



Public Health Committee MEPs toughen up plans to deter young people from smoking

Committees Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety [10-07-2013 - 18:43]

A draft law to make smoking less attractive to the young by banning the use of "characterised" flavours such as strawberry or menthol in tobacco products was backed by Public Health Committee MEPs on Wednesday. But they also amended the draft to require health warnings on every side of a cigarette pack and ban slim cigarettes and "attractive" packaging.

"The focus is to prevent the industry from recruiting new smokers among the young" said Linda McAvan (S&D, UK) who is steering the legislation through Parliament. "The smoking trend is down, as action by public authorities has reduced the number of smokers over the years. However, there is a worrying drift: 29% of young people smoke. The World Health Organisation has shown that since 2005, the trend has been going up amongst young boys and girls in some countries" she added.

The draft legislation was approved by 50 votes to 13, with 8 abstentions.

Additives and flavours

The updated Tobacco Product Directive (TPD) will prohibit the use in tobacco products of additives and flavours that make a product more attractive, by imparting a characterizing flavour, and also the use of vitamins, caffeine and taurine. Additives such as sugar that are essential for the manufacture of tobacco products would be permitted.

No misleading labelling

The labelling or packaging of any tobacco product must not suggest that a particular product is less harmful than others or has positive health or lifestyle effects. It should also not resemble a food or cosmetic product, MEPs say.

Health warnings

Packets and packaging of cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco and water pipe tobacco should display health warnings on all sides of packets. These warnings should cover at least 75% of the external area of both the front and back surfaces, said the committee.

Ban slim cigarettes

"Slim" cigarettes, of a diameter of less than 7.5mm, and packets with less than 20 cigarettes should be banned, the report says. So-called "lipstick packs" would also be banned.

Cross border distance sales should be prohibited.

e-cigarettes

E-cigarettes may only be placed on the market under existing rules on medicinal products. However, "given the potential of these products to aid with smoking cessation, Member States should ensure that they can be made available outside pharmacies", MEPs say.

Press release

No more tar and nicotine info on packs

The tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide yields of cigarettes must henceforth be measured on the basis of referenced ISO standards, as existing indications displayed on cigarette packets have proven to be misleading, MEPs say. They therefore propose that no such information should be included on packs.

Combatting illegal trade

To reduce the volume of illicit tobacco products placed on the market, member states must ensure that all unit packets and outside transport packaging are marked with an identifier. This should make it possible to trace the shipment route from the manufacture to the first retail outlet, say MEPs.

Background

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.

Next steps

The report will be put to a vote in plenary session this autumn, in Strasbourg.

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