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## **EUROPEAN SPIRIT PRODUCERS VOICE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE EU ALCOHOL STRATEGY**

**1 December 2009, Brussels** – Responding to today’s adoption of the Alcohol and Health Council Conclusions (1 December), the European Spirit industry reaffirms its commitment to the EU Alcohol Strategy. Spirit producers strongly condemn the misuse of their products and underline the value of measures which seek to target such misuse, as opposed to those which penalize the vast majority of consumers who drink responsibly.

The European Spirits Organisation – CEPS welcomes the support that the Health Council Conclusions give to the existing EU Alcohol strategy, and the need to continue to foster a multi-sectoral approach to addressing alcohol misuse. In this respect the recognition given to industry self regulatory standards is to be particularly welcomed. CEPS remains convinced that it is through a combination of joint targeted stakeholder action and better enforcement of existing legislation that irresponsible drinking behaviour will be reduced.

CEPS will continue to play an active and constructive role in the EU Alcohol and Health Forum and is determined to implement the commitments that the EU spirits industry made in the CEPS Charter on Responsible Alcohol Consumption. The 4<sup>th</sup>, independently audited, annual CEPS Charter report has just been published and demonstrates the many new initiatives the EU spirits industry has introduced since 2005, as well as its commitment to strengthen further these initiatives in the future. These initiatives include designated driver campaigns, more and better consumer

information and awareness activities and server training programmes, to name but a few.

CEPS however also stresses the importance of undertaking a proper analysis of all the evidence available before considering policy initiatives at either EU or national level which aim at reducing alcohol consumption per se, as opposed to alcohol misuse. The evidence on the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing price or restricting marketing, both mentioned in the Council conclusions, remains highly questionable.

Commenting on the Health Council Conclusions, **Jamie Fortescue, Director General of CEPS** said:

“Spirits consumption in the EU has halved since 1980<sup>[1]</sup>. This decline has not been accompanied by a reduction in alcohol related harm and has occurred during a period when the affordability of alcohol has increased. The spirits industry will play its role in reducing alcohol related harm in the EU, but it remains equally committed to opposing any measures which will penalize responsible consumers”.

## ENDS

<sup>1</sup>source: WHO

**Date of issue:** 1 December 2009

### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The European Spirits Organisation - CEPS is the representative body for the spirits industry at the European level. Its membership comprises 31 national associations representing the industry in 27 countries, as well as a group of leading spirits producing companies.
2. A copy of the Swedish Presidency's Alcohol and Health Conclusions can be seen [here](#)
3. The European Spirits Organisation – CEPS adopted its Charter on Responsible Alcohol Consumption in 2005. The main principles of the Charter include:
  - By 2010, 75% of advertising (print including billboards, TV/cinema and website) will carry responsible drinking messages.
  - By 2010, all CEPS members will introduce or adapt national codes on marketing in order to incorporate all the principles of the established *EFRD Common Standards on Commercial Communications*.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Source: WHO

- The industry will increase investment in promoting retail and server training schemes and drink-driving programmes.
- The industry will work with other stakeholders to define clearly what is meant by responsible drinking and what constitutes misuse and then communicate the information widely.
- Finally, the industry has committed to draw up a comprehensive annual report until 2010 emphasising where progress has been made and improvement needed against precise targets set.

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Charter progress report is available for download at:  
[http://europeanspirits.org/documents/ceps\\_report\\_2009.pdf](http://europeanspirits.org/documents/ceps_report_2009.pdf)

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