

## What will new voluntary EU alcohol labelling rules look like?

Written by Susanne Melior on 19 February 2018 in Opinion  
Opinion

As deadline for industry proposals on self-regulation looms, the German MEP explores what new EU alcohol labelling rules could look like.



Susanne Melior | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

---

The alcohol industry has a huge impact on the EU's economy. Beer, wine and spirits are some of the food and drink sector's most important products.

This makes it increasingly important for people to know exactly what they are consuming. Therefore I don't understand why alcoholic beverages are exempt from the labelling requirements in the food information regulation.

Later this month, the European Parliament will vote on a new spirit drinks regulation. Several amendments were tabled in the environment committee that would have required spirit drinks to at

least label a list of ingredients and their nutritional qualities.

---

## RELATED CONTENT

- [Ulrike Müller: \[1\]Spirits labelling revision must strike the right balance between tradition and innovation \[1\]](#)
  - [Susanne Melior: Alcohol labelling: There should be rules before exceptions \[2\]](#)
  - [Pilar Ayuso: Alcohol labelling rules must address key specificities \[3\]](#)
  - [Renate Sommer: EU Commission report on alcohol labelling is yet another delaying tactic \[4\]](#)
  - [Lynn Boylan: Current file on alcohol labelling is only tinkering around the edges \[5\]](#)
  - [Glenis Willmott: Alcohol labelling should be about what's best for consumers - not industry \[6\]](#)
  - [Vytenis Andriukaitis: Consumers have the right to know what they drink \[7\]](#)
- 

Unfortunately, these failed to achieve a majority in the committee. The Commission published a report on the mandatory labelling of alcoholic beverages in March 2017. The key message is that there are no objective reasons to justify the absence of information on the ingredients and nutritional value of alcoholic beverages.

I fully agree with this statement. In addition, most consumers have an interest in being informed on the ingredients. Instead of legislating, however, the Commission decided to give the alcohol industry a year to present a proposal for self-regulation.

This deadline expires on 13 March 2018. I am very curious to see what how this proposal will look. I have a few suggestions of my own on how self-regulation could work.

In brief, there should be no derogation within the food information regulation for beverages containing more than 1.2 per cent alcohol. There should be a list of ingredients on the labels of wine, beer and spirits bottles.

"There should be no derogation within the food information regulation for beverages containing more than 1.2 per cent alcohol"

In addition, the nutritional declaration should be printed on the label along with the energy value, fat content, saturated fatty acids, carbohydrates, sugar, protein and salt. I am well aware that many drinks do not contain any fat or salt. Nevertheless, there should be no exceptions.

It is important for me that the list of ingredients and the nutritional declaration are directly legible on the label. There are some proposals to identify an off-label solution, such as a QR code printed on the label.

In order to retrieve the information, consumers would have to visit a website using a smartphone or a tablet. This is not enough. It discriminates against anyone that does not own such a device. While the majority of teenagers may own a smartphone, many elderly people do not.

The Commission's report shows that the majority of smartphone owners rarely use off-label information. This why an off-label solution should be reserved for additional information.

"Voluntary and additional information based on a portion size can of course be useful. However, this portion size should be realistic and not absurdly small, as is already the case with some foods"

Another point of contention is the reference quantity to be used for the nutrition declaration. Here too, I believe that the requirements of the food information regulation should be complied with. I think the quantity of 100 ml makes perfect sense. Of course, a beer glass is much bigger than a whisky glass.

As a German, I am very aware of this fact: at the Oktoberfest in Munich, the regular beer glasses hold an full litre. Spirits, on the other hand, are consumed in much smaller portions. Nevertheless, the nutritional values of different alcoholic beverages should be easily comparable without the use of a calculator.

Voluntary and additional information based on a portion size can of course be useful. However, this portion size should be realistic and not absurdly small, as is already the case with some foods.

### **About the author**

Susanne Melior (DE) is the European Parliament's S&D group shadow rapporteur on the definition, presentation and labelling of spirit drinks, the use of the names of spirit drinks in the presentation and labelling of other foodstuffs and the protection of geographical indications for spirit drinks

### **Tags**

[Trade](#) [8]

[Food](#) [9]

[Internal Market](#) [10]

[Health](#) [11]

### **Categories**

[Business and industry](#) [12]

[Alcohol](#) [13]

[Health and social care](#) [14]

[Society and welfare](#) [15]



### **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](#)

---

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/what-will-new-voluntary-eu-alcohol-labelling-rules-look>

### **Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/spirits-labelling-revision-must-strike-right-balance-between-tradition-and>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-there-should-be-rules-exceptions>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-rules-must-address-key-specificities>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/eu-commission-report-alcohol-labelling-yet-a-other-delaying-tactic>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/current-file-alcohol-labelling-only-tinkering-around-edges>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/alcohol-labelling-should-be-about-whats-best-consumers-not-industry>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/consumers-have-right-know-what-they-drink>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/trade>

- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/food>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/internal-market>
- [11] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/health>
- [12] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/business-and-industry>
- [13] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/alcohol>
- [14] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/health-and-social-care>
- [15] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/society-and-welfare>