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ENSP Network Meeting and General Assembly, Bucharest, Romania, 21-24 May 2014

The ENSP Network Meeting and General Assembly will take place in Bucharest, Romania, from Wednesday 21st to Saturday 24th May, 2014.

The meeting will be organised by the Romanian Prevention Forum (<http://www.fnp.ro/>) and more details will be available soon.

The registration form is available online here: <http://www.ensp.org/node/1054>

Theme for World No Tobacco Day 2014: tobacco taxes

The theme for this year's World No Tobacco Day is tobacco taxes.

Increasing the price of tobacco through higher taxes is the single most effective way to decrease consumption and encourage tobacco users to quit. A tax increase also directly benefits governments through increased revenues, which can be used for tobacco control and other important health and social programmes. Increasing tobacco taxes by 10% generally decreases tobacco consumption by 4% in high-income countries and by about 8% in low- and middle-income countries, while tobacco tax revenues increase by nearly 7%.

Source: [WHO Regional Office for Europe](#)

Cigarette smuggling: experts urge MEPs to confront tobacco industry

The illicit trade in tobacco products costs EU countries €10 billion a year in lost tax revenues, according to estimates by the European Commission. Experts and MEPs met on 22 January to discuss how to tackle the issue and the role played by major tobacco producers. “The idea that we are winning the battle against smuggling is perhaps not quite true,” said Green Belgian MEP Bart Staes, vice-chair of the budgetary control committee, which helped to organise the hearing.

Involvement of big tobacco?

In 2000, the European Commission filed lawsuits in New York against Philip Morris International (PMI) and other companies, accusing them of smuggling cigarettes.

The case against Phillip Morris was dropped in 2004, after the company agreed to pay to the EU and the member states €1 billion over 12 years and to make additional payments in case of future seizures of its genuine products.

Similar agreements were concluded with Japan Tobacco International in 2007 and with British American Tobacco and Imperial Tobacco in 2010.

Ingeborg Grässle, a German member of the EPP group, said: “These agreements have not led to an increase in transparency. We need to look more closely on what is happening with the money paid out by the industry. We need a cohesive and consistent strategy in dealing with smuggling.”

Anna Gilmore, professor of public health at the University of Bath, told MEPs there were indications that the four major tobacco companies may still be involved in similar activities. "An important element of the illicit trade in Europe appears to be attributable to big tobacco manufacturers (...) We have to conclude that the agreements did not deter the tobacco industry," she said.

Lack of reliable data

The size of the illicit tobacco trade in the EU is hard to gauge, as there is shortage of reliable data. The main sources are seizures of smuggled packages and a survey of empty cigarette packs collected across the EU. Both produce inaccurate estimates and show contradictory results about the trends in the volume of illicit trade, explained Belgian expert Luk Joossens, who presented a report on cigarette smuggling he co-wrote at the request of the European Parliament.

Protocol to eliminate illicit trade worldwide

Polish expert Leszek Bartłomiejczyk spoke of the illicit tobacco trade coming from eastern European countries such as Belarus, Ukraine and Russia and argued for a worldwide track-and-trace system that should put production and distribution under control and be able to securely identify all products - who has produced them, when and why. He urged the EU to ratify the 2012 WHO protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products. It foresees a global system of information collecting and sharing. It has been signed by the EU and 53 countries.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

6th European Conference o Tobacco or Health



Greece passes new hospital fee bill to cigarette smokers

In a surprise U-turn, the Greek government decided to scrap a controversial hospital fee introduced at the start of the year and pass it on instead to tobacco product prices.

The €25 hospital fee, which initially applied to patients earning more than €11,000 per year, was introduced as an alternative source of revenue for the Greek government, which is desperately seeking to cover its 2014-15 funding gap and avoid a third bailout package.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Athens faces a funding gap of nearly €11 billion for 2014-15.

Instead the bill will be passed on to smokers as the price on tobacco products will increase by 5 euro cents, generating around €40 million per year, [according to the newspaper Ekathimerini](#)

The announcement came as the 28-strong college of EU commissioners met in Athens yesterday (8 January) to inaugurate the Greek presidency of the Council of Ministers.

The Greek minister for health, Adonis Georgiadis, had come under fire for introducing the hospital fee from both the junior coalition partner PASOK as well as opposition parties in the Greek parliament.

Greek media have revealed that an uninsured cancer patient died on Thursday (3 January) because he had been unable to find a public hospital that would treat him free of charge.

However, Georgiadis said there was no reason for the man not to be treated and suggested that his case was being exploited for "political reasons".

But on Tuesday, Georgiadis said that the Health Ministry would be willing to abolish the €25 if other funding measures in line with the government's targets could be found.

The new price hike on tobacco products has already prompted a sharp reaction from representatives of the industry.

“It was the worst possible development for the sector as the decision will send the illicit tobacco trade through the roof,” said Nikos Nechamas, chairman of the Hellenic Association of European Tobacco Companies.

Greece's healthcare system has been under enormous pressure ever since the global financial crisis began in 2007.

In November, Greece's private healthcare clinics threatened [to turn away patients](#) insured by the country's main healthcare facility, the National Organisation for Healthcare Provision (EOPYY). According to the private clinics, EOPYY owes them €800 million.

[It is estimated](#) that six million people in Greece are uninsured and do not have access to medical care.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday another austerity measure did come into force. From now on, Greeks insured by EOPYY will pay one extra euro per prescription.

According to a Health Ministry directive, the new measure will not apply to those suffering from long-term illnesses.

Source: [Euractiv](#)

Première enquête d'envergure sur la e-cigarette en France

Qui "vapote" dans la France de 2014 ? La e-cigarette est-elle seulement utilisée par les fumeurs ? Qui en achète ? Où ça . Et pourquoi ? On devrait bientôt pouvoir répondre à ces questions, puisque l'INPAES vient de lancer la première enquête nationale sur la cigarette électronique. Menée sur 2013-2014, elle porte sur un échantillon de 15 000 personnes âgées de 15 à 75 ans, représentatif de la population résidant sur l'ensemble du territoire métropolitain.

Alors que [l'usage de la cigarette électronique fait encore débat](#) , cette étude permettra d'obtenir des informations fiables sur les comportements des Français vis-à-vis de la cigarette électronique, en suivant la même méthodologie que le Baromètre Santé Inpes, qui teste jusque-là les comportements sanitaires de nos concitoyens, notamment vis-à-vis des addictions . Actuellement, les seules données disponibles sur l'usage de la cigarette électronique en France proviennent de l'Eurobaromètre, "qui présente l'avantage de fournir des données relativement comparables entre les pays européens mais sans avoir la taille d'échantillon suffisante pour donner une image détaillée des utilisateurs", souligne l'INPES.

Cette première enquête d'envergure devrait donc permettre d'estimer de manière plus précise le nombre d'utilisateurs de cigarettes électroniques en France métropolitaine. Les caractéristiques de cet usage seront également interrogées (fréquence de consommation, durée de l'utilisation, teneur en nicotine, lieux d'utilisation, lieux d'achat...). Enfin, les raisons d'utilisation, et notamment le lien avec l'arrêt ou la diminution du tabac, seront également analysées. Les résultats de cette enquête qui s'étalera jusqu'au second trimestre 2014 seront rendus publics au troisième trimestre 2014.

- See more at: http://www.legeneraliste.fr/actualites/article/2014/01/06/premiere-enquete-d-envergure-sur-la-e-cigarette-en-france_231261#sthash.5js1ll4B.dpuf

**Ireland leads way in Europe in tackling tobacco epidemic
*The Irish parliament, the Oireachtas, launched a consultation on a draft public health bill that introduces standardized tobacco packaging. If the bill passes, Ireland will become the first EU member state—the second country***

in the world after Australia—to ban branding from tobacco product packaging.

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) has sent an open letter to the Oireachtas: Chair of the Committee on Health and Children supporting Ireland's Plain Packaging plans. The public health community should congratulate Ireland for taking this bold step to fight against the tobacco epidemic. We must work to protect future generations from the harmful effects of tobacco products. Irish efforts should serve as an encouraging example for Europe. Tobacco packaging is carefully designed by the Tobacco Industry to target consumers, for example, the use of slim cigarettes to target women and research shows that coloured packages appeal to children. Evidence shows that warning messages and pictorial warnings encourage smokers to quit and non-smokers to never start smoking.

“Europe’s youth has the highest smoking rates in the world, with higher rates among lower socio-economic groups and rising rates in the young female population” warned Peggy Maguire, President of EPHA and Director General of the European Institute of Women’s Health.

“We know from the UK’s experience that the tobacco industry will put up a fierce fight to block, amend or delay the introduction of standardized packaging. So we welcome the Irish government’s commitment to protecting children from tobacco marketing. Stripping cigarette packaging of their bright colours and marketing gimmicks draws attention to the health warnings, and reveals cigarettes as the deadly products they are,” added Alison Cox of Cancer Research UK.

The new EU Tobacco Product Directive (TPD), endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament, will mandate that picture and text health warnings to cover 65% of tobacco packages; EU member states can, however, adopt more stringent measures to regulate tobacco products, such as plain packaging. Today’s launch of the plain packaging consultation in Ireland should encourage other EU member states to step up public health measures to make smoking, the cause of hundreds of thousands of deaths a year Europe, less attractive to people.

Source: [EU REPORTER](#)

US - 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2014

This comprehensive report chronicles the devastating consequences of 50 years of tobacco use in the United States. □ The report:

- Updates data on the numerous health effects resulting from smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke and details public health trends, both favorable and unfavorable, in tobacco use.
- Marks the steady progress achieved in reducing the prevalence of smoking and validates tobacco control strategies that have consistently proven to be effective.
- Examines strategies with the potential to eradicate the death and disease caused by the tobacco epidemic.
- Documents that effective interventions are available and calls for their full implementation.

The Report is available online here: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/50-years-of-progress-by-section.html>