



PRESS RELEASE

SFP condemns efforts to weaken and delay the Tobacco Products Directive in the European Parliament

Brussels, 5 September 2013 – The Smoke Free Partnership (SFP) expresses deep concern over the decision taken by the heads of political groups in the European Parliament today to postpone the debate and vote on the Tobacco Products Directive. The vote had been scheduled for the European Parliament's (EP) September plenary session, but has now been delayed to 8 October.

Florence Berteletti, Director of SFP, said: *"This is outrageous. Ever since John Dalli ceased to be Health Commissioner last year, we have repeatedly expressed concern over the delay tactics of the tobacco industry and what a delay of the Directive would mean for public health in Europe. We suspect that tobacco industry interference is now once again at play – this time by overturning a longstanding commitment of the European Parliament to secure a swift resolution of this Directive."*

In July 2013, the EP's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted a strong position on the Tobacco Products Directive including large, mandatory pictorial health warnings on tobacco products covering 75% of the front and the back of tobacco packs; a ban on all characterising flavours of tobacco products (detectable flavours of tobacco smoke such as menthol, vanilla, strawberry); a ban on slim cigarettes and slim cigarette packs; strong measures against counterfeiting and illicit trade of tobacco products with independent supervision; and provisions safeguarding the Member States' right to adopt stronger measures than those in the Directive.

The plenary vote was scheduled on 10 September and was a necessary step to kick-start the European Parliament's negotiations with the Council of the EU so as to allow the adoption of the Directive before next year's European elections. A month-long delay in the plenary vote significantly reduces the time for negotiations and endangers the possibility of a successful agreement before the Health Council on 10 December and the last EP plenary session in April 2014.

Since 2011, the European Parliament has expressed concerns over the timeline of the Directive and has called on the Commission to speed up the preparatory process. Despite this track record, and despite the ambitious calendar set and so far respected for the parliamentary debates, the delay of the vote calls into question the European Parliament's commitment to adopt the Tobacco Products Directive.

According to media reports, supporters of the delay argued that "there was not enough time to discuss" the ENVI report. However, these claims are contradicted by the large number of plenary amendments tabled (almost 70 amendments as of 5 September noon). Most of the amendments tabled aim to weaken the provisions of the proposal by reducing the size of health warnings to 50% of pack surface, extending exemptions from the ban on characterising flavours and eliminating the ban on slim cigarettes.

Florence Berteletti added: *"EU citizens support tobacco control. The measures adopted in the ENVI Committee are effective in helping prevent children and young people from taking up smoking. Before the European elections citizens need to feel that the institutions represent their interests and not those of one single industry. A delay, coupled with subversive efforts to weaken the legislation, only serves the tobacco industry. This does no favours to popular perception of the European Union."*

It was also widely reported that another reason for the delay of the TPD vote is that German MEPs need to focus on the German general elections. Do we expect the EU institutions to stop working every time Germany or any other member state for that matter holds a general election? And why only the Tobacco Products Directive? Why are the other important issues on the September plenary agenda not being postponed?"



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Note to editors

For further comment please contact Florence Berteletti +32 (0)2 238 53 63 or Anca Toma +32 (0)2 238 53 65.

About SFP

The Smoke Free Partnership is a strategic, independent and flexible partnership between the European Respiratory Society (www.ersnet.org), Cancer Research UK (www.cancerresearchuk.org), the European Heart Network (www.ehnheart.org) and Action on Smoking and Health UK (www.ash.org.uk). 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.