

Sir/Madam,

As a free citizen of a free country I would like to comment on the content of the European Commission's Green Paper, "Towards a Europe free from tobacco smoke: Policy options at EU level".

We live in a free market economy, not a Communist state. Consequently, I cannot understand why we, as free citizens, are increasingly being bombarded with patronising rules and regulations telling us what we can and cannot do. Why not let the market and the consumer decide? Let non-smokers choose whether or not to go into a room where smoking is allowed, and let the market make its own rules based on consumer choice and existing demand. As we all know, supply and demand are the principles that govern the market. Politics should not interfere.

In addition, I do not understand why politics is going further and further down the path of insisting that workers be protected from unpleasant influences at the workplace, when the result may be that the workers end up with no job at all because their employers cannot afford the costs of investing in the protective measures or, faced with a drop in turnover, are forced to cut jobs or, worst of all, to shut down altogether.

And it is also important to bear in mind just how many jobs would be put at risk by a drop in turnover, not only in the tobacco sector itself but also in the catering sector and the related supply industries. And all because of rules and regulations!

Nor should we forget falling tax revenues, caused by tax increases in the Tobacco Duty Act. And smuggled contraband goods, on which no tax whatsoever is paid!

It seems as though all the politicians currently involved in the smoking issue have either been intimidated by the press, or have given up basing their arguments on objective considerations and are instead appealing to the emotions. This runs counter to the mandate conferred on them by citizens at the ballot box.

Yours faithfully  
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