

Chair, Honourable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Smoke Free Partnership, a coalition dedicated to promoting evidence-based tobacco control policies to achieve a tobacco-free Europe.

We very much welcome the Commission's proposal for the revision of the Tobacco Taxation Directive (TTD). For too long, the current directive — unchanged since 2011 — has lagged behind market realities, scientific evidence, and has distorted the single market of the EU. During these 14 years, tobacco products have remained highly affordable in many Member States, and a new generation of addictive products has entered the market, often escaping appropriate taxation.

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The Commission's proposal is therefore not only timely, but essential to protect the next generation of Europeans.

Raising the price of tobacco is the single most effective way to reduce consumption, especially among young people and lower-income groups.

By establishing stronger minimum excise duties across Member States, this proposal takes an important step toward closing the price gaps that the tobacco industry has long exploited. These gaps have encouraged cross-border shopping and fed misleading narratives about illicit trade — but most importantly, they have kept tobacco prices and nicotine products too low for too long, making cigarettes and other products easily accessible to young people.

The result? A new rise in youth nicotine use across Europe.

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When discussing tobacco legislation, we cannot ignore the new tobacco and nicotine epidemic is created by the new nicotine and tobacco products.


Heated tobacco, nicotine pouches, and e-cigarettes are spreading rapidly across the EU — often marketed as “healthier alternatives” or “smoke-free innovations.”

Let us be clear: these products are not harmless. They are addictive, heavily marketed, and deliberately designed to attract young people. The industry no longer denies that smoking is harmful, instead, it redefines what “smoking” means.

Nicotine, regardless of how it is delivered, through cigarettes, vapes, or pouches, directly affects the cardiovascular system. It increases heart rate and blood pressure, promotes inflammation and arterial stiffness, and raises the risk of heart attacks and strokes. For young people, whose bodies and brains are still developing, the risks are even greater. Early exposure to nicotine rewires the brain for addiction, making it far harder to quit later in life.

And the youth appeal of these new products is undeniable. We see flavoured nicotine products, with flavours like “berry frost” or “bubblegum,” and devices shaped in fashionable, attractive shapes, and corresponding social media marketing that sells them as lifestyle or wellness products.

Without consistent and proportionate taxation, these products will remain an open gateway to addiction for Europe's youth.



I would now like to draw attention to one new product and that is nicotine pouches, and its link to Sweden:

Industry advocates often point to Sweden as a “smoke-free success story,” claiming that products like nicotine pouches have led to historic declines in smoking.

But this is a carefully crafted narrative, and one that should make us cautious, not confident.

When we look beyond the slogans, Sweden’s own data tell a different story. Among 17-year-old students, 29% currently use oral nicotine products pouches. Among 16- to 29-year-olds, tobacco and nicotine use has risen to 35% — up from 30% just two years ago .

That is not a smoke-free generation, it is a new nicotine-dependent generation.

Sweden’s public health surveys themselves acknowledge that nicotine pouches are an uptake product, not a quitting aid, but an entry point for youth.

The tobacco industry loves to present “the Swedish experience” as proof that its products help end smoking. But it never mentions that Sweden has continuously has implemented decisive and far-reaching measures, including updating its taxation policies regularly to keep tobacco products in check . It never shows you the youth data. It never explains that their so-called “success” is built on making extra profit.

So we must ask ourselves:

Is this really a Swedish lesson, or a Swedish warning?

The lesson is not that nicotine pouches work, it’s that we cannot trust industry-sponsored narratives or data that serve their interests. We see in the lesson that Tobacco control measures and Tobacco Taxes work.

The tobacco industry has a long history of manipulating evidence, and it should not be allowed to shape EU public health policy ever again.


Achieving a tobacco-free Europe requires decisive action now.

We know that most lifelong smokers and nicotine users start before the age of 18. Every euro added to the price of tobacco and nicotine products means fewer children starting to use them.

Taxation is not simply about revenue — it is about prevention, equality, and protection.

If the revised Directive fails to close loopholes or allows new products to remain under-taxed, Europe risks losing an entire generation to nicotine addiction, even as smoking rates decline.

That is why the Smoke Free Partnership urges this Committee to ensure that the final Directive:

- Applies strong, taxation to all nicotine and tobacco products;
  - Prevents tax differentials that make products cheaper or more appealing; and
  - Keeps public health at the heart of the EU’s fiscal policy.
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- A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of a blue curved shape and a red and white striped circular pattern.

This Directive is not about numbers or tax codes — it is about saving lives.

Each year, tobacco kills 700,000 Europeans. Behind every statistic is a family, a friend, a story that could have ended differently if tobacco had been less affordable and less accessible.

Fiscal policy may seem technical, but its human impact is profound. When taxation reduces tobacco consumption, it doesn't just raise revenue — it prevents disease, reduces suffering, eases healthcare burdens, and promotes social fairness.

Aligning tax levels more closely across the EU will help ensure that a young person's likelihood of becoming addicted no longer depends on where they live .

A strong Tobacco Taxation Directive will send a clear and necessary message:

that the European Union is serious about protecting its citizens,

serious about preventing addiction,

and serious about building a tobacco-free future for the next generation.

Thank you.

