



European Parliament scraps smoking ban after only six weeks. Health organisations condemn European Parliament for failing to protect staff and visitors and wasting millions of Euros.

On Monday 12th February, the European Parliament Bureau voted 14 to 1 to scrap recently introduced provisions banning smoking in its premises. The rules were introduced in all the Parliament buildings in Belgium, France and Luxembourg on 1 January 2007 as a result of a 2004 case to the European Ombudsman who found that the Parliament was failing to protect the health of its staff.¹

According to a report in the Parliament’s Newshound magazine the rules were scrapped because of “enforcement” problems and because the smoking ban was interfering with the *“smooth running of our parliamentary and administrative business.”* The EP is now proposing to adopt smoking rooms after consultation with Parliament’s administration.

Health advocates are appalled by the Bureau’s actions: “This decision flies in the face of all the independent scientific evidence on the harm caused by passive smoking. It also ignores the fact that European citizens and the Bureau’s constituents overwhelmingly support smokefree workplaces”, said Luk Joossens of the European Cancer Leagues.

“There are smoking bans in place in all the countries in which Parliament is located. French, Belgians and Luxembourgers have had no problems complying with these laws so how come MEPs can’t do the same? This is not about the smooth running of Parliament but about a handful of MEPs who think they are above the law”, said Fiona Godfrey of the European Respiratory Society. “Their actions bring Parliament into disrepute and will only add to perceptions that Brussels is totally out of step with ordinary voters.”

Susanne Logstrup of the European Heart Network added: “Extensive research has shown that ventilation does not protect against the harmful effects of passive smoking. If Parliament introduces the kind of sealed smoking rooms allowed under Italian and French law it will cost millions of Euros. It’s a complete waste of EU funds when there is a cheap and effective alternative already in place.”

¹ <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/030260.htm>

"In an internal European Parliament poll conducted in late 2006, 60% of all respondents supported the introduction of a comprehensive smoking ban in the Parliament. If the Bureau members are not listening to their voters, to Parliament's staff or to independent medical opinion, just who are they listening to?" concluded Francis Grogna of the European Network for Smoking Prevention.

All eight organisations called upon the many MEPs who supported the ban to challenge the Bureau's decision and ensure that the current rules stay in place.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Ten European Countries² have adopted legal measures introducing smokefree workplaces

According to the recent **Eurobarometer Survey** on the "Attitudes of Europeans towards Tobacco"ⁱ, 95% acknowledge that smoking in the company of a pregnant woman can be very dangerous for the baby. More than four out of five respondents are in favour of a ban on smoking in the workplace (86%). Support for smoke-free pubs (over 80%) and restaurants (over 90%) is highest in the four Member States **which have already banned smoking in hospitality venues**. This is another indication that the support for smoke-free policies tends to increase during the build-up to their introduction, and grows still further after implementation.ⁱⁱ The ban in the European Parliament had only taken effect since January 1, 2007. **A mere five weeks.**

1. Passive smoking causes at least 79000 deaths in the EU 25 each year. See Lifting the Smoke Screen launched in the European Parliament in March 2006³, <http://www.european-lung-foundation.org/index.php?id=416>
2. The **first Conference of the Parties** to the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control has (unanimously) agreed that "there is conclusive evidence that engineering approaches do not protect against exposure to tobacco smoke."ⁱⁱⁱ There is no known safe level of exposure; the only effective method of protection from passive smoke is a comprehensive ban on smoking in all enclosed and semi-enclosed public places. http://www.who.int/gb/fctc/PDF/cop1/FCTC_COP1_11-en.pdf (page 3)
3. At international level, the WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), signed by 168 and ratified by 143 Parties^{iv}, including the Community, "recognizes that scientific evidence has unequivocally established that exposure to tobacco smoke causes death, disease and disability". The Convention obliges the Community and its Member States to tackle exposure to tobacco smoke in

² **Ireland** (29 March 2004), **Norway** (1 June 2004), **Italy** (10 January 2005), **Malta** (5 April 2005), **Sweden** (1^{er} June 2005) and **Scotland** (26 March 2006), **Lithuania** (1 January 2007). In 2007, smoking bans will be introduced in **Wales** (2 April), **Northern Ireland** (Spring 2007), **Iceland** (1 June 2007) and **England**. **France** will extend its current partial smoking ban introduced on 1 February 2007 to the Horeca sector in January 2008.

indoor workplaces, public transport and indoor public places.
<http://www.wpro.who.int/NR/rdonlyres/BFF09650-A238-4CF5-A681-A30C3F430BC0/0/RC5410.pdf> (page 15)

4. In 2000, some 656,000 deaths out of a total of 4.5 million in EU25 countries were due to smoking, according to the ASPECT report (Analysis of the Science and Policy for European Control of Tobacco) published in 2004 by the European Commission.
5. The Smoke Free Partnership is a new strategic, independent and flexible partnership between the European Respiratory Society (ERS at www.ersnet.org), Cancer Research UK (CR-UK at www.cancerresearchuk.org) and the Institut National du Cancer in France (INCa at www.e-cancer.fr). It aims to promote tobacco control advocacy and policy research at EU and national levels in collaboration with other EU health organisations and EU tobacco control networks.
6. "Lifting the smokescreen: 10 reasons for a smoke free Europe" report available at (www.ersnet.org) Published by the Smoke Free Partnership, it provides the first-ever EU figures on deaths from passive smoking and aims to help European and national politicians and policymakers speed up legislative plans and enforcement of smoke free laws across the European Union.

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European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) www.ephah.org
European Network for Smoking Prevention (ENSP) www.ensp.org

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- i “Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco”, Special Eurobarometer 239, January 2006,
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/documents/ebs_239_en.pdf
- ii Jones S, Muller T., “Public attitudes to smoke-free policies in Europe”, *Lifting the smokescreen, op. cit.*
Borland R, Yong HH, Siahpush M, Hyland A, Campbell S, Hastings G, Cummings KM, Fong GT.
Support for and reported compliance with smoke-free restaurants and bars by smokers in four
countries: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey.
Tob Control. 2006 Jun;15 Suppl 3:iii34-41.
- iii [Lifting](#) the smokescreen
- iv As of 12 February 2007.