

Question for written answer E-007625/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
Csaba Molnár (S&D)

Subject: The European Union's accession to the international agreement fighting tobacco smuggling

On 4 May the Commission proposed that the EU, as an international organisation, and the Union's Member States should join the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products under the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The objective of the protocol is to completely eliminate the illicit trade in tobacco products through Member State measures and international cooperation. In Hungary the current government monopolised the sale of tobacco in 2012 with Act CXXXIV of 2012, which was justified primarily as an attempt to protect young people. The Hungarian regulation, infamously known as the Tobacconist Act, has so far yielded two results: an increase in the illicit trade in raw leaf tobacco and cigarettes and an increase in the number of smokers. According to the Central Statistical Office, 28% of the Hungarian public smoked daily in 2015, which contrasts with 27% in 2009. According to the excise statistics of the National Tax and Customs Administration, the manufacturers sold 1 025 million cigarette sticks before the Tobacconist Act, but only 623 million in July 2013. This figure has not moved since then, which leads one to presume that the illicit trade in cigarettes has grown dramatically in Hungary. On this basis I am asking the Commission:

1. In view of the most recent statistics (which show that almost one third of the Hungarian public smokes), does the Commission think that the 2012 Hungarian law has achieved its objective?
2. What does the Commission think can account for the significant increase in the illicit trade in raw leaf tobacco and cigarettes in Hungary since 2012?
3. Does the Commission think that joining the international agreement fighting tobacco smuggling will alone be able to curtail the illicit trade in cigarettes in Hungary?