

Q&A: Combined health warnings on tobacco products

The [Tobacco Products Directive](#) requires cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco packages to carry combined health warnings consisting of a picture from the EU library, a text warning and cessation information. The warnings should cover 65% of the front and back of packages. See below the answers to some frequently asked questions about the combined health warnings and EU picture library.

How many pictures are in the library?

There are 42 pictures in the library in three sets, laid out in a [Commission Delegated Directive](#). Each picture corresponds to one of the 14 text warnings in Annex I of the Tobacco Products Directive.

Should the pictures be rotated? Why?

The three sets should be rotated on an annual basis. This means that set 1 is used in the first year followed by set 2 and then set 3. The purpose of rotating the pictures is to minimise the wear-out effect of the warnings, where pictures become less effective the more you are exposed to them.

Do Member States and Industry need to use all the pictures? How do you ensure that all pictures are used?

All the pictures in each set must be used. Member States should ensure that the warnings are displayed in equal numbers on each brand of tobacco (to the extent possible) and should check compliance accordingly.

Who developed the pictures? How much did it cost?

The pictures were developed by external contractors. The external contracts had a combined budget of nearly 600.000€.

Who chose the pictures?

The European Commission chose the pictures taking into account the input received from the external contractors. The pictures were adopted in 2014 by a Commission Delegated Directive in accordance with the procedures in place. Once adopted the Directive was sent to the Council and European Parliament who did not object.

How were the pictures chosen?

The pictures chosen were those that were shown to be effective through testing. The contractor proposed six pictures per text warning with an aim to illustrate different concepts for each warning. Pictures were tested on 8000 participants in 10 EU Member States (Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK), including 800 respondents per country. The testing was conducted in the form of an online experiment assessing various cognitive,

emotional and behavioural measures. It was complemented by a small exploratory laboratory experiment assessing physiological responses (eye-tracking and skin conductance). Experts from various disciplines (e.g. psychology, medicine, behavioural economics, and communication) participated in the contracts and internationally renowned experts on pictorial health warnings were also consulted.

Are the pictures medically accurate? Do you have the correct consents?

The Commission consulted medical specialists to verify, as appropriate, the medical authenticity of the images and their appropriateness for the text warning. Moreover, lawyers were consulted to ensure that the consent declarations and other legal documentation were appropriate in order to ensure that full copyrights were obtained.

Who is in the pictures?

The Commission is aware of the identities of all persons depicted in the pictures but cannot give out further information on their identity in order to protect the rights of the individuals depicted. While the Commission sometimes receives claims from individuals that persons are depicted without having given consent, the Commission wishes to emphasize that all individuals depicted in the pictures were informed that the pictures would be used as part of the EU picture library and signed consents for this purpose. Lawyers were also consulted to ensure that the consent declarations were appropriate in order to ensure that full copyrights were obtained. Any similarity to other individuals not having given consent, however unfortunate, is purely coincidental.

Do you plan to update the library?

There are no plans to update the picture library in the very near future but the Tobacco Products Directive foresees the possibility to renew the text and picture warnings in the future based on scientific and market development.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/products/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/products/revision/index_en.htm