



Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) No 251/2014 as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products

(COM(2025) 137 final – 2025/0071 (COD))

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Rapporteur: **Josep PUXEU ROCAMORA**

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Legislative procedure	EU Law Tracker
Referrals	European Parliament, 5.5.2025 Council, 8.5.2025
Legal basis	Articles 43(2) and 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
European Commission documents	COM(2025) 137 final
Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Section responsible	Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
Adopted in section	25.6.2025
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Plenary session No	598
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	153/3/2

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

1.1. underlines the socio-economic importance of the wine sector for the European Union ⁽¹⁾.

- (i) With EUR 100 billion in market value, it contributes EUR 130 billion to the EU's GDP. European wines were exported to 194 different countries in 2022, with a total export value of EUR 17,9 billion, playing a crucial role in which solely the wine exports reduced the EU's balance of trade deficit by 3,7 %.
- (ii) It also contributes to social support by generating a total of 2,9 million jobs, which are revitalising rural areas facing depopulation. This sector exhibits exceptional productivity, yielding higher added value per employee compared to similar activities in other sectors at every stage of the value chain (+ 90 % for grape growing vs crop and animal production; + 16 % for winemaking vs manufacturing; and + 5 % for wine commercialisation vs food and beverage activities). Additionally, wine farms are 15 % more profitable than the average farm in the EU, offering a viable economic alternative for people living in rural areas.

⁽¹⁾ PwC 2024 report for CEEV 'Economic, social and environmental importance of the wine sector in the EU': https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/m0780by1g1vznzfl1qo4n/Report-PwC-on-EU-wine-sector_full_032024.pdf?rlkey=dui2nddbh4mxtj8q942x78q99&e=1&dl=0.

- (iii) With more than 3,1 million hectares of vines in areas where there are often no economic alternatives, the wine sector plays a crucial role in maintaining population in rural areas. The majority of the 2,2 million EU wine holdings are small-scale operations but, despite, their size, these vineyards contribute significantly to rural economies and the EU's wine production. Rural regions with expanding vineyards have nearly managed to maintain their population levels, experiencing only a slight decrease of 0,4 %. In contrast, areas with shrinking vineyards have seen a significantly – 6,5 times – greater decline (by 2,6 %) in the size of their populations.
- (iv) The wine sector's total fiscal contribution was nearly EUR 52 billion in 2022 with social contributions accounting for over 57 % of it, representing approximately 0,7 % of the EU's general government expenditure.
- (v) Beyond its direct economic implications, the European wine sector represents a cultural tradition deeply rooted in the societal landscape. This sector reflects a diverse heritage, shaped by centuries of history and innovation, where each terroir contributes to creating a true mosaic of production regions. Viticulture is not only about wine production; it also embodies a way of life, a collective identity and a connection to a territory. The EU wine package should therefore aim not only to secure competitiveness and encourage investment but also to preserve this social and cultural fabric that unites citizens, by highlighting the synergies between the economy, environment and culture. This will help strengthen the spirit of wine regions and ensure a sustainable future for this iconic sector.

1.2. notes the cultural importance of wine in the EU and requests that the European Commission defend the wine culture by effectively supporting the implementation of programmes that help boost consumer awareness about informed and responsible consumption of wine;

1.3. supports the European Commission's proposal, which aims to equip the European wine sector with better tools to face the multiple challenges identified by the High-Level Group on Wine Policy;

1.4. requests that policy support be coupled with an ambitious budget for specific interventions in the wine sector;

1.5. underlines the importance of developing education programmes, as well as research and development projects, to accompany wine companies' and wine workers' initiatives to support wine companies and workers in the sector's ongoing transition;

1.6. underlines that the High-Level Group recommendations and the European Commission's proposal were prepared before the situation in international wine markets deteriorated drastically following the United States administration's decision to apply additional tariffs on EU wines; it believes that further support may be needed in the future to support the international competitiveness of EU wines;

1.7. recommends that additional improvements be made to the Commission's proposal to meet the challenges the EU wine sector is facing and to secure a healthy, sustainable and competitive wine economy in the long term;

1.8. while agreeing that future planting strategies should help adapt production potential to market demand, considers that the list of limitations detailed in the European Commission's proposal is too restrictive and may not fit all situations;

1.9. welcomes the Commission's proposal to extend the validity of authorisations granted for replantings, but recommends limiting their validity to 6 years to allow clear planning for managing potential in the single Protected Denomination of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications areas;

1.10. welcomes the authorisation of national payments for voluntary green harvesting and voluntary grubbing up of productive vineyards as additional supply management tools, given that it is cost-effective to remove surplus wine from the market before it is produced;

1.11. welcomes the proposal to regulate at EU level the use of certain terms that are widely used and, therefore, well understood by consumers for the presentation of products with a reduced alcohol content; it proposes supplementing that proposal with a number other terms and conditions, as set out in amendments 1 and 3 (below);

1.12. does not support the expression 'produced by de-alcoholisation' being made mandatory in the presentation of de-alcoholised and partially de-alcoholised wines;

1.13. recommends, as set out in amendment 2, including in the regulation a reference to the existing symbol or pictogram to be used for the language-free identification of the electronic means of providing information that is used on the label. In addition, for better consumer understanding, the EESC proposes that the energy value appear in close proximity to those electronic means;

1.14. recommends abolishing the mandatory indication of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration when EU wines are exported outside the EU, since these requirements vary from one country to the other;

1.15. suggests enlarging the scope of the powers granted to the European Commission in order to allow the Commission to develop, after thorough consultation of the relevant professional organisations and expert groups, through delegated acts, further rules on i) the use of electronic means for providing mandatory and voluntary information and ii) the form and layout of information provided by electronic means;

1.16. recommends clarifying that the provisions stipulating the mandatory details to be indicated in the same field of vision only apply once, to prevent a situation where all mandatory terms need to be replicated on the front label when the terms 'protected designation of origin' or 'protected geographical indication' or the name of the PDO/PGI is indicated there;

1.17. proposes that the overall amount of payments available in a Member State in any given year for national payments for distillation and green harvesting not exceed 15 %, instead of the 20 % proposed. In addition, the EESC suggests including voluntary grubbing up in the measures covered by these limitations;

1.18. proposes that beneficiaries of crisis distillation payments not be eligible under any other wine support for a period of one and a half years;

1.19. recommends that exactly the same rules on the electronic means used on labels be applied to aromatised wine products as those proposed for wines;

1.20. proposes that, for de-alcoholised or partially de-alcoholised aromatised wine products, there be provisions to the effect that flavouring may confer organoleptic characteristics similar to those of wine, in order to provide legal certainty for these new products;

1.21. welcomes the European Commission's proposal to promote wine tourism, but proposes extending this support to wine companies for adapting their facilities to wine tourism visits and the promotion thereof as well as for programmes linking wine and gastronomy. EU support to wine companies should foster the reinforcement of a local or regional viticultural identity and strengthen the synergies arising from the cooperation between local wine companies;

1.22. suggests removing the time limit on promotion activities aimed at consolidating market share;

1.23. suggests that, for promotion and communication activities in third countries, a review be carried out to simplify application and justification procedures, with a view to facilitating access to aid, reducing the administrative burden and improving efficiency in implementing the measures concerned;

1.24. welcomes the potential increase to up to 80 % of EU financial assistance for investment costs linked to climate change mitigation and adaptation;

1.25. proposes that in case of exceptional circumstances in export markets all over the world or in case of crisis affecting third country markets representing more than 15 % of EU wines exports, the Union financial assistance for promotion and communication interventions could be increased to up to 80 % of eligible expenditure.

2. EXPLANATORY NOTES

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.1 to 1.7 on the need for a wine package proposal and its general content

2.1. The EESC supports the proposal for a wine package aimed at dealing with the following challenges faced by the EU wine sector: on the demand side, a continuous, long-term trend of significant reduction in consumption and a change in consumer preferences due to societal changes; and, on the production side, growing uncertainty regarding interannual production due to climate change and more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

2.2. Since the European Commission proposal was published, the situation in the wine sector has deteriorated further. As of 5 April, wine products have been subject to additional tariffs on the US market, which is by far the leading client for EU wines, accounting for 28 % of the EU's global wine exports. Beyond the US market, the sudden rise in tensions and trade barriers around the world is having a negative impact on economic and consumption outlooks in other third country markets and is generating huge uncertainty for businesses and consumers alike, which will negatively affect investment and the competitiveness of EU wine companies.

2.3. Given the socio-economic impact of the EU wine sector and the crucial role it plays in revitalising EU rural areas, it is essential to enhance its long-term sustainability.

2.4. Considering that the responsible and moderate consumption of wine – which is the way the overwhelming majority of wine consumers enjoy wine – is being stigmatised by removal of the distinction between alcohol abuse on the one hand, and informed and responsible wine consumption on the other, the EESC considers it necessary to promote implementation of the measures provided for in the Strategic Plans regulation⁽²⁾ that help raise consumer awareness about the responsible consumption of wine.

2.5. The EESC welcomes the proposal put forward by the Commission, but believes the 'wine package' could be amended to better reflect this deteriorating context in order to ensure substantial, immediate relief and support for the EU's wine sector.

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.8 to 1.10 and 1.17 to 1.18 on the control of production potential

2.6. The EESC supports the proposal to increase the validity of replanting authorisations, but deems it important not to provide for too long a time frame that could complicate the medium-term management and planning of production potential in protected denominations of origin and protected geographical indications.

2.7. The EESC believes that some of the restrictions proposed could be an obstacle to the aim of adapting production potential to market demand, as laid down in the proposal for Article 63(3), since situations may differ in a 'production region' or a 'geographical area', depending on sub-region territories and/or types of products (e.g., white wines or red wines). In addition, the notion of 'average yield' is inoperative and could lead to vastly different interpretations and manners of calculation from one Member State or operator to another. While the current Article 66(3) already allows for some restrictions, such a proposal could lead to extensive and disproportionate restrictions on how to apply the replanting authorisation. In the same vein, a restriction on replantings in the same geographical area or with the same variety or production method or the same production region may affect flexibility and individual companies' choices for adapting to market demand, in particular as regards new products. On the other hand, the EESC proposes setting a limitation so that beneficiaries of crisis distillation payments are not eligible under any other wine support programme for a period of one and a half years.

2.8. The EESC supports the specific focus on voluntary green harvesting in justified cases of crisis, as a cost-effective measure to control production potential.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) (OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1).

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.11 to 1.12 on the presentation of dealcoholised and partially dealcoholised products

2.9. The EESC supports supplementing the presentation rules for dealcoholised and partially dealcoholised wine products in order to authorise and harmonise (for wines) the use of terms widely used for other low and non-alcohol products that are easily understood by consumers.

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.13 to 1.16 on wine labelling rules

2.10. The European Commission's intention to ensure that the current rules on electronic labelling regarding identification of the electronic means of information provision are complete is a step in the right direction; this follows the recommendation issued by the High-level Group to allow all operators to save time and costs on physical labels, thereby facilitating trade and exports, while protecting consumers and securing their right to easily access information that is mandatory. However:

- due to the lack of a harmonised approach and the need to protect the Single Market, there is an urgent need to identify a language-free system based on a pictogram or symbol for identifying the electronic means. It is therefore crucial that the concrete harmonised modalities of a language-free solution be directly introduced in the basic act.
- due to the difficulty wine companies have in identifying when and whether a third country's legislation does not allow, or diverges from, the EU's provisions on the indication of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration, it is better to remove the requirement to indicate these particulars when EU wines are exported to third countries.

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.19 and 1.20 on aromatised wine products

2.11. Rules on the production and presentation of aromatised wine products should reflect and mirror, where appropriate, developments in the rules on the production and presentation of wines.

Arguments in support of recommendations 1.21 to 1.25 on improvements to the rules on interventions in the wine sector

2.12. While promotion and communication interventions are some of the main tools for coping with today's wine crisis, wine operators are unable to make the most of them because of the complex regulatory framework governing it. The EESC proposes further facilitating implementation of this measure by:

- eliminating one of the main obstacles to full efficiency of the measure, namely the time limit imposed for promotion activities aimed at consolidating market share. The proposed duration of support for promotion activities aimed at consolidating market outlets in third countries is still very restrictive; and
- proposing to review the rules that make it complex for wine operators to implement promotion programmes.

2.13. Considering that wineries are the last link in the production chain and the places that tourists actually visit, it is important that measures undertaken by wine companies to adapt their facilities for implementing and/or promoting wine tourism fall within the scope of measures receiving EU support. However, support should be looked at holistically, as wine tourism requires new skills within wine companies, particularly for family-run operations. It is essential to improve the skills of vineyard owners and employees through educational programmes based on learning from best practices. Considering the positive multiplier effect that can be created when wine-tourism activities are part of a coordinated network, it is crucial to incorporate community-based developments that make wineries attractive to consumers on a wine-region scale. Therefore, the EU's support approach should take these elements into account to enable true synergies at local level and enhance the appeal of wine tourism, while preserving the authenticity of wine regions.

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Amendment 1

linked to recommendation 1.9 – [Article 119.1.a) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013, Article 1, point 5 of COM(2025) 137 final]

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
(i) the term ‘alcohol-free’ if the actual alcoholic strength of the product does not exceed 0,5 % by volume; accompanied by the expression ‘0,0 %’, if the actual alcoholic strength of the product does not exceed 0,05 % by volume;	(i) the terms ‘de-alcoholised’, ‘without alcohol’ or ‘alcohol-free’ if the actual alcoholic strength of the product does not exceed 0,5 % by volume; alternatively, it may be accompanied by the expression ‘0,0 %’, if the actual alcoholic strength of the product does not exceed 0,05 % by volume;
(ii) the term ‘alcohol-light’ if the actual alcoholic strength of the product is above 0,5 % by volume and is at least 30 % below the minimum actual alcoholic strength of the category before de-alcoholisation	(ii) the terms ‘partially de-alcoholised’, ‘low alcohol’ or ‘reduced alcohol’ if the actual alcoholic strength of the product is above 0,5 % by volume and is below the minimum actual alcoholic strength of the category before de-alcoholisation

Reason

This amendment aims to provide the necessary flexibility for the presentation and marketing of these ‘new’ products and removes the unnecessary ‘30 %’ criteria so as to avoid creating a legal loophole for wine products.

Any possible confusion for consumers is already subject to the EU rules on misleading communication and advertising.

Amendment 2

linked to recommendation 1.11 – [Article 119 of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013]

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
	<p>6. When providing the nutrition declaration and/or the list of ingredients in accordance with paragraphs (4) and (5) of this article and other compulsory or voluntary indications laid down by EU or national legislation, the electronic means shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. be language-free and identified by means of an international pictogram or an existing ISO symbol; and ii. appear in close proximity to the energy value. <p>Wine labels using other modalities for presenting the electronic means may continue to be placed on the market until stocks are exhausted.</p>

Reason

The amendment clarifies that the identification of digital means needs to be based on a harmonised language-free solution in order to ensure the free movement of wine products.

Amendment 3

linked to recommendation 1.9

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
Grapevine products of the categories set out in points (4) and (7) may also be obtained, respectively , by second fermentation of, or by addition of carbon dioxide to, de-alcoholised or partially de-alcoholised wines referred to in point (1).	Grapevine products of the categories set out in points (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9) may also be obtained, by second fermentation of, or by addition of carbon dioxide to, de-alcoholised or partially de-alcoholised wines referred to in point (1).

Reason

This amendment aims to clarify that the technological flexibility applying to de-alcoholised sparkling and aerated sparkling wines also covers semi-sparkling, aerated semi-sparkling and quality aromatic wines.

Brussels, 17 July 2025.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Oliver RÖPKE
