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European Parliament approves alcohol policy wording that drops “no safe level”

The revised text shifts attention to harmful and compulsive drinking, with potential effects on labeling and prevention rules.

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On Monday, European institutions moved forward with updated language on alcohol policy that puts the main emphasis on harmful and compulsive drinking rather than adopting the formula that no level of consumption is safe, according to a report by the

Italian outlet Agricultura.it and comments from Italy’s wine industry.

The report said the European Parliament approved an implementation text tied to the bloc’s cancer policy work and that the wording again left out the “no safe level” concept. In the debate over alcohol and cancer, that phrase is used to argue that there is no threshold below which drinking avoids negative health effects. The text, as described by the publication, instead draws a distinction between damaging patterns of consumption and other forms of drinking.

Agricultura.it said the position followed a scientific review by European institutions. It reported that the new approach stresses that compulsive consumption is the real risk factor and that public communication and policy should focus more directly on elevated and risky drinking.

Antonio Frescobaldi, speaking for Unione Italiana Vini, welcomed the outcome. He said the wording recognizes a difference between responsible and moderate consumption and excessive, compulsive drinking, which he said should be confronted firmly. His comments reflect a long-running position inside the wine sector, which has pushed back against blanket statements that treat all alcohol consumption in the same way regardless of quantity or pattern.

The issue has become politically important because EU wording on alcohol and health can influence later decisions on labeling, advertising, prevention campaigns, and cross-border rules for producers and retailers. Even when a parliamentary text does not immediately create binding law, its language can shape the next round of regulatory proposals and compliance expectations. For beverage companies, including wine, beer, and spirits producers, that can affect how products are presented to consumers, what health information must be displayed, and how marketing strategies are designed.

According to the summary of the parliamentary move, the latest text also keeps attention on digital labeling tools and limits aimed at protecting minors. That point is especially relevant for producers because digital labels have been discussed in Europe as a way to provide more detailed consumer information without overloading physical packaging. If that direction is maintained, companies across the drinks industry may need to keep investing in new labeling systems, age-related safeguards, and updated

messaging for different national markets.

The language around alcohol has been one of the more sensitive parts of Europe’s broader public health agenda. Cancer policy discussions in Brussels have repeatedly brought together public health advocates, lawmakers, and industry groups with sharply different views on risk communication. Health groups have argued for stronger warning language and a clearer link between alcohol and disease. Wine producers and other parts of the drinks sector, while generally supporting measures against abuse and underage drinking, have argued that policy should distinguish between patterns of consumption and avoid what they see as overly broad messaging.

That disagreement helps explain why the exclusion of the “no safe level” formula is being treated as a significant result by the wine industry. In practical terms, the wording may reduce immediate pressure for the most sweeping warning-based approach and keep the debate centered on harmful use, prevention, and consumer information. It does not end the underlying dispute over how Europe should talk about alcohol and cancer, but it signals that some lawmakers remain cautious about adopting the toughest possible language.

Agricultura.it said the updated line is meant to concentrate policy efforts on high-risk behavior while avoiding what the sector sees as an unfair demonization of wine. The report also said there is support for continued talks among the wine industry, public health experts, and legislators so that future rules promote informed and conscious consumption.

The development is likely to be watched closely in Italy and other wine-producing countries, where EU health language can quickly become a trade and regulatory issue as well as a medical one. Any further moves by the Parliament, the European Commission, or member states could have direct consequences for producers, importers, distributors, and hospitality businesses that sell alcoholic beverages across the single market.