Public health: prevention of smoking and initiatives to improve tobacco control

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Jules MAATEN (ELDR, NL) on the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on the prevention of smoking and initiatives to improve tobacco control. While broadly welcoming the proposal - on which it had not formally been consulted - the committee nevertheless stressed that the emphasis should be put on reducing tobacco consumption by increasing consumer awareness and made a number of demands aimed at discouraging smoking, in particular by children and adolescents. Member States were urged to: - provide consumers with full and accurate information on the health risks of tobacco consumption; - implement educational programmes, targeted at children and adolescents, on the effects of smoking on health and the environment; - top up the budget line for the anti-smoking campaign targeting 12-18 year-olds launched in May 2002; - phase out tobacco vending machines; - prohibit the production, import and sale of edible products and toys in the form of tobacco products; - prohibit the use of gifts as a form of advertising and promotion; - prohibit the sponsorship by the tobacco industry of national sporting and cultural events; - introduce appropriate price and tax measures on tobacco products so as to discourage consumption; - promote economically viable alternatives for tobacco-growers and the gradual replacement of tobacco subsidies with alternatives. Lastly, the committee called on the Commission to put forward proposals to eliminate the illicit trade in tobacco products, including smuggling and counterfeiting.