



The World Health Organization backs a new proposed EU tobacco directive, which is currently being debated in the European Parliament's health committee.

The proposed legislation consists of new and strengthened rules on how tobacco products can be manufactured, presented, and sold. More specifically, it bans the use of cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco (RYO) and smokeless tobacco products with characterising flavours and makes the use of large pictorial health warnings mandatory on cigarettes and RYO.

WHO Director-General, Dr Margaret Chan, has welcomed the European Commission's proposal which, the European Parliament's Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety has worked intensively on for the past month.

"I am heartened to note that the current Directive draft is responsive to the health concerns of Europeans related to the tobacco epidemic, especially as studies show that the European public also supports strong tobacco control policies. I hope to see the same support from the legislators to the final legislative report during the next plenary session of the European Parliament," Dr Chan says in a statement.

The directive-draft proposes measures for products that were not specifically regulated so far such as e-cigarettes and herbal products for smoking. Chewing and nasal tobacco will be subject to specific labelling and ingredient regulations. The existing ban for oral tobacco (snus) shall be maintained.

The WHO Director-General points out that each year, tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke claim well more than 700 000 lives in European Union.

"A strong EU Tobacco Products Directive would not only help save lives and protect young

people from addiction, but will also signal to the world that the EU can continue to be seen as a strong ally in the fight against the tobacco epidemic. This is an epidemic which claimed an estimated 100 million lives during the previous century, and which could claim a billion more lives in the 21st century.“

Dr. Chan urges EU parlimenarians to remain „steadfast in the midst of ... pressures“.

“In the case of the EU Directive, the tobacco industry is, once again, making an extraordinary effort to keep its products from being regulated, precisely because regulation works so well to reduce the vast harm caused by tobacco products. The tobacco industry is, once again, using an arsenal of economic arguments, precisely because such arguments are so effective in shifting the emphasis away from health, especially in times of financial austerity,” the WHO Director-General says.