



EMBARGO UNTIL 12.00 noon (11.00 am GMT) Tuesday 21 March 2006

Photo opportunity: *A giant, walking cigarette pack will attend the press conference. It will also meet Liz Lynne, MEP (UK, Liberal Democrat) after the official launch of the report (at about 13.50) in Room A5G3, European Parliament. Ms Lynne suffers from asthma, which is aggravated by a smoky atmosphere.*

First-ever EU figures on passive smoking deaths provoke call for action

(Brussels, 21 March 2006) – More than 79,000 adults die each year as a result of passive smoking in the 25 countries of the European Union (1) (2), according to statistics published today by the Smoke Free Partnership. (3)

The new figures are contained in a report entitled “Lifting the smokescreen: 10 reasons for a smoke free Europe” (4). It will be officially launched in the European Parliament (5) by MEPs Liz Lynne (UK, Liberal Democrat) and Adamos Adamou (Cyprus, European United Left–Nordic Green Left).

The report also provides the evidence that measures to prevent passive smoking are feasible and popular.

It calls for legislation to prevent smoking in all enclosed public areas and workplaces, including bars and restaurants. In Ireland, where the policy was introduced in March 2004, 96% believe that the law is successful, and even 80% of smokers think it was a good idea.

The risks from inhaling second-hand tobacco smoke are irrefutable after 20 years of accumulated medical evidence. Professor Konrad Jamrozik, University of Queensland, Australia, says his estimates of the deaths caused by passive smoking are conservative. “*They include deaths from heart disease, strokes, lung cancer and some respiratory disease caused by passive smoking but they omit deaths in childhood due to this cause and deaths in adults due to other conditions related to smoking, such as pneumonia,*” he says.

The estimates are broken down to show deaths due to passive smoking in all workplaces in the European Union, and among the particularly vulnerable workers in restaurants, bars, pubs and nightclubs. In the hospitality industry, 325 people - or one person every day of a six-day working week - die as a result of passive smoking.

“Passive smoking causes death and disease, particularly in hospitality workers,” says Prof. John Britton, Chair of the Tobacco Control Committee of the European Respiratory Society and spokesperson for the Smoke Free Partnership. *“There is no excuse for not introducing a total ban on smoking in enclosed public places as soon as possible. The successes in Ireland, Norway and Italy show it can be done easily and effectively.”*

Tobacco is the most important source of indoor contaminants in environments where smoking occurs.

Side-stream smoke is created between puffs and makes up 85% of room smoke. It is more toxic than the smoke inhaled and exhaled by a smoker. This is because a cigarette being held in the hand or smouldering in an ashtray burns at a lower temperature releasing a different combination of chemicals with larger amounts of some toxic constituents.

Smoke from cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals, including many air pollutants and wastes that are regulated as "hazardous". More than 50 of these chemicals are known to be carcinogens (substances causing cancer) and more than 100 are chemical poisons.

When "smoke-free" legislation is introduced, it is not only health and life expectancy that improve. Companies find that days lost to ill health fall. Contrary to reports that these policies would ruin the hospitality business, jobs in bars and restaurants in New York increased by 10,600 in the year after the 2003 Smoke-Free Air Act came into effect.

Since January 2004, Ireland, Norway, Italy, Malta, Sweden and Scotland have all gone "smoke free". Several other countries, including England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Belgium, have plans in the pipeline. The Smoke Free Partnership wants to hasten the trend.

"Last year, the Swedish Minister of Health, Morgan Johansson said that in five years' time, a majority of EU countries would have smoke free laws. We hope it can happen even sooner," says Fiona Godfrey, EU Policy Advisor, European Respiratory Society speaking on behalf of the Smoke Free Partnership.

Notes to journalists

1. Figures are also available for Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. "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.
5. The official launch of report will be held in the European Parliament, Brussels on 21 March 2005 from 12:30–14:30 in Room A5G3. The **press conference** is at 11 am on Tuesday, 21 March 2006 in the Press conference room of the European Parliament, PHS Building 00 A059, rue Wiertz, B-1047 Brussels

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