

POWERFUL VIDEO OF THE BELGIAN FOUNDATION AGAINST CANCER: A PLAIN CIGARETTE PACK IS AS DIFFICULT TO COPY AS A CLASSIC PACK

... and 37 studies conducted in 8 countries are showing plain packs have a deterrent effect on youth



www.cancer.be/plainpacks

Will the European Union come to a general use of plain cigarette packs? The tobacco industry is already afraid of losing revenue. Their main argument? Plain packaging would increase the risk of counterfeiting! The Foundation against Cancer refutes this argument in a short counterpropaganda film. For several years, the Foundation has indeed supported the introduction of plain, standardised packaging because they are less attractive to young people. The EU Tobacco Products Directive will be reviewed this year, and the Foundation could not miss this opportunity to bring this message to the EU decision-makers - www.cancer.be/plainpacks.

In this short film, far from the usual style of Foundation videos, we see a gangster specialised in counterfeiting who bawls his anger toward the tobacco industry: to say that he is unable to copy a package of cigarettes is an insult to him! Decoding: everything, absolutely everything, is imitable and the arguments by the tobacco industry to influence policy are totally unfounded.

What is plain packaging?

Plain packaging, already in use in Australia, includes the removal of all attractive promotional elements on tobacco packets. Apart from the brand name (which would be presented in a standardised font and size), all other trademarks, logos, colour schemes and graphics would be prohibited. The package itself would be required to be plain coloured and to display only information (such as health warnings) required by law.

The effect of plain packaging on youth

There is evidence that plain packaging makes smoking less attractive to young people. This is the main conclusion of a study¹ conducted at the University of Antwerp for the Foundation. According to this research, plain packages are perceived as less attractive, cheap-looking and unreliable for young people. In addition, plain cigarette packs enhance the visibility of the health warnings. Similar findings were observed in 37 studies conducted in eight countries².

The scare tactics of the tobacco industry have no credibility

Because it feels threatened in its ability to recruit younger and younger smokers with flashy and attractive packets, the tobacco industry is strongly opposed to plain packaging. They say that

¹ Guido Van Hal and al, Flemish adolescents' perceptions of cigarette plain packaging: a qualitative study with focus group discussions, *BMJ Open* 2012;2:e001424 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001424

² Crawford Moodie et al, Plain packaging, a systematic review, University of Stirling, 2012.
http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/papers/PHRC_006_Final_Report.pdf



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they are easier to copy, and thus encourage illicit trade. Actually, to copy any packet is a true child's game for the counterfeiting industry. Plain packs will actually be difficult to copy because they will carry photos or holograms like the classic pack, along with security features that allows for their identification.

Now that the European Tobacco Products Directive is the subject of heated debate, the Foundation against Cancer calls on the Belgian government and the European Union to make plain packaging for cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco mandatory. For this purpose, the short film produced by the Foundation contradicts the argument of the industry in a strong-worded, striking way.

- End of the press release -

Information for journalists, not for publication

For more information on plain packs of cigarettes, you can contact Luk Joossens, Tobacco Prevention Expert at the Foundation against Cancer, ljoossens@fondationcontrecancer.be – tel.: 02 743 37 06 – GSM: 0032-486 88 91 22

For images from the video or more information about the Foundation against Cancer, please contact Steven De Bondt – sdebondt@fondationcontrecancer.be – tel.: 02 743 45 84

The **Foundation against Cancer** unites the forces in the fight against cancer and is active in the whole of Belgium. In our country, cancer affects each year about 60,000 people. The Foundation finances scientific research against cancer in Belgium and reinforces information and social support for people with cancer and their loved ones. It is also active in the prevention, detection and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The income of the Foundation comes primarily from donations and bequests from individuals. In 2012, revenues of the Foundation amounted to 20.8 million euros, of which 8.6 million were devoted to scientific research. The Foundation has committed nearly \$ 4.6 million to social or material assistance and 4 million to information and health promotion.

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