



4 December 2024

Joint Statement

European Lung Health Group welcomes the EU Council recommendation on smoke- and aerosol-free environments and calls for its prompt implementation by Member States

We, the undersigned organisations of the [European Lung Health Group](#) representing patients and healthcare professionals in the area of lung health, warmly welcome the adoption of the updated [Council recommendation on smoke- and aerosol-free environments](#), on 3 December.

Tobacco is one of the top causes of preventable mortality and disease in the European Union. It is a primary cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a major risk factor for the development of lung cancer, and scientifically linked with the onset and exacerbation of asthma. Exposure of non-smokers to second-hand smoke bears significant risks for health, accounting for over 73,000 deaths and 1,760,000 Disability-Adjusted Life Years in the EU (data from 2019)¹.

The revision of this recommendation is essential to **close persistent gaps in the implementation of national smoke-free measures in the EU²**. With it, the Council of the EU clarifies aspects that prompted lack of proper measures so far to ensure smoke-free environments by national governments. The recommendation also addresses the rapid development and market uptake of novel products, as it encourages smoke-free policies that also restrict exposure to products often seen as a key entry point for young people into the habit of smoking.

Therefore, the European Lung Health Group strongly supports the **expansion of smoke-free environments in two directions**: firstly towards restricting exposure to emerging and future products such as electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products, and secondly towards protecting the population in public outdoor spaces such as playgrounds, restaurants, beaches and public transport stops.

We firmly believe that this renewed scope has a great potential to **protect public health, particularly the most vulnerable, and children and young people**, enacting the right to health, and **increasing health equity** by reducing exposure to harmful smoke and aerosols.

Despite being a non-legislative measure, we consider the updated recommendation as a key milestone in achieving the aim of a **'Tobacco-Free Generation' in Europe by 2040**, as set out in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.



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The European Lung Health Group now calls on the following actions towards smokefree environments:

1. We call on lung health groups and other public health stakeholders to disseminate the scope and measures encouraged in this recommendation, at national, regional and local level.
2. We call on EU Member States to implement this recommendation as a roadmap to fulfill Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which requires protection from exposure to tobacco smoke wherever it happens, and which is legally binding for its signatories³.
3. We call on the European Commission to accelerate the revision of the EU regulatory framework, especially the Tobacco Products Directive (TPD), Tobacco Taxation Directive, the Tobacco Advertisement Directive (TAD).

In view of the upcoming implementation, the European Lung Health Group and its 179 national associations call for a swift implementation of the recommended measures to protect lung health in the EU.

In full support for national implementation, we remain ready to offer Member States science-based evidence on the health impacts of tobacco and novel products and the benefits of smoke- and aerosol-free environments to achieve a healthier and more sustainable future.

ENDNOTES

1. European Commission Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Knowledge Gateway, Global Burden of Disease Study, 2019 https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/tobacco-smoking_en#health
2. European Commission, *Final Report: Study on Smoke-Free Environments and Advertising of Tobacco and Related Products*, December 2021 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/68ce81fc-5d55-11ec-9c6c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
3. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 2003 <https://fctc.who.int/news-and-resources/publications/i/item/9241591013>. All EU Member States are signatories of the treaty.

About the European Lung Health Group

The European Lung Health Group brings together nine organizations dedicated to improving lung health in Europe, including: Alpha-1 Plus Belgium, Cystic Fibrosis Europe (CF-E), European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA), European Lung Foundation (ELF), European Pulmonary Fibrosis Federation (EU-PFF), European Respiratory Society (ERS), Lung Cancer Europe (LuCE), Pulmonary Hypertension Association Europe (PHA-E), Tuberculosis Coalition Europe (TBEC)



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