



Brussels, 1 March 2010 r.

Open Letter

Dear Mr. Piecha, Chairman of the Polish Parliamentary Health Committee,

I am writing to you in response to the announcement on 15 February 2010 of a vote in the Polish Sejm to amend the law for the protection of public health against the consequences of tobacco use and tobacco products from 9 November 1995.

The European Public Health Alliance strongly supports the initiative to broaden the scope of this law, and welcomes in particular the Polish Government's move to introduce a smoking ban in public places and the workplace. The European Public Health Alliance considers **a total ban on smoking in all enclosed public places** as the only approach that should be adopted in order to tackle the serious public health concern that is passive smoking.

'Lifting the Smokescreen,' a landmark report, found that exposure to second hand smoke kills at least 79,000 people in the European Union each year. The dangerous health effects of second hand smoke have been documented in over twenty international reports, including reports by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the US Surgeon General. Furthermore, the International Labour Organisation considers passive smoking to be an occupational hazard. Although tobacco companies have always claimed that a smoking ban in bars and restaurants would have a negative impact on business and lead to less sales and to less employment, no reliable and objective studies support these claims. Instead, all studies finding that smoke-free restaurants and bar laws will have no adverse impact on economy or will have positive long-term consequences.

The only legitimate response is to develop sufficient legal frameworks to protect the public and workers. The European Public Health Alliance has been advocating for strong tobacco control action across Europe and has called for increased collaboration between Member States and the European Union to ensure a complementary and comprehensive framework to protect the European public.

The 2005 Limassol Recommendations outline a number of key steps that can contribute to the development of comprehensive and proportionate legislation, including the adoption of binding legislation with no exemptions in public places. Any new legislation should be supported by a targeted media campaign to raise awareness of the new measures. The European Public Health Alliance of course advocates for a broad strategy to limit the uptake of smoking and encourage smoking cessation; the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control should be considered the basis for work on this issue. The recent moves by the Polish Government are therefore very much welcomed by the European Public Health Community.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to wish you luck in the vote.

Yours Sincerely,

Monika Danuta Kosińska  
Secretary General  
EPHA- European Public Health Alliance

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*EPHA is the European Platform bringing together organisations from the public health community, representing health professionals, patient groups, health promotion and disease specific organisations and health NGOs. EPHA receives financial support from the European Commission, via the Public Health Programme of the European Union.*

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