**Investing in alcohol education to tackle abuse**

***More long-term investment needed, says spirits group***

**Brussels, 20 October 2015** – spiritsEUROPE supports calls for greater investment in education to tackle alcohol abuse, in particular underage drinking.

Paul Skehan, Director General of spiritsEUROPE, said: “*We need to tackle the problem of underage drinking head on. As producers, our consumers are adults over legal purchase age. We do not advertise to underage and we condemn any and all sales to minors. But national authorities also have responsibilities to fund long-term education programmes to influence young people in the right way. We need to change the way society views underage drinking, we need to change the culture. But changing a culture is a long term endeavour, and we believe education plays a fundamental part in that behavioural shift*.”

The objective of the current EU Alcohol Strategy is to reduce alcohol related harm, including underage drinking. To address this problem, spiritsEUROPE brought together education experts to hear about the latest developments and science related to prevention programmes targeting young people and their families. The conclusions and policy recommendations were presented on 20 October in a public workshop, chaired by MEP Elisabeth Morin-Chartier.

Opening the workshop, Mme Morin-Chartier, who has had a long experience of working for the French Ministry of Education, said: “*I fully support the Resolution adopted this year by the Parliament which calls on the Member States to implement education measures targeting young people as part of their strategies to prevent abuse and spread best practices. I invite my MEP colleagues to use their influence at local level to make it happen on a wide scale*.”

The literature review presented at the workshop confirms that as with many societal issues, there is a need for a balanced policy between enforcement and prevention. This means enforcement of current legislation such as legal purchasing age and access of alcohol for minors combined with prevention campaigns dealing with both the supply side - such as parents, bar staff and retailers - and also the demand side - the minors, through their teachers, families and peers.

“*spiritsEUROPE remains committed to supporting effective action to tackling alcohol related harm in Europe. We call on the Commission to continue the action oriented work of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, and for Member States to create similar multi-stakeholder platforms at national level*” concluded Skehan.

**ENDS**

**Note to editors:**

* [spiritsEUROPE](http://www.spirits.eu/) represents the spirits industry & comprises 33 associations and 8 multinationals.
* The programme of the workshop and reports presented are available [here](http://spirits.eu/page.php?id=328&parent_id=25):
  + *Investing in the future: can education help fix underage drinking in Europe? Report by the London Forum for Science and Policy- October 2015*
  + *Alcohol Education Programmes to Help Reduce Underage Drinking - Contribution to the European Alcohol & Health Forum (information compiled by spiritsEUROPE)*
* More information on prevention campaigns supported by the spirits industry are visible on [www.drinksinitiatives.eu](http://www.drinksinitiatives.eu)

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