

ECDA Statement on World No Tobacco Day 2019: policy-making and public information should always stem from independent, evidence-based research

31st May 2019

Smoking is the largest avoidable health risk in the EU and a major risk factor for chronic diseases such as cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, chronic kidney disease and hypertension^{1,2}. Despite ongoing efforts by policymakers, Europe has a high prevalence of tobacco use by adults (26% of the overall population) and young Europeans aged 15-24 (29% respectively).³

Tobacco is responsible for nearly 700,000 premature deaths annually in the EU.⁴ In 2018, approximately 430 000 people died from lung cancer.⁵ Diseases of the respiratory system accounted for 8.5 % of all deaths in the EU in 2015. Tobacco consumption accounted for 3.6% of total COPD deaths in the European Region in 2017.⁶ Tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure contribute to approximately 17% of all cardiovascular deaths.⁷ Smoking also has a major economic impact on our societies^{8,9}.

Tobacco control and smoking cessation remain the most effective means to support the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 3](#) target 3.4 of a one-third reduction of premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) globally by 2030, in addition to combating the onset of chronic diseases. Further, a key target for Goal 3 is to “strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in all countries, as appropriate”. Indeed, full implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is critical to addressing the negative downstream effects of tobacco use.

ECDA commends the progress made by the WHO and the EU in the areas of: plain packaging, mandatory combined health warnings on packs and the focus of the EU Health Award 2018 on initiatives to prevent tobacco use, the promotion of smoke-free environmental laws and prohibition of characterising flavours in certain products. However, efforts must be sustained to enhance a smoke-free environment that safeguards Europe’s citizens from chronic diseases caused by tobacco and attain the associated economic benefits¹⁰.

Further, citizens should be informed of the consequences of using tobacco products and the effects on human health based on independent, scientific research findings.

To mark World No Tobacco Day 2019, the ECDA calls on all EU Member States and the European Commission to take the necessary measures to guarantee that independent research, which constitutes irrefutable evidence, is the basis of policy-making and used to inform consumers of the health effects of consumption of tobacco and tobacco-related products.

¹ WHO Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016-2025

² WHO (2014) World Health Organization, Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the European Region: a progress report

³ https://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/overview_en

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/overview_en

⁵ Globocan 2018 - Global Cancer Observatory - iarc <https://gco.iarc.fr/today/data/factsheets/populations/994-who-europe-region-euro-factsheets.pdf>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Respiratory_diseases_statistics#Deaths_from_diseases_of_the_respiratory_system

⁷ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272675/WHO-NMH-PND-18.4-eng.pdf>

⁸ NCI/WHO Tobacco Control Monograph Series 21 - The Economics of Tobacco and Tobacco Control

⁹ The Lancet. 2017. Tobacco elimination: an economic and public health imperative DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)30132-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)30132-0)

¹⁰ The Lancet. 2017. Tobacco elimination: an economic and public health imperative DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)30132-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)30132-0)

In addition, the ECDA wishes to renew its call to the European Commission and Member States to:

European Commission:

- Use independent, evidence-based research to inform the Commission report on the evaluation of the Tobacco Products Directive due by May 2021, which will give special attention to e-cigarettes, in order to assess policy needs in the area;
- Take action to ensure that new tobacco products, including heated tobacco products, are properly regulated and that citizens are protected against claims that heated tobacco products reduce the risk of tobacco-related diseases;¹¹
- Act to scale up of evidence-based interventions that encourage smoking prevention and reduction for those trying to quit;
- Encourage and support member states to transition towards prohibition of smoking in public spaces, where these are not in place, and extend existing bans;
- Ensure that health concerns are considered within internal market rules and in the scope of the EU digital framework, including by taking measures to address indirect online promotion of tobacco products to young people and the promotion of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products;
- Put an end to the parallel trade of tobacco products within the European Union.

Member States:

- Adopt comprehensive smoke-free legislation and ensure compliance;
- Increase taxation on tobacco products to reduce the initiation and addiction to cigarettes and related products; and ban cross-border distance sales of tobacco products;
- Provide multidisciplinary support and follow-up care to adults and adolescents to support smoking cessation;
- Ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the EU Tobacco Products Directive and include tobacco control in the national response to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Increase collaboration with and consultation of expert medical societies and patient groups when shaping policy measures in the area.

Further facts and evidence for action

- Europe has the highest rates of tobacco consumption of any WHO region globally.¹²
- Tobacco consumption in people aged 15-24 has increased 5% since 2014.¹³
- While avoidable, the health risks associated with tobacco consumption are the leading cause of premature death; approximately 50% of European smokers die prematurely (on average 14 years earlier).¹⁴
- About 15% of the European population had tried e-cigarettes at least once in their life in 2017.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://www.ersnet.org/advocacy/eu-affairs/ers-position-paper-on-heated-tobacco-products>

¹² WHO data and statistics on tobacco. http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/369653/Fact-Sheet-on-Tobacco-and-Oral-Health-2018-eng.pdf?ua=1

¹³ Special Eurobarometer 458, Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes, 30 May 2017.

¹⁴ Special Eurobarometer 458, Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes, 30 May 2017.

¹⁵ Special Eurobarometer 458, Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes, 30 May 2017.