

Brussels, 17.10.2006  
D(2006) 1955

Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 30 August 2006 concerning tobacco warning labels.

The Commission is well aware of the research on links between smoking and blindness. I agree that a warning on sight loss due to smoking constitutes a powerful anti-smoking message.

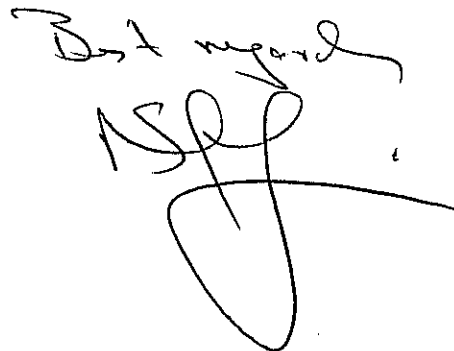
However, for the time being, our focus is on strengthening the existing warnings with hard-hitting images rather than modifying the warning messages.

Much of the value of health warnings stems from their visibility and novelty. Directive 2001/37/EC on Tobacco Products introduced new health messages and dramatically increased the size of the warnings as of January 2003.

At present, the novelty effect comes from a radical change from text warnings to picture warnings, as adopted last year. Belgium will be the first Member State to introduce pictorial warnings next spring, followed by the UK in autumn. A number of other Member States are reflecting on the measure.

We are aware that a comprehensive revision of the warnings will be necessary in the future in order to maintain and increase their effectiveness, and to take account of new scientific developments. When reviewing the warnings, a warning on blindness will certainly be among the first new messages to be considered.

Yours sincerely,

*Best regards*  


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