

## **Package Warnings: Overview of International Developments**

Rob Cunningham  
Canadian Cancer Society  
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Tremendous progress is being made worldwide by governments to improve package warnings. The size of warnings is getting bigger. A growing number of countries require or will soon require picture-based warnings. And as countries implement the FCTC, revolutionary improvements to package warnings will continue around the world.

### **Summary**

Fully 12 countries are known to have finalized laws requiring picture-based warnings: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Jordan, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Uruguay and Venezuela. Countries in the 27-member European Community have the option of requiring picture-based warnings, choosing from among 42 picture messages prepared by the European Commission. The Governments of Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iran, Ireland, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, and United Kingdom have all said publicly that picture-based warnings are under consideration.

In terms of the required minimum size for warnings, as an average of the front and back of the package, Australia and New Zealand legislation currently require the largest space for package warnings in the world at 60% (30% of front; 90% of back), followed by Belgium and Switzerland at about 56% (48% of front and 63% of back, including the border), Finland at about 52% (45% of front and 58% of back, including the border), and Canada, Brazil, Chile, India, Singapore, Thailand, Venezuela and Uruguay at 50% (Canada, Chile, India, Singapore, Thailand and Uruguay are 50% of the front and back; Brazil and Venezuela are 100% of either the front or back).

The *WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* provides that warnings should cover at least 50%, and must cover at least 30%, of the front and back of the package. The use of picture-based warnings is optional.

### **Recommended Websites With Package Warnings Information/Pictures/Regulations from Around the World**

Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada  
<http://www.smoke-free.ca/warnings/default.htm>

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)  
[http://www.paho.org/English/AD/SDE/RA/Tob\\_pack\\_index.htm](http://www.paho.org/English/AD/SDE/RA/Tob_pack_index.htm)

European Cancer Leagues  
[http://www.eurocancerleagues.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Content.DisplayCat&Category\\_ID=9684A77C-0368-11E3-6F0BD5E935906503&lang=EN](http://www.eurocancerleagues.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Content.DisplayCat&Category_ID=9684A77C-0368-11E3-6F0BD5E935906503&lang=EN)

## Size

Here is a table ranking the world's largest package warnings, based on average front and back minimum size (once laws have been implemented after a transition period that remains for some countries):

60% Australia (30% of front; 90% of back)  
 60% New Zealand (30% of front; 90% of back)  
 56% Belgium (48% of front, 63% of back, including border)  
 56% Switzerland (48% of front, 63% of back, including border)  
 52% Finland (45% of front and 58% of back, including border)  
 50% Canada (50% of front and back)  
 50% Singapore (50% of front and back)  
 50% Thailand (50% of front and back)  
 50% Uruguay (50% of front and back)  
 50% India (50% of front and back)  
 50% Chile (50% of front and back)  
 50% Brazil (100% of either front or back)  
 50% Venezuela (100% of either front or back)  
 48% unilingual EC countries (e.g. UK) that have properly implemented the Directive (43% of front, 53% of back, including border)  
 48% Norway (43% of front, 53% of back, including border)  
 48% Iceland (43% of front, 53% of back, including border)

Here is a table ranking the world's largest package warnings, based on the front of the package only (the front is more important for communication than the back):

50% Canada  
 50% Singapore  
 50% Thailand  
 50% Uruguay  
 50% India  
 50% Chile  
 48% Belgium (including border)  
 48% Switzerland (including border)  
 45% Finland (including border)  
 43% unilingual EC countries (e.g. UK) that have properly implemented the Directive (including border)  
 43% Norway (including border)  
 43% Iceland (including border)

In countries where a border is required around the package warning (namely EC countries, and Switzerland, Norway, Iceland), the percentage size for warnings may vary slightly (e.g 1%-2%) depending on package format.

In Canada, in addition to the exterior messages, one of 16 rotated messages are required to appear inside the package, either on the slide (of “slide and shell” package formats), or on an insert.

Brazil and Venezuela require that warnings cover 100% of either the front or the back of the package; in practice this means that a side without the warning is typically displayed to consumers in stores.

In the European Community, in unilingual countries, warnings are required on at least 30% of the front and 40% of the back. However, when a black border required to surround the warnings is counted, the percentage works out to about 43% of the front and 53% of the back (an average of 48% of the front and back).

In bilingual EC countries such as Finland (Finnish, Swedish) and Malta (Maltese, English), the EC Directive requires warnings to be at least 32% of the front and 45% of the back, which including the border works out to about 45% of the front and 58% of the back (an average of 52% of the front and back).

In Belgium, a trilingual country (German, French, Flemish), warnings must cover 35% of the front and 50% of the back, which including the border works out to about 48% of the front and 63% of the back (an average of 56% of the front and back).

The 27 countries in the European Community are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. Bulgaria and Romania have been approved for EC membership and hope to be members by 2007.

Some EC countries dispute or misunderstood that the black border must be in addition to the space reserved for the warnings, as confirmed by the European Commission's legal opinion.<sup>1</sup> A number of countries such as Germany have minimum requirements that result in the total size for the warnings, including the border, to be 30% of the front and 40% of the back of the package.

In EC countries that will require picture-based warnings, the picture warning will be located on the back of the pack, with a text message on the front, pursuant to the EC Directive.

The three non-EC countries that have entered the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein)<sup>2</sup> harmonize their package warnings requirements with the EC. These countries might also choose to require pictures among those selected by the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of the European Communities, "First Report on the application of the Tobacco Products Directive" July 27, 2005.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/keydo\\_tobacco\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/keydo_tobacco_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Current information for Liechtenstein is unavailable.

Switzerland is requiring trilingual warnings on packages (French, German, Italian) consistent with the EC Directive.<sup>3</sup> Although Switzerland is neither part of the EC nor part of the European Economic Area, it often harmonizes its laws with the EC.

It is only a matter of time before countries surpass the minimum size requirements of those countries that currently have the world's largest warnings.

### **Pictures:**

At least 12 countries have finalized laws requiring picture-based warnings: Australia,<sup>4</sup> Belgium,<sup>5</sup> Brazil,<sup>6</sup> Canada,<sup>7</sup> Chile,<sup>8</sup> India,<sup>9</sup> Jordan,<sup>10</sup> New Zealand,<sup>11</sup> Singapore,<sup>12</sup> Thailand, Uruguay,<sup>13</sup> and Venezuela.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>3</sup> To see the news release of the Swiss Government, visit:

French: <http://www.suchtundaids.bag.admin.ch/imperia/98659.pdf>

German: <http://www.suchtundaids.bag.admin.ch/imperia/98659.pdf>

Italian: <http://www.suchtundaids.bag.admin.ch/imperia/98659.pdf>

See also the Swiss ordonnance: Ordonnance sur les produits du tabac et les produits contenant des succédanés de tabac destinés à être fumés, 27 octobre 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Australia: *Trade Practices (Consumer Product Information Standards) (Tobacco) Regulations 2004*, Statutory Rules 2004 No.284. <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pastereg/3/1855/pdf/2004No264.pdf>.

Australian Department of Health and Ageing, "Australia's New Tobacco Warnings Among World's Largest" June 25, 2004 (news release).

<http://www6.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2004-ta-abb087.htm>

Australian Department of Health and Ageing, "Graphic Warnings Planned for Cigarette Packets" Feb. 2, 2004 (news release), visit: <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2004/tw/wor003.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Arrêté ministériel déterminant les avertissements combinés pour toutes les unités de conditionnement de cigarettes mises dans le commerce, 27 octobre 2005, <http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/welcome.pl> (go to issue of *Moniteur Belge* of 2005-11-30)

<sup>6</sup> Resolution RDC no. 335, November 21, 2003, published November 24, 2003 in the Federal Official Gazette.

English text: [http://www.anvisa.gov.br/eng/legis/resol/335\\_03rdc.htm](http://www.anvisa.gov.br/eng/legis/resol/335_03rdc.htm)

<sup>7</sup> *Tobacco Products Information Regulations*, SOR/2000-272.

English: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/T-11.5/SOR-2000-272/185294.html>

French: <http://lois.justice.gc.ca/fr/T-11.5/DORS-2000-272/170132.html>

Bilingual (pdf) from *Canada Gazette, Part II*, pp.1738-1747:

<http://canadagazette.gc.ca/partII/2000/20000719/pdf/g2-13415.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ley Num. 20.105, Modifica la Ley N° 19.419, en materias relativas a la publicidad y el consumo del tabaco:

<http://www.smoke-free.ca/warnings/laws/chilelaw.pdf>

Chilean Government, "Chile Gets a New Tobacco Law" August 13, 2006 (English news release):

[http://www.chileangovernment.cl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1051](http://www.chileangovernment.cl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1051) ;

Chilean Government, "President Bachelet Calls for Respect for New Smoking Law" August 28, 2006, (English news release): [http://www.chileangovernment.cl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1101](http://www.chileangovernment.cl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1101)

<sup>9</sup> *Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules 2006*, published in *The Gazette of India*, Extraordinary, Part II Section 3(i), July 5, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Technical regulation JS 446:2004, *Tobacco and tobacco products-Cigarettes*

<sup>11</sup> "Graphic warnings for cigarette packets" (news release, Damien O'Connor, Associate Minister of Health), Nov. 2, 2006: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=27591>

<sup>12</sup> *Smoking (Control of Advertisements and Sale of Tobacco) Labelling Regulations 2003* (Singapore).

<sup>13</sup> Presidential decree of October 20, 2005

<http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/SDE/RA/Uruguay%20pack%20warnings%20decree.pdf>

Here is the initial implementation date by country for picture warnings:

1. Canada (2001)<sup>15</sup>
2. Brazil (2002; second round 2004)
3. Singapore (2004; second round 2006)
4. Thailand (2005, second round 2007)
5. Venezuela (2005)
6. Australia (March 1, 2006; built in annual rotation)
7. Uruguay (2006)
8. Jordan (2006)<sup>16</sup>
9. Belgium (2006)
10. Chile (2006)
11. India (2007)
12. New Zealand (2008; built in annual rotation)

Countries in the 27-member European Community have the option of requiring picture-based warnings.<sup>17</sup> On October 22, 2004, the European Commission released a series of 42 picture-based warnings, three for each of 14 rotated messages, from which EC member countries

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<sup>14</sup> Regulación de los Empaques de Cigarillos, Gaceta Oficial de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela, March 23, 2004 To see the Venezuela regulation (in Spanish), visit:

[http://www.ops-oms.org.ve/site/tabaco/documentos/Regulacion\\_Empaques\\_Cigarillos.doc](http://www.ops-oms.org.ve/site/tabaco/documentos/Regulacion_Empaques_Cigarillos.doc)

To see a news release from the Venezuelan Ministry of Health (in Spanish), visit:

<http://www.msds.gov.ve/msds/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=266>

<sup>15</sup> The Canadian regulations came into force on Dec. 23, 2000 at the manufacturer level for larger volume cigarette brands (representing about 50%-60% of cigarette market share), and for all other products on June 26, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> The implementation date may have been earlier in 2005.

<sup>17</sup> European Community, *Directive 2001/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2001 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco products.*

English: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2001/l\\_194/l\\_19420010718en00260034.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2001/l_194/l_19420010718en00260034.pdf)

Other languages:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/legal\\_smoking\\_prevention\\_tobacco\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/legal_smoking_prevention_tobacco_en.htm)

European Commission, *Commission Decision of 5 September 2003 on the use of colour photographs or other illustrations as health warnings on tobacco packages*, 2003/641/EC.

English: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/l\\_226/l\\_22620030910en00240026.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/l_226/l_22620030910en00240026.pdf)

Other languages:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/legal\\_smoking\\_prevention\\_tobacco\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/legal_smoking_prevention_tobacco_en.htm)

European Commission, Commission Decision of 26/V/2005 on the library of selected source documents containing colour photographs or other illustrations for each of the additional warnings listed in annex 1 to Directive 2001/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

English: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/Documents/com\\_1452\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/Documents/com_1452_en.pdf)

Annex 1 showing images:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/Documents/com\\_1452\\_a\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/Documents/com_1452_a_en.pdf)

Other languages:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/horiz\\_legal.htm#4](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/horiz_legal.htm#4)

can make a selection;<sup>18</sup> these were formally approved on May 26, 2005. Belgium was the first EC country to require picture-based warnings. Picture warnings are under consideration in other EC countries, including Ireland,<sup>19</sup> the United Kingdom,<sup>20</sup> and the Czech Republic,<sup>21</sup> as well as Romania,<sup>22</sup> Latvia<sup>23</sup> and Portugal.<sup>24</sup>

The Governments of Hong Kong,<sup>25</sup> Iran, Malaysia,<sup>26</sup> Mexico,<sup>27</sup> and South Africa<sup>28</sup> have all also said publicly that picture-based warnings are under consideration.

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<sup>18</sup> “Press conference by Commissioner David Byrne on tobacco and cigarette pack illustrations” October 22, 2004  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/ev\\_20041022\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/ev_20041022_en.htm)

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, “EU fight against tobacco continues with graphic picture warnings and €72 million media campaign” October 22, 2004.  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/Documents/pr\\_20041022\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/Documents/pr_20041022_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> BBC News, “Europe launches shock tobacco ads” October 22, 2004,  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3944793.stm>; Gareth Harding, “Belgium can now picture the worst from smoking” *Washington Times*, February 10, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> CTK, “Drastic warning photos to be on cigarette packets” *Prague Daily Monitor*, December 13, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Gareth Harding, “Belgium can now picture the worst from smoking” *Washington Times*, February 10, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Ma, “Tobacco giant is fighting graphic health warnings” *South China Morning Post*, April 25, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Adeline Paul Raj, “BAT: We can still deliver profit growth” *Business Times* [Malaysia] September 26, 2005; Jane Ritikos, “Pictorial warnings on cigarette boxes soon” *The Star* [Malaysia] June 23, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Julio Frenk, Minister of Health of Mexico, “Open Letter to the Global Tobacco Control Community” October 30, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> South Africa Department of Health “New Tobacco Bill Gazetted” October 16, 2003 (media release)  
<http://www.doh.gov.za/mediaroom/index.html> ; *Tobacco Products Control Draft Amendment Bill, Government Gazette* vol. 460, No. 25601, Notice 1513, October 17, 2003 (proposed new subsection 3(12) of the Act  
<http://www.info.gov.za/gazette/bills/2003/25601.pdf>

## **Other Links**

European Commission's warnings:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/Tobacco/ev\\_20041022\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/ev_20041022_en.htm)

Canadian warnings:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/tobacco/legislation/warnings/warnings.html>

Canadian warnings, scanned versions on actual packages:

[http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/news\\_info.php?cPath=22&news\\_id=78](http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/news_info.php?cPath=22&news_id=78)

Brazilian picture warnings, first round (2002):

[http://www.anvisa.gov.br/divulga/noticias/040601\\_1.htm](http://www.anvisa.gov.br/divulga/noticias/040601_1.htm)

Brazilian picture warnings, second round (August 24, 2004):

[http://www.inca.gov.br/english/cigarrete\\_packages.html](http://www.inca.gov.br/english/cigarrete_packages.html)

Thailand's 2005 warnings:

[http://www.thpinhf.org/packaging\\_labeling.htm](http://www.thpinhf.org/packaging_labeling.htm)

Thailand warning regulation, 2006 (in Thai):

[http://www.ashthailand.or.th/th/content\\_image/activity/newwarning.doc?PHPSESSID=d304a3bd495efd213ea6f140f79fb5fb](http://www.ashthailand.or.th/th/content_image/activity/newwarning.doc?PHPSESSID=d304a3bd495efd213ea6f140f79fb5fb)

Nine Thai warning images for 2007 (with English translation):

[http://www.ashthailand.or.th/th/content\\_image/informationcenter/180.gif](http://www.ashthailand.or.th/th/content_image/informationcenter/180.gif)

Australian warnings:

<http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/drugs/tobacco/warnings/cigarettes3090.pdf>

Uruguay warnings:

[http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/SDE/RA/URU\\_images.pdf](http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/SDE/RA/URU_images.pdf)

Venezuela warnings:

<http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/SDE/RA/Venezuela%20Warnings.pdf>

## **FCTC Requirements**

The FCTC states that messages should cover at least 50% of the principal display areas of the package (i.e. both the front and back), but at a minimum must cover at least 30% of the principal display areas (i.e. front and back). The use of pictures and/or pictograms is optional. The FCTC requires that there be a series of rotated messages. As part of the rotation, non-health messages may be included (e.g. "Quit smoking – Save money").

In Japan, warnings are to cover at least 30% of the front and back. The new warnings are a significant improvement over the previous message stating: "Please remember to follow good smoking manners. As smoking might injure your health, please be careful not to overdo it."

Egypt now requires a text-only warning that covers the bottom third of the front of the pack (based on a sample package). Although this in itself is clear progress for Egypt, this is still not compliant with FCTC requirements for at least 30% of both the front and back.

To underline the recent progress that has been made, it is believed that in October 2000 when the FCTC negotiations began, only Canada, Poland, Thailand and Singapore met the eventual FCTC standard of a minimum 30% of the front and back. And only Canada met the preferred FCTC standard of a minimum 50% of the front and back. Only Canada required pictures (the Canadian regulations were finalized in June 2000 and were followed by an implementation period).

## **What Countries Should Do**

Countries should implement the largest package warnings that are politically achievable. The larger the warnings, the better. Countries can and should require that at least 80% of the front and back be reserved for package messages. The front of the pack is more important than the back. Plain packaging should be required for the part of the package other than where mandatory messages appear.

Picture-based warnings should be included as part of a rotated series. A picture says a thousand words. Rotated messages should be updated regularly to keep them fresh.

## **Evidence of Effectiveness**

There is persuasive and ever-growing evidence that picture-based warnings are more effective than text-only warnings, and that the effectiveness of warnings increases with size. Here are some examples of the many studies and reports respecting package warnings.

Enviro-nics Research Group Ltd., "Evaluation of New Warnings on Cigarette Packages" Prepared for Canadian Cancer Society, 2001. Visit:

[http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172\\_334419\\_436437\\_langId-en,00.html](http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172_334419_436437_langId-en,00.html)

Studies prepared for the Canadian Department of Health. Visit:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/tobacco/research/archive/index.html>

Hammond, D., Fong, G.T., Borland, R., Cummings, K.M., McNeill, A., Driezen, P. "Text and Graphic Warnings on Cigarette Packages: Findings from the International Tobacco Control Four Country Study" *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2007;32(3):210-217

Hammond, D., Fong, G.T., McDonald, P.W., Cameron, R, Brown, K.S. "Impact of the graphic Canadian warning labels on adult smoking behaviour." *Tobacco Control* 2003;12(4):391-395.

Hammond, D, Fong, G.T., McDonald, P.W., Brown, S., Cameron, R. "Graphic Canadian Cigarette Warning Labels and Adverse Outcomes: Evidence from Canadian Smokers" *American Journal of Public Health* 2004;94(8):1442-1445.

Hammond, D., McDonald, P.W., Fong, G.T., Brown, Stephen, K.S., Cameron, R., "The Impact of Cigarette Warning Labels and Smoke-free Bylaws on Smoking Cessation: Evidence from Former Smokers" *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 2004; 95(3): 201-204.

Canadian Cancer Society, "Controlling the Tobacco Epidemic: Selected Evidence in Support of Banning All Tobacco Advertising and Promotion, and Requiring Large, Picture-Based Health Warnings on Tobacco Packages" (Ottawa: Canadian Cancer Society, International Union Against Cancer, 2001). Visit:

<http://www.globalink.org/tobacco/docs/packaging/>

Developmental Research for New Australian Health Warnings on Tobacco Products, Stage 1

Developmental Research for New Australian Health Warnings on Tobacco Products, Stage 2

Appendix from Developmental Research for New Australian Health Warnings on Tobacco Products, Stage 2

All at: <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/drugs/tobacco/warnings.htm>

The Cost-Benefit Analysis accompanying the proposed Australian warnings

<http://www.treasury.gov.au/contentitem.asp?pageId=&ContentID=790>