

ORAL QUESTION H-0568/03

for Question Time at the part-session in October 2003

pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure

by Frédérique Ries

to the Commission

Subject: Cardboard sheaths concealing health warnings on cigarette packs

A new trend has swept through discotheques, bookshops and night shops in Belgium over the last few months: cardboard sheaths have appeared, into which cigarette packs may be slotted, thus concealing the health warnings on such packs. Directive 2001/37/EC¹ stipulates that, as from 30 September 2003, health warnings must cover 30% of the front of cigarette packs and not less than 40% of the back.

The aim of those who designed this product is quite clear: they wish to conceal the health warnings with colour sheaths and, eventually, with commercial advertisements.

Has the Commission been informed of this practice? Does it also realise that this is a booming market affecting twelve of the fifteen Member States? Does it intend to take action, together with the Member States, in order to put a stop to a trade which is in blatant contravention of the spirit of Directive 2001/37/EC? Or will it, at the very least, undertake to consider possible legal action?

Tabled: 19.09.2003

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¹ OJ L 194, 18.7.2001, p. 26.