PRESS RELEASE

spiritsEUROPE WELCOMES US TARIFF EXEMPTION FOR UK WHISKIES AND CALLS FOR EXTENSION TO EU SPIRITS

Brussels, 24 July 2026 - spiritsEUROPE welcomes the exemption granted for UK whiskies from US Section 301 forced labour tariffs, following the overnight announcement by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). This demonstrates that targeted solutions recognising the distinctive nature of spirits products and the high value of transatlantic spirits trade are possible. spiritsEUROPE calls for this tariff exemption to be extended to EU spirits.

"*spiritsEUROPE welcomes the US tariff exemption for UK whiskies, a constructive step that recognises the distinctive nature of these products and the high value of transatlantic spirits trade*," said Mark Titterington, Director General of spiritsEUROPE. "*spiritsEUROPE urges that this momentum now be extended to EU spirits through a full restoration of the 'zero-for-zero' tariff framework, for the benefit of the hospitality sector on both sides and to further support transatlantic trade in US oak barrels*."

The European and US spirits sectors have long been part of a shared transatlantic story, built on cross-investment, shared heritage and deeply interconnected value chains. The Zero-for-Zero agreement supported decades of growth in spirits trade and investment, benefiting producers, consumers and hospitality businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Turnberry agreement established a framework for continued EU-US dialogue and provides for the consideration of additional sectors and products for Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment. Building on the momentum created by the US tariff exemption for UK whiskies, EU and US policymakers should now prioritise equivalent tariff treatment for EU spirits, as part of the return to the Zero-for-Zero framework. This would reinforce a partnership that has delivered significant benefits for both economies.

- ENDS -

NOTE TO EDITORS

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spiritsEUROPE (www.spirits.eu) represents the interests of the spirits sector in 31 national associations as well as of the 11 leading multinational companies. Distilled spirits are as diverse as the EU's Member States, spanning 44 product categories and including a host of geographically specific products that contribute to the culture of their regions and the European Union. As the leading voice of the European spirits sector, we seek to maintain and advance the freedom to produce and market spirits in a responsible way.

Background Information:

Turnberry agreement & exemption for spirits

On 27 July 2025, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and US President Donald J. Trump announced a bilateral agreement on tariffs and trade. As part of its implementation, President Trump signed an Executive Order on 31 July 2025 (accessible **here**), establishing a 15% tariff ceiling on imports of EU products into the US.

PRESS RELEASE

On 21 August 2025, both sides issued a Joint Statement to provide further details on what was agreed through negotiations (the Joint Statement can be accessed **here**). It contains a list of product-specific exemptions from tariffs. Unfortunately, spirits are not part of this list, meaning that EU spirits remain subject to a 10% import tariff in the US (under Section 122), expected to increase to 15% following the conclusion of the US Section 301 investigations (during the course of July 2026).

On 30 June 2026, the two legislative proposals implementing EU tariff commitments under the Turnberry agreement were published in the EU Official Journal (see here). These two legislative instruments entered into force on 1 July 2026.

The Joint Statement agreed last August specified that: "*The United States and the European Union agree to consider other sectors and products that are important for their economies and value chains for inclusion in the list of products for which only the MFN tariffs would apply*". spiritsEUROPE calls for EU-US talks to restart with a view to expanding the list of EU products benefitting from a tariff exemption. The MFN (Most Favoured Nation) rate for spirits in the US is 0%.

Today's USTR announcement

On 23 July, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative published its decision (pre-publication version of the **Federal Register Notice** – *EU determination on page 23, point 19*) to impose tariffs on 60 economies following the investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, in relation to forced labour.

A 10% duty, net of Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN), applies for most products of the European Union, including spirits, as of 12:01 a.m. EST on 24 July 2026. Goods loaded onto a vessel at the port of loading and in transit on the final mode of transit before 12:01 a.m. EST on 24 July 2026 and entered for consumption or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption before 12:01 a.m. EST on 28 July 2026, shall not be subject to such additional duty.

Exemptions are foreseen for certain products, including UK whiskies, as listed in the annexes to the notice.

The USTR factsheet and the press release from USTR can be found here and here.

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