

BRUSSELS - "It's a bit of civil disobedience on my behalf", says the right wing Swedish parliamentarian Christofer Fjellner with a grin.



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It didn't start as a political act at first. It was just coincidences that made it happen.

When Christofer Fjellner, representing conservative Moderate Party, joined the European Parliament in 2004 he just brought a few cases of Swedish "snus" for his own personal consumption. The snuff is a moist powder tobacco product which is illegal to sell in the EU, with the exception of Sweden for cultural reasons. However, once installed in his office people started to pass by asking to buy parts of his private stash.

"Then I thought why not buy some extra cases each time I'm in Sweden, so I don't have to say no to people who forgot their own snuff at home and who then will have to go out and smoke instead. Or ending up without myself just for helping a brother in need" Christofer Fjellner told The Swedish Wire.

Even though it was never meant to be a political statement Christofer Fjellner has been quite active in promoting a legalization of the Swedish snuff during his five years in the European Parliament. He thinks that the prohibition can not be motivated neither by health concerns nor

Swedish politician sells illegal drugs in Brussels

Written by Andreas Liljeheden

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by internal market rules.

“Of course the snuff isn't good for you, it's not carrots we are talking about here. But even so, the prohibition is really bizarre. Cigarettes, that are sold everywhere, are far more dangerous than snuff”, he says.

Nowadays Christofer Fjellner sees his snuff sales as an act of symbol, a fair share of civil disobedience, he explains with a smile. And his grin gets even bigger as he says that at least his office in the European Parliament is a free zone where one actually can buy snuff. He points out though, that it is just an act of symbol. The snuff sale is not a large scale business that he has besides his political assignments. On a good week he sells ten cases, on average it's around five a week.

“I got some steady customers. There's this Finish guy that comes here regularly and also an Austrian who's girlfriend wants him to give up smoking but has permitted him to use snuff instead”, he says, adding that he doesn't make any profit from the sales neither.

“The Swedish Finance Minister Anders Borg has increased the tax on snuff but I still charge four euros a case, so I think I loose a few cents on each one I sell”.



Christofer Fjellner will continue to promote the legalization of the Swedish snuff in the EU. In the directive that forbids the selling it actually states that the European Commission should look into less harmful tobacco product every time it's reviewed. But even so it appears to be a difficult task to promote a legalization since most people have never seen or even heard of the product.

Therefore Fjellner doesn't believe in a big break trough for the snuff in the near future which

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means that his small aside business in the European Parliament will continue to be illegitimate. He's not really worried though that someone will make an official complaint.

"Come and get me I say. That will be an opportunity to test the case", he says with a smile.

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