



Statement on the proposal for a revision of the EU Tobacco Products Directive

As representatives of leading health, medical and non-governmental organisations we urge European leaders to ensure that the EU's Tobacco Products Directive is speedily reviewed and updated.¹ Europe pays a high price for its slow action on tobacco, both in economic costs and harm to its citizens' health and wellbeing. **The estimated annual cost of tobacco to the European economy is of more than half a trillion euros, or about 4.6% of the EU's GDP.**² 700 000 European Union (EU) citizens die prematurely every year because of tobacco consumption and close to 13 million people in the 27 countries of the EU suffer from smoking-related diseases, with devastating effects on economies, societies, and healthcare systems. However, there is a window of opportunity as governments across the EU are currently discussing a proposal for a review of the EU Tobacco Products Directive put forward by the European Commission in December 2012.

The proposal is necessary to guarantee a high level of health protection through the effective implementation of the obligations of all the EU member states as Parties to the UN Treaty – the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and its guidelines³ as well as to improve the functioning of the internal market with benefits to the economy. A majority of **citizens support tobacco control policies**. A Eurobarometer published in 2012 shows that 76% of the EU population supports large pictorial warnings; and 57% support a ban on logos, colours and promotional elements on packs. In line with the majority of citizens wishes, the proposed Directive introduces larger, mandatory pictorial health warnings covering 75% of the main surfaces of packs; prohibits the use of characterizing flavours such as menthol and fruit; prohibits the use of misleading features including slim and superslim cigarettes and enhances the security features on packs allowing for better means of combating illicit trade in tobacco products.

Tobacco is not just a matter of lifestyle choice for adults, **over two thirds of European smokers start before the age of 18**. The truth is that tobacco is a deadly, addictive product that kills half of its users when used as intended. In this respect, the European public health community welcomes these proposals as a step

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/products/revision/index_en.htm

² The study on liability and health costs of smoking produced for the European Commission estimates the total costs, at 2009 levels, to €544 billion in healthcare costs, productivity losses, and life lost. See http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/tobacco_liability_final_en.pdf

³ The FCTC is the world's first international public health treaty. It aims to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, environmental and socio-economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke through the adoption of evidence-based policies and legally binding obligations.

in the right direction towards reducing the attractiveness of tobacco, particularly to young people. The public health community maintains though that this Directive could and should go further.

Business as usual and small steps are no longer enough to slow down the trend of premature disease and death caused by tobacco. Countries all over the world have demonstrated that only by regularly reviewing and updating tobacco policies in line with emerging evidence can governments continue to reduce smoking and the harm that it causes. In Europe **tobacco use is declining too slowly**. By comparison, smoking rates in Australia and Canada, worldwide leaders in tobacco control, have consistently declined due to strong tobacco control policies and are currently at around 17%⁴.

All reliable scientific data shows that the measures proposed in the European Commission's proposal would be effective. The evidence is laid out in the comprehensive Impact Assessment of the proposed Directive⁵ and shows net gains for the economy and for the society. The only opponents of effective tobacco regulation are tobacco companies and their allies, who are behind sustained, systematic efforts to weaken tobacco control legislation. They claim that large pictorial warnings and standardised packaging of tobacco products will increase smuggling, that tobacco product regulation endangers European jobs, or that labelling and packaging measures are ineffective. There is strong evidence that **these statements are not just false but intentionally aimed at preventing or delaying implementation of effective measures to reduce smoking prevalence**.⁶ Attached is a briefing setting out a summary of the industry arguments and the evidence that rebuts them.

This crucial legislation goes to the heart of Europe's economic recovery. By improving the health of citizens, tobacco control will preserve Europe's human capital and the productivity of its highly skilled workforce. This Directive would save millions of lives by helping prevent children from taking up smoking, encouraging smokers to quit, and reducing the burden that our society pays for its tobacco addiction.

Signed in Brussels, 18 June 2013



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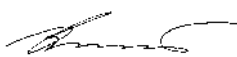
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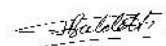
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⁴ WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2011, available at http://www.who.int/tobacco/global_report/2011/en/index.html

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/com_2012_788_ia_en.pdf

⁶ Block, amend, delay: Tobacco industry efforts to influence the European Union's Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC)' at http://www.smokefreepartnership.eu/IMG/pdf/EU_TI_TPD_report_May_2012.pdf