

EuroHealthNet policy brief

Reducing tobacco and nicotine-based products consumption

Policy recommendations and examples of inspiring practices

The European Union aims to achieve a **tobacco-free generation by 2040**, in line with [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#) and the [WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#) (FCTC). To achieve this objective, an [EU Council Recommendation](#) was approved to better protect people from second-hand smoke and aerosols. More policy and practices at all governance levels are, however, urgently needed to make progress.

These policy recommendations are based on the discussions and findings from EuroHealthNet's Country Exchange Visit on this topic. The Exchange Visit brought together experts and public health professionals from across Europe to exchange insights and strategies for reducing tobacco and nicotine consumption.

The full report of the EuroHealthNet 2024 Country Exchange Visit in Budapest can be found [here](#).

With this policy brief, EuroHealthNet is putting forward key policy recommendations and examples of good practices to inspire national, regional and local governments, as well as action at the EU level.

Policy recommendations and examples of inspiring practices for the national, regional and local government level

1. Take proactive national action

Due to the significant delays in EU legislation, countries are encouraged to lead the way in tobacco control by implementing measures that align with their specific contexts.

Belgium – Disposable vape ban: In January 2025, Belgium enacted a nationwide ban on disposable electronic cigarettes. (cf. article 1 of the '[Arrêté royal](#)', 3 May 2024). In December 2022, the Belgian government notified the European Commission of this measure under [Article 24\(3\) of Directive 2014/40/EU](#) and provided justification based on public health and environmental considerations. After reviewing the notification, the Commission accepted Belgium's ban as compliant with EU rules in March 2024.

2. Address novel product use among youth

Develop targeted policies and interventions to curb the increasing trend in novel tobacco and nicotine products, including e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and nicotine pouches among youth. These can include expanding the scope of monitoring and surveys to include all novel products, strengthening age-restriction policies, and banning online sales or advertising and marketing on social media platforms where youth is targeted.

Ireland – [Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products Act 2023](#): Ireland's comprehensive Act came into effect in September 2024. It prohibits the sale of nicotine-inhaling products to individuals under 18 and bans advertising near schools, at events targeting children, and on public transport.

3. Adopt a holistic approach

Integrate education, marketing restrictions, cessation support, pricing measures, and protection from smoke, supported by a robust monitoring mechanism. Such an approach is outlined in the [WHO MPOWER Measures](#). These measures should be implemented as a comprehensive policy package to maximise effectiveness. They can be seen as a starting point, with further room for advancements and opportunities to adopt more innovative approaches.

The Netherlands – Integrated MPOWER policies: The Netherlands is one of only four countries worldwide to fully [implement WHO's MPOWER](#) measures. This comprehensive approach has led to significant reductions in smoking prevalence and enhanced public health outcomes. In 2014, 25.7% of the population were current smokers. By 2021, this rate had fallen to 20.6%. This holistic approach has proven to have a strong equity dimension with benefits across social gradients. For more information, see [this report](#).

4. Invest in education and a life course approach to tobacco prevention and control

Develop educational campaigns that target different life stages, including early childhood, adolescence, and pregnancy, recognising the ripple effect of these interventions. Incorporate raising awareness on the risks of novel products into school-based health promotion programmes.

Hungary – smoking prevention programmes in kindergartens and schools: [Hungary's educational programs in kindergartens](#) help raise awareness among young children about the dangers of smoking and have been shown to influence parental smoking behavior. Following their children's participation, 37% of parents reduced or quit smoking at home. Another innovative approach to tobacco control education is Hungary's '[Smoking is Sticky](#)' campaign in schools.

5. Leverage environmental arguments

Countries should align tobacco control policies with environmental protection and the sustainability agenda to appeal to broader audiences and gain public support. Environmental narratives, such as reducing waste and improving air quality, provide additional incentives for action.

Milan, Italy – all outdoor smoking ban: The city of Milan has [implemented](#) new smoking laws, aimed at 'improving the quality of the city's air'. Initially targeting parks, playgrounds, bus stops, and sports facilities, the policy expanded in January 2024 to include all public spaces, unless individuals can maintain a distance of at least 10 meters from others.

6. Target all kinds of smoking patterns

Initiatives should target all kinds of smoking patterns, and address the increasing prevalence of occasional smoking with tailored interventions.

France – the 'Mois Sans Tabac' campaign: France's Tobacco-Free Month initiative, launched in 2016, serves as an annual nationwide campaign to encourage all types of smokers to quit for 30 days in November. Inspired by the UK's '[Stoptober](#)', this campaign mobilises healthcare providers, local organisations, and public figures.

Policy recommendations for the European Union institutions

1. Revise and update EU Tobacco Directives

Urgently revise the [Tobacco Taxation Directive](#) (TTD) from 2011, the [Tobacco Products Directive](#) (TPD) from 2014, and the [Tobacco Advertising Directive](#) from 2003 to address the increasing consumption of novel products, particularly among youth. These directives should:

- Increase excise taxes on all tobacco and nicotine products to discourage consumption.
- Expand their scope to include emerging products like e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and nicotine pouches and ensure comprehensive, clear, and unambiguous definitions to prevent regulatory loopholes.
- Expand the [Tobacco Advertising Directive's](#) scope to cover all media channels, including online platforms, digital marketing, and indirect advertising such as corporate social responsibility sponsorships.

2. Review the EU's Single-Use Plastic Directive

The [EU Single-Use Plastics Directive](#) can be employed to address the environmental impact of disposable e-cigarettes and single-use plastic filters and mitigate their environmental harm. In 2021, guidelines were issued to help EU Member States implement the Directive. However, progress has been inconsistent. Single-use plastic filters do not only create a false perception of reduced harm on human health, they are also significantly contributing to pollution. It is, therefore, recommended to address these issues during the Directive's review, including measures such as banning these filters.

3. Address health, environmental, and tobacco control policies in an integrated way

To effectively reduce the consumption of tobacco and nicotine-based products, it is important to break through policy silos and create synergies. All key actors, including the European Commission Expert Group on Tobacco Policy, should implement this integrated approach.

4. Adopt clear EU regulatory frameworks putting health, the precautionary and Do No Significant Harm principle at the centre

To uphold a high standard of human health protection in line with Article 168 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU), EU regulations must ensure they adapt to the evolving dynamics of market trends. Consequently, they should follow a strong precautionary principle (art. 191 TFEU) and [Do No Significant Harm \(DNSH\) principle](#) to avoid environmental damage and protect human health.

5. Strengthen transparency and governance

Safeguard public health policies from industry influence by fully implementing and enforcing [WHO FCTC Article 5.3](#), which shields tobacco control measures from commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry. Moreover, mandatory transparency measures for lobbying activities throughout all EU regulatory processes must be strengthened, and transparency efforts at EU, national, and local level should be better aligned.

EuroHealthNet is a partnership of public organisations, institutes, and authorities working on public health, disease prevention, promoting health and wellbeing, and reducing inequalities. We aim to tackle health inequalities within and between European States through action on the social determinants of health. For further information and further references go to www.eurohealthnet.eu.



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