Press release | 05.09.2013

EU tobacco rules

Lucky strike for tobacco industry, as centre-right political groups shamelessly postpone vote

A crucial vote of the European Parliament on revised EU legislation on tobacco products, which was foreseen for next week, is set to be postponed following a decision of the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents. The leaders of the centre-right political groups in the European Parliament (EPP, ALDE, ECR and EFD) colluded to postpone the vote on the EU tobacco directive, which was scheduled for next week. The Greens hit out at the decision, with Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** stating:

"The centre-right political groups, led by the EPP, have shamelessly done the bidding of the tobacco industry in postponing the vote on the tobacco directive. There should be no doubt: this is a cynical exercise designed to buy time for the tobacco lobby, with a view to watering down the draft legislation. This is all the more outrageous as it was the European Parliament that had pushed the Commission to deliver the proposal as soon as possible. The timetable in the EP was agreed amongst all groups at the beginning of the year and Council already adopted a general approach in June. Delaying the process now is nothing but a desperate attempt to undermine the strong position adopted by the public health committee. It is scandalous that the centre-right in this house seems to be more concerned about the profits of the tobacco industry than public health."

Green public health spokesperson **Carl Schlyter** added:

"The EPP is engaging in a double-strike strategy: postponing the vote to buy time, while pushing amendments that seek to weaken the proposals, at the behest of the tobacco lobby. The EP's public health committee voted for robust legislation, with a view to tackling the number one killer in the EU - smoking kills 700,000 Europeans every year - but the EPP group is seeking to dismantle core elements of the proposals.

"EPP MEPs not only want to reduce the combined picture and health warning from 75% of the pack size to 50%, but they also want to make it less prominent by putting it at the bottom edge of the pack, instead of the top edge. They want to continue to allow misleading slim cigarettes, advocate a temporary exemption for menthol from the ban on characterising flavours and go as far as wanting to allow the industry to suggest that tobacco products have positive social effects. It is like the script of a satirical Hollywood film.

"The Greens will work to ensure that the tobacco directive emerges unscathed from the European Parliament, so that it can deliver its aim of reducing the devastating public health impact of these products."

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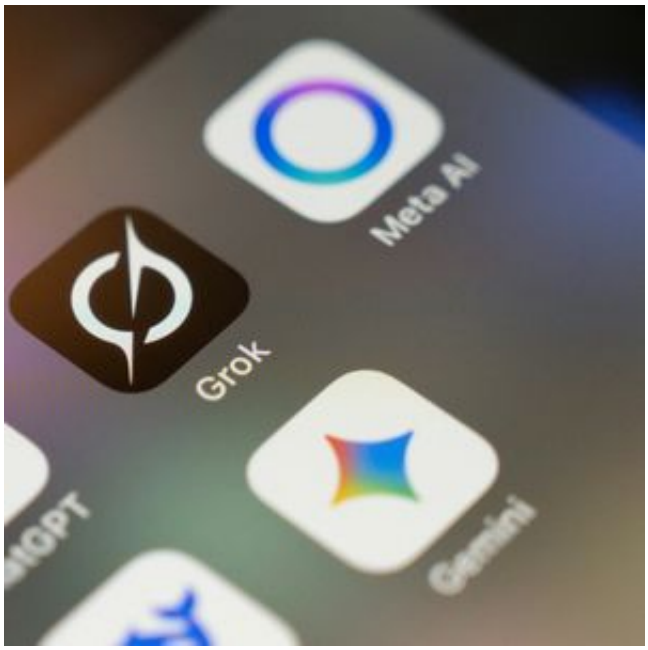


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Rebecca Harms

Member

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