

PRESS RELEASE



SPRITSEUROPE STATEMENT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF FURTHER RESTRICTIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Brussels 16 October 2020 - *spiritsEUROPE*, the trade association proudly representing the European spirits sector, calls on Member States across the EU to consider the following:

- Measures adopted to fight the COVID-19 second wave must be **proportionate, evidence based, and time bound** and be regularly reviewed;
- Financial support for the sector must be maintained where it exists and introduced where it doesn't to protect our valued hospitality sector.

As Europe battles a second wave of COVID-19, governments are rightly taking action to try to bring the spread of the virus under control and save lives. However, as in the first wave, these policies are hitting those in the hospitality sector particularly hard. **As representatives of the spirits sector in Europe, we urge EU Member States to adopt evidence-based, proportionate and time-bound policies, and for the necessary supports to be made available to protect those who depend on our sector, both directly and indirectly.**

As always, our thoughts are first and foremost with those directly affected by this virus, and with those who work to protect us in the health and public services. We understand that governments across Europe have had to make extremely difficult decisions and choices that impact on our daily lives. We are greatly concerned, however, that many restaurants, cafes and bars - who invested heavily to do everything they could to get through the first wave – might not survive the second. Their reinvention during COVID (with social distancing, reduction of capacity, pivots to delivery, takeaway, outdoor service, etc), while innovative, was only ever to be temporary. Many of these businesses are now on the brink of permanent closure; not only would this be an economic disaster, but a social and cultural one too. Our hospitality sector supports millions of jobs and attracts millions of visitors to Europe each year. It cannot be allowed to collapse.

Solutions for solvency

Our members have worked hard with colleagues in the hospitality sector to support the implementation of social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols, and to offer customers the safe and controlled environment they deserve.

We urge policymakers to do whatever they can to ensure that, where outlets can safely operate, they are supported to do so. Where they cannot, restrictions should be as limited as possible (to give businesses a fighting chance of survival), and as systematic and consistent as possible (to allow for appropriate planning).



In particular we call on governments to reconsider:

- Curfews, which have generally not been requested by public health advocates and which are not proven to limit circulation of the virus. If an outlet can safely operate, it can safely operate after 9pm;
- Stringent restrictions on the sale and availability of alcohol, which led to stock-piling, overcrowding and panic-buying during the first wave;
- Reduced opening hours of supermarkets and off-licences. Evidence from cities across Europe has shown that the introduction of reduced business hours can result in overcrowding and “rushes” on retail and public transport;
- Rules which discriminate against bars in favour of restaurants. If small restaurants can operate safely, so can small bars, if they too take the same precautions as outlets serving food;
- Arbitrary closures of the hospitality sector. There is no evidence to suggest that the majority of cases are transmitted in a hospitality setting, especially where establishments have often invested in sanitation and implement social distancing. The targeting of bars and restaurants is disproportionate, and may have a limited impact on the incidence of transmission.

Beyond this, the hospitality sector must be given as much direct support as possible. Furlough schemes for employees are the top priority but we are now at a stage where more comprehensive support is required.

We call for an evidence-based, proportionate and time-bound response from Member States. The current approach of curfews and restrictions on sales has been shown to be ineffective and in some cases counter-productive, and will have an extremely detrimental effect on the future of the sector. As an industry and with our partners we are ready to support as best we can but **we need to take the right approach and encourage safe socializing**, for the benefit of our customers and businesses alike.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

Further information on a range of policy proposals we recommend can be found on our website –

<https://spirits.eu/policies/covid-19-a-spirit-of-recovery>

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 10 leading multinational companies.