

Welcoming the transposition of the European Tobacco Products Directive

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Today, the 20th of May 2016, the new Tobacco Products Directive enters into force. European Union Member States finally have clear guidance and requirements on electronic cigarettes, traceability, the use of additives in tobacco products, standardised packaging, etc.¹ Electronic cigarettes are now regulated under the directive, improving their reliability and avoiding their unrestrained promotion. Traceability provisions in the new Directive will allow to effectively fight smuggling of tobacco products. The TPD further contains a specific ban on almost all flavouring: tobacco will taste of tobacco and not strawberry, chocolate or vanilla. Regarding packaging, with the new Directive we will see an improvement in tobacco control through greater information on the health effects and larger graphic warnings with clearer messages. Some countries such as Ireland, the UK and France have gone beyond the minimum stipulation in the new TPD and have opted for plain packaging measures; others have announced that they are following suit.²⁻⁶ I sincerely believe that this is a day to congratulate ourselves. Today, public health has prevailed over the tobacco industry's economic interests. The measures provided in the TPD are proven to reduce and will reduce further the smoking prevalence in Europe, especially among our youth. This is a victorious step against a deadly business that keeps users addicted. To get to where we are now, numerous discussions and debates have taken place, first of all within the European Parliament, but also between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. Although we have not achieved everything initially intended - menthol flavour will still be allowed until 2020 and plain packaging will for now only be adopted in a few Member States - the Directive marks a victory in the battle for health over the tobacco industry. Lately, the European Court of Justice has supported the European Commission in its response to challenges from the tobacco industry against the Directive.⁷

From now on, the situation is unstoppable and we, the public health community, are unstoppable. In 2002, Canada and Brazil adopted graphic warnings on cigarette packs. It took three years for a third country, Singapore, to follow suit. Ten years on, so many more countries have joined the movement.⁸ Similarly, in 2012 Australia was the first to adopt plain packaging and it took three years before other countries decided to follow in its footsteps.^{9,10} Like the adoption of pictorial warnings, this trend can only grow and will not recede. On behalf of ENSP, I would like to congratulate and thank the European Commission, the Parliament and all European governments, but above all, the citizens of the European Union. This historic moment will have a large impact on health, culture and the lives of millions of people and for the years to come.

Congratulations Europe on celebrating a Public Health victory!

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PROVENANCE AND PEER REVIEW

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