Commissioner speaking

Let me let me say a couple of words on tobacco also because that is something that didn't manage to discuss at the hearing. And I do have, a let's say, a proliferated view on it.

Let me start almost at a philosophical level. What are we here for? Can you as servants of our people, here for the long-term well-being of our people, and not for just short-term economic gains. And I have to say we're not doing a good enough job in terms of fighting for the health of our citizens.

700,000 Europeans die each year because of tobacco and that is the reality. Smoking kills, vaping kills, and we have now kids, also at my kitchen table, but I'm sure also at yours who are telling us. Well, look, it smells and tastes like strawberry. It can't be harmful, can it?

Well, actually it does, it kills. So, my view is that we need to do more. We need to do more also, given that you know it is highly addictive, it is actually structured to be addictive, and the sector is mercilessly lobbying for increased room and knows very well that this addictive approach is a continuation of the problem.

So, what I intend to do is make sure that we increase again the hurdle of taxation across Member States, it will not be easy, but what we currently have simply is too low and we expand the scope and we go beyond the classic cigarettes, simply because the supply has gone beyond the classic scope and I just gave you the strawberry example.

That on maybe on the transfer pricing, we're currently working on a platform solution, we're liaising with Member States to see whether that is OK. It is indeed true that so far, the proposal has been blocked in Council, but I'm not yet prepared to give it up. I think there is added value for the Union.

Subcommittee on Tax - Billy Kelleher (Irish MEP, Renew)

Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner for your Presentation. It was referenced already, but if I could just get a bit more clarity on the issue of the Tobacco Taxation Directive, it was last updated in 2021.

And the application report indicated that it was not doing what it was meant to do in terms of, you know, coordination across all Member States. There were shortcomings in enforcement as well. And, umm, in terms of having uniformity of exercise across the European Union, clearly it has to update for a number of reasons. But you did reference it.

And we all know that, you know, E cigarettes and vaping is effectively the revenge of tobacco companies on our younger generations for the public policies that we pursued

in terms of trying to slow the uptake of traditional smoking cigarettes. And I'm just wondering.

Is the urgency there, you know, in the Commission, not you personally, but in the Commission, in view the fact that 16 Member States, the Council, have urged rapid response to the shortcomings in view of the changing patterns and every year we prevaricate due to the fact that the formative ages of young people's taking up E cigarettes and vaping is we're...costing

We're adding another generation to the slavery of a nicotine addiction, so it really is urgent in many, many ways, but primarily from a public health policy point of view. So, I would hope that you can live up to the commitments requested by 16 members of the Council, but more importantly by yourself. Thank you.

Commissioner

So, I think we we're so we're fully on the same page.

Just to be clear, if you or anyone else here in the audience would have specific ideas to how to further enrich the next version of the directive, I will be very much open to it because I hope you've heard my commitments.

What we need is a smoke free generation and then in that in that sentence smoke actually includes all the elements like e-cigarettes, vaping and what have you.

Smoke free generation, ww are lost cause we will not be that that that smoke free generation anymore but those below 20 and certainly those below 10 have a chance but again they are seduced by banana flavours, strawberry flavours all sorts of all sorts of stuff that lure them into a full sense of security that actually the thing that they take is actually sort of OK, but it is not. It kills, it just kills like the ordinary cigarettes we have all been being exposed to. So, I absolutely feel the urgency of that group of Member States. And I do want to make sure we we push that forward and I will liaise within the Commission of course also with the Health Commissioner and others on how to most effectively approach this.