

Brussels, 22 October 2004

EU fight against tobacco continues with graphic picture warnings and € 72 million media campaign

The EU is intensifying its fight against tobacco. At a press conference in Brussels today David Byrne, the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, announced a € 72 million EU media campaign against smoking and unveiled new hard hitting picture warnings for cigarette packs. The new anti-smoking drive follows the success of the EU's 2002 to 2004 campaign, "Feel Free to Say No" (see [IP/04/323](#)), which told young Europeans "be cool – don't smoke", achieving some 1 billion contacts with them and partnering the EU with footballers and music stars. The picture warnings unveiled by Mr. Byrne include graphic photographs of rotten lungs (caption: "Smoking causes fatal lung cancer") a dead body in a mortuary (caption: "Smokers die younger") and a man with a large tumour on his throat (caption: "Smoking can cause a slow and painful death"). They form part of a database of 42 images designed for use in combination with the hard hitting health warnings introduced EU-wide in 2003 (see [IP/03/1213](#)). EU countries who so wish will be able to use the pictures to add impact to their health warnings. The Commission expects picture warnings to be introduced in a number of countries next year, including Ireland and Belgium.

Commissioner Byrne said: "People need to be shocked out of their complacency about tobacco. I make no apology for some of the pictures we are using. The true face of smoking is disease, death and horror – not the glamour and sophistication the pushers in the tobacco industry try to portray. The EU must hammer home this message to young people via its media campaign and to smokers via their cigarette packs."

The large black and white health warnings seen on cigarette packs across Europe were introduced by the EU's Tobacco Products Directive (see: [IP/01/702](#)). This legislation mandated the Commission to help EU countries to introduce picture warnings. The Commission's database has been created by a communications agency and the images in it pre-tested in focus groups across the 25 EU Member States. Experience from Canada, where picture warnings have been used for several years, suggest they can help reduce smoking.

David Byrne was joined at his press conference by Dr. Ann McNeil, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at University College London who presented a review of EU tobacco control policy produced by a team of health experts. The experts put the annual cost of tobacco related disease in the EU at € 100 billion – or 1% of GDP.

Their report calls for intensified effort against tobacco across the EU, based on:

- Comprehensive, long term strategies
 - Well staffed, properly funded tobacco regulators
 - Full implementation of the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
- Commissioner Byrne commended these recommendations as an important contribution to the Commission's thinking.

Just before the press conference Mr. Byrne presented a cheque for € 250 to school children from Ghent whose class won an EU backed competition to design an anti-tobacco poster.

Further information

Copies of the new picture warnings are available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/mediatheque/photo/new_en.html

A press pack is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/ev_20041022_en.htm

Beate GMINDER 02/296.56.94
Catherine BUNYAN 02/299.65.12