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Alcohol Labelling - What is really in our drinks?

European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) welcomes the publication of the European Commission's long-awaited report on alcohol labelling in line with Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011.

It is thanks to Commissioner's Andriukaitis persistence that consumer might soon be better informed about what is in the alcoholic beverages.

Mariann Skar, Eurocare Secretary General said: *'We welcome the report as it clearly recognises the need for better alcohol labelling and widespread support for it. Disappointingly, the conclusions do not seem to be in line as it asks for self-regulatory proposal from the industry. Self-regulation is not a suitable regulatory mechanism. Member States in the European Council should follow up and empower the European Commission to take regulatory actions'*.

For the consumers to make a truly informed choice all alcoholic beverages should follow the current provisions in the Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, that is per 100ml.

Listing ingredients contained in a beverage alerts the consumers to the presence of any potentially harmful or problematic substances. Even more importantly, providing nutritional information such as energy content allows consumers to monitor their diets better, and makes it easier to keep a healthy lifestyle. Labels need to be regarded as an opportunity for impact over time, rather than setting the expectation that they will affect immediate behavioural change.

Being high in sugar means alcohol contains a considerable number of calories, with an energy content 7.1 kilocalories per gram - only fat has higher energy value per gram (9kcal/g).

Europe is the world's heaviest drinking region, with some European countries ranking around 2 times above the global average¹.

'To date, European legislation has greatly failed to allow consumers to make an informed choice about the alcoholic products they are purchasing, we are hoping that publication of today's report will be a first step to align alcohol with other food products', said Mariann Skar, secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance.

¹ World Health Organisation (2014) Global status report on alcohol and health



In 2015 Eurocare conducted a consumer survey which found that only 24.7% of the respondents search for information online regarding ingredients or additives in their alcoholic beverages. Labels remain the best option to inform consumers at the point of sale and consumption about the nutritional value and ingredients. 50.4% of respondents indicated they would like to have more information about ingredient listing, 43.2% regarding calorie content and 37.9% nutritional value. Overall labelling information currently provided to the consumers is not sufficient.

European Alcohol Policy Alliance strongly believes that it is the right of the consumers to be allowed to make informed and easily comparable choices about the products they purchase. For the next year, we will be closely monitoring the industry's voluntary actions.

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The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 60 member organisations across 24 European countries advocating prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in advocacy and research, as well as in the provision of information and training on alcohol issues and the service for people whose lives are affected by alcohol problems.

www.eurocare.org