



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Health systems and products
Substances of human origin and Tobacco control

Brussels, 2 May 2013

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Participants: Dominik Schnichels, Katja Bromen (DG SANCO D4)
Ralf Weidenhammer (Weidenhammer Packaging Group)

Date: 2 May 2013

The meeting was organised at the request of Mr Weidenhammer to listen to his concerns regarding possible implications of the proposed Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) on the packaging industry.

Background

Weidenhammer Packaging Group is a family owned company producing paper and plastic packaging for various consumer products, including cans used as packaging for fine-cut tobacco. They are the market leader, in particular in Germany.

Summary

Mr Weidenhammer explained that the banning of the use of cans foreseen in the proposed Directive is a major area of concern:

Fine-cut tobacco would account for one third of cigarette consumption in Germany. Some 90% of the total market of fine-cut tobacco would be used in make-your own (MYO) cigarettes, produced with a particular type of tobacco, i.e. volume fine-cut tobacco. This tobacco would require a particular packaging providing space and air around the tobacco to ensure its quality, therefore necessitating the selling within rigid packaging such as cans/tins instead of flexible packaging such as pouches as foreseen in the Directive. It was sold in composite cans, containing between 50 and 200g of tobacco. Its consumers would be mostly above 25 years of age. Banning these cans would have a negative, almost prohibitive impact on the quality of the product and on the market segment in general.

DG SANCO explained the rationale of the TPD proposal regarding a certain level of standardisation of the packages. Mr Weidenhammer explained that due to its distinctive form, look and cut, fine-cut tobacco was easily distinguishable from pipe tobacco, which would render the risk of circumvention of stricter rules for RYO tobacco totally unlikely. Furthermore, repackaging of products and covering of packs, resulting in an avoidance of looking at health warnings was already practiced by consumers of all types of tobacco products and was anyway outside the responsibility of the Commission.

Furthermore, Mr Weidenhammer wondered why the Impact Assessment does not address the impacts on the packaging industry for RYO and MYO tobacco. SANCO pointed to the lack of cooperation by the European association.

Mr Weidenhammer explained that in some markets (mostly Eastern and Southern EU) the tobacco industry would have a preference for big standing pouches (100 g and more) compared to the cans because of reduced costs.

Regarding the actual production of the cans he explained that the can producers buy the paper ("label") surrounding the cans (including health warnings) from printing companies. The tobacco industry fills the cans from the bottom, closes them with a cardboard bottom and adds the tax stamps, typically covering a part of the lid and of the lateral side. The reason for this filling process is that the opening mechanism at the top is more sophisticated.