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EP waters down report on how to reduce alcohol-related harm

Health and alcohol

The European Parliament today adopted an amended report on an EU strategy for reducing alcohol-related harm, rejecting calls to harmonise EU health warnings on alcoholic drinks. Commenting on the report, German Green MEP **Hiltrud Breyer**, said:

"Given the extent and seriousness of alcohol-related harm in the EU, it is extremely disappointing that the EP has voted to water down its report on reducing alcohol-related harm by removing calls to harmonise EU health warnings on alcoholic drinks, in particular concerning pregnant women. This u-turn from the report adopted by the Environment and Public Health Committee, in response to the alcohol industry's lobby, sends the wrong signal about the approach of the EU to tackling this problem. Instead of clear EU-wide legislation, the Commission's 'hands-off' approach has been endorsed and all responsibility is left to individual Member States.

"There is clear evidence of health problems caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy, so it is particularly disturbing that the EP rejected calls for appropriate warnings on alcoholic beverages. While the alcohol industry may simply want to ignore the devastating consequences caused by the abuse of alcohol, EU lawmakers should treat this problem with the seriousness it warrants."

Swedish Green MEP **Carl Schlyter** added:

"Alcohol is responsible for at least 7.4% of all early deaths and ill health in the EU and causes a loss of up to 125 billion euro each year. Clear labelling about the potential consequences of alcohol consumption is one way of addressing this problem and we regret that MEPs have failed to take a strong stance in support of such labelling on alcoholic beverages. Total freedom for the alcohol market is anti-liberal, it limits the freedom of people to walk home safely from bars and be safe on our roads, as well as for children to feel safe at home."

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