



## Making tobacco less attractive to young people

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**A proposed law to make tobacco less attractive to young people, inter alia by banning sweet or fruity flavours, is to be put to a vote on Tuesday. The draft, as amended by the Public Health Committee, would also require more health warnings on packets and subject electronic cigarettes to EU rules on medicinal products.**

### Why is a new tobacco directive needed?

Twelve years after the current directive came into force, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the EU, killing around 700,000 people per year. Measures taken over the years to cut smoking have had an impact - in the past decade the number of smokers has fallen from nearly 40% in the EU 15 in 2002 to 28% in the EU 27 in 2012 - but tobacco consumption is still a major burden on healthcare systems and the economy.

The rules laid down in 2001 are no longer seen as adequate. New flavourings and packaging have been used to make some tobacco products more attractive. Novel products such as electronic cigarettes have appeared. Scientific evidence shows that current labelling rules requiring the display of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide yields on cigarette packages can mislead consumers into believing one type of tobacco product is less harmful than another. Smoking is even on the increase among young people in some countries, due to the attractive packaging and novel products. EU legislation also needs updating to comply with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

### What does the new legislation cover?

The revised directive, as proposed by the European Commission, covers:

- labelling and packaging of tobacco products;
- additives such as vitamins or those associated with energy such as caffeine and taurine
- flavourings such as menthol, chocolate or fruit flavours;
- internet sales of tobacco products;
- tracking and tracing measures to help combat the trade in illicit tobacco products;
- products which do not contain tobacco but are closely linked to smoking or tobacco consumption, for example electronic and herbal cigarettes.

### What are the procedural steps?

To enter into force the new directive will have to be approved by both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

On 10 July this year, Parliament's Environment and Public Health Committee (ENVI) voted by 50 votes to 13, with 8 abstentions, to broadly approve the Commission proposal, although it tightened up some points, for example on electronic cigarettes (see EP press release of 10.07.2013).

# Background

If the full Parliament endorses the ENVI committee's position in Strasbourg in October, a team of MEPs will embark on negotiations with the Council of Ministers.

The Council of Ministers has meanwhile already agreed on a 'general approach' (a political agreement among governments). It opposes a ban on slim cigarettes (ENVI favours a ban) but says these cigarettes should be sold in normal-sized packets to reduce their appeal to young people. It backs the ban on flavoured cigarettes, including menthol. It also supports a requirement for large pictorial warnings to be printed on all cigarette packets but would reduce the amount that would have to be covered from 75% (advocated by the Commission and backed by ENVI) to 65%.

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