

**PRESS
RELEASE**



ESPAD study: EU spirits producers firmly condemn underage drinking

Brussels, 26 March 2009. *New figures on drinking and drug use amongst adolescents in 35 European countries were released today in the 2007 ESPAD study. The data paints a mixed picture, showing a slight decrease in European youth reporting recent alcohol consumption, but huge differences between the countries. In a first reaction, the European Spirits Organisation sharply condemned underage drinking and called for the strict enforcement of existing youth protection laws.*

Jamie Fortescue, Director General of the European Spirits Organisation, commented:

“The European Spirits Organisation firmly condemns the sale of alcoholic beverages to the underage and calls for the strict enforcement of national youth protection laws. Across Europe, the spirits industry implements numerous information campaigns aimed at preventing alcohol misuse, and trains bar staff and retail personnel in observing the underage sales ban. Our world-renowned products are destined for occasional and responsible consumption by adults.”

“Tackling underage drinking is the joint responsibility of all stakeholders, including governments, industry, schools, parents and civil society. EU spirits producers are committed to play their part in such a partnership. For instance, strict law enforcement and large-scale information campaigns by government, industry and NGOs have largely stigmatised drink-driving. The vast majority of Europeans would discourage their friends from driving when they are drunk. We now have to achieve the same for underage drinking: Enforcing existing youth protection laws, while ensuring that teenagers do not perceive their peers’ irresponsible drinking behaviour as acceptable or cool. We take the ESPAD results seriously and will analyse them thoroughly.”

“However, there can be no “one-size-fits-all” approach for all of Europe. The diverging national figures released today by ESPAD only confirm this. As drinking patterns are closely linked to local cultures and traditions, they vary widely from country to country – and will therefore also need targeted and localised responses.”

-ENDS-

For more information, please contact:

Mr Jamie Fortescue

Director General, European Spirits Organisation – CEPS

T. +32 (0)2 779 24 23 or E. jamie.fortescue@europeanspirits.org

Note to Editors:

The European Spirits Organisation – CEPS is the representative body for the spirits industry at the European level. Its membership comprises 33 national associations representing the industry in 27 countries, as well as a group of leading spirits producing companies.