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[Press release](#) | 10.07.2013

Tobacco Directive

Tougher rules on packaging and additives

The European Parliament's committee on public health today voted on draft legislation on tobacco products. The Greens/EFA group welcomed the vote in favour of an ambitious revision of the existing Tobacco Products Directive which has been in place for 12 years. While statistics show that overall the number of smokers is decreasing EU-wide, there is a worrying increased prevalence of smoking in the 15-25 age group. Furthermore, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the EU.

Commenting on the vote, Green public health spokesperson **Carl Schlyter** (MEP, Sweden) said:

"We are delighted that the public health committee, which has the lead responsibility in the European Parliament, clearly resisted the huge lobbying pressure from the tobacco industry and voted for an ambitious revision of the tobacco directive. Importantly, the public health committee went further than the European Commission's initial proposal with regard to additives. According to its position, all additives will need to be authorised for use ("positive list"), with any substance that is inherently hazardous or hazardous upon combustion being disqualified from the positive list. This list would place the burden on manufacturers to prove that the additives comply with the list's strict criteria."

"I am also very happy that the committee voted to ban characterizing flavours such as menthol and also slim cigarettes. Ending the use of flavours and cigarette shapes that make this killer drug attractive, particularly for younger consumers, is long overdue."

"Likewise, it is a great step forward that the committee supported the Commission proposal for a combined picture and text warning, on the front and back of packets, that takes up 75% of the surface on packets of cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco instead of 65% advocated by Council - warnings cannot be big enough!"

"In light of the booming, unregulated e-cigarettes market, clear rules are needed. I am glad that a clear majority agreed that they should undergo a light authorisation regime as medicinal products, with a 36-month transition period."

"However, the Greens/EFA group regrets that there was no majority in support of fully standardised or 'plain packaging' of cigarettes. Introduced by Australia in 2011, this would have meant no more logos or flashy colours on the part of the packaging not covered by warnings. A silver lining to this is that there was support for allowing member states the freedom to go further and adopt plain packaging at national level."

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