

New Commission urged to implement ‘ambitious’ EU trade policy

Written by Martin Banks on 2 December 2019 in News
News

The head of an EU-wide body representing Europe’s spirits sector has called for an “ambitious EU trade policy” from the new European Commission.



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Christian Porta, President of spiritsEUROPE, was speaking at a summit in Brussels which brought together national associations, spirits companies and others from the spirits sector, Europe’s second largest agrifood exporter.

In a keynote speech, Porta highlighted the policy ambitions the sector wants from the new European Parliament and European Commission.

There were, he noted, four major policy areas “that are particularly close to our heart.”

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These include trade, he said, adding, “We need to maintain and further develop the rules-based international trading system and we need an ambitious EU trade policy to ensure products like ours have free and fair access to third markets across the world. In trade, we are facing highly difficult and very urgent challenges.”

“Take, for instance, the uncertainties of Brexit, the complex task of reforming the WTO, or the harsh reality of EU-US tariffs – which are hurting our sector on both sides of the Atlantic in a heavy way every day.”

He told the gathering that “in a fast-changing world marked by trade tensions, negative interest rates and a looming economic downturn, one key question for political and business leaders to examine right now is: where is growth going to come from?”

He pointed out that despite a current tough trade environment, European spirits and liqueurs sales to the US grew by 60 percent between 2010 and 2017. Spirits, liqueurs and wine now account for 17 percent of the EU’s total agri-food exports.

“We need to maintain and further develop the rules-based international trading system and we need an ambitious EU trade policy to ensure products like ours have free and fair access to third markets across the world” **Christian Porta, President of spiritsEUROPE**

spiritsEUROPE, which represents the sector at EU level, is also calling for the re-establishment of the Parliamentary intergroup on wines, spirits and quality foodstuff.

It says such a group would “allow for the enhanced understanding of the cultural, traditional and economic importance of spirits among key decision-makers in the European Parliament and should be re-constituted.”

“We encourage MEPs from all political groupings, sitting on all committees, and from across the Member States, to support the re-establishment of the intergroup,” said Ulrich Adam, Director General of spiritsEUROPE.

The summit also focused on encouraging “sensible relationships” with alcohol and reducing harmful consumption, as well as promoting sustainable development.”

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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