

## **Europe's brewers determined to further target alcohol-related harm**

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*Brussels – 1 December 2009* – The Conclusions on alcohol and health adopted today by Europe's Health Ministers miss a golden opportunity to develop a sustainable approach against tackling alcohol-related harm.

"Whilst we can welcome the fact that Sweden made tackling alcohol-related harm one of its EU Presidency objectives, the priority areas for action identified today do not put us on the most appropriate course going forward," said the Secretary General of The Brewers of Europe, Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem. "The text adopted today sends out the message that by simply pushing up the prices and further restricting advertising, Europe can successfully curb alcohol-related harm. Looking to the future, we would question if this is really an effective and sustainable way of tackling the problem."

According to Europe's brewers, if such policies were to be implemented across the EU, the problem of alcohol abuse would not be solved, whilst the ones to suffer would be the overwhelming majority of European beer consumers who consume responsibly, the 2.5 million Europeans who owe their jobs to beer, and the 4,000 breweries already struggling through the current economic crisis.

"Unfortunately, the Conclusions adopted today seem to have prevailed in sending a simplistic message that yet more, tighter regulation automatically leads to lower misuse, which is just not the case," Mr de Looz-Corswarem added.

The Secretary General of The Brewers of Europe went on to praise outgoing European Health Commissioner, Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, saying her support for the EU Alcohol and Health Platform and the proactive participation of stakeholders such as The Brewers of Europe had been well recognised and appreciated.

"At the end of the day, what's effective when it comes to targeting alcohol misuse, and what we have been demonstrating through the EU Alcohol and Health Forum, is that targeted and locally-focused initiatives – in partnership with local stakeholders – work. I would again appeal to the EU's policy makers to recognise these actions before looking into new legislation," Mr de Looz-Corswarem stated.

The Secretary General of The Brewers of Europe concluded by saying that "whatever obstacles Europe's brewers might face in the future, two things are certain: we have a responsible role to play and we remain fully committed towards tackling alcohol misuse and related harm."

**ENDS**

**For further comment and information, please contact:**

Niall Doheny

The Brewers of Europe

Email: [nd@brewersofeurope.org](mailto:nd@brewersofeurope.org)

Tel: +32 (0)2 551 18 14

Web: [www.brewersofeurope.org](http://www.brewersofeurope.org)

Twitter: @brewersofeurope

**Note to the editors**

The Brewers of Europe, founded in 1958 and based in Brussels, is the voice of the European brewing sector towards the European institutions and international organisations. It has 27 members, comprising 24 national brewer associations from most EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. Among the roughly 4,000 brewers across Europe, the vast majority are small and medium-sized, local and family-run businesses. 2.5 million jobs are directly or indirectly linked to the European brewing sector.

The Brewers of Europe are founding members of the EU Alcohol and Health Forum launched by the European Commission in June 2007 establishing a platform for discussion among businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders and encouraging a joint undertaking to tackle the issue of alcohol-related harm.