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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**
meeting on 8 December 2016

Commission report on the labelling of alcoholic beverages - Article 16(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers

– *Information from the Irish Delegation*

(Any Other Business item)

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Irish Delegation on the above mentioned subject.

Food Information to Consumers

Article 16 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011

Commission report on the labelling of alcoholic beverages

Alcohol misuse is a big social challenge in Europe. According to WHO, alcohol is the third leading risk factor for disease and mortality in Europe. The EU is the region with the highest alcohol consumption in the world. Alcohol may cause serious harm and it can be linked to more than 60 different types of diseases and conditions, among them injuries, mental disorders, and cardiovascular diseases.

Alcohol misuse also causes damage to others, such as children in families with alcohol disorders or third parties harmed from alcohol related traffic accidents and/or violence. The costs of harmful alcohol consumption in the EU are extremely high. Many challenges in relation to alcohol misuse, such as cross-border advertising, labelling requirements and sales, need be tackled at European level.

Member States can drive their own policy initiatives so far, but EU cooperation is needed.

In the Scoping Paper for a new EU Alcohol Strategy (adopted by The Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action (CNAPA) in 2014), Member States called on the Commission to develop a new and ambitious strategy with the main objective to work on cross border issues at EU level and to support Member States in preventing and reducing the harmful use of alcohol across the European Union. One of the areas for action proposed was providing health-related information through the labelling of alcoholic beverages.

Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers replaced pre-existing rules on food labelling and covers all of the information to be made available to the final consumer whether by means of a label, website, advertisement etc. It enables consumers to make more informed choices on the food they purchase by extending mandatory labelling requirements. Most significantly, pre-packed foods will be required to display a nutrition declaration from 13 December 2016. This declaration must include the energy value along with the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt in the food. The display of allergen information on pre-packed food must now be clearly emphasised and, for the first time, food business operators must provide allergen information with non-prepacked food. Additional legislative proposals may follow following the publication of a number of reports in the coming years.

According to Article 16(4) of Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 the Commission was mandated to produce a report, by 13 December 2014, addressing whether alcoholic beverages should in future be covered, in particular, by the requirement to provide the information on the energy value, and the reasons justifying possible exemptions, taking into account the need to ensure coherence with other relevant Union policies. Furthermore, that report should be accompanied by a legislative proposal, if appropriate, determining the rules for a list of ingredients or a mandatory nutrition declaration for those products.

Given the vital importance of this matter , in terms of the provision of crucial information to consumers and the necessity of ensuring adequate protection of public health across the EU, Ireland requests an update from the Commission in respect of the completion and publication of the report (including the accompanying legislative proposal, if deemed appropriate).