

## **MIDDAY EXPRESS**

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### **Tobacco products: Commission adopts a new set of written health warnings**

Brussels, 07/03/2012 – Today, the European Commission adopted 14 new health warnings to appear on tobacco packs. Written health warnings on tobacco products sold in the EU have been compulsory since 2003. The legislation in force also foresees periodic updating of the health warnings.

The 14 new health warnings adopted today were chosen from amongst 24 possible messages and following tests among focus groups made up of citizens from all 27 Member States through a Eurobarometer study. Thereafter the warnings were discussed and agreed with the 27 Member States.

Whereas most adult smokers in the EU are probably aware that smoking is harmful for their health, they tend to underestimate or ignore the manifold dangers that smoking poses. Available evidence suggests that textual warnings have an impact on smokers' attitudes and behaviours. In order to remain effective however, such warnings need to be updated regularly. In parallel, evidence of lesser known negative consequences of tobacco use is accumulating. For example, new scientific evidence shows that tobacco use plays a causal role in mouth and throat cancer, visual impairments as well as dental and gum disease. Parental smoking also acts as an incentive for children's smoking. The text warnings have thus been updated in this sense. This is illustrated by the following new warning texts: "Smoking causes mouth and throat cancer"; "Smoking increases the risk of blindness"; "Smoking damages your teeth and gums"; "Smokers' children are more likely to start smoking". Member States have two years to introduce the new written health warnings. The Tobacco Products Directive also makes it possible for Member States to combine text warnings with graphic images which are even more effective since they convey warnings in a more vivid way. Pictorial health warnings are currently in place in nine Member States: Belgium, Romania, United Kingdom, Latvia, France, Malta, Spain, Hungary and Denmark. Other Member States have passed or are planning to pass similar legislation.

For more information:

Commission Directive (available soon on the following webpage):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/key\\_documents/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/key_documents/index_en.htm)

Eurobarometer:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/eurobarometers/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/eurobarometers/index_en.htm)

Information on EU Tobacco Control:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/policy/index_en.htm)