

Combating illicit trade in tobacco products: Statement by Commissioner Andriukaitis on the EU's adoption of an EU-wide track and trace system

Today the EU has taken a big step forward in combatting the illicit trade in tobacco products. The new EU-wide track and trace system adopted today will ensure that tobacco products in the EU are easily traceable with a [unique identifier](#) for each product. In addition, we are also making sure that tobacco products meet specific security requirements, with at least five types of authentication elements required per packet.

*The track and trace system and the security requirements should be in place **by 20 May 2019** for cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco and **by 20 May 2024** for all other tobacco products (such as cigars, cigarillos and smokeless tobacco products).*

Tobacco still remains the biggest avoidable cause of premature death in the EU, and the illicit trade in tobacco facilitates access to cigarettes and other tobacco products, including for children and young adults. In addition, millions of euros in tax revenues are lost every year as a result of the illicit trade. I am confident that these measures will improve public health and deliver significant economic benefits for the EU and its citizens.

Background

The [Tobacco Products Directive \(2014/40/EU\)](#) provides for the establishment of an **EU-wide track and trace system** for the legal supply chain of tobacco products and a system of **security features** to help citizens and authorities detect illicit products.

The legal acts adopted today lay out the measures that must be taken by EU Member States and economic operators in order to establish and operate a traceability system for tobacco products, ensuring that all packets of tobacco produced in, destined for, or placed on the EU market, are marked with a unique identifier. They also set out the requirements for the obligatory security features to be applied to tobacco products.

The legal acts adopted today are in line with the [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control \(FCTC\) Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products](#), which the EU ratified in 2016.

More information

[1] <http://www.who.int/fctc/protocol/en/>

[Press release: Abstraction reform: further moves made towards Green Brexit](#)

Access to clean and safe water supplies is essential for people and the environment, however increasing demand for water is putting pressure on supplies.

Latest data shows that five per cent of surface water bodies and 15 per cent of groundwater bodies are at risk from increasing water use by current abstraction licence holders that could damage the environment.

Today's new [abstraction reform plan](#) will improve better access to water by:

- Preventing unsustainable abstraction by reviewing existing licences and introducing more controls to protect rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Developing a strong focus on catchment areas for water bodies to encourage more partnership working between [the Environment Agency](#), abstractors and catchment groups to protect and enhance the environment and improve access to water.
- Modernising the abstraction service to allow online applications for licences and bring water resources regulations in line with other environmental permitting regulations.

Environment Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

The abstraction licencing system is in clear need of reform and I am very pleased to set out how we will do this in our plan. I believe our approach will work for all parties and, most importantly, will protect our precious water supplies.

Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and we will keep building on our successes by enhancing our environmental standards and delivering a Green Brexit.

Making sure that abstraction is sustainable and contributes to healthy water bodies that are able to provide good support to fish and other aquatic life is at the heart of these plans.

While good progress has been made in recent years, the plan emphasises the importance of the Environment Agency, the water industry and other stakeholders working in partnership at a catchment level to improve and protect the environment and improve access to water.

From January 2018 the Environment Agency will begin to regulate around 5,000 water users that have historically been exempt from regulation. This will create a fairer system and help protect the environment.

The Environment Agency's work to address unsustainable abstraction should see around 90 per cent of surface water bodies and 77 per cent of groundwater bodies meet the required standards by 2021.

Notes to editors:

- The Environment Agency will produce updated abstraction licensing strategies that detail the solutions to environmental issues in local areas around rivers and groundwaters and set out approaches to help abstractors access the water they need.
- Since 2008 the Environment Agency has made changes to over 270 abstraction licences to prevent over 30 billion litres of water per year being removed from the environment where abstraction is unsustainable.
- In the New Year, the Environment Agency will begin piloting and testing a digital system for handling licence applications and data reporting. Modernising these services will improve the user experience as well as supporting reforms to better protect the environment and improve access to water.
- A report will be made to Parliament by May 2019 on the progress made on abstraction reform.

For too long the UK steel industry has been neglected by this Government – Gill Furniss

Gill Furniss, Shadow Steel Minister, commenting on the publication of the Government's study into the 'Future Capacities and Capabilities of the UK Steel Industry', said:

“For too long the UK steel industry has been neglected by this Government. Their Industrial Strategy merely paid lip service to industry whilst failing to provide any tangible solutions or to respond to the Steel Sector Deal proposal. The opportunities outlined in today’s report can only be harnessed with full Government backing and support.

‘‘Labour will create a level playing field for the UK steel industry so it can compete globally and take full advantage of the opportunities on offer’’.

[Press release: Campaign to protect young people from STIs by using condoms](#)

Public Health England had launched ‘Protect against STIs’, a new campaign that aims to reduce the rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among 16 to 24-year-olds through condom usage. The campaign is the first government sexual health campaign in 8 years.

To coincide with the launch of the campaign, a new YouGov survey of 2,007 young people reveals current attitudes towards condom use and what prevented them from using protection.

Shockingly, the findings revealed that almost half (47%) of sexually active young people said they have had sex with someone new for the first time without using a condom; whilst 1 in 10 sexually active young people said that they had never used a condom.

The new research also revealed that sexual health is a challenging topic for young adults to discuss, as 56% of men and 43% of women said that it is difficult to talk about STIs with friends. Furthermore, 58% said that if they had an STI they would find it difficult to talk to their sexual partner about it.

In 2016, there were over 141,000 chlamydia and gonorrhoea diagnoses in people aged between 15 and 24 in England and almost 6 in 10 (59%) of all those diagnosed with an STI were among this age group.

‘Protect against STIs’ aims to raise awareness of the serious consequences of STIs, which can cause infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID – an infection of the female upper genital tract, including the womb, fallopian tubes and ovaries), swollen or painful testicles and even meningitis. Gonorrhoea is a particular concern because it is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics, and may become untreatable in the future. The

campaign will be highlighting the increased likelihood of contracting an STI if having sex without a condom and that many STIs are symptomless, including 7 in 10 cases of chlamydia.

Despite the rates of STIs remaining consistently high among young people, currently, twice as many young people say that the main reason for using condoms is to avoid pregnancy (58%), rather than to avoid getting an STI (29%).

The campaign aims to help normalise and encourage condom use in young people, as it was revealed that 1 in 3 (32%) young adults said that they have never seen a condom mentioned in sex scenes on TV or in films.

'Protect Against STIs' launches on 15 December 2017 with a nationwide digital advertising campaign targeting young people. The new advertising hears from real people talking about their own personal experiences of having an STI. The identities of the individuals will not be shown but will be animated by emojis. The campaign is being supported by a range of partners, including the Family Planning Association (FPA), Durex and British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).

Gwenda Hughes, Head of STI Surveillance at Public Health England comments:

Rates of STIs among young people continue to be too high and it is concerning that many sexually active young people are not using condoms with new partners. Six in 10 chlamydia and gonorrhoea diagnoses are in those under 25 years of age, so we need to remind young people of the importance of using condoms with a new or casual partner to help prevent infection.

Dr Sara Kayat, TV doctor and campaign supporter comments:

Using a condom is the safest way to ensure that you avoid contracting STIs, such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea. Whilst many STIs are symptomless, contracting them can have serious health consequences if left untreated and even lead to infertility. As I tell patients in my clinic every week, it's just not worth putting yourself at risk by not using a condom.

Tom Haywood, Senior Brand Manager at Durex UK, said:

STI rates remain high amongst young people in England and we want young people to know that sex can be fun and safe, if you wear a condom. There is still a perception for many that condoms reduce pleasure and fun, but condoms should be a key part of positive sexual activity as they help protect against STIs. Through this campaign, Durex wants to help educate young people around condom use and help reduce levels of STIs.

Visit [the campaign website](#) for more information.

Background information

Additional quotes

Dr Elizabeth Carlin, President of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) comments:

BASHH are delighted to support this important new campaign from Public Health England. It is both timely and crucial given the high rates of sexual infections in young people, many of whom do not have symptoms. Condoms remain essential in the fight against STIs, as well as HIV, and we recommend using them for sex with any new or casual partners. We urge anyone who is concerned about their sexual health, or risks they have taken, to have a check-up and be tested – it is quick and easy to do.

Jesse, aged 24 from London who contracted chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the past comments:

I've had both chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the past when I didn't use a condom and it wasn't a nice experience. They caused pain in my groin and discomfort when urinating. The worst of it though was having to tell my previous and current sexual partner that I had contracted the STIs, so they also needed to get checked and treated. I had symptoms, but I know there are so many people who don't, so now when having sex with someone new I will definitely use a condom.

1. [Campaign advertising and images](#) can be downloaded online.
2. Dr Sara Kayat is a GP at Grays Inn Road Medical Practice. Her main areas of expertise are sexual and reproductive health, as well surgical specialties like ENT and orthopaedics. Interviews available upon request.
3. Public Health England
[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Twitter: [@PHE_uk](#), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](#).

4. The Family Planning Association (FPA) is supporting the 'Protect against STIs' campaign by helping to deliver sexual health information and support to key audiences via their Sexwise website.

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[Debbie Abrahams comments on Written Ministerial Statement on Employment and Support Allowance](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Written Ministerial Statement on Employment and Support Allowance, said:

“It is a damning indictment of this Government and their incompetence that 75,000 people in receipt of ESA were underpaid between 2011 and 2014 and this information has only now been put in the public domain.

“The statement spells out a litany of failures by officials and Ministers. Ministers have known about this issue for nearly a year, but chose not to inform Parliament immediately. The Secretary of State must come before Parliament to explain how such a huge error was not rectified sooner and to outline in detail how he will ensure all those affected will receive the payments they are due.”

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