



---

# EU Briefing

---

European Parliament Wednesday 23 June 2010

## **PASSIVE SMOKING IS A MAJOR HEALTH HAZARD TO CHILDREN**

Passive smoking in the home is a major hazard to the health of the millions of children who live with smokers. ‘**Passive smoking and children**’, a major new report from the Tobacco Advisory Group of the **Royal College of Physicians**, says that children are particularly vulnerable to passive smoke exposure, most of which occurs in the home, and that treating the health consequences is a significant economic cost to health services.

With the Spanish Parliament set to approve a smoking ban this month and discussions in Greece, Bulgaria and Finland, the report provides powerful evidence to support the implementation of the **2009 EU Council Recommendation and European Parliament Resolution on Smoke Environments**. The estimates of relative risk are universal and can be applied to the number of children exposed to tobacco smoke in any country to produce figures for the extra cases of disease resulting from exposure. The report can be used in this way by organisations involved in tobacco control to demonstrate the scale of the problem to Governments in EU member states, and includes a series of policy measures that could be introduced to reduce exposure.

The report highlights the most important factors governing exposure to children, which are whether their parents or carers smoke, and whether smoking is allowed in the home. Relative to children in non-smoking families, passive smoke exposure is around **three times higher** if the father smokes, **over six times higher** if the mother smokes, and **nearly nine times higher** if both parents smoke. Smoking by other carers is also a significant source of passive smoke exposure. Children growing up with parents or siblings who smoke are also **90% more likely** to become smokers themselves.

### **The report’s recommendations include:**

Increasing the real price of tobacco; further reduction in smuggling and illicit trade; investment in new and innovative mass media campaigns targeting smoking, particularly in younger adults; more effective health warnings on cigarette packets; prohibition of point-of-sale display; generic standardised packaging; tailored cessation services; reducing the number and accessibility of tobacco retailers to children; extending smoke-free legislation much more widely, to include public places frequented by children and young people, and to prohibit all smoking in cars.

There is public support for more comprehensive tobacco control policies, and a strong ethical justification for these measures. As all of the health damage is completely avoidable, it is time for a new approach to safeguarding children – their health depends upon it.

---

Linda Cuthbertson, RCP PR Manager +44 (0) 20 3075 1254, +44 7748 777919,  
Linda.cuthbertson@rcplondon.ac.uk  
www.rcplondon.ac.uk