



# **GLASS BOTTLES AND SPIRITS DRINKS - MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY PACKAGING**

**THE SPECIFICITIES OF GLASS BOTTLES FOR  
SPIRITS DRINKS**





With more than 90% of spirit drinks packed in glass bottles, they have become a central, indispensable part of the product. Today, there is no way to separate the drink from its often-iconic glass bottle. For the spirits sector, glass bottles are at the crossroad of consumer safety, product identification and environmental sustainability.

**spiritsEUROPE and its members define the following four core areas of functionality of glass bottles for spirits drinks:**

- ➔ **Protection of consumer safety as glass packaging meets the highest hygiene standards and preserves the high quality of the spirits they contain**
- ➔ **Support for environmental sustainability**
- ➔ **Protection of spirit drinks' Intellectual Property (IP) and cultural heritage, fight against counterfeit and the public health risks resulting from it**
- ➔ **Support the premiumization and brand elevation trends of fine spirits**

The [European Green Deal](#) and the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) set the ambitious direction of travel for the upcoming revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) and policy measures considered by the European Commission – such as the revision of the Essential Requirements for Packaging, with a focus on weight reduction targets – will have a significant impact on the design of glass bottles and therefore on spirits drinks.

**Key recommendations by spiritsEUROPE on the specificities of glass bottles for spirits drinks to be considered by policy makers in the ongoing revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD):**

- ➔ **Lifecycle consideration as well as product and supply chain specificities need to inform the revision of the Essential Requirements whilst recognising the need for packaging design.**
- ➔ **Policy on packaging needs to be harmonised on EU level and the integrity of the Single Market for packaging and packed goods needs to be maintained; revised legislation on Packaging and Packaging Waste needs to be proposed in form of a regulation**
- ➔ **Packaging policy needs to recognize that the spirits market is global and needs to consider impacts on trade**



1

### **Glass bottles protect consumer safety as glass packaging meets the highest hygiene standards and preserves the high quality of the spirits they contain**

Glass packaging is virtually inert and impermeable, making it the most stable of all packaging materials. This is key to protecting both consumers and the fine spirits drinks contained in the bottles. There is no risk of harmful chemicals getting into the spirit drink that is packed in a glass bottle. Further, no additional barriers or additives are needed.

2

### **Glass bottles support environmental sustainability**

On average, spirits drinks bottles make up on average less than 2% of the EU's glass bottle market and we are pleased to play our part – albeit it is a small one. Glass packaging is endlessly recyclable to food grade applications – without any loss of quality, with no additional waste or by-products. Also, the collection for recycling rate of glass packaging is best in class with 76% on average across the EU wide currently. The industry led platform **Close the Glass Loop**, to which spiritsEUROPE is a founding partner and board member, is pushing to increase these rates to 90% by 2030.

3

### **Glass bottles protect spirit drinks' Intellectual Property (IP) and cultural heritage, fight against counterfeit and the public health risks resulting from it**

The size and shape of spirits drinks bottles are an *integral* part of spirit drinks' IP and cultural heritage. Many bottle designs date back to deep into the last century and are traditionally linked to drinks, regions and traditional craftsmanship. As IP rights are increasingly difficult to secure, the iconic design of a spirit glass bottles is of the highest value to many brands. Also, for instance GI spirits strongly depend on their glass bottle designs and their recognition around the globe is strongly based on their iconic glass bottles. Any standardization of the bottle shapes (be it intended or not) could boost counterfeits, as "look alike" bottles will be easier and cheaper to produce. This will ultimately put the consumer health at risk as industry standards for product and packaging alike could not be guaranteed for such counterfeit products, obviously. Packaging allows consumers to differentiate products and brands, the glass bottle and the liquid that is inside are as much part of the cultural heritage.

4

### **Support the premiumization and brand elevation trends of fine spirits**

For spirit drinks, brand differentiation is widely based on packaging design. Our products follow the strictest and most demanding marketing standards and face limitations in terms of brand differentiation unknown to other sectors. Bottles' designs in terms of shape, decoration ornaments, embossing, etc. are actively used to communicate to the consumers and to instill a sense of appreciation for the product: iconic packaging stimulates consumption at special moments.

Bottle designs vary greatly from brand-owner to brand-owner; bottle designs support the value proposition to the consumer. The iconic design of glass bottles is of the highest value to many brands.



Finally, bottles of spirit drinks are often used as decorative items for the house – many spirit drinks bottles sit in drinks cabinets for many years and are clearly not fast-moving consumer goods

Attention needs to be paid to ensure that the best packaging is available for each situation and that many products and product categories differ to such important degrees, that one single top-down approach imposed by regulators will not guarantee the highest carbon reduction. Also, policy may not discourage packaging producers and users to invest in innovation to explore to date unknown packaging systems.

Against this background, spiritsEUROPE sets out the **3 key policy recommendations** in more detail as follows:



→ **Lifecycle** consideration as well as product and supply chain specificities need to inform the revision of the Essential Requirements whilst recognising the need for packaging design.

We call on the European Commission to review the Essential Requirements as follows:

*“Packaging shall be manufactured and used such that the packaging volume and weight be limited to the minimum amount that still allow that the core areas of functionality for spirit drinks – points 1 to 4 above - are maintained.”*

Any legal considerations on updating the Essential requirements shall acknowledge the updated list of performance criteria:

- product protection
- packaging manufacturing process
- packing/filling process
- logistics (including transport, warehousing and handling)
- **reword:** ‘*design and product presentation*’ instead of ‘*product presentation and marketing*’
- **keep** user/consumer acceptance
- information
- safety
- legislation
- ~~delete: other issues.~~

‘**design**’ means the appearance of the whole or a part of a product resulting from the features of, in particular, the lines, contours, colours, shape, texture and/or materials of the product itself and/or its ornamentation; (source: Directive 98/71/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 1998 on the legal protection of designs).



→ Policy on packaging needs to be harmonised on EU level and the integrity of **the Single Market** for packaging and packed goods needs to be maintained; revised legislation on Packaging and Packaging Waste needs to be proposed in form of a regulation.

Current national packaging legislation is following various, often directly conflicting objectives, such as ambitious mandatory re-use targets vs light-weighting. *De facto*, this means that spirit drinks producers need to re-design bottles in opposite directions for different markets, adding a huge burden on companies of all sizes and, in consequence, pushing SMEs out of the market and reducing consumer choice – with no



added value in terms of environmental sustainability. **Any upcoming review of the PPWD must address barriers to the free movement of packaging and packaged goods with the objective to maximise harmonisation.**




→ Packaging policy needs to recognize that the spirits market is global and needs to consider impacts on **trade**: both inflows and outflows need to be considered in policy.

Any disproportionate restrictions around packaging could inhibit EU producers' ability to compete based on design aspects which would reduce competitiveness for EU products in export markets.



**spiritsEUROPE** proudly represents one of Europe's most valuable agri-food export sectors and, with it, the interests of 31 associations of spirits producers as well as 11 leading multinational companies. Distilled spirits are as diverse as the EU itself, spanning 44 product categories and including a host of geographically specific products that contribute to the culture of their regions (240 GIs)

**spiritsEUROPE** aisbl – rue Belliard 12, bte 5 – 1040 Brussels  
info@spirits.eu – [www.spirits.eu](http://www.spirits.eu)

 @spiritsEUROPE