



fighting heart disease
and stroke
european heart network

The Tobacco Products Directive: The need for large pictorial health warnings on standardised packaging

Each year, Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD) cause over 1.9 million deaths in the EU. Smoking is one of the most important modifiable risk factors. A high proportion of premature deaths from CVD is due to smoking. In the EU, smoking causes 28% of CVD deaths in men aged 35-69 and 13% in women of the same age.¹

The European Heart Network (EHN) supports the new Commission proposal on the tobacco products directive as a step in the right direction to help reduce the burden from tobacco use. Still, we believe that the Directive could and should go further.

EHN calls for plain standardised packaging, with pictorial and health warnings which should cover 80% of both the front and back surface of the cigarette pack



Evidence shows that measures such as large graphic warnings are effective in reducing the appeal of tobacco products, particularly to women and young people. One of the best ways to raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco is through the adoption of large mandatory pictorial warnings on the front and back of the pack. These are much more likely to draw attention and result in greater information processing than text warnings only.²

Evidence also shows that for enhanced effectiveness, pictorial warnings must be combined with plain, standardised packaging. This is to ensure that consumers do not get distracted or confused by contradictory brand imagery carefully designed by the tobacco industry and making the product look safe and attractive.³ Evidence shows that removing the colour, brand imagery and logos from packages reduces the attractiveness and appeal of the packaging and enhances the ability to communicate the health warning to the consumer.⁴

¹ Nichols M, Townsend N, Scarborough P, Luengo-Fernandez R, Leal J, Gray A, Rayner M (2012); *European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics 201*; European Heart Network, Brussels, European Society of Cardiology, Sophia Antipolis <http://www.ehnheart.org/cvd-statistics.html>

² V. White, B. Webster, M. Wakefield, Do graphic health warning labels have an impact on adolescents' smoking related beliefs and behaviours? *Addiction* Abingdon, 2008; D. Hammond, G. Fong, P. McDonald, K. Brown, R. Cameron, Showing leads to doing: graphic cigarette warning labels are an effective public health policy, *European Journal of Public Health* (2006).

³ <http://www.smokefreepartnership.eu/news/spotlight-8-labelling-and-packaging-tobacco-products>

⁴ Sambrook Research International, A review of the science base to support the development of health warnings for tobacco packages, May 2009, p. 147-148