



## Media Release

# Smokers' campaign group fires warning against standardised packaging

Wednesday 26 February 2020 - Brussels

Smokers' campaign group Forest EU has issued a warning against standardised packaging of tobacco products being introduced in more EU states.

According to the Brussels-based group, the policy has failed to impact smoking rates where it has been introduced, including Australia, the United Kingdom and France, yet despite that it is already being hailed as a template for other products such as alcohol and sugary drinks.

Guillaume Périgois, director of Forest EU, said:

"Anti-tobacco lobbies are spinning a different story but standardised packaging has failed to impact smoking rates where it has been introduced.

"Plain packaging is an attempt to infantilise adults by treating them like children and reducing their ability to make informed choices.

"Other EU member states should be extremely wary of supporting a policy that, despite its obvious failure, is now being touted as a template for other potentially unhealthy products."

**Why it's important:** This new Forest EU Briefing Note establishes three core facts:

1. Plain packaging of tobacco products doesn't work  
Experience in countries which have implemented plain packs (Australia, the United Kingdom and France) shows the measure has failed to reduce smoking rates.
2. Plain packaging infantilises adult consumers  
Standardised packs infantilise adults by reducing choice.
3. Plain packaging doesn't reduce youth smoking rates  
The Australian experience with plain packaging shows there was no statistically significant reduction in youth smoking following its introduction.

Standardized packaging of tobacco products is starting to be discussed for other products such as alcohol, carbonated drinks and convenience food.

**Why it's a story:** This publication challenges claims made by anti-tobacco lobbies in the past days:

- Last week, the British Heart Foundation published the result of a survey showing a 37-point increase in the percentage of UK smokers who didn't like the new look of their packs. But the BHF cited no evidence that cigarette consumption in the UK has fallen as a result.
- Similarly, this week, the Association of European Cancer Leagues called for EU-wide "mandatory plain/standardised packaging with 80% front and back pictorial health warnings for all tobacco products and/or electronic cigarettes" but failed to provide any evidence of its effectiveness.

**ENDS**

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## Notes to editors

- An electronic version of the **Plain Packaging Briefing Note** is available at <http://forestonline.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Forest-EU-Plain-Packaging-Briefing-Note-260220.pdf>.
- The cited British Heart Foundation report can be read [here](#); the cited Association of European Cancer Leagues report can be read [here](#).
- Forest EU is a campaign group informing smokers about the issues that affect them in the European Union and engaging with stakeholders so the views of informed adults with an interest in tobacco policy are considered within the EU's decision-making process.
- Forest EU is supported by Tobacco Europe whose members are Japan Tobacco International (JTI), British American Tobacco (BAT) and Imperial Brands PLC (IMB), and by the members of the European Smoking Tobacco Association (ESTA). Its annual budget in 2019 was €165,000.
- Forest EU has an independent organizational structure and advocates for the consumer, not the tobacco industry. Forest EU accepts there are serious health risks associated with smoking tobacco and does not, through its campaigning activities, seek to promote or encourage it.
- For more information, visit <http://forestonline.eu/>