



*Photo opportunity: A giant, "plain packaging" cigarette pack with striking pictorial and text warnings will attend the press conference.*

## PRESS RELEASE

# EU should adopt plain packaging to discourage young smokers

**29 February 2012, Brussels** – Plain packaging should be introduced in Europe to reduce the appeal of smoking among adolescents, according to public health experts and tobacco control groups. (1)

Cigarette packaging with plain fonts, no logos and large and explicit picture and text messages will further de-normalise and de-glamorise smoking. Promotional branding continues to drive teen smoking; a cigarette pack can become a 'badge' in the same way as trainers and mobile phones do, according to the organisers of a conference taking place tonight in the European Parliament. (2)

International public health expert and social scientist, David Hammond from the University of Waterloo, Canada, says: "The brand imagery, logos, and designs on cigarette packs serve as a critically important promotional tool, particularly for reaching priority groups such as young women and youth."

"My research shows that plain packaging of cigarettes would reduce the attractiveness of smoking, particularly among young people. Plain packaging would also help to reduce false beliefs that some cigarette brands are less harmful than others." (3)

Top medical experts are equally convinced. "Introducing plain packaging would deter smoking thus contributing to the prevention of all four of today's major killers: cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lung disease and diabetes," says Prof Marc Decramer, immediate past president of the European Respiratory Society. (4)

He adds: "Health experts everywhere recognise this policy development as one of the most cost-effective public health measures available to governments today".

Australia is the first country in the world to pass legislation on plain packaging (5) but there is a worldwide trend towards larger picture and text warnings. Some EU countries already have sizable pictorial warnings, and legislation in Uruguay requires images covering 80% of the front and back of cigarette packs. (6)

In Europe, the current challenge is to stop adolescents from becoming smokers, the organisers say. Europe has the highest rate of 13-15 year old smokers in the world (7) – and those who become regular long term smokers have a 1 in 2 risk of dying from a tobacco related disease (8).

"Our top priority is large (80%) mandatory picture warnings at the front and back of all tobacco products (not only cigarette packs) in combination with standardised, plain packaging. We also stress

the importance of adding quit lines on the pack of all tobacco products,” says Florence Berteletti-Kemp of the Smoke Free Partnership.

The European Commission is currently considering a revision of the Tobacco Directive. It has reported on its consultation, including comments on plain packaging. (9) Having signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (10), the European Union should be committed to introducing plain packaging. “Plain packing is feasible, legal and easily implementable. It does not cost any money to governments and works for public health. There is no excuse not to do it,” Ms Berteletti-Kemp adds.

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### Notes for journalists

1. Press conference at 11 am on 29 February (Brussels Press Club Europe) and meeting in European Parliament at 18.30 (details below).
2. High level conference on pictorial health warnings and standardised packaging for tobacco products, European Parliament - Room: Altiero Spinelli A5G-2 From 18.00 till 21:00, co-hosted by a group of cross-party MEPs: Karl-Heinz Florenz, Glenis Willmott, Carl Schlyter and Antonyia Parvanova. (Invitation only)
3. David Hammond's website, Tobacco labelling resource centre includes a section on plain packaging see <http://www.tobaccolabels.ca/plainpackaging>
4. Marc Decramer, Professor and Head of the Pneumology Section at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. He was President of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) between 2010 and 2011 and is currently on the board of the European Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Coalition.
5. Watch Nicola Roxon, former Australian health minister talk about plain packaging on ABC News, 6 April 2010 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=ZY5L8US9tfU&NR=1> Health warnings in Australia will be required to cover 75% of the front of packs and 90% of the back of packs.
6. See “International rankings” in Cigarette Package Health Warnings, International Status Report, October 2010. <http://www.tobaccolabels.ca/factsheet/cigarettepackagehealthwarningsinternationalstatus> Ten EU countries have already adopted legislation to introduce pictorial health warnings (Belgium, Romania, United Kingdom, Latvia, Malta, France, Spain, Hungary, Denmark and Ireland).
7. Warren C W et al, Patterns of global tobacco use in young people and implications for future chronic disease burden in adults, Vol 367 March 4, 2006 [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com) also available at [http://www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org/resources/ficheiros/Patterns\\_of\\_global\\_tobacco\\_use.pdf](http://www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org/resources/ficheiros/Patterns_of_global_tobacco_use.pdf)
8. Peto R. and Lopez A., The future worldwide health effects of current smoking patterns <http://www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/pressreleases/2000-08-02/the-future-worldwide-health-effects-of-current-smoking-patterns>
9. European Commission, Public consultation on the possible revision of the Tobacco Directive [http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/consultations/tobacco\\_cons\\_01\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/consultations/tobacco_cons_01_en.htm), [http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/consultation\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/consultation_report_en.pdf)
10. Spotlight on the Labelling and Packaging of Tobacco Products, Articles 11 and 13 of the FCTC, Issue Eight, May 2011 (available in many languages) [www.smokefreepartnership.eu](http://www.smokefreepartnership.eu)

*The Smoke Free Partnership brings together the European Respiratory Society (ERS at [www.ersnet.org](http://www.ersnet.org)), Cancer Research UK (CR-UK at [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)) and the European Heart Network (EHN at [www.ehnheart.org](http://www.ehnheart.org)). We aim 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.*

*The Foundation against Cancer is the only national organization fighting cancer in Belgium. Its main priorities are financial support for scientific research on cancer, social support for patients and their close ones, and cancer prevention and screening.*

*The French League against cancer is committed to a struggle that aims to protect all persons, in particular the most vulnerable, by preventing smoking initiation, raising tobacco control as a major societal issue, and continuously underlining the devastating health, social, economic and environmental consequences of smoking.*