**SPIRITSEUROPE WELCOMES PUBLICATION OF THE COMMISSION’S REPORT ON CONSUMER INFORMATION FOR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

Brussels, 13 March 2017 – ***Today, the Commission published its report on the implementation of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation regarding alcoholic beverages. The sector is given a year to put forward a self-regulatory proposal to provide this information.***

“*We welcome this overdue report. The delay in its publication has led to equal measures of frustration and speculation. Now, with the release of the report, we have clarity from the Commission as to its preferred future orientation,”* said Paul Skehan, Director General of spiritsEUROPE\*. *“We have already stated that we have no objection to providing consumers with relevant information. Indeed, giving consumers what they want is what our sector has been doing for decades, centuries even...*

*“The devil is in the details, of course. The amount, and type, of information given are key issues, as is the manner in which that information is provided. While the average consumer may have an increased interest in the calories contained in their beverages of choice, we do not sense any significant increase in demand for knowledge about the ingredients contained in our products. In addition, there is no value in showing calories per 100ml - such a reference would grossly misrepresent the calories present in an average glass, depending if consumers choose spirits, beer or wine. It would also confuse and potentially contradict our messages related to moderate drinking. Showing the information per serving would allow for useful comparison, and facilitate informed choices. (1)*

*“We are careful about the breadth of information that we already convey to consumers - not only the array of information that is required by EU and national legislation (2), but also the wealth of information we provide about responsible drinking (3). Adding more and more information is not necessarily useful, and may potentially confuse rather than educate. A balance is needed.*

*“Finally, we believe the mechanism for providing the information should be best left to the producer: while some may prefer to re-design labels to convey the material, others see more scope for information being provided using modern, digital means (4). Why prescribe labels, when more comprehensive and more flexible online media are evolving and improving day by day?*

*We will respond in a constructive, practical manner - always keeping the real consumer to the fore in our considerations.”*

- ENDS –

\*in his capacity as permanent representative of Skehan sprl

***For further information, please contact:***

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| **Paul Skehan**Director GeneralMobile: + 32 (475) 388415 | or **Carole Brigaudeau** Director CommunicationsMobile: + 32 (486) 117199 |

**NOTE TO EDITORS:**

[spiritsEUROPE](http://www.spirits.eu/) is the representative body for the spirits industry at European level comprising 31 association and 8 multinational members.

(1) Click [here](http://spirits.eu/policies/internal-market/labelling-regulation-11692011) to see the spiritsEUROPE position.

(2) There are mandatory labelling requirements for spirit drinks at EU level regarding:

* sales denomination, designation (including Geographical Indications)
* name or business name and address of the food business operator or, if that operator is not established in the EU, the importer;
* contents / net volume;
* alcoholic strength;
* lot code;
* country of origin, where its omission would mislead.

In many cases, specific conditions apply in relation to the size and placement of such information; further information is required in particular circumstances for certain spirits. In addition, several Member States require additional information to be placed on the label for sales in their markets, including language stipulations.

(3) Consumer information on responsible drinking ([www.responsibledrinking.eu](http://www.responsibledrinking.eu)). We have associations representing our spirits sector in 23 EU countries. 12 already have one or more consumer information websites with calorie information and we can expect that by the end of the first quarter of 2017, all 23 will provide the information, mainly the range of calories per standard drink. In addition, large companies also provide much information online, via corporate, trade association and brand websites.

(4) The online option to be explored: already 59% of the EU-28 population (15+) uses a portable computer or a handheld device to access the internet away from home or work and, following this trend, the average percentage should be close to 80% by 2020, which is already the case in countries like Denmark, the UK and Sweden (Eurostat figures 2016).