

Portugal bans smoking inside public places 03/05/2007

LISBON, May 3 (Reuters) – Portugal's parliament approved a law on Thursday banning smoking in almost all indoor public places, joining other European countries in an attempt to cut down on tobacco-related deaths. The ban, approved more than a year after it was proposed by the Socialist government, will carry hefty fines for individuals who smoke in offices, shopping centres and most restaurants.

About a quarter of Portuguese smoke and smoking is blamed on up to 12,000 deaths per year, according to polling group Marktest.

"The ban should decrease the number of deaths caused by smoking and will also reduce second hand smoking," said Luis Negrao, a doctor at Portugal's Cardiology Association.

Despite widespread consensus among parliamentarians on the law, which should enter into force within a year, some had disagreed on the fines for violators.

Smokers who flout the ban will be fined up to 1,000 euros (\$1,361), more than twice the penalty incurred on a person caught using illegal drugs in public places.

Establishments that break the law will face a fine of up to 2,500 euros. But some restaurants and bars can designate 30 percent of their space for smokers if they are larger than 100 square metres.

England is to implement a total smoking ban in offices, pubs and restaurants this summer after similar restrictions were approved in Ireland, France, Spain and other European Union member states.

"We might lose some clients who smoke but we could also benefit from the ban, as it could attract more non-smokers to our cafe," said Jose Frias, a restaurant owner in Lisbon.

"Isn't it nice to have a meal without being worried that someone will light up a cigarette in your face?"

Source:

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L03723356.htm>

