



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 10.7.2017  
C(2017) 4626 final

*Dear Chair,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the definition, presentation and labelling of spirit drinks, the use of the names of spirit drinks in the presentation and labelling of other foodstuffs and the protection of geographical indications for spirit drinks {COM(2016)750 final}.*

*The Commission welcomes the Houses of the Oireachtas' general support for the proposal, which aims to align Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 to the provisions in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and is therefore part of the process of adaptation of European Union's "acquis" to the new legislative framework determined by the Treaty.*

*The Commission recalls that the existing European Union legal framework for spirit drinks ensures the free circulation of goods in the single market by setting up product definitions, labelling rules and provisions related to the protection of geographical indications for spirit drinks. The proposal does not intend to change that.*

*Besides the alignment of the Regulation with the Treaty, the proposal only introduces minor technical amendments in order to address shortcomings in the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 and to make the legislation consistent with new European Union legal instruments. Structure and wording changes have been introduced to simplify the regulations and improve their readability, in line with the Commission's Better Regulation agenda. In addition, the proposal replaces the existing procedures for the management of geographical indications in the spirit drinks sector, with new procedures modelled on the more exhaustive and well-tested procedures for agricultural products and foodstuffs.*

*Mr Pat DEERING T.D.  
Chairman of the Joint  
Committee on Agriculture,  
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Houses of Oireachtas  
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*cc. Mr Sean Ó FEARGHAÍL T.D.  
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*The Commission agrees with the Houses of Oireachtas on the importance of geographical indications as useful instruments allowing producers to protect the unique nature of product names from imitation and takes note of Ireland's concern for the protection to continue and be effective. The spirit drinks sector is a strategic sector for European Union geographical indications. The proposal maintains all the substantial rules and specificities of the geographical indications for spirit drinks. Only the procedures for registration, amendment, cancellation and opposition would be changed. These procedures have been made more transparent, less burdensome and more consistent with the other sectors of geographical indications in the European Union. Consistency among sectors of geographical indications is particularly important for international negotiations.*

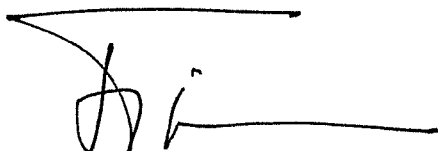
*The provision for an electronic register is a measure that would bring the geographical indications in the spirit drinks sector closer to the other sectors of geographical indications in the European Union. Foodstuffs and wine geographical indications have registers instead of Annexes to a European Union Regulation for the listing of the protected designations. All designations are registered therein via Commission Regulations. There is no risk of legal uncertainty. In a context of regular registration, amendment and cancellation of designations, maintaining all of them in an Annex is not straightforward as that Annex would have to be amended each time there is a change.*

*However, the Commission agrees with the Houses of the Oireachtas that the proposed online register should provide for a comprehensive listing comparable to Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008.*

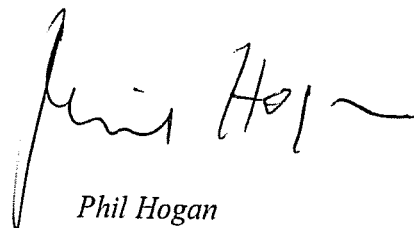
*The points made above are based on the initial proposal presented by the Commission which is currently in the legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council. Discussions on the proposal with the European Parliament and the Council have just started. The Commission remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached in the near future.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Houses of the Oireachtas and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*



*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*



*Phil Hogan  
Member of the Commission*