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**NOTE**

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
No. prev. doc.:	14080/17 SAN 401 DENLEG 94 AUDIO 121 FISC 253
Subject:	<b>Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting on 8 December 2017</b> Draft Council conclusions on cross-border aspects in alcohol policy – tackling harmful use of alcohol – Adoption

Delegations will find attached the Italian statement distributed during the Council (EPSCO) Session on 8 December 2017 in connection with the adoption of the Council conclusions referred to above.

**Statement by Italy on the Council conclusions on alcohol policy**

**EPSCO Council**

**(Brussels, 8 December 2017)**

Italy appreciates the Estonian Presidency's intention to address this issue of great relevance to public health policy - the fight against certain aspects of the harmful use of alcohol - so we do not intend to hinder the adoption of the draft Conclusions.

However, we feel bound to express our regret that certain aspects which we consider important have not been included or strongly emphasised in the text of these conclusions.

These points arise from our positive experience in Italy, where, notwithstanding some worrying trends of excessive consumption, especially among young people, average consumption has been amongst the very lowest in Europe and confined to moderate and responsible use of drinks with a low alcohol content as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

We would therefore have liked the conclusions to emphasise that a safe level of alcohol consumption does not lead to a significant increase in health risks. This would also have been in line with the advice and language used by international organisations such as the WHO, which always refer to the harmful use of alcohol, and not to its consumption as such.

Italy also believes that, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of public prevention and communication policies, especially those aimed at young people, it is essential to adopt a cross-sectoral approach including all industry stakeholders.

Moreover, we consider that the adoption of tax measures is not in itself a proven effective step, and that on the contrary such measures could stimulate illegal supply methods, including through alternative channels, thereby putting consumers' health and safety at risk.

We also believe it is premature to deal with the issue of labelling, as we expect to receive the proposal from the drinks industry in the first few months of next year.

We would reiterate that any national labelling initiative must not violate the principles of free movement of goods between Member States, as provided for in the Treaties.

Italy kindly requests that this statement be included in the minutes of the meeting.

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