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PLAIN CIGARETTE PACK CLAIMS SLAMMED



Claims that stripping cigarette packets of branding will lead to an increase in illicit trade of tobacco products are "ridiculous", a charity said.

A new report found that standardised packs are unlikely to cause a rush of new counterfeiters making more packs.

Earlier this year the UK Government launched a consultation on plans to introduce mandatory plain packaging for tobacco products.

The proposal could mean cigarette packs and other products will be stripped of all logos with just the name of the brand and warnings are visible.

Health campaigners have welcomed the proposal, but opponents claimed it would lead to increased smuggling and job losses.

Some organisations claimed that policy documents prepared for the consultation did not scrutinise the impact plain packaging may have on smuggling and counterfeit packs.

Information generated by the consultation, which closed in August, is still being analysed by health officials.

The report just out, by Luk Joossens, who has advised the European Commission and World Health Organisation

on illicit tobacco trade, claims that counterfeit packs are so cheap to make they can hardly become much cheaper.

The report, commissioned by Cancer Research UK, states the cost of creating a 20-pack of counterfeit cigarettes is around 10 to 15 pence - of which up to 5p is estimated to be on packaging.

"The tobacco industry claims that plain packs would be easier to counterfeit," said Mr Joossens.

"The reality is that all packs are easy to counterfeit and that counterfeiters are able to provide top quality packaging at low prices in a short time.

"Plain packaging will not make any difference to the counterfeit business."

Jean King, Cancer Research UK's director of tobacco control, added: "Claims that plain packaging will cause a rush of illegal tobacco into the UK are ridiculous.

"The tobacco industry is making these claims while fighting the idea of plain packs - the new policy it most fears.

"Putting all tobacco products in standardised packs will reduce their appeal to children and help lead to fewer young people becoming addicted to cigarettes.

"The tobacco industry has no credibility and should remain at arm's length from any health initiatives that are designed to reduce smoking rates.

“We urge the UK Government to respond to the consultation as soon as possible. The answer is plain - standardised packaging won’t stop everyone from smoking but it will give millions of young people one less reason to start.”

Australia is due to be the first country in the world to put all tobacco products in plain standardised packs.



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