***EVERY HOUR, EUROPEAN SPIRITS ABROAD GENERATE ABOVE €1 MILLION FOR THE EU.***

***Post BREXIT, we urge EU leaders to ensure minimum possible disruption to trade, both with the UK and third countries***

Brussels, 30 June 2016. **This afternoon, *the European spirits sector is publishing its annual trade report ‘Made for trade: spirits success abroad’ which shows that after a small decrease in 2014, spirits bounced back in 2015 with export sales reaching over €10 billion. This positive performance makes a significant contribution to EU economies in creating growth and jobs. However, after the BREXIT vote, the prospects for future spirits trade appear less certain.***

“Can w*e toast a return to growth?*” asked Paul Skehan, Director General of spiritsEUROPE. “*We want to celebrate the great performance of our exporters in 2015*, *offering a net gain to the European economy of almost €9 billion, but we do so with a wary eye to the future as we weigh the possible trade consequences of the BREXIT vote.”*

Obviously, the BREXIT vote has imposed itself in the discussion, generating many more questions than answers. How will current and future EU trade negotiations be affected by the UK referendum to leave? Certainly, the EU’s trade position looks weaker, as our second biggest economy is shorn from the EU’s overall internal market. And in what ways might the nearly €3 billion trade in spirits between the UK and the rest of the EU be affected?

“*For our sector, and many others, a strong UK within a strong EU is the scenario offering most certainty and the best prospects for growth*” said Paul Skehan. “*The referendum decision leads to uncertainty, with likely knock-on effects on investment, jobs and growth – not only within the UK and EU, but around the world”*. That said, Paul Skehan stressed “*We will work closely with politicians and our sector colleagues in this new political environment, to ensure the best possible outcome of this divorce.*”

The spirits sector has always been a strong supporter for a robust EU trade policy: negotiating ambitious trade deals with key export markets to gain competitive advantage while targeting high import tariffs and other barriers such as discriminatory tax policies, insufficient IP protection and complex custom procedures. Enforcement of existing agreements can also be improved.

*“We frequently bring to the attention of the Commission trade-restrictive measures that prevent spirits producers from doing business. Many of these cases are linked to the lack of enforcement of rules already negotiated at WTO level or in free trade agreements”* concluded Skehan*.* At the launch of the spiritsEUROPE report, recent problems in Canada, China and Colombia will be highlighted.

ENDS

**Note to editors**

* **spiritsEUROPE** is the representative body for the spirits industry at European level comprising 31 associations and 8 multinationals: [www.spirits.eu](http://www.spirits.eu)**.**
* **Full trade report 2016,** including a Foreword by Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan is available [here](http://spirits.eu/files/24/spiritseurope-trade-report-2015.pdf).
* **Many quotes** available in the Trade Report 2016 for you to pickfrom:
* MEP Toika Saïfi- (Vice President of INTA);
* Kristy Poppe (bar tender in New-York); colleagues working in South Africa (Antoinette Drumm – Rémy Cointreau), Singapore (Joy Rice - Diageo), India (Amrit Singh – ISWAI) and small producer in France (Judith Cartron);
* **analysis of exports by product categories** by Alexander Smith from IWSR.
* **Review of our trading performance and issues of concerns** with the Americas, Asia Australia/New Zealand, wider Europe and Africa.
* **spiritsEUROPE trade ‘wish list’: we urge the EU to:**
* Ratify and implement CETA.
* Conclude an ambitious agreement with the US that will create the necessary level playing field for EU exporters.
* Intensify its ambitious trade negotiating agenda with the ASEAN region, including the forthcoming FTA with Philippines and early ratification of the agreement with Vietnam.
* Seek ambitious agreements with emerging high-growth markets such as India.
* Help business to seize opportunities in the growing African markets.
* Continue to be a leading voice in the WTO and support the day-to-day work of the WTO in developing & enforcing international trade rules.
* Enforce existing trade rules more vigorously and resist non-compliant practices.
* Devote the necessary human resources to deliver effectively on its trade agenda.