

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-003949/19**  
**to the Commission**  
**Frédérique Ries (Renew)**  
(20 November 2019)

**Subject:** First death in Belgium attributed to the toxic mixture in an e-cigarette

On 6 November, an 18-year-old from Brussels who had used an e-cigarette containing a cannabis derivative died as a result of respiratory failure. Similarly, 39 e-cigarette users have died in the US since the summer, having contracted a lung disease after consuming vitamin E oil that was added to cannabis refills sold on the black market.

According to analyses carried out by the US health authorities, vitamin E is harmful if inhaled or heated, and is therefore responsible for the lesions found in the victims' lungs.

1. In response to the tragedy, is the Commission planning to launch a campaign to raise awareness among young Europeans about the dangers of inhaling cannabis-based blended liquids using electronic cigarettes?
2. What measures will the Commission take to ensure that directive 2014/40/EC is strictly enforced in the Member States, and in particular Article 20(3)(e), which states that, with the exception of nicotine, only ingredients that do not pose a risk to human health in heated or unheated form can be used in the nicotine-containing liquid?
3. What new legislative, economic and fiscal measures will the Commission take over the next few months to prevent the tobacco industry's systematic targeting of younger and younger people?

**Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission**  
(10 January 2020)

The Commission has consistently been drawing the attention to the health <sup>(1)</sup> risks posed by e-cigarettes and is concerned about the recent suspected case in Belgium as well as the reported cases in the US.

The Tobacco Products Directive <sup>(2)</sup> lays down rules on the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products in the EU and helps ensure a high level of health protection, with a focus on young people. Article 20 of the directive introduces a regulatory framework for e-cigarettes, which contains requirements relating to safety, quality, consumer protection and information as well as data collection <sup>(3)</sup>. The use of vitamins is not permitted under this directive.

The Commission is in contact with the responsible authorities and is closely monitoring the situation. In particular, the Commission manages an Early Warning and Response System <sup>(4)</sup> and has requested Member States to report all suspicions of serious lung diseases linked to the use of e-cigarettes.

The Commission is also closely monitoring developments and scientific evidence related to e-cigarettes and has already requested a scientific opinion <sup>(5)</sup> from the Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks, which will also address short- and long-term health effects.

The Commission also recently discussed e-cigarette issues in an expert group <sup>(6)</sup> meeting <sup>(7)</sup>. The Commission and Member States have agreed to collaborate closely, with the overarching aim of protecting human health. Future national measures could include awareness raising actions.

The Commission continuously monitors implementation of the Tobacco Products Directive through compliance assessments of national transposition measures, including transposition and conformity checks.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the potential risks to public health associated with the use of refillable electronic cigarettes, COM(2016)0269.

<sup>(2)</sup> Directive 2014/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products and repealing Directive 2001/37/EC (OJ L 127, 29.4.2014, p.1).

<sup>(3)</sup> In addition, Article 20 provides for a maximum limit of nicotine concentration (20 mg/ml), use of ingredients of high purity not posing a risk to human health in heated or unheated form and prohibition of certain additives in the nicotine containing liquid. Tanks and cartridges are limited to 2ml. Refill containers are limited to 10ml. Further, refill containers and electronic cigarettes must be child-resistant and tamper-proof, and they must be sold with instructions for their use and with health warnings.

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/early-warning-and-response-system-ewrs>

<sup>(5)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/scientific\\_committees/scheer/docs/scheer\\_q\\_013.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/scientific_committees/scheer/docs/scheer_q_013.pdf)

<sup>(6)</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3150&Lang=EN>

<sup>(7)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/tobacco/docs/ev\\_20191015\\_sr\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/tobacco/docs/ev_20191015_sr_en.pdf)

The Commission will report on the implementation of the Tobacco Products Directive in 2021.

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