

## TRIS notification 2024/0351/LV

### Draft law 'Amendments to the Handling of Alcoholic Beverages Law'

EFOW, the European Federation of Origin Wines ([www.efow.eu](http://www.efow.eu)), is a Brussels-based organisation representing wines with an Appellation of Origin and Geographical Indication from the European Union. As the voice of the European origin wines towards European and international institutions, it is actively advocating for a better protection and promotion of these wines within the EU and throughout the world.

Its current members are the national associations in charge of origin wines from France (CNAOC), Italy (FEDERDOC), Spain (CECRV), as well as the Port and Douro Wines Institute (IVDP) from Portugal.

#### "Because origin matters"

The appellation wine sector is a perfect example of a sector that is constantly modernising while preserving the traditions and skills rooted in its different terroirs. These high-quality products, with their great variety and originality, cannot be relocated or copied. This model is based on an atomised network of small and medium-sized businesses, often family-run, which create numerous direct and indirect jobs in rural areas, including thousands of jobs in wine tourism. The wine sector's contribution to the economy of the EU's territories is considerable and indispensable, as in many regions of the EU there is no viable agricultural alternative to winegrowing.

For centuries, wine production has been a way of life in many parts of Europe. It is a tradition that is part of a shared culture and heritage. The fruit of long-term labour, wine requires passion and in-depth knowledge of soil use, grape varieties, science and business skills. Many of Europe's wine-growing regions are on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites, offering unique environments and fostering biodiversity.

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On July 1, 2024, Latvia notified the European Commission of a draft law aiming to amend 'the Handling of Alcoholic Beverages Law'.

According to Latvian authorities, this draft is necessary to "*reduce alcohol consumption, (...) reduce the proportion of at-risk users (...) and to reduce long-term alcohol-related diseases and mortality due to alcohol consumption.*"

#### EFOW would like to provide its remarks to the TRIS notification 2024/0351/LV:

- We appreciate the Latvian authorities' initiative to integrate EU wine labelling rules into national legislation. However, **the proposed Article 7, as notified via the TRIS process, seems to exceed the requirements set by the EU by mandating the inclusion of the list of ingredients directly on the label.** Under EU Regulations 1308/2013 and 1151/2012, as amended by Regulation (EU) 2021/2117, the list of ingredients can be provided either on the label or, under certain conditions, by digital means. **We urge the Latvian authorities to ensure that Article 7 aligns fully with the EU wine labelling rules by explicitly allowing the option of providing the list of ingredients electronically.**
- Additionally, the **provisions regarding pregnancy and drink-driving pictograms require further clarification.** As it stands, it is unclear whether these measures are proportionate, given the lack of specific guidelines for the pictograms. In other EU countries (France, Lithuania, and soon Ireland), a pregnancy warning pictogram is already mandatory. **Latvia should ensure mutual recognition of such pictograms to avoid unnecessary redesigns for the Latvian market.**

- We also note that the draft law introduces a **discriminatory distinction between physical retail outlets and online sales of alcoholic beverages**. Specifically, it imposes a 6-hour delay between the sale and delivery of alcoholic beverages purchased online, while no such delay exists for in-person sales at retail outlets. This distinction not only discriminates between different types of businesses but also unduly restricts consumer freedom and choice. We recommend that this provision be removed from the draft to avoid infringing on EU competition rules.
- Regarding retail locations, the draft law requires a **"prominently displayed sign" warning that alcohol consumption has negative health effects, that alcoholic beverages cannot be sold to minors, and that minors may not purchase, consume, or possess alcoholic beverages**. The Latvian government should clarify both the content and format of this sign, as it is currently impossible to assess whether the measure is proportionate. **Moreover, health warnings should focus on harmful alcohol consumption rather than implying that all consumption is harmful**. Broad, generalised statements warning about alcohol consumption, irrespective of drinking patterns (such as quantity, frequency, or context), do not provide useful health guidance to consumers. Instead, they should be given evidence-based information aimed at reducing harmful consumption patterns, in line with the WHO Global Strategy and related action plans endorsed by Member States. We encourage the Latvian government to ensure that its legislative measures provide consumers with actionable guidance based on scientific evidence, focusing on the harmful use of alcohol rather than alcohol consumption in general. This would support better public health outcomes and align with international best practices.