Combating tobacco consumption: Community role

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The establishment of a yearly prize for the best anti-tobacco project in the European Union was proposed by the Committee. The committee adopted a non-legislative report by Mr José VALVERDE LÓPEZ (EPP, Sp) on a Commission communication on the Community's role in combatting tobacco consumption. In adopting the report, the committee also called for a halt to direct income support to the tobacco sector in the European Union, thereby releasing funds to facilitate conversion to other crops. The report stressed that there could be no conflict between health protection and other Community policies, including the CAP. Members condemned EU exports of poor quality tobacco to third countries and considered that the Community should not aid tobacco-related projects in the developing world. There should be a UN convention on combatting tobacco. The committee favoured an EU directive prohibiting direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products. Tobacco tax should be harmonized, with a minimum level set, and the health warning should be made more prominent, covering at least 25 % of package surface. It should be made harder for children to get hold of tobacco products (eg by banning tobacco vending machines and raising to 18 the age-limit for buying tobacco products). The Commission should launch a legislative initiative seeking to have nicotine declared an addiction-inducing substance and tobacco companies should have to compensate smokers for health damage. Calling for a ban on smoking at work, the committee insisted that "everyone has the right to breathe clean air and this right must always prevail over the right for smokers to smoke". A study should be made of tobacco promotion via the Internet.