

**Question for written answer E-006581/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Monika Panayotova (PPE)

Subject: Liberalisation of the smoking ban in public areas in Bulgaria

In line with EU-level efforts to promote a smoke-free environment across the Union, Bulgaria adopted in 2012 a new law introducing a smoking ban in public places, which has been strictly observed thereafter. The ban aims to cut the number of adult and young smokers and to reduce second-hand smoke exposure. Regrettably, the new Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) government, which took office on 29 May 2013, has announced plans to relax this ban. The new government pledged to reverse the existing policy limiting the harmful effects of exposure to second-hand smoke. Not only does this run contrary to numerous scientific studies showing the various risks of second-hand smoke to human health, but it is also in complete disregard of the positions of the World Health Organisation, the Commission, Parliament and the health policies enacted in a number of Member States.

In this regard, I would like to ask the Commission whether liberalisation of the smoking ban in Bulgaria contradicts EU-level efforts to safeguard a smoke-free environment for EU citizens. What steps will the Commission take to block a possible relaxation of the smoking ban in one of the EU Member States? Could the Commission provide statistical data, at EU-level and by Member State, on the harmful effects of smoking on the health of European citizens and specifically young people?