

Italy's Free Taxi Program for Drunk Partygoers

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. intoxicated (adjective) /ɪn'tɒksɪkeɪtɪd/: Under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to the point of impairment in physical or mental abilities.
Example: He was arrested for driving while intoxicated.
2. initiative (noun) /ɪ'nɪʃetɪv/: An introductory step or action, often taken independently to achieve a particular goal or result.
Example: She took the initiative to organize a charity fundraiser.
3. deem (verb) /di:m/: To judge, consider, or believe something to be a particular way based on one's opinion or assessment.
Example: The committee will deem the proposal acceptable after reviewing it.
4. confiscate (verb) /'kɒn.fɪ.skeɪt/: To seize or take possession of something, often by authority or force, typically as a penalty for wrongdoing.
Example: The customs officers can confiscate illegal goods at the border.
5. pilot (verb) /'paɪ.lət/: To operate or control an aircraft, vehicle, or machine during a test, trial, or journey.
Example: She will pilot the new spaceship on its maiden voyage.
6. detractor (noun) /dɪ'træk.tər/: A person who criticizes, speaks negatively about, or undermines the reputation or value of something or someone.
Example: Despite the detractors, the artist's work received widespread acclaim.



Italy is testing a new program aimed at reducing alcohol-related traffic accidents. The program, initiated by the transport ministry, offers free taxi rides to individuals who are too **intoxicated** to drive. This **initiative** comes in response to Italy's ongoing struggle with drunk driving, which has been **deemed** a "serious problem" according to a 2020 report by the European Transport Safety Council.

In Italy, the legal blood alcohol limit for standard drivers is set at 0.5 grams of alcohol per liter of blood. For those who have been driving for less than three years or are under 21 years

old, the limit is zero grams. Violators can face heavy fines, with penalties reaching approximately \$2,100. In severe cases, drunk drivers may even be sentenced to up to 18 months in jail, and their vehicles can be **confiscated**.

Despite these strict penalties, a concerning number of Italians admit to driving while over the legal limit. Approximately one-third of the population engages in this dangerous behavior. To address this issue, the government has launched a trial of the free taxi program. The program is currently being **piloted** at six nightclubs across Italy and is scheduled to run until mid-September.

Under this initiative, individuals leaving participating nightclubs who appear to be intoxicated will be subject to an alcohol test. If their blood alcohol level exceeds the legal limit, the government will cover the cost of a taxi to transport them safely to their destination. For example, on the first night of the program's implementation at Il Muretto, one of the participating nightclubs, 21 individuals were safely transported home via taxis.

While some have praised the program's intention to promote responsible drinking and reduce drunk driving incidents, it has also faced criticism. **Detractors** argue that it may unintentionally encourage excessive alcohol consumption, as individuals might purposely get drunk to benefit from the free taxi service. This debate raises questions about the most effective strategies for curbing drunk driving while still ensuring a safe and enjoyable nightlife experience.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever heard of similar programs in your country?
2. Do you think the penalties for drunk driving in your country are strict enough?
3. How can societies encourage responsible drinking and prevent drunk driving?
4. What other measures do you think can help reduce drunk driving incidents?
5. Have you ever used a taxi service after a night out? Share your experience.
6. How can programs like this strike a balance between promoting responsible drinking and deterring excessive alcohol consumption?
7. What are your thoughts on the relationship between nightlife and responsible drinking in your community?