

Strict embargo: 00.01 hrs

Tuesday 31 May, 2011

EUROPEAN UNION URGED TO ADOPT PLAIN PACKAGING ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS ACROSS ALL MEMBER STATES

On World No Tobacco Day today (Tuesday) the Smoke Free Partnership (SFP) has renewed their call for the European Union (EU) to adopt standardised, plain packaging with large pictorial health warnings on all tobacco products.

This commitment would see new tobacco packaging legislation adopted by the European Parliament by 2014.

The SFP is delivering the eighth in a series of briefings to outline the issues around tobacco packaging. The briefing examines the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) - the focus of World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) 2011 – as the best tool to help stop tobacco being marketed via its packaging.

The FCTC is the world's first international public health treaty. It is aimed at reducing the devastating impact of tobacco. The Treaty is legally binding and has been ratified by more than 170 countries including the EU.

The briefing – titled "Spotlight on the FCTC" – highlights that tobacco packaging can be used by governments to communicate the dangers of tobacco use rather than being used as a marketing tool by the tobacco industry.

Hard hitting and graphic pictures of the health effects of smoking on the front and back of packets and ensuring all packaging has identical colouring and design would achieve both these goals.

The report also reveals the evidence that plain packaging helps change attitudes to smoking, the high level of public support for the measure, as well as dispelling the myth that this will cost jobs or a loss of retail income.

Along with the release the report, the SFP is being recognised by the WHO with a prestigious WNTD Award to recognize their accomplishments in tobacco control. The awards recognize international achievements in the fight against the global tobacco epidemic and in the promotion of tobacco control initiatives and policies.

They are awarded to individuals and institutions selected for long-term commitment and outstanding contribution in research, advocacy, health promotion, capacity building and other activities that promote and enforce tobacco control.

Florence Berteletti Kemp, the director of Smoke Free Partnership, said: "There is absolutely no reason why the EU could not introduce mandatory pictorial warnings (80 per cent back and front) on all tobacco products and plain standardised packaging. These measures are effective, supported by 75 per cent of the EU population, legally feasible and they would cost nothing to governments. Those opposing these measures have no evidence that they don't

work and are only listening to the tobacco industry. In adopting plain, standardised packaging the EU could regain its role as a global tobacco control leader.”

Glenis Willmott MEP said: "If we're serious about preventing tobacco-related diseases then we need to see the aims of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control put into action through European legislation. Soon MEPs will have a chance to do just that, when the European Commission brings forward its proposals for a revision of the Tobacco Products Directive. This will be our chance to make sure that we implement the measures that are most effective at preventing people from taking up smoking, and encouraging smokers to give up."

Susanne Løgstrup, the director of the European Heart Network, said: “We call on the European Commission – and expect nothing less from it but - to propose standardised packaging and graphical warnings covering 80 per cent of both sides of the pack.”

Jean King, Cancer Research UK’s director of tobacco control, said: “Tobacco remains the single greatest challenge to public health. On World No Tobacco Day it’s important to remember that this year alone, more than 5 million people worldwide will die from a tobacco-related disease. The importance of continuing efforts to reduce smoking rates can’t be overestimated. The next vital step in preventing more lives being lost to tobacco is to wrap tobacco in plain packaging. We know from research that this helps change attitudes to cigarettes.

“Also, we congratulate the Smoke Free Partnership on their award. They should be extremely proud of their work in helping to prevent another generation becoming addicted to such a lethal product.”

ENDS

For more information contact Florence Berteletti Kemp on **+32 (0)496 12 43 02 one hour before the event or on +32 2 238 53 63**

Notes to editor:

The briefing is taking place at the **European Parliament** between **18.00 - 20.00 on the 31 May 2011** in the **Members’ Salon**.

Download a copy of the report – Spotlight on the FCTC – from the Smoke Free Partnership website: <http://www.smokefreepartnership.eu/>

For more information on World No Tobacco Day visit:
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2011/en/index.html>

For more information on the World No Tobacco Day Awards visit:
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/activities/wntd-2011-who-framework-convention-on-tobacco-control/world-no-tobacco-day-awards>

About the Smoke Free Partnership:

The Smoke Free Partnership is a strategic, independent and flexible partnership between Cancer Research UK, the European Heart Network and the European Respiratory Society. It aims to promote tobacco control advocacy and policy research at EU and national levels in collaboration with other EU health organisations and EU tobacco control networks.