**Tobacco Products Directive**

**European Parliament vote is a black day for women’s health**

**Strasbourg, 8 October 2013**—The European Institute of Women’s Health (EIWH) is deeply disappointed by the European Parliament’s vote on the draft Tobacco Products Directive. Young girls and women are increasingly taking up smoking and in some EU member states heavily out-smoke boys. If this trend continues, Europe can expect a lung cancer epidemic in women in twenty to thirty year’s time. And this will be due to the short-sightedness of today’s political leaders preferring to listen to the tobacco industry lobby, rather than the warnings from the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which expressly points out the industry’s marketing strategy to target young girls and women with fashionable slim cigarettes, menthol and other pleasing flavours and more recently electronic cigarettes to be sported at clubs and pubs to circumvent the smoking ban.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Europe for women. Women damage not only their own health; but their smoking also impacts on the health of their children and makes kids into future smokers. "*With this vote the future profits of the tobacco industry are put above public health. The European Parliament failed to regulate electronic cigarettes while there was time to act. This gadget guarantees a new generation of smokers getting tied into the deadly habit. We appeal to Members of the European Parliament, the Commission and Member States to reflect if this price is worth paying,*” said Hildrun Sundseth, Member of the EIWH Board.

The EP vote made some timid steps that require health warnings covering 65% instead of Australia’s example of plain packaging. The EIWH urges the EU and its Member States to follow Australia and Ireland and introduce plain packets for cigarettes and other tobacco products and regulate electronic cigarettes like a medical inhaler as an appropriate health and safety measure through the European Medicines Agency. It is not a lifestyle toy.

“*Although some misleading words such as light, mild and low tar have been curbed, the European Parliament did not ban slim cigarettes, which are expressly used to target women, nor did it act forcefully on electronic cigarettes and has postponed the ban of menthol to eight years down the road*,” said Peggy Maguire, Director General of the EIWH.

The Parliament limited electronic cigarette advertising, but rejected the re-classification of electronic cigarettes as medicinal product that would have led to tighter regulation. “*Inhalation into the lungs delivers substances as quickly into the bloodstream as injections. Therefore electronic cigarettes must be regulated to ensure their safe use throughout the European Union,*” said Hildrun Sundseth, Member of the EIWH Board.

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