**Minimum Unit Pricing – spiritsEUROPE welcomes early Christmas present from European Court of Justice**

**Brussels, 23 December 2015** – The European Court of Justice decided today to follow the Opinion of the General Advocate on Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) of alcohol published on 3 September 2015.

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

“We welcome the ECJ ruling. This is an early Christmas present for moderate drinkers everywhere, who already pay astronomical levels of tax on each sip they take.

The Court has confirmed that MUP is a barrier to trade and therefore illegal if there are less disruptive measures available to tackle alcohol misuse. Clearly there are other measures available, and therefore this MUP proposal should be dropped. We welcome the clarification of this important principle since it affects every Member State.”

“The Scottish courts must now reflect on the implications of the ruling and all the evidence, before issuing a final judgment.”

“It is time to move on and 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, not in conflict through the courts.”

“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 (C-333/14) 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.
* Court decision, Opinion f the Advocate General (Mr Bot)and the list of questions submitted are available on [ECJ website](http://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?language=en&td=ALL&num=C-333/14)
* 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.

(\*)Paul Skehan in his capacity as permanent representative of Skehan sprl, Director General of spiritsEUROPE

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