

Alcohol labelling: There should be rules before exceptions

Written by Susanne Melior on 12 October 2017 in Opinion
Opinion

The spirit drinks regulation is about ensuring the best quality drinks, explains Susanne Melior.



Susanne Melior | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

The essence of the spirit drinks regulation has only one crucial point: the best quality of spirit drinks must be guaranteed. The old regulation of 2008 has proved its worth. It only needs to be adapted to the Lisbon treaty. The minimum requirements are defined in 47 categories of spirit drinks. From Finland to Spain as well as from France to Poland, producers of spirit drinks must adhere to the same quality criteria.

Depending on the type of spirit drink, different requirements are needed: the minimum alcohol content, the ingredients and the production process. This provides the consumers with security and the manufacturers with some leverage.

The consumers stand in the focus. They may rest assured that the bottle really contains the spirit drink mentioned on the label. That is why the regulation also covers the protection of geographical indications. Scotch whisky must come from Scotland and 'Schwarzwälder Kirschwasser' from the Black Forest in Germany.

RELATED CONTENT

- [Pilar Ayuso: Alcohol labelling rules must address key specificities](#) [1]
 - [Renate Sommer: EU Commission report on alcohol labelling is yet another delaying tactic](#) [2]
 - [Lynn Boylan: Current file on alcohol labelling is only tinkering around the edges](#) [3]
 - [Glenis Willmott: Alcohol labelling should be about what's best for consumers - not industry](#) [4]
 - [Vytenis Andriukaitis: Consumers have the right to know what they drink](#) [5]
-

The spirit drinks industry is a huge market. European spirit drinks are in demand worldwide. Every year, Europe exports over €10bn worth of spirit drinks.

In order to ensure this high quality, I would like to limit the amount of sugar that may be used in the production of some spirit drinks. A certain rounding of the taste with sugar is perfectly fine. But an excess amount of sugar, however, should not conceal any defects in the production process. There is another example: I can very well imagine that egg liqueur may be refined with cream in future, which is not possible under the current regulation.

The most difficult discussion we are going to have is a rather technical one. Although most spirit drinks have been produced in tried and tested processes for a long time, there are always innovations. These must be reflected in the spirit drinks regulation.

But how should these new procedures be incorporated into the regulation? Through delegated acts, implementing acts or through an ordinary legislative procedure? I would prefer the latter. The production of spirit drinks has a long tradition.

Spirit drinks are not a new area where still a lot of experimentation with the basics is needed. Possible changes and adjustments to the existing definitions must be made right now. If the manufacturers wish to do so, they should contact us now. Then, we will have a full discussion about the issue.

The definitions of spirit drinks are the core of the entire spirit drinks regulation. Therefore, no amendments are to be made without Parliament's involvement.

What we cannot rule in this regulation, unfortunately, is the declaration of ingredients and nutrition values. I would like this information to become mandatory for all alcoholic beverages including beer, wine and spirit drinks.

As with all other foodstuffs, consumers should be able to see directly on the label how many calories and how much sugar a drink contains. I do not understand why an exception for alcoholic beverages exists. To this end, we will have to amend the food information regulation. I will call on the European Commission to submit a proposal to us on this issue.

About the author

Susanne Melior (DE) is Parliament's S&D group shadow rapporteur on spirit drinks labelling report

Tags

[European Commission](#) [6]

[Health](#) [7]

Categories

[Health and social care](#) [8]



The Parliament Magazine is a Dods Group plc title

Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)

[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)

[EventsDods](#)

[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)

[HouseThe](#)

[Parliament](#)

[MagazineHolyrood](#)

[Total PoliticsPublic](#)

[Affairs NewsCivil](#)

[Service](#)

[World](#)

[PublicTechnology](#)

[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[SummitPublic](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and](#)
[Care Innovation](#)
[ExpoCivil Service](#)
[LiveCivil Service](#)
[AwardsChief](#)
[Nursing Officer for](#)
[England's](#)
[SummitWomen into](#)
[LeadershipThe](#)
[Youth Justice](#)
[ConventionSocitm](#)
[Spring](#)
[ConferenceNHSCC](#)
[Annual Members'](#)
[EventDods at Party](#)
[Conference](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-there-should-be--ules-exceptions>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-rules-must-address-key-specificities>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/eu-commission-report-alcohol-labelling-yet-a-other-delaying-tactic>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/current-file-alcohol-labelling-only-tinkering-around-edges>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-should-be-about-whats-best-co-sumers-not-industry>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/consumers-have-right-know-what-they-drink>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/european-commission>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/health>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/health-and-social-care>