**Minimum Unit Pricing – spiritsEUROPE welcomes opinion of the Advocate General of European Court of Justice**

**Brussels, 3 September 2015** - The Advocate General of the ECJ has, this morning, issued his opinion on Minimum Unit Pricing of alcohol.

In response, Paul Skehan, Director General of spiritsEUROPE – one of the parties to the original case lodged in Scotland - said

“We welcome the Advocate General’s opinion. The opinion encourages us in our long-held view that MUP is neither proportionate nor necessary, and is, consequently, illegal under EU law. We welcome the statement of this important principle at European Union level since it affects every Member State. We await the Court of Justice’s final ruling early in 2016.

“Is it time to now move on? Instead of wasting more time debating the illegality of MUP, we believe it would be far better to discuss useful, legal ways of tackling the alcohol-related issues that persist, not only in Scotland, but around the EU. Tackling alcohol-related harm requires collective efforts for targeted actions - in partnership, at local level. There are a range of other initiatives of proven effectiveness, not based on theoretical computer models.

“We will continue to work closely with public and private stakeholders in EU countries to reduce alcohol-related harm ([see spiritsEUROPE members’ actions across the EU](http://spirits.eu/files/36/cp.as-053-2015-roadmap--implementation-report-2014.pdf)).

ENDS

**Notes to editors: *spiritsEUROPE may have further comments today once it studied the Advocate General’s opinion in more detail.***

* spiritsEUROPE, along with the SWA and Comité Vins, took legal action against MUP in 2012. The case was referred to the CJEU by the Scottish Court in May 2014 for a ruling on questions of EU law. Several Member States – Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria and Poland – raised similar concerns at the CJEU’s hearing in May.
* The CJEU’s ruling is likely early in 2016. Once it has received the ruling of the European Court of Justice, the Scottish Court of Session will decide on the next steps

**spiritsEUROPE is opposed to minimum unit pricing (MUP) because:**

There is no simple link between alcohol price increases and reduction in alcohol-related harm. As a result, the measure might be ineffective but will in addition:

* erect an illegal barrier to trade,
* discriminate between companies in the market,
* set a potentially dangerous precedent for third countries to try to block European products from entering their markets, resulting in a very negative impact on the European drinks industry, the single largest agro-food export of the EU.

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