



*European Economic and Social Committee*

**INT/287**  
**Beer imports into Finland**

Brussels, 14 December 2005

**OPINION**

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on the

**Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 69/169/EEC as regards the temporary  
quantitative restriction on beer imports into Finland**

COM(2005) 427 final - 2005/0175 (CNS)

---

On 30 September 2005 the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 93 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

*Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 69/169/EEC as regards the temporary quantitative restriction on beer imports into Finland*  
COM(2005) 427 final 2005/0175 (CNS).

The Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 11 November 2005. The rapporteur was Mr Byrne.

At its 422nd plenary session, held on 14 and 15 December 2005 (meeting of 14 December 2005), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 115 votes to 3 with 14 abstentions.

\*

\* \*

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 Finland has requested an extension of the existing restriction on beer imports by travellers from countries other than Member States beyond 1 January 2006. This request is aimed at addressing fiscal, economic, social health and public order problems.
- 1.2 The proposed amendment authorises Finland to extend the restriction until 31 December 2006. The maximum limit of six litres will however be increased to sixteen which is the actual limit currently being applied by Finland.
- 1.3 The EESC supports the amendment.

## 2. **Background**

- 2.1 In 2000 Finland was granted a derogation until 31 December 2005 to limit personal imports of beer by individuals from countries other than Member States to a maximum of six litres. In particular, Finland has a border with Russia where alcohol is much cheaper so that if the normal monetary limits applied individuals could import c. 200 litres of beer.
- 2.2 Because of the large price difference the impact of unrestricted imports on Finnish retailers, government tax revenue and social and health problems would be severe.

2.3 Finland has however already made significant tax reductions in 2004 and has also applied a higher maximum of sixteen litres rather than six. Thus Finland has therefore been seeking to move towards a long-term solution.

3. **General comments**

3.1 The Committee notes the steps already taken by Finland to address the problem and believes therefore that it is appropriate to grant a further extension of the derogation until 31 December 2006.

Brussels, 14 December 2005.

The President  
of the  
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General  
of the  
European Economic and Social Committee

Anne-Marie Sigmund

Patrick Venturini

---