

EU lawmakers back tougher anti-smoking rules

February 26 2014, by Juergen Baetz

(AP)—The European Parliament on Wednesday voted for tougher anti-smoking rules that will make health warnings on cigarette packs larger and include mandatory pictures of rotting teeth or cancer-infested lungs.

Gruesome warning photos can already be found on [cigarette packs](#) in some countries, but they will have to be bigger and used across all the 28 EU countries from 2016, according to the legislation.

The warnings will occupy 65 percent of the front and the back of cigarette packages plus 50 percent of its sides, including text [health warnings](#) like "smoking kills—quit now." Current warning labels only cover 30-40 percent of the packages.

The legislation also introduces tighter regulation of e-cigarettes, advertisement rules and a ban on most flavored tobacco products. Health experts have argued cigarettes that have vanilla or chocolate flavors, for example, lure young people to start smoking by disguising the taste of tobacco.

Menthol-flavored cigarettes are granted an extension but will be banned by 2020, according to the new law.

Officials and health advocates welcome the changes as a milestone in helping to reduce the number of smokers in the 28-nation bloc, while the tobacco industry condemns it as a burdensome regulation on an industry that pays lots of taxes.

The legislation still requires approval by EU governments next month, which it is widely expected to receive.

Smoking bans in public, limits on tobacco firms' advertising, and other measures over the past decade have seen the number of smokers fall from an estimated 40 percent of the EU's 500 million citizens to 28 percent now. Still, treatment of smoke-related diseases costs about 25 billion euros (\$34 billion) a year, and the bloc estimates there are around 700,000 smoking-related deaths annually across its 28 countries.

EU Health Commissioner Tonio Borg said the adoption of the [tobacco legislation](#) is "a testament to the political will to put the health of our citizens first."

Philip Morris International Inc., which owns several brands such as Marlboro, said the legislation will make the EU economy less competitive and fuel the black market [tobacco](#) sales.

"This will be a blow to the hundreds of thousands of people working in the legal industry and member state governments now faced with filling budget gaps," said Drago Azinovic, the firm's top European executive.

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Citation: EU lawmakers back tougher anti-smoking rules (2014, February 26) retrieved 17 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-eu-lawmakers-tougher-anti-smoking.html>

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