



Press Release: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **'Independent Brewers of Europe' – a strong new voice for diverse brewing culture!**



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**It's being hailed as the beginning of a new era in beer culture: Europe's independent breweries are standing up to the market power of the global beer industry. They are countering the trend towards standardised international flavours with a deliberate commitment to diversity and regional brewing culture.**

**The newly founded group, 'Independent Brewers of Europe' (IBE), sees itself as a Europe-wide interest group of independent breweries. IBE will campaign against injustices in the beer market. It aims to defend the diversity of craft-brewed beer specialties and ensure that they have sufficient market presence so that beer lovers can continue to enjoy unhindered access to genuine, regional beers in the future.**



The initiative for this strong, new presence of **‘Independent Brewers of Europe’** originated from the ‘Independent Breweries of Austria’, who has been passionately and vehemently advocating to preserve Austrian beer culture since its members joined forces almost three years ago. This is an urgent matter, because in Austria alone, a single brewing group has built up an astonishing amount of power, controlling around two-thirds of the entire market.

### **Ten countries...and counting!**

**‘Independent Brewers of Europe’** consists of national associations of independent breweries. Associations from **Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland and United Kingdom (UK)** have been involved from the outset. Together, they want to join forces and form a counterweight against the ever-increasing advance of beer multinationals in Europe.

*“We want to cooperate across borders,”* says Hubert Stöhr, the Chair of Independent Breweries of Austria, describing the idea behind the founding of the group: *“We have a major goal in common. We want to protect indigenous beer culture in all its diversity and facilitate its further development.”*

### **The goal: Driving change together**

There is a lot at stake. Europe has a rich beer culture developed over centuries. This, combined with the more recent craft beer movement, has resulted in a diverse array of regional brewing traditions from Ireland and Poland to Norway and Spain, which are part of Europe's common cultural heritage. But this heritage is now in danger, as the market is increasingly dominated by a few large international breweries. These global corporations consistently concentrate their production towards mass market tastes. Anyone who brews and sells such large volumes of beer cannot focus on specialties. As market concentration increases, there is a corresponding decrease in diversity, and a merciless price war is raging in most European countries.



It can't continue like this. The **'Independent Brewers of Europe'** want to counteract this downward spiral. They are campaigning for greater diversity and freedom of choice. They want to support each other and ensure better visibility for independent brewers. The aim is not to fight against the global players, but to compete with them in a sporting and fair way so that consumers have the opportunity to choose from more tasty products on the market.

### **Planned cooperation measures:**

- Regular dialogue across national borders to identify changing market situations and new challenges at an early stage. Regular meetings form the basis for cooperation.
- Wherever independent breweries are dealing with an unfavourable or difficult environment, a quick and direct transfer of information can help:
  - › Procurement of high-quality raw materials
  - › Taxes, duties and legal provisions
  - › Representation of interests vis-à-vis national governments, but above all in Brussels.
- **'Independent Brewers of Europe'** want to raise awareness for their cause, one which is ultimately also the cause of quality-conscious beer drinkers. Not with a billion-euro marketing budget like the big conglomerates, but with creativity and sympathy.
- Last but not least, members of **'Independent Brewers of Europe'** want to learn from each other, adopt best practice examples, and thus, become stronger together.

### **Who are the 'Independent Brewers of Europe'?**

The **IBE** is an alliance of national associations representing independent breweries. The following associations gave the starting signal (in January 2024):

1. Germany: Private Brauereien
2. Finland: Pienpanimoliitto
3. France: Syndicat National des Brasseries Indépendantes (SNBi)
4. United Kingdom: Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA)



5. Italy: Unionbirrai
6. Netherlands: craftbrouwers.nl
7. Austria: Unabhängige Privatbrauereien Österreichs
8. Poland: Polish Craft Brewers Association (PSBR)
9. Switzerland: Die freien Schweizer Brauereien
10. Czech Republic: Czech and Moravian Microbreweries Association

The group is committed to growing, with talks already underway with other countries in Europe. Independent brewing organisations that are concerned about preserving regional beer culture are expressly invited to get in touch.

**Contact: [office@independent-brewers.com](mailto:office@independent-brewers.com)**

### **Countering the decline of brewing culture**

The first attempt to join forces was made in Belgium in 2019, but the Covid pandemic and subsequent economic crisis meant that concrete activities had to be put on hold. In January 2024, the 'Independent Breweries of Austria' group made a fresh attempt and organised a meeting in Vienna to discuss current problems and possible joint strategies for future development with like-minded industry players from all over Europe. It became apparent that while each national market is different, "independents" everywhere are struggling with similar challenges:

- **Unfair market practices:** International beer groups in **France** are supplying restaurants and bars with special containers that are not compatible with the kegs used by private breweries. Hospitality businesses that stock one of the major beer brands can therefore no longer be supplied by private breweries. This makes it impossible for them to access the market.
- **Pretence of regionality:** In **Austria**, an international company offers seemingly regional brands. The appearance of these brands suggests Austrian products that come from different regions. But in fact, one of the world's largest beer multinationals is behind it.



- **Targeted market concentration:** International brewing groups buy up regional breweries and integrate them into their corporate structure. What remains of the originally independent beer is, at best, a brand. Take **Germany** as an example: who doesn't know Beck's from Bremen, Spaten, Löwenbräu and Franziskaner? These are "just" names and have all belonged to the world's largest beer group since 2008.
- **Dominant marketing:** Beer advertising is a billion-dollar business. Huge sums are pumped into communication and marketing every year. Regional family breweries cannot keep up with this. As a result, they are increasingly losing visibility, and their name recognition is being eclipsed by the intensive marketing activities of beer multinationals.
- **Price war:** Cheaper mass production means beer conglomerates can wage a tough price war, a feature which is mostly supported by retailers. Independent breweries are losing precious shelf space in supermarkets. In the already hard-hit hospitality trade, the beer brand that can offer the best price is often awarded the contract.

*“The dominance of corporate beers is noticeable across all countries,”* says Mike Benner, Managing Director of SIBA in the UK: *“We will be a voice for thousands of breweries, from individual countries to Brussels, where to date we have been heard far too little.”*

### **For a new quality awareness**

European brewing culture in all its diversity can only be preserved if consumers are on board. That is why the members of the **‘Independent Brewers of Europe’** want to create a new awareness of origin and regional traditions. *“Our member companies respect the established traditions of their region. They place a big focus on sourcing good raw materials and brew with care,”* says Stöhr. *“If you pay attention, you can taste this difference,”* explains Jos Oostendorp from the **Craft association of independent Dutch brewers**. And **Archibald Tropes** from **SNBi** in **France** adds: *“We know that we can convince consumers of the benefits of genuine, authentic brewing culture. We just need to raise our voice more clearly.”* **Stefan Stang** from the German association **Private Breweries** adds: *“The value of regional breweries is not measured by the*



*number of hectolitres produced, but by their commitment to communities, associations and voluntary work. This dedication knows no boundaries, which is why we look forward to working with like-minded, independent breweries in Europe!”*

By joining forces, the **‘Independent Brewers of Europe’** aim to have each other's backs in order to safeguard their independence. *“We are and will remain independent. We are not for sale. We are an important pillar of European culture and will not be wiped off the map,”* concludes Stöhr.

- The ‘Independent Brewers of Europe’ is not a registered association, but an alliance between organisations from various European countries. The members are united by the same values and convictions, and their co-operation was sealed with a handshake. They finance their activities themselves and the contributions are divided according to their hectolitre production. The current spokesperson for the group is Huber Stöhr, Managing Director and owner of the Schloss Eggenberg brewery in Upper Austria and Chair of ‘Independent Breweries of Austria’.
- The next opportunity to meet members of ‘Independent Brewers of Europe’ in person and to exchange ideas will be on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at BrauBeviale ([braubeviale.com](http://braubeviale.com)) in Nuremberg. Please send enquiries directly to Ute Watzlawick: [u.watzlawick@wine-partners.at](mailto:u.watzlawick@wine-partners.at)

[www.independent-brewers.com](http://www.independent-brewers.com)

**\*Photo credit:**

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**Description:**

*Founders of the Independent Brewers of Europe in front of the Vienna Secession, Jan 2024*

*1<sup>st</sup> row, left to right: Roland Demleitner (Private Brauereien), Simone Monetti (Union Birrai), Michal Voldrich (Czech-Moravian Association of Microbreweries), Hubert Stöhr (Unabhängige Privatbrauereien Österreichs), Seppi Sigl (Unabhängige Privatbrauereien Österreichs)*

*2<sup>nd</sup> row, left to right: Piotr Sosin (PSBR), Kilian Kittl (Private Brauereien), Christian Pickler (Union Birrai), Lukas Niedermayr (Union Birrai), Bruno Güntensberger (Die freien Schweizer Brauereien), Archibald Tropres (ex. SNBI France)*

*3<sup>rd</sup> row, left to right: Marek Kaminski (PSBR), Reto Morellon (Die freien Schweizer Brauereien), Tobias Frank (Unabhängige Privatbrauereien Österreichs), Barry Wats (SIBA), Bernd Beersma (Craftbrouwers)*



## **Brief profiles of all European founding associations:**

### **1. Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA)**

SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates, was established in 1980 to represent the interests of the growing number of independent breweries in the UK.

SIBA currently represents about 700 independent craft breweries, supplier companies and associate members such as Homebrewers and International Brewing Members.

SIBA are the Big Voice of independent beer – as well promoting independent brewing and lobbying government on behalf of brewers, SIBA also run regional and national independent beer awards for cask, keg, bottled and canned beers, host regional meetings for the benefit of members as well as the UK's biggest beer & brewing trade event BeerX UK in Liverpool.

*Founded:* 1980  
*Members:* 700  
[www.siba.co.uk](http://www.siba.co.uk)

### **2. Syndicat National des Brasseries Indépendantes (SNBi)**

The focus of SNBi is set on promoting transparency in ingredient sourcing and brewing processes, encouraging brewers to develop their own production capacities and ensuring beer labels are respectful and non-discriminatory. Key areas of focus include upholding ethical standards, regulatory compliance, technical innovation, international collaboration, social responsibility, education, sustainable development, interprofessional cooperation and security.

*Founded:* 2006  
*Members:* 850  
[www.snbi-france.fr](http://www.snbi-france.fr)

### **3. Craftbrouwers**

The goal and purpose of Craftbrouwers is to improve the standard of Dutch craft breweries via stimulating knowledge development and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, they look after the (political) interests of their members and promote craft beer in the Netherlands.

*Founded:* 2003  
*Members:* 194  
[www.craftbrouwers.nl](http://www.craftbrouwers.nl)

### **4. Private Brauereien**

The association Private Brauereien represents a diverse group of small and medium-sized breweries, all privately owned. Their goals are to promote the unique quality and character of their beers, embrace and support diversity within the brewing culture, and provide personalised, high-quality support to each member. They focus on fostering strong, direct relationships, enhancing regional structures and offering targeted advice to help their members thrive and address future challenges effectively.

*Members:* 600  
[www.private-brauereien.de](http://www.private-brauereien.de)

### **5. Pienpanimoliitto**



Although registered in 2008, the cooperation first began in 1995, when Finnish breweries began using the term 'Pienpanimoliitto' (Union of small breweries). Their goal then, as it is now, is to develop Finnish craft brewing expertise and improve the operating conditions for craft breweries in Finland. The organisation strives for more liberal legislation and also to promote craft beer culture to the Finnish public.

*Founded:* 2008

*Members:* 70

[www.pienpanimoliitto.fi](http://www.pienpanimoliitto.fi)

## **6. Die freien Schweizer Brauereien (FSB)**

'Die freien Schweizer Brauereien' support small and medium-sized independent breweries in Switzerland and Liechtenstein to maintain their independence and autonomy. Promoting the unique and exciting variety of beers from their individual members is a priority. They emphasise the importance of Swiss beer as a cultural symbol and regional identity. Committed to regional beer diversity across Switzerland and Liechtenstein, they also promote beer knowledge and share their expertise with the community.

*Founded:* 1990

*Members:* 30

[www.schweizer-brauereien.ch](http://www.schweizer-brauereien.ch)

## **7. Unabhängige Privatbrauereien Österreichs**

The vibrant scene of regional independent breweries in Austria only covers around a third of the total market. Austrian private breweries believe it is about time to set an example. For this reason, they formed an association in 2021 to transparently distinguish themselves from large international corporations with the assistance of a seal of origin that is visible on all bottles and cans.

*Founded:* 2021

*Members:* 47

[www.privatbrauereien.at](http://www.privatbrauereien.at)

## **8. Unionbirrai**

'Unionbirrai' is dedicated to supporting small independent brewers by providing regulatory and logistical assistance and contributing to legislative processes. The organisation works to ensure that the growing brewing sector receives proper attention and support from institutions. Unionbirrai advocates for simplified tax systems and combats industrial interference to protect and promote craft beer. The goal is to safeguard the entire supply chain, from producer to consumer, ensuring that craft beer is recognised and valued.

*Founded:* 1999

*Members:* 318

[www.unionbirrai.it](http://www.unionbirrai.it)





### **9. Czech-Moravian Association of Microbreweries**

The 'Czech-Moravian Association of Microbreweries' promotes and defends the rights and interests of its members, supports business development, and ensures communication with legislative bodies, state administration, industry chambers, and relevant institutions. It submits proposals and opinions to these entities to advocate for its members' common interests and cooperates with similar associations. Emphasising craftsmanship, diversity, quality and mutual solidarity, the association fosters broad cooperation among stakeholders. It aims to create conditions for members to produce beer in microbreweries with high expertise and professionalism while enforcing fair economic competition.

*Founded:* 2011

*Members:* 160

[www.minipivo.cz](http://www.minipivo.cz)

### **10. Polish Craft Brewers Association**

The aim of PSBR is to support and integrate Polish small and independent breweries while promoting Polish craft beer locally and internationally. They actively represent the segment to government and public administration, advocating for favourable legislation. Their association was founded to give a voice to small and independent brewers, unlike big and middle-sized brewers who had long-established organisations. They stand for craft brewing values: prioritising product quality, knowing and naming the people behind each beer, fostering innovation and maintaining independence from big breweries and capital.

*Founded:* 2018

*Members:* 30

[www.psbr.eu](http://www.psbr.eu)