

ALCOHOL IN THE EU'S POLICIES

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Delayed Commission report on alcohol labelling frustrates beer industry

New EU rules on nutrition labelling for food and drinks entered into force a few months ago. But whether or not alcoholic beverages will also have to carry them in the future is still unclear. A Commission report on the issue, due in December last year, is yet to be published.

Renate Sommer is a centre-right German MEP (European People's Party) who was rapporteur on the food labelling regulation when it was voted on in the European Parliament back in 2011.

Speaking at an event hosted by the EurActiv Institute last week, she recalled that alcoholic beverages were excluded from the regulation because lawmakers could not agree on a definition for so-called alcopops, which are mixtures of alcoholic beverages with soft drinks or juices.

The European Commission was given until December 2014 to define alcopops, and to deliver a report about how alcoholic beverages should be treated under the regulation.



Beer labels. Not enough info? [a olin/Flickr]

However, nothing has been published so far, and there is no indication the Commission will do so any time soon.

Making comparisons

This has led to an absurd situation where consumers can easily find out the list of ingredients contained in a bottle of milk, but not on a bottle of whisky or beer, said participants at the EurActiv event.

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) said consumers ought to have this information as few consumers are aware that a half litre of beer (5% alcohol) contains approximately 220 calories, or the equivalent of a chocolate bar.

Because it believes consumers have the right to know what's in their drinks, BEUC recently sent a letter to the EU Commissioner for Food and Health, Vytenis Andriukaitis, urging him to step up action on alcohol labelling.

"BEUC can see no good reason

why alcoholic drinks should be treated differently. Labelling nutritional info and the full list of ingredients should be mandatory to help consumers know what and how much to drink," wrote Monique Goyens, BEUC secretary-general.

Contacted by EurActiv, the Commission said it was currently not in a position to announce the date of adoption of its report.

"Exploratory work has been carried out which has led to preliminary discussions with member states, but most of the work remains to be done," the Commission wrote. "Further discussions are still needed before we can progress with this report."

Brewers launch voluntary move on labelling

AB InBev, the leading global brewer, was frustrated with the delay, saying that

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“clarity from the Commission on how they see the labelling discussion for all alcohol sectors is overdue.”

The Brewers of Europe, which represents the beer industry in Brussels, backed the consumer group, saying shoppers have a right to compare nutritional and ingredients information, between beers and other beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

“We are thus looking forward to the Commission publishing the report and seeing what plans the EU has to address the current exemption for alcoholic beverages to provide nutrition and ingredients information,” said Simon Spillane, senior advisor to The Brewers of Europe.

In the meantime, The Brewers of Europe, announced a major voluntary move to list ingredients and nutrition information on their brands per 100ml, in line with the new EU regulation.

“We want Europe’s consumers to know the ingredients in beer and how these beers can fit within a balanced lifestyle,” said Pierre-Olivier Bergeron, Secretary General of The Brewers of Europe. “Brewers already label the alcohol content on their beer brands but we also agree with consumer groups that citizens would benefit from having access to the ingredients and nutrition information, allowing them to compare like-for-like facts with all the other beverages available to them, both non-alcoholic and alcoholic.”

Misleading consumers?

But SpiritsEurope, a trade group representing producers of spirit drinks at EU level, believes putting detailed nutrition information on the product’s labels could mislead consumers.

While SpiritsEurope is in favour of sharing information with consumers on nutrition, origin and ingredients, it says a detailed discussion needs to take place about what exactly should be displayed. Moreover, it believes information should only be provided per portion, and not by 100 milliliter (ml), as is required under the existing regulation.

“While 100ml is usually a fraction of the amount of beer a person might consume in one serving, it can equal to three servings of spirits: the maximum daily recommendation for men and beyond what is recommended for women. A calorie comparison based on 100 ml rather than per serving will mislead rather than inform,” SpiritsEurope said.

Paul Skehan, the director-general of SpiritsEurope, called for an open dialogue “for the assessment of the most appropriate method of provision of each information, that is, whether on- or off-label”.

CEEV, a trade group representing the wine sector, agreed, saying labelling is not the only solution to convey information to consumers.

“It is certainly not the panacea to provide information on the energy content in wines that is proportionate, accurate, meaningful and useful for consumers,” CEEV commented, saying it is sometimes “better delivered off-pack,” like on internet sites.

CEEV also argued that wine products have specific characteristics, which vary from producer to producer and year to year. This means that the administrative burdens linked to the management of changing labels, and related stock-keeping for wine producers, would be unparalleled in comparison with other mass-produced industrial food and beverage products.

“Mandatory nutritional labelling would result in the wine sector incurring huge additional costs that would be impossible to face by most wine producers, an overwhelming majority of micro, small and medium enterprises,” CEEV told EurActiv.

Renate Sommer agreed that the question of mandatory labelling for alcoholic beverages was difficult.

“There is a difference between spirits, beer and wine. Mandatory labelling says it has to be always labelled per 100 ml. This might mislead the consumer on the consumption of the spirit. You shouldn’t drink 100 ml of spirits as a unit. It sounds easy just to have everything labelled, but we need to also take the problems of the producers into account,” she said.

Consumers in the dark over alcoholic drinks content

Consumer knowledge about the nutritional value and ingredients contained in alcoholic beverages is limited, according to a new survey published last week.

Only three out of ten respondents said they were aware that spirits contain more calories than orange juice, beer or wine, according to the new survey by GfK research, published on Thursday (26 March).

This lack of awareness about the nutritional content of alcoholic beverages comes despite a stated interest from consumers who said they would like to receive such information.

The respondents included 5,395 people in six countries - Germany, Poland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The survey is significant because a new

EU-wide regulation for food and drinks labelling, including rules on ingredients, entered into force in December last year.

These rules do not apply to alcoholic beverages, however, and it remains unclear whether they will.

The survey was published as trade group The Brewers of Europe announced a major voluntary move to list ingredients and nutrition information on their brands per 100ml, in line with the new EU regulation.

“We want Europe’s consumers to know the ingredients in beer and how these beers can fit within a balanced lifestyle,” said

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Pierre-Olivier Bergeron, Secretary General of The Brewers of Europe.

“Brewers already label the alcohol content on their beer brands but we also agree with consumer groups that citizens would benefit from having access to the ingredients and nutrition information, allowing them to compare like-for-like facts with all the other beverages available to them, both non-alcoholic and alcoholic.”

Information on ingredients

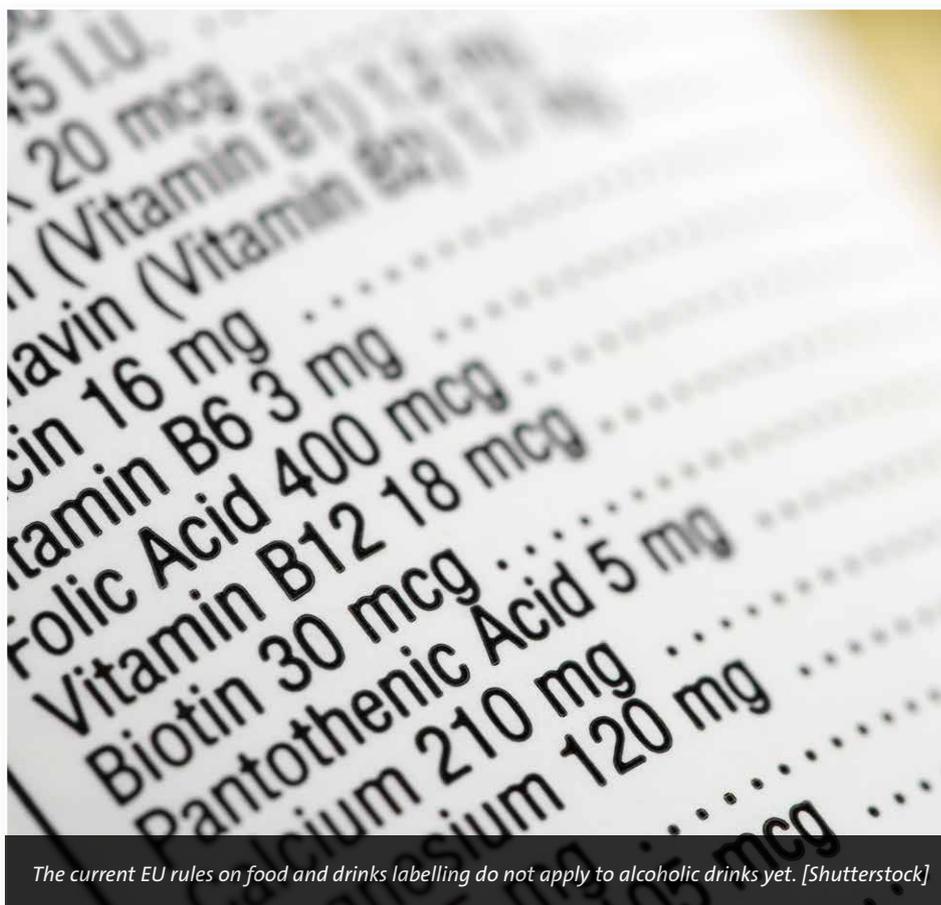
In general, all respondents to the GfK survey believed that beer - whether alcohol-free or regular - contained more calories than 50 kcal per 100 ml, which is the average for beer.

A majority likewise overestimated the amount of calories contained in white or red wine (which stands at 51-100 kcal per 100 ml on average). On the other hand, they tended to underestimate the number of calories contained in whiskey (which normally lies between 201 and 250 kcal per 100 ml).

Overall, respondents were able to name the most commonly-used ingredients of beer, namely water, hops and yeast. They were also able to mention grapes as a main ingredient in wine, but half of all the respondents indicated incorrectly that water is an ingredient of wine. 20% also named other fruits as ingredients in wine.

Knowledge about the main ingredients for different kinds of spirits proved to be lower than for beer and wine. While the majority knew that water is a key ingredient in vodka, whiskey, gin and rum, a large proportion of respondents named false ingredients such as grapes and other fruits, herbs, spices and cereals.

69% of those surveyed agreed that the same nutrition information which is currently mandatory for food and alcohol-free drinks, should also be mandatory for alcoholic beverages. And 74% of respondents wanted the list of ingredients provided for alcoholic drinks. These include energy value, fat, carbohydrates, sugars, proteins and salt.



The current EU rules on food and drinks labelling do not apply to alcoholic drinks yet. [Shutterstock]

European consumer organisation BEUC said it was concerned that consumers were not aware of what they are drinking.

“We think consumers should know how many calories their drinks contain. We think this information is essential, especially in the context of the increasing levels of obesity and overweight among adults and young consumers,” said the BEUC’s Ilaria Passarani. “We know that young people tend to consume a lot of alcohol. Maybe they are not aware of the calories they are ingesting by consuming alcoholic beverages.”

Global brewer AB InBev said that the research backed their assumption that a large majority of consumers are interested in ingredients and nutrition labelling for alcoholic drinks.

“Consumers’ expectations for full ingredient and nutrition information for all food and drink products are clear. But the GfK report also shows some important knowledge gaps, including a common misperception that beer has more calories than is actually the case. Together with other brewers, we have a clear case for making sure consumers have the right information at their

fingertips,” AB InBev said in a statement.

Consumer thinking

But Paul Skehan, the director general of SpiritsEurope, a trade group, sounded a note of caution about the brewer’s consumer survey.

A survey designed to really understand consumer thinking would first ask them to rank the information they would like to have, in order of priority, Skehan claimed. Consumers would then be asked to say whether they would prefer to see this information on the product itself, or by other means, for example, digitally.

The spirits industry said the brewers’ move was misleading and also undermined messages about responsible drinking. “While 100 ml is usually a fraction of the amount of beer a person might consume in one serving, it can equal to three servings of spirits,” the trade group said.

Anyway, Skehan said it was inconceivable that consumers will ever be satisfied with whatever information that’s presented to them.

Commission applauds beer industry's move on labelling

Beer drinkers across Europe will soon be able to find out the detailed calorie and nutrition content of their drinks after four of the world's biggest brewers announced last week that they will make the information available.

The EU's Food Information to Consumers Regulation entered into force on 13 December 2014, but alcoholic beverages was exempted from labelling obligations pending a Commission report.

The report, which was due to be adopted by 13 December 2014, was delayed. It is still unclear when it will be published.

As a result of the deadlock, industry advocates The Brewers of Europe announced that the beer sector had committed to go beyond the existing EU regulation when it comes to informing consumers about ingredients and nutrition information.

"We are not pressed upon by the EU regulators to (do) this, so it's a voluntary commitment which goes beyond the current regulation," said Pierre-Olivier Bergeron, the Secretary-General of the Brewers of Europe.

"It's a major commitment, because the brewing sector is not a couple of companies here and there - it's over 5,000 breweries across Europe," Bergeron said when the initiative was made public last week (26 March). "Beer is brewed in every single country. So this commitment did require a lot of preparation on the part of The Brewers of Europe," Bergeron told an event organised by the EurActiv Institute where the initiative was launched.

European consumers have a right to know about the nutritional content of their



European brewers announced a pledge to provide more consumer information on 26 March 2015 in Brussels. [Henriette Jacobsen]

drinks. While the beer industry has provided information in the past, brewers are now "stepping it up", Bergeron explained.

Commission applauds

The EU executive welcomes the industry's move to provide the information voluntarily.

"This is a positive step enhancing consumer information," the Commission said in e-mailed comments.

The Commission has confirmed that it was working on its report, which is now long overdue. Renate Sommer, a centre-right MEP and the former rapporteur on food labelling rules in the European Parliament, said a major sticking point is the definition of so-called 'alcopop' drinks, which mix alcohol with soda or juice.

Bergeron admitted that there has been some impatience with the Commission on the part of the brewers. While the beer industry's self-regulation move had several motivations, he said the beer industry now hopes it can lead to a consultation with the EU's executive.

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) also welcomed the brewers' initiative as a step forward. This was especially significant given the current political climate at the Commission "where we see more and more that 'better regulation' means no regulation or deregulation", said Ilaria Passarani, the Head of the Food and

Health Department at BEUC.

"We know that there is only a small chance that the Commission will come up with a proposal on food labelling for alcoholic beverages anytime soon. In this context, we welcome the initiative of The Brewers of Europe. We hope that other producers of alcoholic beverages will follow this example," Passarani told EurActiv.

Renate Sommer said that part of the difficulty was to decide whether to make labelling voluntary or mandatory. Member states with large wine producing sectors are opposed to mandatory labelling, saying it could cause headaches for their national producers.

New labelling across the sector?

Sommer also suggested that mandatory labelling could cause problems across the entire alcohol sector.

"There is a difference between beer, spirits and wine and the mandatory labelling says it has to be labelled always per 100 ml, but this might mislead the consumer regarding the consumption of spirits. You shouldn't drink 100 ml of spirits as a unit," Sommer told EurActiv.

Her view was supported by SpiritsEurope, which represents the spirits industry.

"We are also in favour of an open

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dialogue for the assessment of the most appropriate method of provision of each information, that is, whether on- or off-label. But that information must work for consumers, not mislead them," said Paul Skehan, the Director-General of SpiritsEurope.

Skehan stated that calorie information for alcoholic beverages per 100 ml portions would maybe serve the interest of the beer industry, but risked misleading the public and undermine messages about responsible drinking.

"While 100 ml is usually a fraction of the amount of beer a person might consume in one serving, it can equal to three servings of spirits: the maximum daily recommendation for men and beyond what is recommended for women," SpiritsEurope said.

Bergeron, however, pointed out that 100 ml is currently a regulatory point of reference and that consumers expect to make like-for-like comparisons. He suggested adding a serving size reference or a consumption size unit in addition to the 100 ml reference.

Costs for small companies

Another sticking point is that detailed labelling obligations might favour big industrial producers over small wine or beer producers, Sommer pointed out.

Industrial producers have standardised products with predictable ingredients while drinks coming out of micro-breweries and small wineries may vary greatly, making labelling trickier, Sommer remarked. The laboratory research this would entail could prove too costly for them, she stressed. And creating new labels and having them printed would also add costs for small producers.

Bergeron was less worried, saying The Brewers of Europe will support their members in calculating the nutritional value of their products. He also said individual beer companies will be given time to comply with the new industry-wide labelling requirements. The pledge, he pointed out, should be a motivational factor for European brewers.

Consumers have the right to know what's in their beer

The Brewers of Europe have announced a groundbreaking commitment to go beyond the existing EU legislation on consumer information, and progressively provide ingredients and nutrition values on their products, writes Pierre-Olivier Bergeron.

Pierre-Olivier Bergeron is Secretary-General of The Brewers of Europe, an association bringing together the national brewers' associations from 29 European countries.

Do you know the ingredients that go into making beer? Do you know how beer can fit within a balanced lifestyle? Even if you do, do you think other consumers should be as informed as you?

Europe's brewers are rightly proud of their beers and the ingredients they use. We want Europe's consumers to know these ingredients and the nutritional values of the beers we brew. And we are not afraid to go beyond the requirements in current EU legislation when it comes to informing our consumers.

Beer and other alcoholic beverages are covered by the EU Regulation on Food Information to Consumers, but on two aspects there is currently an exemption for drinks of more than 1.2% ABV (alcohol by volume), namely on ingredients listing and the nutrition declaration.

Ground-breaking commitment

Last week, The Brewers of Europe announced, however, a groundbreaking commitment from brewers to go beyond

this existing EU legislation on consumer information and to progressively provide ingredients and nutrition values in an objective manner.

Brewers will list ingredients in descending order, whilst the calories, fats, carbohydrates, proteins and salt values will be provided per 100ml, as is currently legally required for all other non-alcoholic beverages, including non-alcoholic beers. This mandatory 100ml reference point set in EU legislation allows consumers to compare nutritional values in a simple and accurate way across all drinks and to calculate easily their nutritional intake.

Taking account changing consumer behaviours and the continuing advancements in mobile technologies, brewers will furthermore feature the information on label and/or online, keeping in step with the changing times to help ensure we have better informed consumers not just today but also in the future.

With many consumers increasingly interested in getting the right lifestyle balance, we want our consumers to know how beer, when consumed in moderation and by healthy adults, can fit within an adult's balanced lifestyle.

Better informed consumers

In Europe alone there are over five thousand breweries, forty thousand different brands, and around one hundred different beer styles. The brewing community incorporates major multinationals, significant regional and national companies, and a number of SMEs, very much attached to their local communities.

In fact, brewers already label ingredients, either voluntarily or as a mandatory requirement, in over half the EU markets, and in some countries the brewers are already providing nutrition information. This is one of the reasons why the implementation of our commitment will have to be progressive, since some markets will need to take bigger steps than others, even if the overarching philosophy

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remains the same, namely to have better informed consumers.

Once started, we will set interim targets, report on the progress made and showcase some of the best practices that can inspire not just other brewers, but also other food and drink producers.

This commitment will also contribute to the European Beer Pledge, a package of responsibility initiatives that was launched by The Brewers of Europe in 2012, and on which we have been reporting annually ever since.

Online opportunities

The roll-out of this commitment will entail additional information on the labels but also further information through online platforms.

An important tool for informing consumers, the label is now also part of a growing range of platforms from which consumers can, and indeed wish to, seek information about the products available to them. Providing information online promises to be an exciting and innovative means to ensure consumers have at their

fingertips all the knowledge they require about a given product.

When the EU's latest Food Information Regulation was adopted in 2011, the debate was all about the label. Yet the Regulation itself left the door open for new technologies and proposes that these be looked at seriously in the future as a means of having better informed consumers.

There are a number of opportunities to placing information online, notably to have more tailored, targeted information for individual consumers, information that may not be appropriate for the label, also due to the space limitations. The information itself can also be quickly and easily updated as and when appropriate, reducing some of the not insignificant costs that go with calculating the seven nutritional declarations - calories, fat (of which saturated fats), carbohydrates (of which sugar), protein and salt - and changing labels.

The label will nevertheless continue to be an integral part of the online communications, since it will direct the consumers to the additional information sources.

Need for a level-playing field

The European Commission is due to produce a report on the exemption from EU rules and the next steps for dealing with alcoholic beverages.

Should it do so, it must establish a level-playing field amongst all alcoholic beverages with regard to the provision of ingredients and nutrition information. A level playing field means providing the same information and also using the same reference points as are currently applied to all non-alcoholic beverages. This will also be essential in helping consumers to make informed comparisons between all drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

In the meantime, we were delighted to see our announcement being welcomed by the major European consumer groups and public health NGOs in the alcohol field. The Brewers of Europe will now move forward with the implementation of our commitment and encourages other drinks sectors to join us in this endeavour to ensure we have better informed consumers with regards to alcoholic beverages, ingredients and nutrition information.

The Brewers of Europe | Pierre-Olivier Bergeron



A beer garden in Bavaria. [Shutterstock]

What's in alcoholic drinks should be no secret

To know what our food and drinks are made of is a basic consumer right. However, alcoholic beverages – often loaded with calories and sugar – scarcely display the full list of ingredients and nutritional information, escaping the rules applied to everything else we eat and drink, writes Ilaria Passarani.

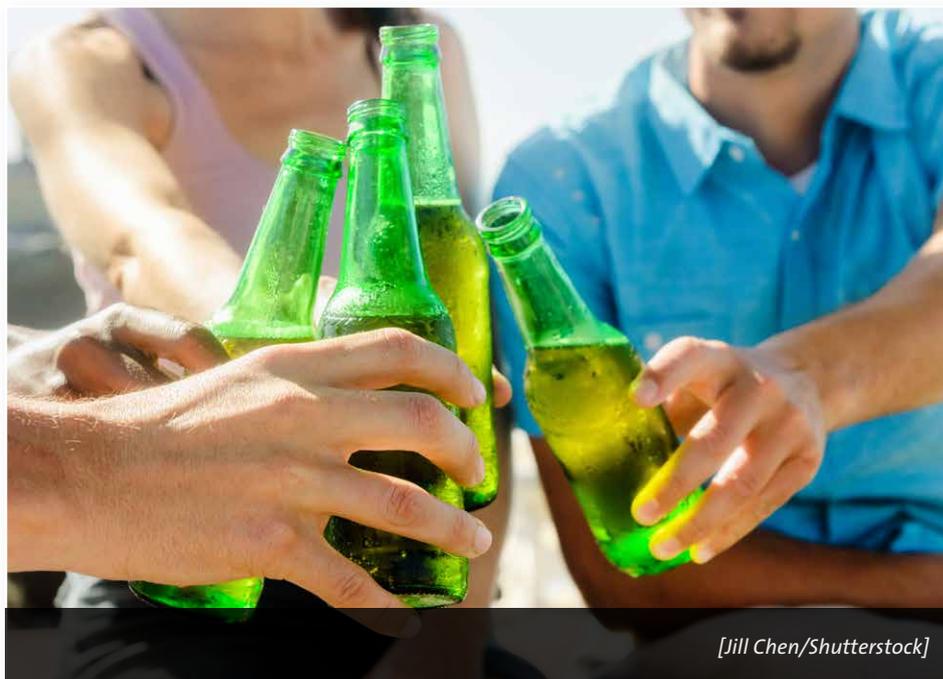
Ilaria Passarani is the Head of the Food and Health Department at The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), a 40-member strong organisation defending the interests of consumers at European level.

Mystery calories

Have you ever tried to find how many calories you ingest by sipping a glass of wine or beer? Ever wondered what those beverages are made of? While such information is easy to spot on a bottle of orange juice or milk, one cannot say the same when it comes to alcoholic beverages. Currently, nutrition and ingredient information is only labelled on alcoholic drinks at the manufacturers' discretion. Just check bottles in a supermarket and you will realise it applies in very few cases.

Most of us know alcohol must be consumed in moderation. However, the scale of alcohol's impact on our weight and health is far less obvious. How many people know that an average half litre of 5% alcohol beer contains as many calories as a chocolate bar (i.e. about 220 calories)? Or that a large glass of wine is more caloric than a cookie?

Needless to say, we need calories to fuel our bodies so they can support our daily activities. However, those present in alcohol are 'empty' calories[i], hence not vital. On top of being highly caloric, some



[Jill Chen/Shutterstock]

alcoholic drinks are also laden with sugar. As such, alcohol's part in our overall diet is often overlooked, despite the number of overweight or obese Europeans being on the rise.

Secret ingredients

As regards composition, consumers cannot know if food additives – such as colourings, preservatives or flavours – are mixed into the final product. No rule requires mention of whether apple flavour has been added to cider, for instance. Also, any added additives simply must be labelled on soft drinks, but the rule is inapplicable to alcohol-based versions.

What's in the EU law?

The Food Information Regulation[ii] which recently entered into force in Europe requires all food and beverages to list ingredients and display energy value, fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt.

However, alcoholic beverages have slipped through the Regulation's net and are exempted from such requirements. Since December 2014, the European Commission has been postponing the publication of a report assessing whether the reasons justifying such exemptions are sufficient.

Ending the exemption

We are not telling consumers to go 'teetotal'. Our goal is to make sure they have the tools to make considered decisions. Nutritional labelling must be one such tool. Just like consumers have the right to know what they eat, they have the right to know what they drink.

Making ingredients compulsory on alcoholic drink labels would ensure consumers are not misled as to the true nature of a product, can assess quality properly and determine which product they want to buy. With controls being based on the ingredient list, it would also help combat fraud. Adding sugar and sweeteners to wine as flavour enhancers is just one example of alcohol manipulation.

Nutrition labelling on alcohol should be the default rule, not just an option. Voluntary labels undoubtedly create great disparities from one brand or country to another. No matter where they live or what their favourite drink is, all European consumers should be able to know what amount of sugar and calories they intake with alcohol.

If the European Commission is as serious as it claims about informing consumers and tackling obesity, at the minimum it should fulfill its obligations foreseen in the Food information Regulation by publishing the awaited report on alcohol labelling with no further delay.

Lawmakers urge Commission to table new alcohol strategy

Members of the European Parliament, backed by health NGOs and the alcohol industry, are asking the European Commission to propose a new alcohol strategy, saying it should depart from the current one.

Some MEPs are losing their patience with the Commission, and want the EU executive to speed up the process of launching a new strategy.

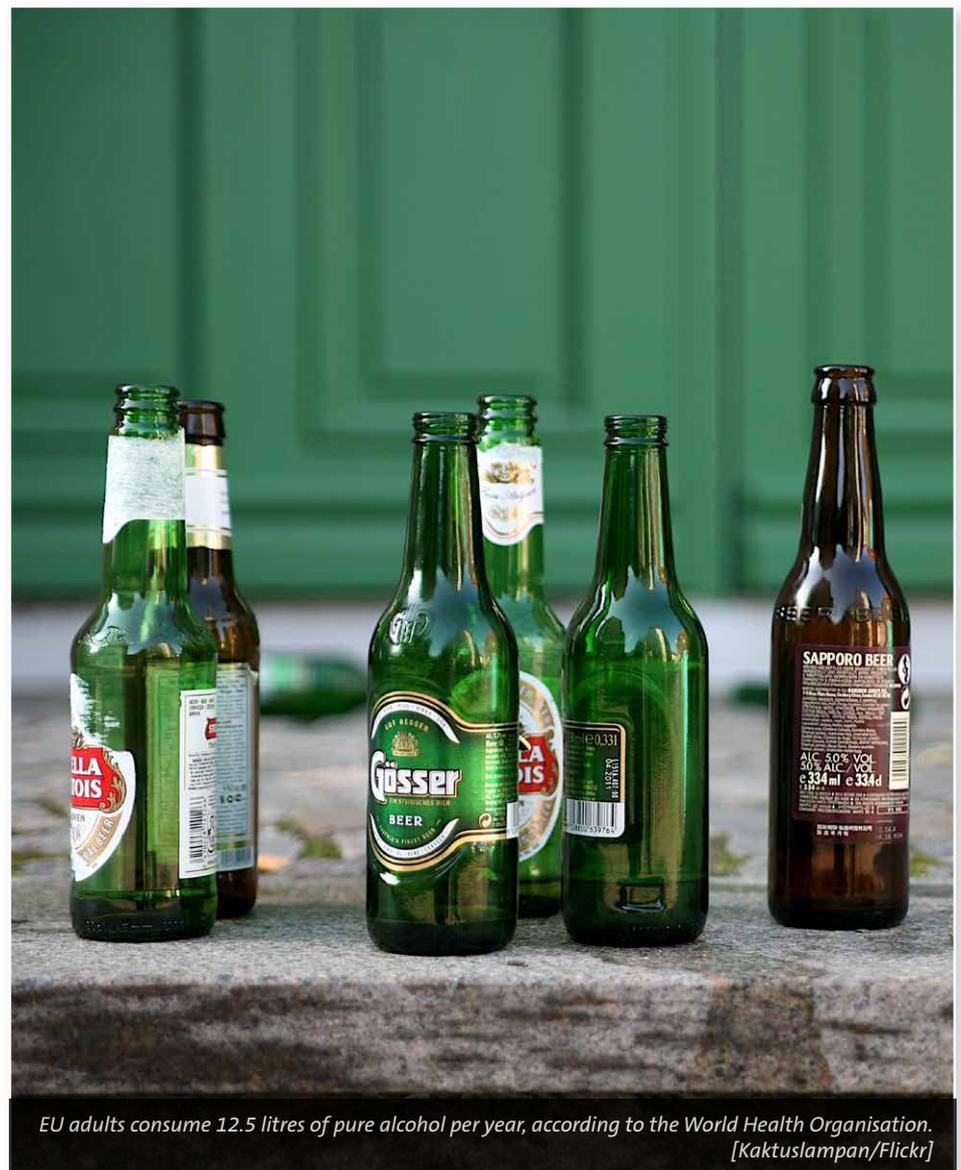
On Tuesday (31 March), the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) overwhelmingly adopted a resolution which calls for the Commission to start working immediately on the Strategy.

The strategy should enter into force in 2016 and continue over an extended period of time, they said.

The EU's latest strategy in reducing alcohol-related harm expired in 2013, after seven years in use.

While it did not impose specific legislation, the strategy provided guidance to member states in preventing harmful and hazardous drinking, by tackling areas such as drink driving, alcohol during pregnancy and underage drinking.

Three French MEPs - Angélique Delahaye, Françoise Grossetête and Michel Dantin from the European People's Party (EPP) - praised the Parliament committee's resolution, saying it underlines the responsibility of both consumers and producers in preserving



EU adults consume 12.5 litres of pure alcohol per year, according to the World Health Organisation. [Kaktuslampan/Flickr]

public health, while respecting cultural traditions.

The resolution puts emphasis on prevention and education for young people, and gives member states the means to address alcohol harm as a public health problem, they said.

EurActiv asked the Commission whether it plans to update the previous alcohol strategy, or present a completely new one at some point during its mandate. The EU's executive replied that it was in the middle of a review process.

"As part of the process, we need to consider how alcohol-related harm can fit into a more holistic approach to support sustainable health systems and reduce the burden of chronic diseases," the Commission told EurActiv in an email.

Industry supports current strategy

The Brewers of Europe, an industry group representing the beer industry, referred to an independent evaluation of the previous strategy, published in late 2012, which showed the priorities were the right ones and remained valid.

"It is imperative that we continue to pursue the current EU strategy with a renewed vigour, taking on board the evaluation's recommendations," The Brewers said.

Paul Skehan, the Director-General of SpiritsEurope, the European body representing producers of spirits, stressed the importance of working in partnership

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with all stakeholders in order to reduce the harms caused by alcohol, such as binge drinking, underage drinking, drinking during pregnancy and drink-driving.

“Currently, the fight against alcohol harm is too fragmented, and lacking in coordination. The fight is also hindered by an increasingly polemic, polarised debate: simple one-size-fits-all solutions are touted as the only possible way to solve what is an exceptionally complex, varied set of challenges,” Skehan said.

“Collectively, we need more constructive discussion about the real problems, their causes and the remedies we might all apply towards reducing harm. Those remedies need to be based on sound science and robust evidence,” Skehan continued.

Minimum unit pricing

Another element which some legislators want included in the next Strategy is Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP).

While no member state currently has an MUP law, in 2012, the Scottish government decided to introduce one, and the UK government undertook to do the same.

The MUP in Scotland was set at 50p per unit, and the legislation supposed was to have been implemented in April 2013. However, it was delayed by a legal challenge by the Scottish Whisky Association (SWA), SpiritsEurope and wine producers (CEEV). The case has now been referred to the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

In an interview with EurActiv in September, Glennis Willmott, a British MEP from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), said the MUP could be a useful tool to be included in the new alcohol strategy.

“We have to look at it carefully. There is a whole range of problems. We have to make sure that the extra money doesn't go to the supermarket, and just

making profit. But it's something worth looking at, and I think it's something we should be discussing,” she said.

Meanwhile, the UK's House of Lords' EU Committee a few weeks ago published a report, saying that while MUP is controversial, it has been successful in bringing health benefits to the heaviest drinkers.

The Lords even called on the UK government to honour the commitment it gave in 2012 by following suit.

The court decision on whether or not setting up an MUP could be legal in the EU was previously announced to be in the spring of 2015.

But Mark Taylor, a spokesperson for the Scottish Government, told EurActiv that his government is now expecting a decision later this year.

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