**GLOBAL BINGE DRINKING IS IN DECLINE AND EUROPE IS LEADING THE WAY**

spiritsEUROPE CALLS ON INCOMING HEALTH COMMISSIONER TO RE-START THE EUROPEAN ALCOHOL AND HEALTH FORUM (EAHF) AS PARTNERSHIP APPROACH IS SEEN AS KEY DRIVER FOR CHANGE

Brussels, 30 September 2019 – ***Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED) declined by more than 25% between 2005 and 2016 in Europe, according to a new report released today by the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD). With close and continued cooperation between all stakeholders identified as a critical success factor to accelerate this positive trend, spiritsEUROPE calls on the Commissioner-designate for Health, Stella Kyriakides, to re-start the work of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF).***

The positive data presented today by IARD aligns with another positive trend detailed in a [report](https://www.iard.org/science-resources/detail/Trends-Report-Underage-Drinking) published some weeks ago which found a fall in underage drinking in two thirds of the 63 countries monitored (including all European countries). As underage drinking and HED are precise indicators to measure alcohol-related harm, it is greatly encouraging to see both figures in steady decline.

“*More and more people are drinking responsibly across the world, and we are particularly pleased by the clear reduction in heavy episodic drinking in Europe. This report confirms data from the* [*World Health Organisation*](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA72/A72_19-en.pdf) *and other sources, and it shows that we are moving in the right direction. The spirits sector is proud of the contribution we are making in partnership with our public & private stakeholders through our responsible drinking campaigns. We will continue to invest in this area to help accelerate further progress*” said Ulrich Adam, Director General of spiritsEUROPE

One factor that has been identified as critically important for reducing harmful alcohol consumption is the so-called ‘whole-of-society’ approach, wherein different actors from public, private, and civil society sectors work together in partnership to address risky drinking behaviour.

In light of this, and ahead of the parliamentary hearing of the Commissioner-designate for Health, Stella Kyriakides, spiritsEUROPE is calling for the re-establishment of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF). Founded in 2007, yet not operational since 2015 the Forum has provided a platform where both public health NGOs and the alcohol sector groups could meet and discuss shared issues of concern, propose best practice, and share experiences to develop and implement sensible alcohol policy approaches. “*During the last consultative meeting in 2018, there was unanimous support to re-start the work of the Forum. The fact that today’s report underlines the importance of work done in partnership to help reduce alcohol-related harm further provides a very valid reason for the incoming Health Commissioner to do so.”* concluded Ulrich Adam.

**ENDS**

**NOTE TO EDITORS**

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**spiritsEUROPE** is the representative body for the spirits industry at European level comprising 31 associations and 10 multinationals: [**www.spirits.eu**](http://www.spirits.eu).

**The International Alliance for Responsible Drinking** (IARD) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing harmful drinking worldwide. IARD is supported by its member companies from all sectors of the regulated alcohol industry – beer, wine, and spirits – in their common purpose of being part of the solution to reducing the harmful use of alcohol. For more information on our membership and what we do, please visit [www.iard.org](http://www.iard.org).

A link to the full report, *Trends Report Heavy episodic drinking. Working together to deliver change: How a whole of society approach can combat heavy episodic drinking*, and statistics can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2lRHwa9>

The spirits sector’s long term commitment is reflected in [many](http://www.drinksinitiatives.eu) of the initiatives run in individual countries by local producers, and spiritsEUROPE also helps to fund and sustain prevention activities in several European countries. Some examples include:

* **Best Bar None**: Best Bar None is a UK Accreditation Scheme with National Awards supported by the Home Office and the drinks industry which is aimed primarily at promoting responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises. It was piloted in Manchester in 2003 and found to improve standards in the Evening and Night Time Economy, with premises now competing to participate. It has since been adopted by 75 towns and cities across the UK and is now being taken up internationally.
* **Responsible Party**: the Erasmus Student Network receives support from Pernod Ricard to run responsible student parties. Some simple organisation rules are part of the programme like no open bars, no free alcoholic drinks and no advertising of the party based on alcohol and its price. Workshops and trainings are also delivered to ESN volunteers during national, regional and international events to help with the challenge for volunteers to talk to their peers about responsible alcohol consumption. Until January 2019, more than 500 Responsible Parties have been held. These have reached more than 367,000 students in 32 countries. Responsible Parties are currently run in 28 countries.
* **Smashed**: Smashed is Diageo’s flagship global theatre-in-education programme launched in 2014. It aims to break the culture of underage drinking and reduce alcohol related harm among young people. Collingwood Learning developed the programme in consultation with pupils and has executed it independently ever since. It was designed to engage with pupils in a different way to typical school lessons to help them understand the facts, causes, and consequences of alcohol misuse and the risks of underage drinking. It is now running in 20 countries reaching over 100,000 young people around the world in 2018 alone. Diageo’s ambition is to reach five million people through the programme by 2025.