



8th October, 2013

Tobacco Products Directive vote in European Parliament

EFA Policy Officer reporting from Strasbourg

The European Parliament plenary voted today on the proposal for a directive on the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products. The Parliament voted in favour of the Commission's proposal and, especially, gave the mandate to the Rapporteur, the Member of the European Parliament Linda McAvan (UK, S&D) to negotiate with the Council of the European Union and the Lithuanian Presidency. The objective, repeated several times in today's debate preceding the vote by the Lithuanian Health Minister Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis and the Commissioner for Health Tonio Borg, is to have the directive adopted before next European Parliament's elections that will be held in May 2014.

But what are the main provisions voted today by the European Parliament?

1. Combined health warnings (text and pictures) will have to cover 65% of the front and back of tobacco products packages and they have to be placed on the top: currently these warnings are smaller, placed on the bottom and, in some Member States, there is no obligation to use them (only 13 Member States use them)
2. A positive list of additives should be established by the Commission, menthol cigarettes are not allowed anymore although a 5-year exemption period has been allowed
3. Slim cigarettes will continue to be allowed on the market, but slim or fancy packages will not (packages that contain less than 20 cigarettes are not allowed anymore)
4. Better provisions on traceability will allow to track tobacco products throughout the entire supply chain and therefore limit counterfeiting
5. E-cigarettes are regulated under the general safety of products directive, but to be placed on the market they will need to respect clear requirements established in the amendment adopted by the EP plenary; those products claiming health benefits will be regulated under the medicinal products legislation

EFA supported combined health warnings covering 75% of the packages, comprehensive ban on all additives, ban on slims, better provisions on traceability and regulation of e-cigarettes to guarantee their safety for users. We can draw positive and negative conclusions from this vote that has a bittersweet flavour. Stronger requirements backing the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee report voted in July could have been adopted by the Members of the European Parliament. However, tobacco industry requests were not completely supported by the plenary. EFA will continue to support the Rapporteur in her effort to protect public health in Europe and we will follow the negotiations with the Council.

Roberta Savli

EU Policy Officer

roberta.savli@efanet.org

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients organisations, representing 35 national associations in 22 countries and over 400,000 patients. EFA is dedicated to making Europe a place where people with allergies, asthma and COPD have the right to best quality of care and safe environment, live uncompromised lives and are actively involved in all decisions influencing their health. www.efanet.org