

A Clear Choice for Better Health: Support Council recommendations on smoke- and aerosol-free environments

With overwhelming public support for smoke-free spaces, extending these protections to include aerosol-free environments and new public spaces, as recommended by the Council in the new proposal for the Recommendation 2024/0230, would further enhance public health and reduce healthcare costs across Europe.

Novel products have immediate health effects and are a gateway to tobacco use, especially in youth

Novel products cause inflammatory and irritative reactions in the lungs due to exposure to glycols.¹ This can cause a range of harmful effects on health, such as e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury (EVALI).² Nicotine is also highly addictive and detrimental to brain development until 25 years of age.³ Additionally, secondhand smoke contains nicotine as well as aldehydes and heavy metals,⁴ which have been shown to have respiratory and cardiovascular implications.⁵

Evidence shows that non-smokers who use e-cigarettes have a higher chance of taking up traditional⁶ especially in the younger population.⁷ There is a clear gateway potential of e-cigarettes towards cigarette smoking. Moreover, dual use, the use of both a novel and traditional product in daily life, is highly prevalent. The 2020 Eurobarometer report found that 59% of e-cigarette users and 79% of heated tobacco product users also use conventional tobacco products.⁸ Rather than being a cessation aid, novel products are often being taken up in addition to tobacco.

In conclusion, given the health risks and the potential for novel tobacco products to serve as a gateway to traditional smoking, a precautionary approach is essential to safeguard public health, particularly among youth.

¹ SHEER. Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks

https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/electronic-cigarettes_en. Date last updated April 16 2021. Date last accessed November 19 2024

² Rebuli M E, Rose J J, Noël A, et al. The E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use-Associated Lung Injury Epidemic: Pathogenesis, Management, and Future Directions: An Official American Thoracic Society Workshop Report. *Annals of the American Thoracic Society* 2023; 20(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1513/AnnalsATS.202209-796ST>.

³ Chen D, Grigg J, Filippidis F, on behalf of the Tobacco Control Committee of the European Respiratory Society. European Respiratory Society statement on novel nicotine and tobacco products, their role in tobacco control and “harm reduction”. *Eur Respir J* 2024; 63(2): 2301808; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.01808-2023>

⁴ Truth Initiative. Secondhand smoke and aerosol.

<https://truthinitiative.org/sites/default/files/media/files/2024/09/Secondhand%20Smoke%20and%20Aerosol%20Fact%20Sheet%202024.pdf>. Date last updated July 2024. Date last accessed November 19 2024.

⁵ Li L, Lin Y, Xia T, Zhu Y. Effects of Electronic Cigarettes on Indoor Air Quality and Health. *Annu Rev Public Health*. 2020 Apr 2;41:363-380. doi: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094043. Epub 2020 Jan 7. PMID: 31910714; PMCID: PMC7346849.

⁶ Baenziger ON, Ford L, Yazidjoglou A, et al. E-cigarette use and combustible tobacco cigarette smoking uptake among non-smokers, including relapse in former smokers: umbrella review, systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open* 2021; 11: e045603.

⁷ Banks E, Yazidjoglou A, Joshy G. Electronic cigarettes and health outcomes: epidemiological and public health challenges. *Int J Epidemiol* 2023; 52: 984–992.

⁸ European Commission. Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes.

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2240>. Date last updated February 2021. Date last accessed November 19 2024

The Recommendations will bring net economic benefits

Under the Principle of Proportionality, the Council Recommendations would positively impact health and bring significant reductions in healthcare spending. Smoke-free workplaces improve employee productivity and reduce their smoking-related illness. In addition, smoke-free areas in parks, beaches and other public spaces can make cities and regions more attractive to tourists and improve the life quality of local residents.

The EU should intervene to increase consistency in health protection and simplify enforcement across the EU

Member States have been calling on the EU to take action on tobacco and novel products.⁹ Some Member States have also taken action to implement more stringent legislation on tobacco and novel products. Implementing these Council Recommendations in all Member States will ensure consistent protection of citizens regardless of their location in the Union. Additionally, including both tobacco and novel products in the recommendations will make it easier for authorities to regulate and enforce policies, especially in cross-border settings. Consistency will prevent the tobacco industry from exploiting regulatory gaps in terms of marketing and promotion.

Tobacco and novel products pollute the environment

The environmental impact of tobacco and novel products is immense. Cigarette butts are the most prevalent debris collected during beach clean-ups and are a threat to aquatic environments and health. Waste from tobacco products contaminates water quality, affecting drinking water and sources for irrigation.^{10,11} Studies also show that e-cigarette production and disposal threaten air quality, water, land use, and animal health.¹²

The majority of EU citizens want smoke-free environments

According to the Eurobarometer 2023, a majority of respondents are in favour of having smoke-free environments where social distancing cannot be ensured.¹³ Introducing outdoor smoke-free environments will create an inclusive environment where vulnerable populations such as patients, children, and youth are not exposed to the harmful effects of second and thirdhand smoke and aerosols. Furthermore, such environments would promote the occupational health of people working in hospitality who are involuntarily exposed to second and thirdhand smoke and aerosols. Smoke- and aerosol-free environments also have the potential of encouraging cessation as it denormalises smoking and vaping and will prevent former smokers from relapse.

⁹ Council of the European Union. Strengthening efforts to protect children from direct marketing and sale of tobacco and nicotine products, especially on digital platforms. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10527-2024-INIT/en/pdf>. Date last updated June 17 2024. Date last accessed November 19 2024.

¹⁰ WHO. Tobacco Poisoning our Planet. World Health Organization publication: <https://ggtc.world/knowledge/sustainability-and-human-rights/tobacco-poisoning-our-planet>. Date last updated May 29 2022. Date last accessed. November 19 2024

¹¹ GGTC. Tobacco's Toxic Plastics, A Global Outlook. <https://ggtc.world/knowledge/all-topics/tobaccos-toxic-plastics-a-global-outlook>. Date last updated June 2022. Date last accessed November 19 2024.

¹² Ngambo G, Hanna E G, Gannon J, et al. A scoping review on e-cigarette environmental impacts. Tobacco prevention & cessation. 2023; 9, 30. <https://doi.org/10.18332/tpc/172079>

¹³ European Commission. Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2995>. Date last updated June 2024. Date last accessed November 19 2024