Citizens' summary

Stepping up the fight against cigarette smuggling –

EU communication

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- The illicit trade in tobacco products, especially cigarette smuggling, is a **criminal activity** which:
  - causes significant **financial losses to the EU budget and the budgets of the Member States** in terms of unpaid taxes and duties;
  - fuels **organised crime** and undermines **social order**;
  - is linked to other forms of **smuggling such as drugs, weapons and humans**;
  - undermines **health policies** aimed at reducing the consumption of tobacco products;
  - affects **vulnerable groups** such as young people and those on low income.
- Now more than ever, in times of **economic crisis**, every cent counts. It is unfair that criminals steal billions of euros which could help fund social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Everyone** except the criminals.
- **Citizens** will benefit from having more money available in the state budget for social projects, better health protection and a safer environment, as crime decreases.
- **Member States** will benefit by collecting greater revenues.
- **Legitimate industry** will benefit at manufacturing and retail level.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- The financial losses to the EU are estimated to exceed **€10 billion a year**.
- Smuggling is an **international problem** and the criminal networks operate across borders. A coordinated and comprehensive approach is the only effective way to tackle the problem.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

- Criminal activity will be severely disrupted.
- Greater coordination will lead to an optimum use of resources and exchange of information at national, EU and international level.
- The EU will continue to address the problem at international level by urging and helping the source countries to combat cigarette smuggling.

WHEN IS THE STRATEGY LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- Some of the proposed measures/actions are on-going.
The strategy proposes actions to be implemented in the short (2013) medium (2014) and long-term (2015). The proposed actions will be discussed with the European Parliament and the Council.

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