



[Joint press statement] Mixed victory for tobacco control in European Parliament's vote

The European public health and tobacco control community cautiously welcomes the European parliament's plenary vote today to start negotiations with the Council in view of reaching agreement on a Tobacco Products Directive (TPD). The text adopted in plenary is not perfect, however it does maintain a high level of protection of public health in some areas and advances EU tobacco control in several areas compared to the legislation in force.

The Parliament plenary voted today to support mandatory pictorial warnings covering 65% of both sides and at the top of the pack, the restriction of characterizing flavours without exception (with a temporary derogation for menthol), strong tracking and tracing provisions for tobacco products across the entire supply chain, and strong regulation of novel tobacco products. **While the Parliament rejected the ban on slim cigarettes, it maintained restrictions on other misleading features of tobacco products and Member states' possibility to adopt more stringent measures to regulate tobacco products, such as plain packaging.** Also importantly, the Parliament adopted a negotiation mandate allowing the start of negotiations with the Council and the European Commission in view of reaching a compromise before the European elections in May 2014.

The plenary vote on the TPD had been delayed by a month last September following intense lobbying by the tobacco industry (1). The official explanation that MEPs needed more time to consider the legislative proposal left a bitter taste. As a consequence, this month delay resulted in 35 amendments added to the initial 70, most of which aimed to weaken the Directive further in what can be translated as a victory of the big tobacco lobby.

Today, and despite these attempts at delaying the TPD, **the Parliament has fulfilled its commitment to deliver a legislative report on the TPD and to start negotiations with the Council with the aim to reach a compromise and ensure it is adopted by both institutions before the end of the legislature in May 2014.**

In the past few weeks, information emerged from internal industry documents about the tactics and arguments used by the tobacco industry and its allies to influence the positions of Member States and hundreds of individual MEPs – or to delay the legislative process in case the attempts at influence failed. The public health community recently sent a letter to EP president Martin Schultz (2) calling for an end to the delay tactics and for greater transparency in the interactions with the tobacco industry.

The result of the vote today shows increased MEP awareness about tobacco industry tactics. NGOs in public health and tobacco control welcome that parliamentarians placed the interest of public health in Europe and that of protecting future generations from being lured by tobacco products above the commercial interests of an industry that manufactures a deadly product.

In the coming months, a negotiation team of the European parliament led by the Rapporteur Linda McAvan will enter negotiations with the Council led by the Lithuanian Presidency and with the European Commission. The goal of these negotiations will be to reach an agreement that should form the basis of a political agreement at EU Council level in December 2013 that could subsequently be approved by Parliament before the end of the year.

The EU health and tobacco control community remains committed to supporting the adoption of a strong TPD before the European elections in 2014 and to further raising awareness among policy makers about the insidious tactics of the tobacco industry to block or weaken EU public health legislation.

➤ **Quotes**

"The strong mandate given to take the next step of negotiations forward is a good signal that despite the intense lobbying, the weakening of the provisions and the failure to ensure the highest level of health protection, the overall strategy of the tobacco industry to delay this Directive has so far failed," **Monika Kosińska, Secretary General of the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).**

"This is a bittersweet moment. Today's vote in the EP plenary was not ideal for public health, but it does advance tobacco regulations in many areas. The overwhelming majority to allow the Rapporteur to start negotiating with the Council on a compromise is a crucial result as it makes it possible to adopt a final Directive before the end of the Parliamentary mandate. That in itself is a victory as it means there is no need for further delays," **Florence Berteletti, Director, Smoke Free Partnership**

"We very much regret that the European Parliament did not adopt 75% mandatory warnings. This was a significant element in the European Commission's proposal. But we do welcome the strong mandate given to the rapporteurs to take the negotiations forward. We recommend that all EU Member States follow in the footsteps of Ireland and adopt proposals for plain packaging," **Susanne Logstrup, Director, European Heart Network (EHN).**

➤ **Notes to the editor**

- (1) [Tobacco giant Philip Morris 'spent millions in bid to delay EU legislation'](#)
- (2) [\[Joint Open Letter to President of European Parliament\] Philip Morris lobbying activities on the Tobacco Products Directive](#)

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