

STUDY REVEALS FALLING LEVELS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POLLUTION ACROSS EUROPE

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Subhead: Clear link established between smoking prevention efforts and reduced Carbon Monoxide pollution in non-smokers

The HELP-COMETs (Carbon monOxide Measure of Exposure to Tobacco Smoke) report, which is a study of over 221,000 smokers and non-smokers across the 27 EU Member States, has just unveiled its results based on its second year of testing.

These results show that the level of carbon monoxide pollution amongst both smokers and non-smokers has reduced over the past year and is significantly lower in countries with advanced tobacco controls. This downward trend is important because CO is a toxic substance and has multiple negative effects particularly on the heart and circulatory system.

The good news for the UK is that the average non-smoker in this country registered just under 2 ppm (parts per million) of exhaled CO – which is below the European average of 2.6 ppm and is significantly lower than countries with cheaper cigarettes and weaker legislation. This figure had also reduced from the previous year, which reflects the positive impact of the Smokefree legislation introduced in July 2007.

This is further confirmed by the positive Tobacco Control Score which rose from 73% in 2005 to 93% in 2007. The score is based on a country's measures to control smoking and these include advertising restrictions, tobacco prices, influence of anti-tobacco groups, etc. The EU as a whole only scored 50% for 2007.

This is the second year of the HELP-COMETs report which is produced by Bertrand Dautzenberg, who is a professor of chest medicine at Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. The report utilises the results of CO tests taken at over 400 public events organised by the HELP – 'For a life without tobacco' campaign.

The majority of the 221,000 CO tests were conducted in public places as part of the HELP Campaign's (<http://www.help-eu.com>) road show events that took place across Europe. 53% of respondents were male and participants ranged widely in age with the majority of participants coming from the 10-19 and 20 to 29 age categories.

In the UK, HELP-COMET results were recorded at events across the country in towns and cities as diverse as Birmingham, Bromley, Hersham, Hull, Leeds, London, Manchester, Newbury, Sheffield, Silverstone and York to name just a few.

Commenting on the report's findings Kawaldip Sehmi, a Director of QUIT (<http://www.quit.org.uk>) - the UK charity that has helped over 2 million smokers, said, "The results appear to show that Smokefree legislation and smoking bans have had a significant impact on the CO pollution of non-smokers with a two fold decrease in their CO levels in countries which have implemented such measures. This evidence should

increase the pressure on those countries that have not yet taken such steps. While the UK is in a better position than many European countries it is important that we keep the pressure on and continue to drive CO levels down for the health benefit of smokers and non-smokers alike.”

To mark the launch of the second HELP-COMETs report Kawaldip Sehmi of QUIT and Daniel Clayton of ASH Wales (<http://www.ashwales.co.uk>) will be hosting a live web chat TV broadcast to answer questions about the report and to offer advice and guidance to people interested in giving up smoking. Members of the public have the opportunity to submit questions both in advance and during the show. The live web chat will be broadcast on Thursday 30th October at 12.30 GMT and can be viewed at the following URL:

http://www.webchats.tv/chat/another_nail_in_the_coffin_for_smokers

Ends

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Editors Notes:

· About Professor Bertrand Dautzenberg

Bertrand Dautzenberg is a professor of chest medicine at Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. He has been involved in lung cancer treatment, the network for treatment of COPD, the treatment of tuberculosis and tobacco prevention and treatment.

In the tobacco field, he chairs the ‘Office de prevention du Tabagisme’ (OFT), ‘Paris Sans Tabac’ (PST), ‘ACTIF’ (Alliance contre le tabac d’Île de France) and the Antismoking committee of Paris hospital network (Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris). He participates on the board of the ‘European Network of Smoking Prevention’ (ENSP) and is the coordinator of the ‘European smoke-free hospital network’ (ENSH).

In 2005, he was decorated with the World Health Organisation medal for his work on behalf of tobacco control. He has written five books on tobacco and a report on passive smoking for the French Health Minister.

· About Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a toxic gas which is colourless and odourless and is produced by smoking cigarettes, cigars and pipes. Smokers and non-smokers are regularly exposed to high levels of CO.

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a polluting gas linked to combustion. CO is extremely toxic but colourless and odourless and is also nicknamed the ‘invisible killer’. CO is produced by vehicle exhaust systems, water heating appliances, coal-burning stoves as well as by smoking cigarettes, cigars and pipes.

Of the hundreds of toxic constituents of tobacco smoke, carbon monoxide is particularly harmful to both

smokers and non-smokers. In smokers, the level of CO in the body is often higher than the CO pollution warning level in the cities of the EU (set at 8.5 PPM). In non-smokers, the level of CO exhaled increases with the duration of exposure to passive smoking.

CO passes from the lungs to the blood and binds itself to the haemoglobin of the red blood cells, which have an affinity for this gas 200 times greater than for oxygen. The CO paralyses the red blood cells and prevents them from binding the oxygen essential for the life of the organs, heart, brain and muscles in particular. Cardiac efficiency levels fall, the risks of blood clots forming increase and there are real risks to the development of the foetus in pregnant women.

· About HELP

Tobacco is Europe's greatest public health challenge, killing more than 650,000 people each year. This figure includes 19,000 people who have never smoked themselves. To tackle this issue, the European Commission, launched one of the world's biggest anti-smoking communication campaigns in 2005, ' HELP – For a life without tobacco'. This uses a range of communication tools including television advertising, the internet; the active participation of young people from all Member States and a roadshow appearing at public places and events where the European citizens can test their carbon monoxide (CO) level.

"HELP" is the second major EU-wide anti-smoking campaign run by the European Commission. The European Commission earmarked €72 million for the campaign between 2005 and 2008. Adolescents (15 to 18 year olds) and young adults (18 to 30 years olds) are the main target groups.

At the outset of the campaign Markos Kyprianou, the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection at that time, said: "The sickness and death caused by smoking costs EU countries €100 billion a year. Prevention and information campaigns like "HELP" are an investment in a healthier and more prosperous future for our citizens. As well as promoting tobacco-free lifestyles to young people, the campaign also highlights the dangers of passive smoking and supports the trend towards tobacco-free public places."

He continued: "Eight out of ten smokers start in their teenage years. Once hooked, it is a habit that takes many of them to an early grave. Every year, 650,000 EU citizens die from tobacco related disease. I am determined to do everything I can to stop young people taking up smoking, and to help young smokers kick the habit before it ruins their health. I want to see a major shift in our society, where being smoke-free becomes the norm and the smoke-addicted are a dwindling minority."

· Further information

The press releases, press kits, logo and images from the HELP campaign can be downloaded from the Web site www.help-eu.com.