

In light of coronavirus pandemic, wine industry gets even more EU funding

European Union after a health pandemic gives even more money to promotion of certain unhealthy products.

European Alcohol Policy Alliance is disappointed and strongly condemns European Commission's decision to give additional package of exceptional measures to support the wine sector, following the coronavirus crisis¹.

Given the well-recognised carcinogenicity of wine as an alcohol product and its contribution as a risk factor to a number of chronic diseases (which are a co-founding factor for higher mortality due to COVID-19), it is highly irresponsible for the European Institutions to allow greater than usual support for the wine industry.

The WHO European region continues to have the highest level of alcohol consumption per capita globally and proportionately higher levels of burden of disease attributable to alcohol use compared to other regions. It is irresponsible for European Commission to promote policies and products that are in juxtaposition to health policies.

Alcohol, even in very small quantities, is known to cause certain types of cancer. Alcohol use, especially heavy use, weakens the immune system and thus reduces the ability to cope with infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

'They say one should not waste a crisis. But the European Commission just did. When it comes to health policy the European Commission has shown that it bows to the powerful lobbies of the wine industry and disregards alcohol's impact on health. It is very sad that a health crisis is used to get even more tax-payers money from the European Union by the alcohol industry' said Mariann Skar Secretary General of European Alcohol Policy Alliance.

The new measures include the temporary authorisation for operators to self-organise market measures, the increase of the European Union's contribution for wine national support programmes, and the introduction of advance payments for crisis distillation and storage.

The European Union's contribution for measures of the national support programmes will increase by another 10% and reach 70%. A previous exceptional measure had already increased it from 50% to 60%. In addition to these support measures for the wine sector will also benefit from an increase of the EU's contribution (from 50% to 70%) for programmes managed by producer organisations.

¹ Announcement from 7 July 2020, accessible:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1267

Especially disappointing is the decision to allocate more resources for the promotion programmes for wine.² Europe's economic recovery should be a healthy one in every sense of that word and not use public funds to promote unhealthy products.

Resources to help the EU recover after a health pandemic should not be allocated to support production and promotion of unhealthy products such as wine.

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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

² The European Commission recently launched two calls for proposals for promotion programmes that aim to support the sectors most affected by the crisis, including the wine sector. The two calls will be opened until 27 August 2020.