

6/3/26
cc: Vjenceslav
Rupčić

Dear Deputy Prime Minister Primorac

Ahead of the Council ECOFIN meeting of 10 March, the European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA), representing 11 public health organisations working across cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory, allergic and other non-communicable diseases, wishes to share its position on the revision of the EU Tobacco Taxation Directive (TTD), as proposed by the European Commission on 16 July¹.

Updating the TTD is both a public health and an economic imperative. Beyond reducing disease burden, the Commission estimates that **updated minimum tax rates would generate around EUR 15 billion in additional EU-wide tax revenue per year**, while delivering **approximately EUR 6 billion in annual savings in healthcare costs**, with further savings expected from reduced tax fraud linked to illicit tobacco manufacturing¹. Tobacco taxation provides predictable revenue, while reduced spending on tobacco shifts consumption toward other sectors of the economy, supporting jobs and productivity.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in Europe. Each year, it causes **1.1 million deaths in the European region, including 153,000 from second-hand smoke exposure, and is responsible for 27% of all cancers**². Despite previous progress, 24% of adults in the EU continue to smoke, with declining trends slowing in recent years, particularly among young people³. This sustained burden translates into avoidable healthcare costs, productivity losses, and long-term pressure on public finances.

The evidence is unequivocal: **price increases through taxation are the single most effective measure to reduce tobacco and nicotine use**.^{2,4} A 10% increase in price, for example, can lead to a 4-5% decrease in demand for cigarettes⁵. Experience at EU level confirms this impact. Smoking prevalence declined from 28% to 24% between 2012 and 2023, with around 40% of this reduction attributable to taxation policies following the 2011 revision of the Directive³. According to the Commission, **the proposed revision could reduce smoking prevalence to around 20.8% in the first year of implementation, equivalent to approximately 12 million fewer smokers, while generating €20.22 billion in additional tax revenue, with limited impact on overall EU inflation**¹.

Since the last revision of the Directive, the tobacco and nicotine market has changed profoundly. **E-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches have proliferated, are often marketed as "reduced-risk" or "no-risk" alternatives and are frequently taxed at substantially lower rates**². This has coincided with a sharp rise in youth nicotine use: in 2024, 22% of 15-16-year-olds in Europe reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, with even higher prevalence in several Member States⁶. Evidence shows that these products fuel nicotine initiation rather than smoking cessation, undermining decades of tobacco control efforts^{2,6}. **The World Health Organization is clear that all nicotine containing products should be taxed at least at the same level as cigarettes to correct misleading perceptions and protect public health**⁷.

Long-term competitiveness can only be achieved through a healthier population and more resilient health systems⁸. A strong and ambitious revision of the TTD would send a clear signal that the European Union remains committed to protecting health, preventing addiction among young people,

and aligning fiscal policy with the objectives of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and broader non-communicable disease prevention.

We therefore respectfully encourage your government to support the ambition of the Commission proposal and to engage constructively in the ongoing discussions among Member States. This long-overdue reform represents a unique opportunity to deliver tangible health, economic and societal benefits across the Union.

We remain at your disposal should you wish to engage further on the evidence underpinning this reform.

With best wishes,



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Member organizations of ECDA

1. *European Cancer Organisation (ECO)*
2. *European Society of Cardiology (ESC)*
3. *European Heart Network (EHN)*
4. *European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)*
5. *European Academy of Neurology (EAN)*
6. *European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology (EULAR)*
7. *European Respiratory Society (ERS)*
8. *European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA)*
9. *International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)*
10. *European Society of Hypertension (ESH)*
11. *United European Gastroenterology (UEG)*

¹ European Commission (2025). *Impact Assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Council Directive on the Structure and Rates of Excise Duty Applied to Tobacco and Tobacco-Related Products.*

² World Health Organization (2021). *WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic: Addressing New and Emerging Products.*

³ European Commission (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 539 – Attitudes of Europeans towards Tobacco and Related Products.*

⁴ World Bank Group (2019). *Is Tobacco Taxation Regressive? Evidence on Public Health, Domestic Resource Mobilization, and Equity Improvements.*

⁵ European Cancer Organisation (2023). *Public Consultation on the Evaluation of the Legislative Framework for Tobacco Control.*

⁶ ESPAD Group (2024). *European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD): Key Findings.*

⁷ World Health Organization (2023). *Heated Tobacco Products: Summary of Research and Evidence of Health Impacts.*

⁸ Joint Public Statement from ECDA Members ERS, ECO, ESC, EHN (2025). *Health community urges EU Finance Ministers to back a strong Tobacco Taxation Directive.*