Tobacco: manufacture, presentation and sale of products (recast of Directives 89/622/EEC, 92/41 /EEC, 90/239/EEC)

1999/0244(COD) - 27/02/2001

After detailed negotiations, the Conciliation Committee reached agreement on the joint text of the directive. The main points of the agreement were as follows: Tobacco products for export: after a transitional period until 2007 at the latest (allowing more time to change product specifications and negotiate internationally agreed standards), exported tobacco products would also have to meet the same strict ceilings for tar (10mg), nicotine (1 mg) and carbon monoxide (10mg) as tobacco products marketed in the EU; List of ingredients: tobacco companies would have to submit on an annual basis a list of ingredients of their products to Member States' authorities, who would then make this information available to the public. Furthermore, it was agreed that, by the end of 2004, the Commission would submit a proposal providing for a common list of ingredients authorised for tobacco products. Another Parliament recommendation that was adopted specified that, pending the establishment of that common list, Member States could prohibit the use of ingredients which increased the addictive properties of tobacco products; Health warnings: it was agreed that all packets of tobacco products would have to carry the following general warnings: "Smoking kills/Smoking can kill" or "Smoking seriously harms you and others around you", rotated in such a way as to guarantee their regular appearance. The packets would also have to carry an additional health warning (with a more exact indication of relevant health risks such as lung cancer or heart disease), taken from a list annexed to the directive. That warning would also have to be rotated on a regular basis. As for the size of the health warnings, the agreement took up Parliament's recommendations and thereby provided for much bigger warnings than originally proposed. The general warnings would have to cover 30% of the front of the packet (32% for countries with 2 official languages and 35% for those with 3 official languages), and the additional warning would have to cover 40% of the back of the packet (45% for 2 languages and 50% for 3 languages); The use of photos and graphics: over and above the written warnings, Member States would be allowed to insist on additional warnings on cigarette packets in the form of colour photos or other illustrations depicting and explaining the health consequences of smoking, in accordance with rules to be adopted by the Commission no later than 31 December 2002; Prohibition of misleading descriptors: with effect from September 2003, the use of terms or brand names (such as "low tar", "ultra light" and "mild") or designs suggesting that a particular tobacco product was less harmful than others would be banned.