epidemiological data and public policy have provided evidence-based data on which we base our work.

Each chapter of this handbook is informed by real-world field visits, legal analysis, and EU best practices. Our hope is that this Manual will serve not only as a practical toolkit for programme managers, youth workers and other civil society partners, but also as a catalyst for wider policy dialogue and retailer engagement.

We extend our deepest gratitude to every individual and institution that contributed time, insights, and encouragement. May this Manual empower and inspire us all to design, implement, and sustain mystery shopper and other prevention programmes that protect Serbia's youth and set a new standard for compliance and advocacy in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Underage alcohol consumption remains a major public-health and social concern in Serbia. Despite national laws prohibiting sale to minors, research shows persistent gaps in retailer compliance – especially in on-premise venues (bars, clubs, and cafés). This Manual offers a step-by-step mystery shopper methodology designed to:

- Measure real-world compliance with legal age-verification requirements
- Generate evidence-based data for enforcement agencies (police, market and tourism inspectors) and civil society advocates
- Empower youth as trained, ethical field operatives and advocates, equipping them with observation skills, critical thinking, and clear safety protocols to collect accurate data and contribute to meaningful change
- Drive policy dialogue and retailer education, leveraging EU best practices to elevate Serbia's compliance rates and improve consumer protection of minors

Why Mystery shopping?

Mystery shopping is a covert audit method in which trained "shoppers" or "decoys" blend in as everyday customers to evaluate a business's service quality, operational practices, and legal compliance. A key application of this technique is alcohol compliance checks, where "shoppers" assess whether staff consistently request valid ID and adhere to under-age sales laws.

Traditional compliance checks (announced inspections or self-report surveys) often overestimate retailer diligence. In contrast, mystery shopper audits employ covert, real-life scenarios to capture authentic seller behaviour under everyday conditions. Key benefits include:

- **Objectivity:** Standardized scripts and questionnaires minimize observer bias.
- **Coverage:** Both on-premise and off-premise outlets can be assessed across urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- **Actionability:** Detailed visit reports feed directly into enforcement work and advocacy campaigns.

Early initiation of alcohol use is a well-documented predictor of later harm: children who take their first drink before age 15 face significantly higher odds of developing alcohol dependence, chronic liver disease, and mental-health disorders in adulthood. In Serbia, the 2024 ESPAD study indicate that the average age of first alcohol consumption among 15- to 16-year-olds is approximately 13 years, with nearly 49% having tried alcohol by that age, well above the European average of one-third.[1] Delaying the age of first drink can yield substantial public-health benefits: research suggests that each additional year before initiation can reduce lifetime risk of alcohol dependence and related illnesses by up to 30%, highlighting the importance of robust age-verification and prevention strategies.

And last, but by no means least, important argument in favor of using mystery shopper methodology: mystery shopping in alcohol compliance checks relies fundamentally on youth participation. By involving young people not only in programme design, training, and data collection, but also in monitoring law enforcement and advocating for stronger protection measures, young people have a direct voice in both assessing and shaping the policies that safeguard their health and safety.

[1] European Union Drugs Agency. (2024). *ESPAD 2024 key findings*.

Youth Health ahead of Profit

"Youth Health ahead of Profit" – Greater consumer protection of minors from alcohol sale is a three-year project aimed at strengthening the protection of minors from alcohol sales in Serbia by enhancing the role of civil society in policy-making processes, aligning national legislation with EU standards, and promoting responsible retail practices. This approach directly addresses alarming trends in alcohol consumption among minors and systemic failures in the enforcement of legal protections, particularly due to misaligned regulations and the influence of commercial interests.

The project strengthens local civil society organisations (CSOs) through financial support, capacity building, and coordinated advocacy efforts. CSOs implement local activities that include youth-led "mystery shopper" campaigns, educational sessions for citizens and retailers, as well as community mobilisation to advance public policy changes, while a cross-sectoral working group composed of institutions, CSOs and international organisations leads advocacy for key policy amendments.

The project "Youth Health ahead of Profit" is jointly implemented by the **Centre for Youth Work (CZOR)**, the **Association for Consumer Protection in Vojvodina (UZPV)**, and **Media & Reform Centre Niš (MRCN)**, in cooperation with **IOGT-NTO Movement (Sweden)**, the **Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of the Republic of Serbia**, the **Institute of Economic Sciences**, and the **Institute of Public Health of Vojvodina**. The project is implemented with the financial support of the European Union.

How to use this Manual

This document serves two primary audiences:

- ***Civil society organisations*** (youth workers, programme managers, mystery shopper supervisors) who will:

    - Design the programme for collecting data / conducting field research
    - Recruit and build capacities of young people to take an active role in programme planning and implementation
    - Oversee data collection and quality control

- ***Advocacy and enforcement partners*** (police, inspectors, policy and decision makers) who will:
  - Interpret compliance data
  - Integrate findings into enforcement actions and retailer guidance
  - Shape public-health messaging and regulatory reforms

This Manual describes how to set up, run, and leverage a mystery shopper programme to better protect minors from alcohol sales in Serbia. Drawing on both domestic policies and EU best practices, it shows how to:

- Design a statistically robust programme
- Recruit and train young people as "mystery shoppers" safely and ethically
- Collect and analyse compliance data (ID-check rates, refusal rates)
- Report findings to police, trade inspectors, and advocacy partners
- Mobilize follow-up actions – policy dialogue, media outreach, and retailer guidance

The Manual consists of 3 parts. *Part I* provides complete insight into regulatory and epidemiological context of Serbia, when it comes to alcohol consumption among youth, policies that provide protection of minors as consumers, and draws a paralel with EU countries. *Part II* provides detailed instructions on how to design, implement and report on mystery shopper programmes and its results, how to include young people and how to ensure safety, ethical and legal compliance of mystery shoppings. In *Part III*, you will find annexes that all interested actors can use in order to design and implement a mystery shopper programme with young people.

While this Manual provides a step-by-step guide to in-person mystery shopper audits, it does not cover remote or online alcohol sales – which in Serbia fall under a separate set of rules and enforcement mechanisms. If you plan to extend compliance checks to online channels, you will need additional protocols – such as test orders, delivery-driver verification scripts, and coordination with postal inspectors – alongside technical safeguards mandated by Serbia's e-commerce framework.

PART I: REGULATORY AND PIDEMIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

1. Legal framework
2. Epidemiology

1. Legal framework

1.1 State of play in Serbia

Below is an overview of key consumer rights, the actors responsible for their protection, and the mechanisms for their enforcement, with particular reference to the prohibition of alcohol sales to minors.

Consumer protection encompasses a set of rights, instruments, and institutions designed to safeguard consumers' interests in their relationships with business entities. In the Republic of Serbia, this area is regulated by the **Consumer Protection Law** ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 88/2021), which sets out detailed provisions on consumer rights and procedures for their enforcement.

The fundamental consumer rights under the Law are:

1. The right to satisfaction of basic needs – access to essential goods and services such as food, clothing, footwear, housing, healthcare, education, and hygiene;
2. The right to safety – protection from products and services that may endanger life, health, property, or the environment, as well as from those whose possession or use is prohibited;
3. The right to information – access to accurate and complete information necessary for making informed purchasing decisions;
4. The right to choice – the possibility to choose among a range of products and services at competitive prices and appropriate quality;
5. The right to representation – the representation of consumer interests in the development and implementation of consumer protection policies, through consumer associations and federations;
6. The right to redress – the right to seek protection in legally prescribed procedures in cases of rights violations, including compensation for material and non-material damage;
7. The right to education – the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for making informed decisions, as well as awareness of one's rights and how to exercise them;
8. The right to a healthy and sustainable environment – the right to live and work in an environment that does not endanger the health and well-being of present and future generations, with timely access to environmental information.

In addition to outlining these rights, the Law clearly defines prohibited conduct by traders in their dealings with consumers. It prohibits **unfair commercial practices** that mislead or exert undue pressure on consumers, thereby influencing their economic decisions. Misleading practices include providing false or deceptive information, while aggressive practices involve harassment, coercion, or undue influence. Special protection applies to minors – the sale, serving, or gifting of alcohol (including beer), tobacco, and pyrotechnic products to persons under the age of 18 is prohibited. If there is doubt regarding a customer's age, the trader may request an identity document and refuse the sale if it is not presented.

In cases of justified suspicion that consumers' safety rights have been jeopardized – whether due to dangerous products, services, or prohibited goods – the minister responsible for trade may propose that the Government adopt a decision on the urgent implementation of extraordinary and coordinated inspection controls by all competent authorities.

The enforcement of consumer rights is based on shared responsibilities among several institutions and bodies. In the Republic of Serbia, consumer protection is carried out by:

- The National Assembly;
- The Government;
- The Ministry of Internal and External Trade;
- The National Consumer Protection Council;
- Other ministries and regulatory bodies;
- Authorities of the autonomous province and local self-governments;
- Consumer associations and federations.

The Market Inspectorate, operating within the Ministry of Internal and External Trade, plays a key role in supervising the implementation of the Consumer Protection Law. Sanctions may include:

a. Fines;
b. Advertising bans;
c. Temporary prohibition of business activities;
d. Seizure of goods.

In practice, consumer rights are exercised through the following channels, listed from faster to more formal mechanisms:

1) Complaints

Consumers have the right to submit a complaint to a trader in written form (in person, by email, or via an electronic form).
The trader must respond within 8 days of receiving the complaint, and resolve it within 30 days of receipt.
If the trader fails to act in accordance with the law, the consumer may initiate other protection mechanisms.

2) Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

Consumers may also seek protection through out-of-court procedures before registered ADR bodies. These procedures are free of charge or involve minimal costs and are significantly faster than court proceedings.

3) Judicial protection

If previous measures do not yield results, the consumer may initiate civil proceedings before the competent court. Claims may relate to:

- Compensation for damages;
- Contract termination;
- Refund of payment;
- And similar remedies.

Despite its public-health roots, under-18 alcohol control in Serbia spans multiple legal domains – from general health protection and youth policy to consumer rights, public order, advertising and taxation. Together, these laws and strategic documents define minimum purchase ages, restrict marketing, and allocate institutional responsibilities, and set preventive and treatment priorities for young people. The table below summarizes their main features as they apply to youth:

Instrument	Scope & Objectives	Youth-specific provisions	Enforcement / Lead agency
Law on Public health	Broad public-health risks (alcohol, tobacco, diet, gambling)	Recognizes youth as a risk group; mandates prevention activities	Ministry of Health
Law on Health protection	Healthcare delivery, including mandatory treatment	Prioritizes treatment for alcohol use disorders among minors	Ministry of Health
National Programme for Alcohol Harm Prevention	Reducing social and individual harms from alcohol	Calls for educational programmes, reduced availability and advertising	Government (cross-ministry)
Law on Youth	Youth rights, participation, and social empowerment	Guarantees youth participation, funding for youth-focused programmes, including prevention	Ministry of Tourism and Youth; local authorities
Youth Strategy 2023–2030	Youth policy framework with health and well-being objectives	Sets targets for reducing youth drinking; mandates youth participation	Ministry of Tourism and Youth

Action Plan for Youth Strategy 2023–2025	Implements Strategy through concrete measures	Funds youth-led prevention and policy-making activities	Ministry of Tourism and Youth; partner ministries/CSOs
Law on Consumer Protection	Consumer safety, including age-verification for alcohol sales	Prohibits sale to < 18; requires mandatory ID checks; admin fines	Market & tourism inspectors
Law on Public peace and order	Public order misdemeanours, including under-16 alcohol sales	Prohibits sale to < 16; criminal fines	Communal (municipal) police
Law on advertising	Regulates alcohol marketing across media	Bans ads targeting minors; restricts placement near schools	Agency for electronic media; market inspectors
Law on excises	Taxation of alcohol by ethanol content	Higher rates on spirits to reduce affordability for young consumers	Customs administration; Ministry of Finance

When it comes to regulating consumer protection of minors from alcohol sales, 2 most important regulations are ***Law on Consumer Protection*** and ***Law on Public peace and order***. However, these two laws regulate alcohol sales to minors in a different way.

Feature	Law on Public peace and order (Art. 21)	Law on Consumer protection (Arts. 23–24)
Minimum age covered	Prohibits sale/service to persons **under 16**	Bans sale, service or gift to persons **under 18**
ID-check requirement	Implied by the offence, but not explicitly mandated	Explicit: seller must verify age with gov't ID (ID card, passport, driver's license)
Type of offense	Misdemeanour	Administrative infringement
Enforcement bodies	Municipal (communal) police	Market (trade) inspectors; tourism inspectors; sanitary inspectors
Individual sanctions	20 000 – 100 000 RSD fine	Not separately specified; legal entities typically fined ~50 000 RSD per violation
Entrepreneur / Entity	50 000 – 200 000 RSD (entrepreneur); 200 000 – 500 000 RSD (legal entity)	~50 000 RSD fine; repeat offences can trigger temporary suspension of trade/catering permits
Procedure	Police report → misdemeanour proceedings	Inspector report → administrative proceedings
Practical implication	Catches only under-16 sales as a public-order offence	Extends protection to 16 – 17-year-olds; a sale to any under-18 is punishable

Because Serbia's two age-limit laws operate on different thresholds, they create gaps and confusion that weaken protection for all minors:

- The Public peace and order law stops at under-16, creating a "legal blind spot" for 16 – 17-year-olds unless the Consumer protection law is enforced – which it often isn't as rigorously.
- Two separate agencies – police for under-16 misdemeanors, inspectors for under-18 administrative cases – need to coordinate, but in practice operate in silos. Lack of a unified monitoring system means no one tracks how many under-18 violations occur, and inspectors rarely pursue administrative sanctions when police handle an incident as a public-order offence.
- Mixed messages about which law applies can lead staff to "play it safe" by ignoring both or guessing about the age cutoff, undermining consistent 18+ compliance.
- Administrative fines (~50 000 RSD) under the Consumer protection law may be viewed as a cost of doing business, especially when repeat offenders face only temporary permit suspension. Misdemeanor fines under Public peace & order law can reach 500 000 RSD but apply only to under-16 sales – failing to deter 16–17-year-old transactions.
- No central database records under-18 violation counts or fine revenue, so policymakers lack reliable indicators of enforcement strength.[2] Without data, it's impossible to evaluate whether either law is reducing youth access or to target resources where lapses are most common.

[2] Serbia does not track fines for under-18 alcohol sales separately – instead aggregating them with tobacco and pyrotechnics violations – and CZOR's latest research (2025) shows just 416 such administrative orders were issued between 2020 and 2024. Therefore, it is unclear how many fines were issued in the past 5 years for alcohol sales to minors.

Due to a vast legal framework, there are several enforcement bodies that have the mandate to enforce and monitor implementation of policies that protect minors from alcohol sales.

Communal (municipal) police

- Patrol public order; issue misdemeanour citations under the Public peace & order law for under-16 sales.

Market (trade) inspectors

- Conduct unannounced visits to shops; open administrative cases under the Consumer protection law for under-18 sales.

Tourism inspectors

- Target on-premise venues (bars, clubs, and cafés); enforce the Consumer protection law within hospitality.

1.2 EU Overview

The EU does not impose a single binding minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) via directive. Instead, alcohol policy is primarily set at the national level, guided by:

- **EC's EU Alcohol Strategy (2006 – 2012)**, which **encouraged Member States to curb underage drinking, but did not recommend a harmonized minimum legal drinking age across the EU.**
- The **EU Action Plan on Youth and Heavy Episodic Drinking (2014 – 2020)** whose objectives continue to inform current alcohol-related policies and initiatives across Member States.
- **CRC General Comment No. 20 (2016)** by the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends a **minimum age of 18 years** for both purchase and consumption of alcohol.
- **Council Recommendation 2001/458/EC** on the drinking of alcohol by youth stipulates that **children must not be targeted by alcohol manufacturers** and urges **strengthened regulatory control** of alcohol retailing.

There are several national variations for MLDA among EU Member States, but **18 years** is the most common threshold.

- **Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Sweden** set the limit depending on alcohol content; lower age (often 16) for beer/wine; higher age (usually 18 or 20) for spirits/high-alcohol drinks.
- In **Luxembourg** minimum age is 16, and in **Malta** it's 17 – for purchasing any type of alcoholic beverage.
- Most EU countries set **uniform MLDA of 18** for all types of alcohol. (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Spain, etc.)
- **Some Member States** (e.g., Sweden, Finland) have a **state-owned alcohol sales monopoly for off-premise sales** and enforces **20+ age limit.**

Enforcement mechanisms across EU also vary:

- **Fines:** Ranging roughly from €250 to €1 000 per violation, depending on the country and the severity of the breach.
- **License sanctions:** Repeat violations can lead to suspension or revocation of the seller's alcohol-sale permit.
- **Public-awareness campaigns:** Many countries pair enforcement with education drives in schools and communities.

However, the World Health Organisation has done significant work on protecting minors and reducing alcohol-related harm through concrete policies:

- **European framework for action on alcohol 2022 – 2025** specifically sets several priority actions for protection of minors (e.g. minimum age for purchase, alcohol sales bans at youth events, and control of remote delivery channels)
- **Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022 – 2030** (which, among other objectives, mentions pricing policies to reduce affordability, restrictions on youth-targeted marketing, and regulation of alcohol availability in retail settings)

1.3 Key similarities and differences

- **Shared objective:** Both Serbia and EU member states aim to **protect minors** from early alcohol exposure, recognizing its public-health harms.
- **ID verification:** Serbia mandates ID checks for any customer who appears under 18; across the EU, many nations require ID verification for anyone who looks under the national MLDA, but there is no single EU-wide age threshold.
- **Age thresholds:** Although the legal framework in Serbia defines two age thresholds (16 and 18 years), these do not refer to permitted or prohibited age limits for alcohol sales, but rather to two levels of misdemeanours. Alcohol consumption between the ages of 16 and 18 is not permitted; the legal distinction instead concerns the type of prohibition and the severity of sanctions.
- **Enforcement fragmentation:** Serbia splits misdemeanour (police) and administrative (inspectorates) roles; many EU systems centralize enforcement under licensing authorities.

1.4 Implications for Mystery shopping

In Serbia, unlike some EU countries, mystery shopping isn't used as a methodology for compliance checks on unlawful alcohol sales. However, the current multi-layered framework ensures youth are both protected by age-based sale bans and empowered through active consultation mechanisms. Mystery shopping compliance checks could then sit at the intersection of these laws, generating the evidence needed to activate enforcement and policy gaps identified above.

2. Epidemiology

2.1 Youth alcohol consumption in Serbia

Understanding the scale and patterns of under-18 drinking is essential for designing an effective mystery-shopper programme. Serbia's most recent epidemiological data[3] indicate:

Indicator	Serbia	EU Comparison	Age Group
Ever Tried Alcohol	81%	75% ESPAD average	**15–16 years**
Past-Month Drinking	57%	43.8% ESPAD average	**15–16 years**
Binge Drinking (5+ drinks/session)	37%	31.1% ESPAD average	**15–16 years**
First Drink at ≤ 13	48.7%	~33% ESPAD average	**15–16 years**
Current Drinkers	~60%	~57% EU average	**15–29 years**
Ever Drinkers	~73%	~73% EU average	**15–29 years**
Weekly+ Drinking	33% men / 12% women	30% men / 14% women	**15–29 years**
Weekend Consumption	Men 84g / Women 57g pure alcohol	Varies by country	**15–29 years**
Workday Consumption	Men 38g / Women 33g pure alcohol	Varies by country	**15–29 years**

[3] European Union Drugs Agency. (2024). *ESPAD 2024 key findings*.
European Social Survey (ESS ERIC). (2024a). *European Social Survey: Round 11 (2023/2024) data and documentation*. European Research Infrastructure Consortium.

Overall, young people in Serbia drink as frequently as, but in larger amounts than, their peers elsewhere in Europe – and they start earlier. Binge-drinking is more common, and alcohol is very easy for minors to obtain. This underscores the need for stronger age-checks, tighter pricing/tax measures, and enhanced school- and community-based prevention.

2.2 Trends and health implications

Recent data point to a worrying acceleration in early drinking among Serbian minors. Between 2022 and 2024, the proportion of 10 – 17-year-olds who have ever consumed alcohol rose from 48.7 % to 77.8 %, a 29.1 percentage-point jump in just two years. This mirrors broader ESPAD findings showing that nearly half of Serbian 15 – 16-year-olds have their first drink by age 13 and that binge-drinking (five or more drinks in one session) affects 37% of these teens compared to 31% across Europe.[4]

Early initiation and heavy episodic drinking carry profound long-term risks. Young people who start drinking before age 15 face significantly higher odds of developing chronic alcohol dependence, liver disease, and a host of mental-health disorders in adulthood. Acute harms also spike: in February 2024, media-reported poisonings of 33 minors following binge episodes highlighted the dangers of unsupervised access to high-strength beverages. Moreover, alcohol use is a leading cause of over 200 diseases and injuries, and contributes to 10% of non-communicable diseases – underscoring its role in long-term cardiovascular, neurological, and psychiatric morbidity among youth.[5]

These converging trends – earlier initiation, rising binge-drinking rates, and escalating acute and chronic harms – underscore the critical need for robust age-verification enforcement, comprehensive prevention education, and targeted public-health interventions to stem the tide of youth alcohol-related injury and disease.

[4] Ibid.
[5] Centar za omladinski rad. (2025). *Šteta izazvana alkoholom, njen uticaj na državni budžet i ekonomske koristi preventivnih mera: Studija* [Alcohol-related harm, its impact on the national budget, and the economic benefits of preventive measures: A study]. Novi Sad: Centar za omladinski rad.

PART II: MYSTERY SHOPPING METHODOLOGY

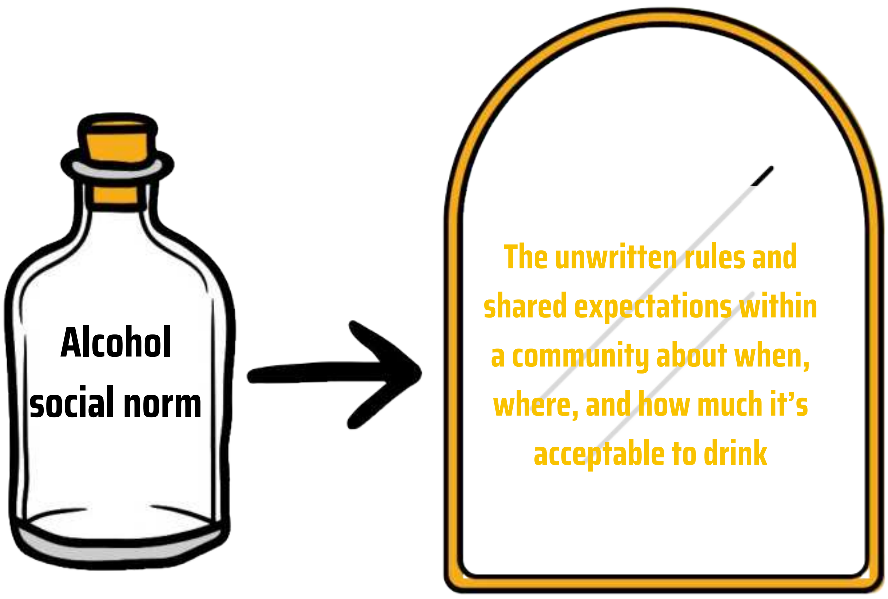
3. Mystery shopping as a protection mechanism
4. Mystery shopper programme
5. Examples of exercises/sessions for youth capacity building

3. Mystery shopping as a protection mechanism

3.1 Definition and applications

Mystery shopping is a covert market-research technique in which trained evaluators – known as "shoppers" or "decoys" – pose as ordinary customers to assess the quality, compliance, and customer-service standards of businesses. Originating in the retail and hospitality sectors, it has since expanded to industries as diverse as banking, telecommunications, and public services. Shoppers follow standardized scripts or checklists to ensure consistency, recording observations on everything from staff friendliness and product display to adherence to legal requirements – such as age-verification for alcohol or tobacco sales.

Monitoring adherence to under-age sales laws (alcohol, tobacco), health-and-safety protocols, and consumer-protection regulations is one of the key applications of mystery-shopper methodology, providing the objective, evidence-based insights needed to pinpoint non-compliant outlets, bolster enforcement actions, and ultimately deter unlawful sales—thereby safeguarding minors and promoting healthier communities. Furthermore, mystery shopping also helps shift perceptions – making responsible, law-abiding service the new standard and reducing the idea that underage or heavy drinking is the expected social norm in society (''alcohol social norms'').



3.2 Comparative overview in EU

Below is a consolidated comparative overview of EU mystery shopping programmes for under-18 alcohol-sales compliance.[6]

Country	MLDA	Mechanism & recognition	Lead Body / Policy Source	Key outcomes
Slovenia	18	Mystery shopping is used by CSOs (e.g. No Excuse) but not institutionalized as part of enforcement.	Market inspectorate & Health inspectorate in cooperation with CSOs	Raised media and legislative attention; post-intervention ID checks became more frequent
Germany	Beer/wine 16 Spirits 18 Minors over 14 allowed to drink alcohol if parents are present	Mystery shopping is institutionalized at local level	Municipal inspection offices, with oversight from the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) & local police.	High non-compliance revealed; more retailer training; debate around raising MLDA
Sweden	18 in on-premise venues, 20 in Systembolaget	Mystery shopping is occasionally used, mostly by private firms; not part of formal enforcement.	Alcohol licensing authorities, Systembolaget.	Limited public data; helps assess retailer behaviour; youth hospitalizations remain high

[6] Please check the *References* for specific sources of information, for each country.

Finland	18 for beverages containing up to 22% alcohol (beer, cider, wine) 20 for beverages with more than 22% alcohol (spirits, when purchased from Alko Oy) 18 for ordering any alcoholic drink in bars, restaurants, regardless of strength	Mystery shopping is institutionalized, used by Alko Oy and health agencies.	Alko Oy & Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) research teams.	Illegal sales declined; methodology integrated into training and public campaigns
Netherlands	18	Mystery shopping is institutionalized and conducted via local authorities; minors involved in local audits	Municipalities and Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA).	Documented drop in successful underage purchases; retailers proactively improved compliance
Lithuania	20	Used in research-driven inspection campaigns	Ministry of Health, local inspectorates	Low ID-check rate revealed; campaigns launched to improve enforcement
Estonia	18	Sporadic use in public-health studies and local oversight	National Health Agency, local municipalities	Included in JAPreventNCD project; used to map alcohol availability

Spain	18	Pilot use in local-level interventions	Regional authorities, CSOs	Increased age-verification after campaigns; improved regulatory awareness among vendors

These models demonstrate that embedding mystery shopper programmes within official compliance strategies not only benchmarks retailer behaviour but also accelerates policy enforcement and public-health impact.

4. Mystery shopper programme

Effective mystery shopper programmes begin with rigorous planning. This chapter guides you through setting clear objectives, crafting a representative sampling strategy, and developing a realistic budget.

There are several stages in planning and implementation of a mystery shopper programme:

Phase 1:
Planning and design

Phase 2:
Recruitment and training

Phase 3:
Scenario development

Phase 4:
Field execution

Phase 5:
Analysis and advocacy

4.1 Phase 1: Planning and design

Phase 1 is about laying a solid foundation: deciding **what** you want to achieve, **how** you'll measure success, **where** you'll conduct visits, and **when** and **with what resources**. Rather than diving straight into fieldwork, spend this phase building consensus, clarifying goals, and creating practical tools that guide every later step.

4.1.1 Objectives & indicators

Before you send anyone into a shop, ask: **What does success look like?** Here, success is not a vague "improved compliance" but concrete, measurable change. You might want to track:

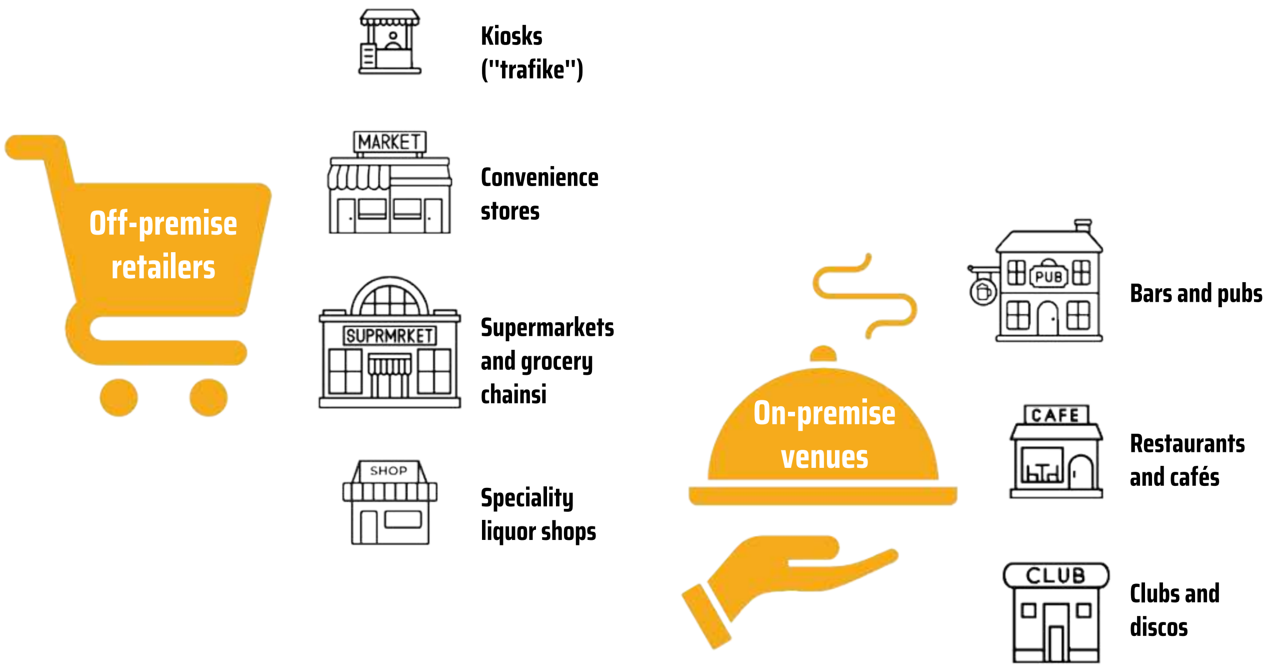
- **Primary goal**: Ensure staff consistently check ages.
- **Primary metric (ID-check rate)**: Of all visits where our decoys attempt a purchase, what percentage did staff ask for IDs.
- **Refusal accuracy**: When a shopper shows under-18 ID, how often does staff refuse the sale?
- **False acceptance**: How many times does a decoy with clear under-18 ID still get served?
- **Any specifics about your programme**: gender-segregation, off- or on-premise purchases, etc.

4.1.2 Sampling strategy

Besides defining indicators, at the beginning stages of programme design, it's necessary to have a clear overview of where, when and why in those places we conduct mystery shopping's. In order to do so, first we need to understand the alcohol outlets/selling points in Serbia, and then define our sampling strategy.

4.1.2.1 Market overview

Understanding outlet diversity ensures your sampling captures the full range of sale environments, but also helps pinpoint the unique risk factors at play in every sales environment.



<u>Off-Premise Retailers</u>

- Kiosks (“trafike”) and convenience stores tend to be ubiquitous – even small villages have several – and often employ short-term or untrained staff, which can lead to lower ID-check rates.
- Supermarkets and grocery chains operate under corporate compliance policies (e.g., centrally distributed age-verification training), so they usually perform better – but local managers’ and staff commitment can vary.
- Specialty liquor shops (‘’diskont’’) typically have more knowledgeable staff, although some smaller family-run outlets may still lapse in busy periods.

On-Premise Venues

- Bars and pubs see their highest risk late at night – staff focused on quick table turnovers may skip ID checks under pressure.
- Clubs and discos often prioritize cover-charge processing and crowd control, so age verification can become sporadic.
- Restaurants and cafés present mixed profiles: fine-dining venues usually maintain strict compliance, while casual cafés treating alcohol as a side offer can be more relaxed about checking IDs.

Key risk factors include:

Late-night hours (after 22:00)

- Outlets open into the early morning often exhibit measurably lower ID-check rates, as staff juggle crowd management and rapid service.

Staff turnover

- High turnover – especially in kiosks and small shops – correlates strongly with non-compliance, since new hires may never receive formal age-verification training.

Promotional events

- Happy-hour discounts, themed parties, or “two-for-one” deals can distract staff from legal requirements, creating windows of opportunity for under-age sales.

4.1.2.2 Simplified sampling tips

List outlets

Map every outlet that sells alcohol	If you can't visit them all, pick a core set of 10 - 20 locations that represent each category.

Mix it up

Ensure you include off-premise and on-premise	A simple rule: aim for half your visits in shops and half in bars/cafés.

Cover different times

After school/early Evening (15:00 - 18:00): when teenagers finish classes.	**Dinner/evening Rush (18:00 - 22:00): when shops and restaurants are busy.**	**Late-night slots (22:00 - 02:00): especially for clubs and late-hour bars, where compliance often dips.**

Repeat in rounds

After school/early Evening (15:00 - 18:00): when teenagers finish classes.	This lets you see if any trainings or inspections in between have improved ID-check rates.

Spot-check high-risk venues

If you hear of problem locations - those known for lax enforcement or big drink promotions - visit them more often (e.g., three to four times instead of one or two).

4.1.3 Budget & timeline

Effective budgeting and scheduling are the backbone of a successful mystery shopper programme, ensuring you allocate resources wisely, anticipate challenges, and keep key milestones on track without sacrificing data quality or participant safety. Here are some guiding principles on how to prepare effectively:

- **Align costs with priorities:** Identify your non-negotiables, your expenses and allocate more of your budget to areas that most directly affect data quality and participant well-being.
- **Leverage in-kind support:** See if partner organizations can donate meeting space for training, lend devices for data collection, or cover travel costs. Even small contributions can free up funds for critical line items.
- **Build in contingencies:** Be prepared for unexpected expenses – extra travel, a need to do additional capacity building, etc. Factor a small buffer (e.g., 5 – 10 % of your estimated budget) to handle surprises without derailing the project.
- **Phase your spending:** Spread major expenditures across stages: preliminary planning, recruitment & training, field visits, and analysis/reporting. This approach helps you monitor spending in real time and adjust if one phase costs more or less than anticipated.
- **Schedule with flexibility:** Draft a high-level timeline that maps out key milestones – securing agreements with partners, training sessions, visit windows, and reporting deadlines – but leave room to shift activities if, for example, a training date must move or data uploads run late.
- **Regular checkpoints:** Set brief monthly or mid-phase reviews with your core team to compare planned vs. actual spending and timing. Early detection of overruns or delays lets you reallocate resources or recalibrate deadlines before small issues become big problems.

4.2 Phase 2: Recruitment & Training of Shoppers

4.2.1 Youth participation

Phase 2 builds on your foundational design by bringing young people into the fold as active partners – recruiting and equipping youth decoys with the skills, support, and empowerment they need to drive the mystery shopper programme. Their involvement strengthens authenticity, builds civic skills, and drives more sustainable public-health outcomes.

Participation of young people in the design, monitoring, and advocacy of under-18 alcohol-sales policies is enshrined in Serbia's and Europe's legal frameworks. At the national level, the Law on Youth and Youth Strategy 2023–2030 (with Action Plan 2023–2025) establish formal consultation mechanisms, financial support for youth-led projects, and guaranteed involvement in decision-making, to ensure that policies address real youth needs and harness their unique insights. Serbia's accession of the Aarhus Convention further underscores the right to participate in environmental and public-health decision processes. These national provisions are mirrored at the EU level by the EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027), whose "Youth Participation" priority calls for meaningful involvement of young people in democratic life, and by the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021–2024), which, echoing Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, mandates that children and adolescents be heard in all matters affecting their health and safety. By embedding youth at every stage – from mystery-shop programme design and training to data collection and advocacy – we not only comply with these obligations but also create more relevant, credible, and effective policies grounded in the lived experiences of young people.

Involving youth in monitoring and advocacy gives them ownership over the rules designed to protect them, which enhances compliance and public support. Public policy interventions become grounded in their everyday experiences, making regulations more practical, credible, and ultimately more effective at addressing the real-world challenges youth face.

To ensure that young people are not merely participants but active drivers of the Mystery shopper programme, a range of engagement strategies can be deployed at different stages – from recruitment and training to decision-making and advocacy. The table below outlines five key approaches and their associated actions to foster meaningful youth involvement:

Strategy	Key activities
Inclusive recruitment	Partner with schools, youth clubs, and youth centres to recruit a diverse pool of volunteers. Use clear, youth-friendly messaging emphasizing the programme's public-health mission and skill-building opportunities.
Comprehensive training & mentorship	Run interactive workshops on legal context, scenario scripts, safety protocols, and digital data tools. Pair each decoy with a trained youth worker or CSO mentor for real-time support and debrief.
Shared decision-making	Solicit youth input on scenario design, visit schedules, and questionnaire content to ensure relevance. This is also an opportunity to revisit Phase 1 and make sure that your planning is in line with young people's lived experience.
Recognition & feedback loops	Provide certificates, recommendation letters, or stipends to acknowledge contributions. Hold regular debrief sessions where decoys share experiences, suggest improvements, and learn how their data was used.
Advocacy engagement	Train youth in public speaking and media relations to present findings at meetings, assemblies, or press events. Support youth-led mini-campaigns (social media, posters) reminding peers and retailers of age-verification rules.

By embedding youth participation throughout planning, execution, and advocacy, the mystery shopper programme becomes more than a compliance audit – it transforms into a youth empowerment initiative that:

- Strengthens community ownership of public-health goals.
- Cultivates a generation of informed, engaged citizens.
- Sustains momentum for under-18 alcohol-sales enforcement and related policy reforms.

Ultimately, when young people see their voices shaping both the process and the outcomes, they become powerful ambassadors for challenging and changing the alcohol social norm – now and in the future.

4.2.2 Youth roles in mystery shopper

Young people can take up different, complementary roles in planning and implementation of mystery shopper.

Decoys/Shoppers (Field operatives)

Minors or over-18 volunteers who convincingly appear underage.

They follow scripted scenarios to test whether staff request ID and refuse under-18 sales, to record outlet details, staff interactions, and scenario outcomes immediately after each visit

Peer mentors & In-field support

Over-18 youth accompany minor decoys on visits, help manage safety check-ins, and provide real-time coaching.

Reduces risk for minors, reinforces correct scenario delivery, and ensures swift response if a visit must be aborted.

Programme planners & Coordinators

Help draft scripts, select high-risk outlets, and shape questionnaires.

Integrates authentic youth perspectives into methodology, increasing relevance and buy-in among potential decoys.

Data reviewers & Advocates

Help code qualitative notes, spot emerging themes, and craft youth-friendly advocacy materials (social-media posts, infographics).

Empowers participants to translate findings into peer-oriented outreach, amplifying the programme's public-health impact.

4.2.3 Capacity building of youth

To perform these roles effectively – and to gain lasting skills – youth should have and/or develop the following core competencies through structured training:

Competence Area	Training Focus	Outcome
Legal & ethical literacy	Overview of under-age sales laws, participant rights, and ethical dilemmas	Understand boundaries and conduct obligations
Consumer protection literacy	Key principles of consumer rights law, role of inspectors, and how compliance checks support broader consumer safeguards	Contextualizes myster shopper findings withing Serbia's consumer-protection framework
Scenario delivery	Role-play of standard and high-risk scripts with feedback	Consistent, believable shopper performance
Observation & reporting	Note-taking techniques, use of digital forms, photo-evidence protocols	Accurate, complete data capture
Safety & risk management	Check-in/check-out procedures, de-escalation tactics, abort criteria	Confidence to navigate unexpected situations
Peer leadership & mentorship	Communication skills for coaching decoys and facilitating debriefs	Strong support network and quality control
Data analysis basics	Thematic coding of notes, basic indicators and targets calculations	Ability to spot trends and contribute to reporting

Advocacy & communication	Crafting clear messages, public-speaking practice, social-media engagement	Empowered to present findings and influence peers
Alcohol social norms	How marketing, peer pressure, and culture shape drinking attitudes; decoding promotional cues	Deeper insight into contextual factors affecting staff behaviour and ability to spot norm-driven non-compliance
Critical thinking & ethics	Exercises in questioning assumptions, recognizing cognitive biases, and reframing observations to see patterns in retailer behaviour	Youth develop a more analytical mindset, able to interpret interactions beyond face value and suggest improvements
Public health literacy	Short- and long-term harms of underage and excessive drinking, role of enfocement in prevention	Strong motivation and contextual understanding to drive compliance checks and compelling advocacy

Tip: Use non-formal education methods and tools to ensure quality, experiential learning of young people. By the end of Phase 2, youth participants should not only be able execute mystery shopper visits but also feel ownership over the programme's design, quality, and advocacy efforts.

4.2.4 Safety protocols

Ensuring the physical and psychological safety of minors and other young people involved in the programme is paramount. This chapter outlines the measures you must put in place before, during, and after field visits to keep youth safe and supported at all times.

Field visits	Never send a young person into an outlet alone. Pair each decoy with a trained youth worker, CSO field-officer or youth leader who: - **Provides real-time support:** Monitors unfolding situations and steps in if tensions rise. **- Manages logistics:** Ensures the decoy arrives and leaves safely, especially in late-night or remote settings. **- Manages check-ins:** Stays in regular contact - decoys "ping" before entry and immediately after exit to confirm their status.
Check-in/Check-out and abort protocol	**Check-in/Check-out:** Decoys must message their supervisor via a secure channel just before entering and right after leaving each outlet. Any missed or delayed check-in triggers an immediate welfare check.
	Abort mission criteria: Clear, pre-agreed signs - aggressive staff, unusually crowded premises, or suspicion of undercover activity - allow decoys to safely terminate the visit and retreat to a designated safe spot.
Emergency procedures and support	**24/7 Hotline:** Provide every young person with a phone number they can call at any time for crisis assistance or technical support.
	Safe retreat plans: Identify nearby public spaces (cafés, police stations) where decoys can regroup if they feel unsafe.
	First aid: Ensure at least one adult supervisor per shift holds basic first-aid training.
Travel safety	**Supervised transport:** For remote or late-night visits, arrange for adult-supervised carpool, taxi or gas vouchers, or dedicated transport rather than unsupervised public transit.
	Buddy system: When possible, decoys travel in pairs - especially during evening slots - to deter harassment and provide mutual support.

4.2.5 Data-Privacy and Confidentiality

Protecting the personal information of our youth decoys is just as important as ensuring their physical safety in the field. From the moment consent forms are signed, we apply a “privacy by design” approach: each participant is assigned a randomly generated code rather than their real name, and only the minimal data needed for analysis – visit timestamps, outlet IDs, scenario codes, and compliance outcomes – is recorded. All submissions can be accessed only by the core data team; supervisors and mentors see only anonymized, aggregate reports.

Behind the scenes, raw data – including signed consent forms – reside in an encrypted database with strict role-based permissions.

Throughout recruitment and training, these measures need to be explained clearly to both decoys and their guardians. Young people must be aware of their right to review or withdraw personal data at any time, and every team member signs a confidentiality agreement before accessing the system. In this way, we uphold the highest standards of data privacy – meeting Serbian legal requirements and reflecting broader European best practices – while maintaining the trust and safety of our young participants.

4.2.6 Ethical and legal considerations

Deploying minors as shoppers raises important questions about ethics and exposing and encouraging young people to potential harmful behaviour and substances. An ethical argument could be made for the fact that some young people involved in this programme would never be exposed to alcohol, if not participating in mystery shopper initiative.

Therefore, in order to minimize harm and protect young people, several checks must be put into place before recruitment and implementation:

- **Field research must not expose participants** – especially minors – **to greater risk than everyday life.** The protocols must ensure decoys encounter only ordinary customer interactions.
- **Informed consent** – Beyond parental permission, explain the process transparently to each youth participant: the scenarios they will enact, the questions they'll field, and their right to withdraw at any moment. Build capacities of young people in order to understand alcohol harm but also regulations, their implementation and limitations and importance of their participation in public policy design and monitoring.
- **Beneficence and respect** – Decoys should never be pressured to push boundaries (e.g., provocative scripts). Debrief sessions after visits allow young people to reflect, share concerns, and receive emotional support.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity** – Maintain decoy anonymity in all reports. Staff names, outlet locations, and personal identifiers must be coded, and raw data stored securely under strict access controls.

Before enlisting minors as mystery shopping decoys, it is essential to ensure that your programme is fully grounded in Serbian law and aligned with broader child-protection standards. There is no legal prohibition against involving young people in compliance monitoring – in fact, the opposite is true. Under the Law on Youth, the Republic of Serbia explicitly promotes **"active youth participation"** in public-policy processes that affect them. This national commitment is further reinforced by the Youth Strategy 2023–2030 and its Action Plan 2023–2025.

When it comes to alcohol-sales compliance, both the Law on Public peace and order and the Law on Consumer protection target sellers – not buyers – and impose penalties only on outlets or their staff. There is no clause that criminalizes minors for attempting to purchase alcohol, so decoys face no legal jeopardy. A written parental or guardian consent form is sufficient to authorize a minor's participation in this supervised fieldwork.

To uphold child-protection best practices, your programme should conduct basic background checks on all adult supervisors, secure written consent and youth assent, and ensure no decoy actually consumes alcohol or crosses any ethical or legal boundaries. Decoys present genuine ID when asked, never consume or retain alcohol beyond completing the purchase, and follow a clear “abort mission” protocol if a situation becomes unsafe.

The sale of alcohol to minors under the current legal framework of the Republic of Serbia is classified as a **misdemeanour** rather than a criminal offence. Accordingly, organisations conducting compliance monitoring cannot incur criminal liability for failure to report a criminal offence, as the conduct in question does not constitute a criminal offence within the meaning of the Criminal Code.

At the same time, **the absence of criminal liability does not imply the absence of professional and ethical responsibility**. The decision on whether and how information regarding identified irregularities will be communicated to the competent authorities should form part of a predefined internal protocol. Such a protocol should take into account the objectives of the initiative (e.g. systemic advocacy and improvement of practice), the protection of minor participants, the principle of proportionality, and the public interest. In this way, the organisation ensures legal certainty in its work while preserving integrity, transparency, and accountability in handling the collected data.

Although the law does not require it, **informing or partnering with municipal police and market or tourism inspectors** can lend official legitimacy to your activities and provide an additional safety net. **By weaving these legal safeguards and transparent consent procedures into your mystery shopper programme, you demonstrate both respect for the rule of law and a firm commitment to the rights and well-being of the young people who make your compliance checks possible.**

4.3. Phase 3: Scenario development

Phase 3 transforms your plan into concrete, field-ready tools. By carefully crafting a set of diverse visit scenarios and pairing them with a streamlined questionnaire, you ensure that every mystery shopper interaction yields reliable, comparable data.

4.3.1 Why Multiple Scenarios Matter

Retail environments vary dramatically. A quiet weekday early evening is very different from a weekend happy-hour crowd or a promotion-driven sale. To capture how these real-world conditions affect age-verification, if possible, your programme should rotate through at least five scenario types:

1. **Standard visit**: Conducted mid-week between 17:00 and 19:00, this baseline scenario measures compliance under “normal” conditions. The decoy enters alone, asks for or gets a single standard beverage, and notes whether staff request valid ID before completing the sale.
2. **High-risk visit**: Scheduled during peak hours (22:00 – 00:00) or when staff face distractions – such as long queues or simultaneous orders – this scenario pushes the limits of vigilance. Variations include ordering multiple items, arriving with a friend who loiters nearby, or glancing frequently at a watch to imply impatience.
3. **Promotional visit**: By commenting on visible discounts, the decoy tests whether promotional signage or special offers divert staff attention away from mandatory ID checks.
4. **Visual ambiguity visit:** The decoy appears very young (but should actually be over 18) and presents a valid ID only when asked. This tests whether staff proactively request ID based on appearance alone, without verbal cues.
5. **Verbal age-declaration visit:** The decoy verbally states “I’m 18” without offering identification. This scenario assesses whether staff rely solely on verbal declarations or properly insist on valid proof of age before completing the sale.

Assign each outlet a mix of at least two scenario types over time – so staff cannot predict when they’ll be tested under high stakes. Random scheduling further reduces the chance that outlets spot a pattern.

4.3.2 Building the questionnaire

A concise, intuitive form is essential for capturing the right data quickly and accurately. The questionnaire is to be used by shoppers/decoys when performing mystery shopping's. Whether digital or paper, your questionnaire should include:

Category	Field Name	Options / Format	Notes
Mandatory	Outlet address & type	Free text / Dropdown: On-premise / Off-premise	You can also award a unique outlet code to each outlet
	Date & time	Auto-timestamp (digital) or manual entry (paper)	Record immediately after visit
	Scenario code	Dropdown: STN / HR / PR / VA / VD	Standard, High-risk, Promotional, Visual amiguity, Verbal age-declaration
	Checkout type	Dropdown: Self-service / Staff-operated	Indicates if payment requires staff interaction
	POS approval required	Yes / No	In case of self-service, does software block sale until a staff override?
	Beverage type	Dropdown: Beer / Wine / Cider / Spirits / Ready-to-Drink / Other	Can help inform targeted retailer guidance and advocacy efforts (e.g. removing ultra-low-price, high-ABV promotions)
	Volume (ml)	Numeric	
	Alcohol strength (%)	Numeric	
	Price paid (RSD)	Numeric	

	ID Requested	Yes / No	
	ID Type (if Yes)	ID card / Passport / Other	
	Sale Completed	Yes / No	
	Refusal Reason (if No)	Underage / Other	Specify other if selected
Optional	Staff Gender	M / F / Other	The response is based on the mystery shopper's perception, not on staff self-identification. The aim is to capture perceived gender during the interaction for methodological consistency, not to record personal data.
	Mystery shopper gender	M / F / Other	This data may support analysis of how perceived gender norms influence alcohol sales practices — particularly in relation to ID verification, product recommendations, and staff interactions with underage or borderline-age customers.
	Staff Age Group	Approximate (e.g., <25, 25–35, 36+)	The response is based on the mystery shopper's perception, not on staff self-identification.

	Queue Length	None / Short (1–2) / Medium (3–5) / Long (6+)	The decoy should record the number of individuals ahead at the time of entry or staff interaction. In self-service settings, the number may reflect customers lingering near the register or POS terminal.
	Notes	Free text	Capture any notable behavior or context

To input data / fill in the questionnaire, use a mobile form tool (such as Google form or another tool that permits offline entry) that enforces required fields. Always carry a paper backup in case of technical failures – ensuring data continuity.

By thoughtfully developing scenarios that reflect real-life pressures and equipping shoppers with a simple, user-friendly questionnaire, mystery shopper visit becomes a high-value data. This phase ensures you uncover not just whether rules are followed, but why and under what conditions they fail.

4.4 Phase 4: Field execution

Phase 4 brings your planning to life, as decoys carry out mystery shopper visits according to the defined scenarios and sample. This phase tests not only retailer compliance but also the robustness of your training, tools, and quality-control procedures. Success here depends on smooth on-the-ground coordination, disciplined adherence to protocols, and rapid, accurate data capture.

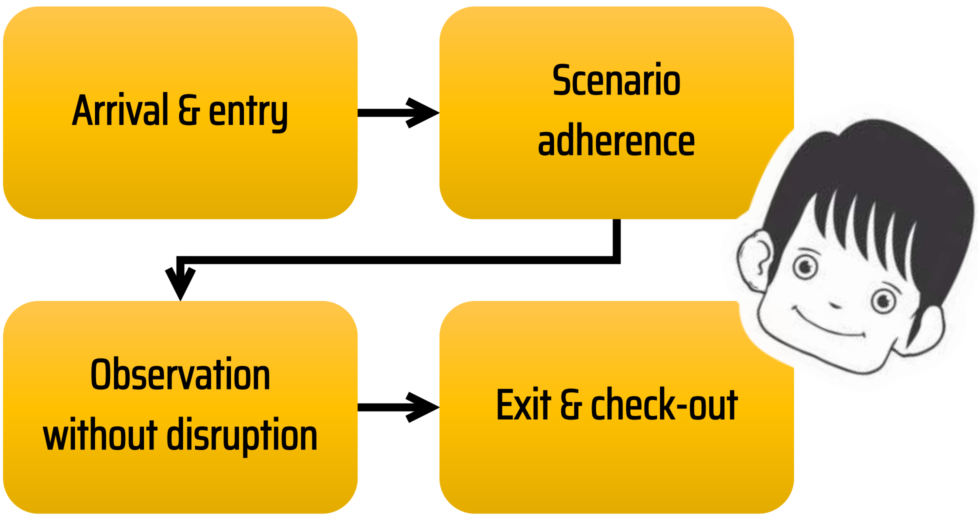
4.4.1 Pre-visit preparation

Before each shift, supervisors/youth workers confirm assignments and ensure every shopper is ready:

- Daily briefing: Using a secure group chat or messaging app, supervisors share each decoy's outlet list, scenario type, and time window. This briefing also reconfirms outlet addresses and any last-minute adjustments (e.g., a venue closure).
- Equipment check: Shoppers verify that their smartphone or tablet is fully charged, the data-collection app is logged in, and paper backup forms are within easy reach. They double-check that they have the ID and a discreet way to carry note-taking materials.
- Personal presentation: To blend in naturally, decoys dress in everyday youth attire – avoiding conspicuous logos or uniforms. This casual appearance helps prevent undue attention that might skew staff behaviour.

4.4.2 Conducting the visit

Each visit follows a clear sequence to maximize consistency and safety:



1. **Arrival & entry:** Decoys approach the outlet alone, enter unobtrusively, wait for staff attention, and deliver the scripted request in a neutral tone; or in cases of self-service outlets, they simply grab the beverage according to the scenario.
2. **Scenario adherence:** Whether it's a Standard, High-risk, Promotional, or Refusal visit, the shopper precisely follows the role-play script. If asked for age or ID, they respond according to the scenario – truthfully presenting a genuine document.
3. **Observation without disruption:** Shoppers silently note staff behaviour – eye contact, verbal prompts, hesitation – and try to remember key details, for later data input.
4. **Exit & check-out:** Upon completing the interaction – whether served or refused – the decoy exits calmly and returns to a safe spot before opening the app. A brief "check-out" message is sent to the supervisor (e.g., "Visit complete: Outlet ABC, STN scenario").

4.4.3 Immediate data entry

Accurate recall depends on swift recording:

- **Timely Submission:** Shoppers enter all mandatory and optional fields within five minutes of leaving the outlet.
- **Form completion:** The digital form captures outlet address/ID, date/time, scenario code, beverage details, ID-check outcome, and any photos of signage or shelf displays.
- **Paper Backup:** In the event of device failure, shoppers use paper forms to record essentials and transfer the data to the digital system as soon as technical issues are resolved.

4.4.4 Handling unexpected situations

Safety and data integrity come first when working with young people. Besides having a youth worker/supervisor and/or team of youth volunteers (another shopper, mentor, etc.) present at the location (either inside or outside the outlet), it's important to be prepared for unexpected situations. Here are some possible situations and ideas on how to resolve them.

Confrontations and suspicion

- If staff question the shopper's actions beyond routine ID checks, the decoy calmly replies, "I'm just a customer.", and either completes or aborts the visit. Any escalation triggers an immediate exit and supervisor notification.

Technical interruptions

- A dead battery or app crash prompts an instant switch to paper forms, and - if feasible - a mobile hotspot or alternate device is used to re-establish connectivity.

Safety abort

- Overcrowding, aggressive patrons, or other hazards warrant an immediate abort. Shoppers note "Visit aborted for safety" in the comments and the supervisor reassigns the outlet.

Refusal

- Proper refusals are met with a polite "Thank you" before exit, without entering in a conflict with the staff. If a minor's ID is incorrectly accepted, the decoy completes the transaction, logs "Sale completed despite invalid ID" and departs.

In some cases, depending on the strategy of the organisation, you might want to educate staff, outlet managers or other customers about regulations and legal compliance. In such cases, prepare different promotional materials that you can distribute after the purchase. Be mindful that in some cases, outlet staff and managers might become defensive if faced with possible fines for illegal alcohol sale, and follow appropriate safety protocols.

It’s also good practice to equip every decoy with a formally signed and stamped authorisation certificate from the organising CSO, clearly stating their role in the mystery shopper programme and the purpose of their visits – both to reassure outlet staff and to present to any authority that may question their activities.

4.5 Phase 5: Analysis and advocacy

Phase 5 transforms the raw reports from your field visits into the insights and stories that will drive enforcement action, policy change, and public awareness. It is divided into two interlinked streams – first, rigorous data management and analysis to identify patterns and performance gaps; second, strategic reporting and advocacy to translate those findings into tangible impact.

4.5.1 From reports to reliable data

Before any analysis can begin, it is essential to consolidate all visit reports into a single, structured repository. Whether you use a secure spreadsheet or a cloud database, your data schema should mirror the questionnaire fields: outlet identifiers, scenario codes (STN, HR, PR, and RF), beverage details, checkout type, ID-check outcomes, and any qualitative notes.

Automated imports ensure that new entries flow seamlessly into your central database. With a clean, complete dataset in place, you can confidently compute your core indicators:

ID-check rate (%): Visits where staff requested ID ÷ total visits x 100

Refusal rate (%): Under-18 visits correctly refused ÷ total under-18 visits x 100

False acceptance rate (%): Under-18 visits served despite ID checks ÷ total under-18 visits x 100

Disaggregate these metrics by outlet type (off-premise vs. on-premise), scenario, region (urban/suburban/rural), and time slot (peak vs. off-peak). Trend analysis across quarters will reveal whether compliance is improving, stagnating, or slipping – information crucial for both programme adaptation and stakeholder reporting.

You may choose to monitor additional indicators beyond the core compliance metrics, depending on their programme goals and capacity. These optional indicators can provide deeper insight into staff behaviour and enforcement consistency, especially within nuanced scenarios. For example, organisations might track proactive ID requests triggered by youthful appearance, staff responses to verbal age declarations, or the rate of early mission aborts due to confrontation or safety concerns. Such data can be valuable in tailoring future advocacy efforts and refining scenario design.

4.5.2 Qualitative coding

Numbers tell one part of the story; the notes explain the "why." Develop a simple codebook to tag recurring themes – "staff unaware," "promotional confusion," "self-checkout override," or "busy counter." Use spreadsheet filters or qualitative software to quantify how often each theme appears, then link those patterns back to your data. For instance, you might discover that outlets with visible happy-hour signage exhibit 20 percent lower ID-check rates, suggesting a targeted training need.

Complement thematic tags with basic sentiment analysis – positive, neutral, or negative – so you can report not only how often staff ask for ID, but also how they ask: politely, dismissively, or not at all.

4.5.3 Crafting reports for maximum impact

With your analyses complete, it's time to tailor reports for key audiences. Depending on who you want to see your report, here's how you can prepare simple and concise content for your audience:

- Police & inspectors need a concise log of misdemeanour-eligible incidents, complete with dates, times, and addresses for rapid follow-up. Market & tourism inspectors require a summary of under-18 infractions – highlighting repeat offenders and permit-suspension candidates.
- For each retail chain, we create a one-page report showing how each of their stores performed compared to the area's average compliance rate, and then give them easy, practical improvements – like putting up an "Always Check ID" sign at the cash register or running a short refresher training with staff – so they can quickly boost their scores. For outlets with high compliance rate, you can create a sticker or poster card with a positive comment or a formal "Certificate of Excellence" they can proudly display, complete with the date and their compliance score. You might also offer a digital badge for their website or social-media channels, feature them in your quarterly newsletter as a "Gold-standard outlet," or send a commendation letter from local inspectors. These positive reinforcements not only reward good practice but also motivate other outlets to improve.
- Civil society & donors look for big-picture infographics, human-interest quotes from decoys' notes, and clear calls to action (e.g., "Increase after-school inspections by communal police in X").

Each report should follow a consistent structure – brief overview, methodology recap, key findings (data tables and visuals), and tailored recommendations – so recipients can quickly locate the information most relevant to them.

4.5.4 Media outreach & Policy advocacy

To amplify your evidence beyond the compliance community, develop a concise press release that highlights top-line results and quotes from youth participants and enforcement partners. Prepare eye-catching infographics for distribution to local and national media, as well as social media channels.

Organize a policy roundtable with ministry representatives, youth workers, CSOs, and retailer associations. Present your findings, facilitate discussion on barriers and solutions, and secure commitments to stepped-up inspections, training support, or legislative initiatives.

Complement this with opinion pieces for media and/or your website, co-authored by respected public-health experts or youth advocates, emphasizing the real-world consequences of under-enforcement and the proven impact of mystery shopper audits.

4.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Reporting is not a one-off event – it's the catalyst for ongoing action. Track which referrals yielded inspections or fines, then feed that enforcement data back into your dashboard. Schedule follow-up mystery-shop rounds 3 – 6 months later to measure improvement and keep the momentum alive. Maintain a quarterly stakeholder newsletter summarizing progress and lessons learned, and convene an annual meeting/workshop/training to refine your methodology.

By closing the loop – from data collection and analysis to advocacy and enforcement – you create a cycle that continually strengthens protections for minors, drives retailer accountability, and embeds youth voices at the heart of public-health policy.

Enforcement tracking

- **Referral log:** Record every case submitted to authorities, noting whether it led to an inspection, a fine, or other action.
- **Outcome dashboard:** Link each mystery shopper visit to its enforcement outcome, so you can calculate "conversion rates" (e.g., % of under-18 violations resulting in sanctions)..

Follow-up

- **Timing:** Schedule a second round of visits 3 - 6 months after your initial audit.
- **Consistency:** Use the same scenarios, outlets, and time slots to measure real before-and-after changes.

Stakeholder feedback loops

- **Quarterly newsletters:** Summarize the latest indicator trends, share success stories, and highlight remaining gaps.
- **Annual workshops:** Bring together youth decoys, trainers, law-enforcement officers, and CSO partners to revise findings and co-design improvements.

Continuous improvement

- **Methodology review:** Update scripts, sampling strategies, or data tools based on what worked - and what didn't - in the field.
- **Capacity building:** Refresh training modules to incorporate new legal developments, technological enhancements, or feedback from young people.

5. Examples of exercises/sessions for youth capacity building

Exercise name	Policy Puzzle Relay
Objective	Build participants' understanding of how legal and public health frameworks interconnect.
Duration	45 minutes
Steps	Divide participants into teams and give each team parts of real or fictional policy documents. Teams reassemble coherent policy frameworks by identifying objectives, actors, enforcement elements, and expected outcomes. Discuss feasibility, ethical challenges, and identify missing consumer protections.
Facilitator tips	Include “wild cards” that introduce real-world complications like lobbying pressure or budget cuts.
Competence areas	Legal & Ethical Literacy Consumer Protection Literacy Public Health Literacy

Exercise name	Youth Campaign Briefing
Objective	Develop messaging skills targeting alcohol-related social norms and peer influence.
Duration	60 minutes
Steps	Design a short youth-led campaign message addressing risky alcohol behaviours. Role-play delivery formats (e.g. social media, school talk). Reflect on tone, clarity, and relevance.
Facilitator tips	Offer examples and encourage feedback on how norms and peer dynamics shape impact.
Competence areas	Advocacy & Communication Peer Leadership & Mentorship Alcohol Social Norms

Exercise name	Alcohol: Pros and Cons
Objective	Through this exercise, we will explore participants' perceptions of alcohol and critically discuss its perceived advantages and disadvantages.
Duration	10 – 20 minutes
Steps	Draw a plus and a minus sign on a flipchart, then ask participants to list all the positive and negative aspects of alcohol. You may guide the discussion in the following direction: Considering both the advantages and disadvantages, what is most important for a young person? (When discussing the advantages, ask what specific benefits young people believe alcohol provides.) Do you think young people would use alcohol if they could obtain those perceived benefits in other ways? More specifically, in relation to alcohol, does alcohol itself contribute to these advantages or disadvantages?
Facilitator tips	Allow space for young people to reflect on whether their attitudes are shaped by social influence or based on reliable information.
Competence areas	Alcohol Social Norms

Exercise name	Yes, no, maybe
Objective	The purpose of this exercise is to initiate debate and stimulate discussion about party culture and alcohol-related norms among participants.
Duration	10 – 20 minutes
Steps	Ask participants to stand up and reflect on the statements you will read aloud. They may respond with YES, NO, or MAYBE. If their answer is "yes," they should stretch their arms above their head. If their answer is "no," they should stretch their arms down toward the ground. If their answer is "maybe," they should cross their arms. Statements: • It is allowed to buy alcohol for persons under 18. • When I go to a party, I want to dance. • I have been to a party without drinking alcohol. • Under the influence of alcohol, it is harder to think clearly. • Those who drink alcohol dance better.

	The statements are read one after another. During the discussion, ask participants to explain their answers (for example, if everyone says that those who drink alcohol dance better, ask them to explain why they think so).
Facilitator tips	Participants may close their eyes during the exercise. Additional questions you may ask: • My parents would be disappointed if I drank alcohol before turning eighteen. • My parents would be disappointed if I smoked cigarettes before turning eighteen. • My parents would be disappointed if I smoked after turning eighteen. • My parents would be disappointed if I drank alcohol after turning eighteen. After these questions, you may ask further questions that help participants understand what constitutes an alcohol-related norm and how perceptions of alcohol differ from those of tobacco. If there is a difference between perceptions of alcohol and the use of tobacco products, why might that be?
Competence areas	Alcohol Social Norms Critical Thinking & Ethics Legal & Ethical Literacy

Exercise name	Courage in a bottle
Objective	The aim of this session is for participants to discuss what courage means and to critically examine the role of alcohol as a substance that supposedly provides courage.
Duration	10 – 20 minutes
Steps	Begin by asking the group to name something they consider a courageous act. Write down everything participants share. Wait for someone to mention an example such as an extreme sport or something similar. If no such example is given, you may refer to the example of a person who jumped from the edge of space with a parachute. Explain the difference between that type of courage (emphasising that such an act would not be possible with alcohol in one's bloodstream) and the everyday forms of courage we need in daily life. It is often claimed that alcohol creates a sense of courage. Ask participants to make a list of situations in which they believe alcohol is needed in order for someone to dare to do something. Encourage them to think about different social situations.

	Discussion: Which of these situations actually requires more courage? Can they be done without alcohol? Is courage a mindset, or something that can be created through drinking? Conclude by stating that alcohol does not provide courage; rather, it acts as a substitute for courage. A major drawback of using alcohol to “gather courage” is that over time, it becomes increasingly difficult for the brain to experience courage without alcohol.
Facilitator tips	Additional discussion questions: • What if a person has learned to be courageous only under the influence of alcohol, but wants to approach an attractive person working behind the counter in a supermarket? • Aren’t most situations we encounter in everyday life alcohol-free? If you want to do something, isn’t it impractical to rely on alcohol in order to give a presentation, go bungee jumping, succeed in a job interview, or move to another country? • How do we build courage?
Competence areas	Alcohol Social Norms Critical Thinking & Ethics

Exercise name	Mystery Shopper Simulation
Objective	Explore monitoring techniques and safety dilemmas in alcohol point-of-sale settings.
Duration	75 minutes
Steps	Present mock scenarios of alcohol purchases. Participants observe, record, and report seller behaviour and risk factors. Evaluate ethical and legal tensions in reporting.
Facilitator tips	Introduce variants like underage volunteers or hidden cameras.
Competence areas	Observation & Reporting Legal & Ethical Literacy Safety & Risk Management

Exercise name	Decoding Data Dashboards
Objective	Teach participants to interpret alcohol harm statistics and improve visual data storytelling.
Duration	50 minutes
Steps	Analyse simplified health dashboards. Highlight trends and suggest visual changes. Discuss how data influences consumer perception.
Facilitator tips	Focus on clarity and avoid data overload. Prompt questions around false causality or bias.
Competence areas	Data Analysis Basics Public Health Literacy Critical Thinking & Ethics

Exercise name	Role Swap: Council debate
Objective	Simulate stakeholder perspectives in alcohol regulation through structured role-play and argumentation.
Duration	90 minutes
Steps	Assign participants stakeholder roles (e.g. mayor, youth representative, retailers, CSO advocate). Present a scenario: “Should the town restrict alcohol ads near schools?” Prepare short statements and engage in debate using realistic constraints.
Facilitator tips	Use structured feedback to debrief empathy and policy logic.
Competence areas	Scenario Delivery Advocacy & Communication

Exercise name	Spot the Risk!
Objective	Train participants to identify and respond to risk scenarios in alcohol-related environments.
Duration	40 minutes
Steps	Show photos or descriptions of various settings (e.g. party, supermarket, park). Participants work in teams to list safety risks and suggest mitigation strategies. Discuss which risks are hardest to spot and why.
Facilitator tips	Use a mix of overt and subtle risks, and encourage team discussion on responsibility and escalation.
Competence areas	Safety & Risk Management Observation & Reporting Alcohol Social Norms

Exercise name	Mentorship Maze
Objective	Build peer-to-peer guidance skills by simulating support conversations.
Duration	60 minutes
Steps	Introduce mock scenarios: a friend is pressured to drink; another wants help navigating local services. Participants practice short response scripts, balancing empathy and guidance. Rotate pairs for varied interaction styles.
Facilitator tips	Offer feedback on tone, helpfulness, and boundary-setting.
Competence areas	Peer Leadership & Mentorship Advocacy & Communication Legal & Ethical Literacy

Exercise name	Consumer Rights Challenge
Objective	Teach young people how consumer laws protect them in alcohol-related contexts.
Duration	50 minutes
Steps	Present case studies: fake IDs, misleading labels, aggressive sales tactics. Participants match each case to a protection principle. Design a mini-awareness poster highlighting one consumer right.
Facilitator tips	Link to local or EU laws and encourage cross-checking facts.
Competence areas	Consumer Protection Literacy Legal & Ethical Literacy Public Health Literacy

Exercise name	Scenario Architect
Objective	Enable participants to design realistic training scenarios from stakeholder experiences.
Duration	70 minutes
Steps	Form teams and assign real-life perspectives (bartender, school official, youth worker). Each team builds a short "scenario script" with a challenge, context, and desired outcome. Swap and review scenarios, offering enhancement feedback.
Facilitator tips	Steer teams toward layered situations involving legal, ethical, and peer dynamics.
Competence areas	Scenario Delivery Peer Leadership & Mentorship Alcohol Social Norms

Exercise name	Ethics on Trial
Objective	Foster ethical reasoning in complex alcohol-related dilemmas.
Duration	60 minutes
Steps	Share 2–3 tricky situations: e.g. someone altering research data, pressure to conceal risky behaviour. Split into jury panels to decide what's ethical, unethical, or legally ambiguous. Panels present verdicts and reasoning.
Facilitator tips	Encourage debate, dissent, and clear articulation of values vs. rules.
Competence areas	Legal & Ethical Literacy Critical Thinking & Ethics Compliance Monitoring

Exercise name	Note like a Pro
Objective	Improve participants' accuracy and structure in recording mystery shopping observations.
Duration	45 minutes
Steps	Show 3 types of decoy notes: one vague, one detailed but confusing, one well-structured. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. Participants rewrite the weak notes using a note-taking template.
Facilitator tips	Emphasize clarity over length; introduce categories like tone, ID request, and staff response.
Competence areas	Observation & Reporting Data Analysis Basics

Note-taking template:

Category	Observation Notes	Checklist (✓ or ✗)
Location & Date		
Staff Behavior	e.g., polite, indifferent, confrontational	
ID Request	Was age verification requested clearly?	
Alcohol Visibility	Where and how was it displayed?	
Tone of Interaction	e.g., rushed, friendly, suspicious	
Any unusual factors?	Loud music, group of teens, security nearby?	
Notes Summary	2–3 concise sentences wrapping the visit	

Tip for participants: Focus on factual descriptions, not assumptions.

Exercise name	De-escalation drill
Objective	Prepare participants to calmly handle discomfort or confrontation during fieldwork.
Duration	60 minutes
Steps	Role-play scenarios: e.g. angry cashier, suspicious bystander, staff refusal. Practice 2–3 de-escalation responses per scene. Reflect on body language, tone, and exit options.
Facilitator tips	Use short phrases as “calm scripts” for later field use; highlight abort criteria.
Competence areas	Safety & Risk Management Legal & Ethical Literacy

Examples of scenarios:

1. The Angry Cashier: A mystery shopper requests to buy alcohol and is refused. The cashier becomes defensive and aggressive, accusing the participant of “trying to trick them.”
2. Suspicious Bystander: While observing a venue, a customer notices the participant taking notes and starts asking probing questions — “Who are you working for?” “Are you filming?”
3. Staff Refusal + Peer Friction: During a group field visit, staff bluntly refuse access to a venue. One participant reacts emotionally (“This is unfair!”), upsetting the dynamic.

Exercise name	Insight Mapping
Objective	Understand how social norms and marketing messages shape alcohol-related behaviours.
Duration	50 minutes
Steps	Present visual prompts (ads, posters, packaging). Decode the cues: What behaviours are encouraged? Who is the target? Participants build a “norm map” showing how these messages reach youth.
Facilitator tips	Include subtle cues (colours, slogans); relate findings to mystery shopping scenarios.
Competence areas	Alcohol Social Norms Critical Thinking & Ethics

Exercise name	Mini-Data Hack
Objective	Teach participants to generate simple indicators from field data.
Duration	40 minutes
Steps	Provide mock data sheets (e.g. store visits with yes/no for ID check). Participants calculate compliance rates and flag repeat violators. Discuss what indicators reveal and what they conceal.
Facilitator tips	Avoid complex math; focus on patterns and storytelling through numbers.
Competence areas	Data Analysis Basics Advocacy & Communication

Handout: Mini-Data Hack Grid

Retailer Name	Visit Date	ID Requested?	Alcohol Sold?	Notes
		Yes / No	Yes / No	

Calculation Prompt:

- Number of visits:
- % where ID was requested:
- % where alcohol was sold without ID check:
- Any repeat offenders?

Exercise name	Public health timeline
Objective	Connect underage drinking to long-term health consequences and prevention strategies.
Duration	45 minutes
Steps	Give participants cards with health events (e.g. liver damage, school dropout, police report). Place them on a timeline and group them by short- and long-term harm. Discuss how enforcement disrupts negative trajectories.
Facilitator tips	Include a few “positive” cards (e.g. timely ID check, youth training) to show protective pathways.
Competence areas	Public Health Literacy Safety & Risk Management

Exercise name	The Compliance chain
Objective	Illustrate how individual actions contribute to broader compliance outcomes.
Duration	40 minuta
Steps	Create a "compliance chain" with participants acting as links (e.g., retailer, staff, mystery shopper, enforcement officer). Simulate a scenario where one link fails (e.g., staff doesn't check ID). Discuss the ripple effects on compliance and public health.
Facilitator tips	Use props or visual aids to make the chain concept tangible and memorable.
Competence areas	Legal & Ethical Literacy Public Health Literacy

Exercise name	The Perfect Pitch
Objective	Build participants' confidence in presenting findings to stakeholders.
Duration	60 minuta
Steps	Provide a sample report with key findings. Participants prepare a 3-minute pitch to a specific audience (e.g., store manager, policy maker). Practice delivering the pitch and receive feedback on clarity and impact.
Facilitator tips	Emphasize tailoring the message to the audience's priorities and using data effectively.
Competence areas	Advocacy & Communication Data Analysis Basics

Handout: Advocacy Pitch Planner

Section	Prompt	Notes Field
Target Audience	Who are you addressing? (e.g., policymaker, store manager)	
Key Finding	What's the main insight or concern?	
Supporting Evidence	Include 1–2 data points or quotes	
Emotional Hook	What will resonate with the audience's values?	
Suggested Action	What change or response do you propose?	
Call to Action	Close with a compelling request or next step	
Delivery Tips	Body language, voice tone, use of visuals	

Optional Add-on: Provide a **sample pitch script** beside the template for inspiration or rehearsal use.

Exercise name	Ethics in Action
Objective	Explore ethical dilemmas and decision-making in mystery shopping.
Duration	50 minuta
Steps	Present participants with ethical scenarios (e.g., witnessing illegal activity, being offered a bribe). Discuss possible responses and their consequences. Develop a group code of ethics for mystery shopping.
Facilitator tips	Encourage participants to consider both personal and professional values in their responses.
Competence areas	Legal & Ethical Literacy Safety & Risk Management

Handout: Scenario cards

1. **Ethical Scenario Card #1: Bribe in back room**

During a mystery shopper visit, a staff member offers the decoy a small gift in exchange for a “positive report.” Is this reportable? What are the ethical boundaries for the youth participant? How should the team respond?

2. **Ethical Scenario Card #2: Pressure from peers**

A fellow youth participant jokes about bending the rules to “get better data.” What risks does this pose to data credibility? How would you address this within the team? Should the facilitator be informed?

3. **Ethical Scenario Card #3: Identity mistake**

The retailer refuses to sell alcohol, but the decoy later learns they were mistaken about the staff member’s name and reported the wrong person. What should happen next? How does this affect accountability? Could safeguards prevent this error?

4. **Ethical Scenario Card #4: Observer dilemma**

While shadowing a retailer, the observer sees a minor being served alcohol, but the decoy wasn’t involved. Is the observer obligated to report this? What are the boundaries of role-based reporting? How could protocols be clarified?

5. **Ethical Scenario Card #5: Private vs. Public sharing**

A participant shares details of their mystery shopper experience on social media, including names of venues. Is this a breach of confidentiality? How might public posts affect program integrity? Should there be digital conduct guidelines?

Exercise name	Behind the Counter
Objective	Encourage empathy and understanding of frontline staff decisions regarding alcohol sales.
Duration	45 minuta
Steps	Role-reversal exercise: participants play staff dealing with ambiguous ID situations. Present scripted customer profiles (e.g. shy teen, confident 18-year-old, friend group). Staff-role players decide: sell or refuse? Then explain their reasoning.
Facilitator tips	Include time for reflective journaling to compare experience as staff vs. shopper.
Competence areas	Critical Thinking & Ethics Legal & Ethical Literacy

Exercise name	Mission Debrief Circle
Objective	Reflect on lessons learned, build trust, and generate group insights after field activities.
Duration	40 minuta
Steps	Participants sit in a circle and take turns sharing one insight, challenge, or surprise. Use a talking object (e.g., card or token) to guide respectful sharing. Group co-creates a “field wisdom wall” of key takeaways.
Facilitator tips	Make this part of any final session; ensures emotional closure and peer learning.
Competence areas	Public Health Literacy Advocacy & Communication

PART III: ANNEXES

Annex A – Parental/Guardian Consent form

Annex B – Youth assent & Code of Conduct

Annex C – Outlet visit Report form

Annex D – Scenario scripts

Annex E – Supervisor Check-in / Check-out log

Annex F – Debrief and feedback

Annex A – Parental/Guardian Consent form

Participant Name: ___________________________

Date of Birth: ___________________________

Purpose of Activity

I understand that my child will participate as a mystery shopper decoy to help assess compliance with legal age-verification requirements for alcohol sales. Activities include visiting retail and hospitality outlets, requesting an alcoholic beverage by following a scripted scenario, and recording whether staff ask for identification.

Risks and safeguards

- My child will **not consume** any alcohol; their role is observational only.
- Visits will always be accompanied by a trained youth worker or CSO field officer.
- Safety protocols (check-ins, emergency hotline, abort criteria) are in place to protect participants.

Data use and confidentiality

- Personal data are limited to name, birth date, and contact information.
- All visit reports use a code instead of real names; no identifying information appears in published findings.
- Data are stored securely and deleted according to the project's data-retention policy.

Rights and withdrawal

I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the programme at any time without penalty. No negative consequences will follow withdrawal.

Parent/Guardian Consent:

I have read and understood the information above. I consent to my child's participation under the described conditions.

Name: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________

Emergency Contact Name & Phone: ___________________________

Annex B – Youth assent & Code of Conduct

Participant Name: ___________________________

Youth Assent

I understand that I will act as a mystery shopper decoy to check whether staff ask for ID before selling alcohol. I will follow the script given to me and record what happens. I know I can stop participating at any time and that no one will be mad at me or hurt me.

Signature: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________

Code of Conduct

Confidentiality: I will not tell outlet staff or anyone else about my role as a decoy.

Safety first: If I feel unsafe, I will abort the visit and contact my supervisor and/or youth worker.

Accuracy: I will follow the script exactly and record all details honestly.

Respect: I will be polite to staff and other customers at all times.

Annex C – Outlet visit Report form

Field	Response
Decoy code	______________________________
Outlet ID & type	______________________________
Date & Time	______________________________
Scenario code	STN / HR / PR / VA / VD
Checkout Type	Self-service / Staff-operated
POS Approval?	Yes / No
Beverage Type	Beer / Wine / Cider / Spirits / RTD / Other
Volume (mL)	___________________
Alcohol strength (%)	___________________
Price paid (RSD)	___________________
ID requested?	Yes / No
ID type (if Yes)	ID card / Passport / Other
Sale completed?	Yes / No
Refusal reason (if No)	Underage / Other
Staff gender	M / F / Other
Staff age group	<25 / 25–35 / 36+
Mystery shopper gender	M / F / Other
Queue length	None / Short / Medium / Long
Notes	Free-text: ______________________________

Annex D – Scenario scripts

1. Standard (STN)

Enter outlet alone between 17:00–19:00.

Say: “Hello, I’d like a beer, please.”

If asked for ID, present genuine ID.

If refused, say “Thank you” and exit.

If served, pay, accept change, and exit.

2. High-Risk (HR)

Enter outlet between 22:00 – 00:00 or during peak service.

Order multiple items: “Two beers and a small soda, please.”

Optional peer-pressure cue: glancing repeatedly at a companion.

Proceed as in Standard for ID and exit.

3. Promotional (PR)

Comment on visible deals: “I saw your happy-hour beer deal; I’d like two, please.”

Observe whether staff focus on discount and still verify ID.

Follow Standard steps for ID response and exit.

4. Visual ambiguity test (VA)

Enter outlet alone between 17:00–19:00. Appear noticeably younger than 18 (e.g. casual clothing, no makeup, relaxed posture).

Say: “Hi, I’d like a beer, please.” Do not offer ID unless asked. If asked, present genuine ID.

If refused, say “Thank you” and exit. If served, pay, accept change, and exit.

5. Verbal Age-Declaration Visit (VD)

Enter outlet alone between 17:00–19:00.

Say: “Hi, I’d like a beer.’’ If asked about your age or ID, say: ,,Don’t worry about it, I’m 18.’’ If staff insist on ID, present genuine ID.

If refused, say “Thank you” and exit. If served without being asked for ID, pay, accept change, and exit.

Annex E – Supervisor Check-in / Check-out log

Visit #	Decoy code	Outlet ID	Date	Check-in time	Check-out time	Supervisor initials	Notes
1							
2							
3							

Annex F – Debrief and feedback

Participant: _____________________ **Date:** _____________

1. Visit reflection

Outlet & Scenario: ____

What went well? (e.g., staff asked for ID promptly)

Challenges or surprises? (e.g., crowded, distracted cashier)

2. Emotional & safety check

Did you feel safe throughout the visit? Yes / No

If no, what triggered concern?

3. Learning & suggestions

What did you learn about staff behaviour or policies?

How could the script or process be improved?

4. Next Steps

Any follow-up needed? (e.g., report to inspector, additional training)

Signature (Decoy): ______________________ **Supervisor:** __________________

GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

Glossary

Alko Oy	Finland's state-owned alcohol retail monopoly, founded in 1932 and overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Alko is the brand name used publicly for its retail stores, which are the only legal outlets for selling alcoholic beverages over 5.5% ABV (recently raised from 4.7%). It operates over 360 stores across Finland and is responsible for ensuring alcohol is sold responsibly and in accordance with Finnish law.
Consumer protection	Legal and policy frameworks that safeguard buyers – especially vulnerable populations like minors – from harmful or unethical business practices.
Cross-sectoral Working Group	A collaborative body involving stakeholders from different sectors – such as government, CSOs, and international organizations – tasked with addressing policy issues like minors' alcohol access.
Evidence-based Advocacy	Advocacy strategies grounded in research data and empirical findings, used to push for legislative or behavioural change.
Grassroots CSO	A civil society organization that operates primarily at the local level, often community-led and focused on citizen engagement and advocacy.
ID-check rate	% of visits where staff asked for proof of age
MLDA	Minimum legal drinking age
Off-premise	Retailers that sell alcohol for consumption elsewhere
On-premise	Outlets selling alcohol for immediate consumption, where alcohol is sold and consumed on site

Refusal rate	The percentage of alcohol purchase attempts by underage decoys that are denied by staff, usually after checking ID.
Systembolaget	Sweden's government-owned alcohol retail monopoly, established to minimize alcohol-related harm. It operates more than 400 stores nationwide, selling all beverages above 3.5 % ABV. Unlike bars or restaurants, Systembolaget's outlets are the only legal retailers for stronger drinks – and staff are trained to enforce age checks, offer neutral advice on consumption, and refuse sales to anyone under 20 (the MLDA).

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