

Joint Reaction to the Council Recommendations on Smoke- and Aerosol-Free Environments

The European Commission has released the long-awaited Council Recommendations for Smoke-free Environments. A move set to create a baseline for smoke- and aerosol- free environment measures across the European Union. All exposures to second-hand smoke which contain many of the same cancer-causing substances and toxins need further action.¹

It is important that the update includes second-hand smoke and aerosols produced by cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and heated tobacco products as well as extending the list of smoke-free locations. The Eurobarometer Report states that “in the last 6 months people were using e-cigarettes or heated tobacco products when they visited outdoor spaces 74% of the time, outdoor spaces intended for use by children or adolescents 49% of the time, and indoor spaces 41% of the time”. This rise in use of novel products in public and indoor spaces is a threat to public health, which our organisations expect the Council Recommendations to help mitigate.²

We are hopeful that the Council swiftly adopts these recommendations. We urge further tobacco legislation under Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan to be evaluated and updated in the coming mandate and stand ready to support the Commission in safeguarding public health.

Professor Filippos Filippidis, Tobacco Control Committee Chair of the European Respiratory Society said: “Smoking in public places such as children’s play areas, outdoor pools, amusement parks, and terraces, must continue to be denormalised. Evidence shows that smoke-free areas prevent the uptake of tobacco smoking among children and young people. With emerging tobacco product use on the rise, their inclusion is a crucial step in protecting the European population from exposure to harmful substances.”

Isabel Rubio, ECO co-chair of the Prevention, Early Detection and Screening Network “welcomes a holistic approach towards smoke-free environments that includes e-cigarettes and emissions from heated tobacco products and all other tobacco products or substitutes. Strengthening smoke-free regulations for outdoor public environments and for private environments such as households and vehicles, which remain significant sources of exposure for some populations, including young people, and especially for people of low socio-economic status, remains an important form of protection towards non-smokers and helps to prevent young people from taking up smoking in the home. In particular, we welcome the inclusion of health facilities, public parks, beaches and sports stadiums among the outdoor public spaces where Member States are recommended to ban all forms of tobacco consumption”

¹ Smoking and the lungs. European Lung Foundation. Date last updated: 20 December 2023. <https://europeanlung.org/en/information-hub/keeping-lungs-healthy/smoking-and-the-lungs/#:~:text=bone%20mineral%20density.-,Passive%20smoking,risk%20by%2020%2D30%25>.

² European Union 2023. Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and related products. DOI: 10.2875/020758. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2995>.

