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EUROPEAN DOCTORS WANT BETTER LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

The alcoholic beverages industry has failed to produce a uniform labelling proposal to adequately inform consumers about the ingredients and nutritional contents of the beverages they produce. Instead the industry has proposed sector specific plans, which will result in information of their products only being available on their websites.

CPME calls on the EU to end the exemption of alcoholic beverages from EU Regulation 1169/2011. Alcoholic products should be treated in the same way as foodstuffs and non-alcoholic beverages. The European Commission should not accept the industry's proposals.

The spirits producers' trade association recently launched their website, www.responsibledrinking.eu, providing health related information as to when and how to drink. The page offers information about moderate drinking, drinking guidelines and standard units, and aims to answer the question what is in a spirit drink. As an example, it gives the following list of ingredients for 'wine spirit': 'distilled wine, water (if used), sugar (if used) and colour - plain caramel (if used)'.

The CPME President Prof. Dr Frank Ulrich Montgomery considers this insufficient: *"In fact, general health information about alcoholic drinks should be given by public health institutions and authorities. Industry's self-regulation is not an appropriate way to protect the population from alcohol-related harm. We are also facing an epidemic of obesity in Europe. Consumers need to know about the nutritional contents and calorific values of what they are drinking. This information has to be printed onto the product to inform consumers. Self-regulation has not succeeded in improving public health outcomes so far."*

The wine industry is campaigning to get their products to be labelled under the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) instead of under EU Regulation 1169/2011. The European Parliament's AGRI Committee has suggested that only the calorie content should be on the label whereas the rest of the essential information about the ingredients should be provided online.

Prof. Dr Montgomery concludes that *"Consumers rarely access such information online. They clearly deserve information that is accessible at the time of consumption about what is in their drinks."*

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