



Subject: Preventing cancer by improving the EU's tobacco policy

Lugano, 21 November 2024

We are writing to you on behalf of the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) - a professional organisation for medical oncology, representing more than 40,000 members from 177 countries – to ask for your support in securing the adoption of the Council Recommendations on Smoke-and Aerosol-Free Environments.

Tobacco consumption remains a leading cause of preventable illness and premature death, contributing towards many forms of cancer, and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. This consequently accounts for nearly 700,000 deaths in the EU¹ bringing a vast financial burden on national healthcare systems.

ESMO welcomes the recent publication of the Council Recommendations, with their wider scope covering electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and heated tobacco products (HTPs) and extending the coverage of smoke-free environment policies to key outdoor areas, as a positive step towards achieving the Tobacco-Free Generation by 2040, where less than 5% of the population uses tobacco, as set in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP). However, ESMO regrets that EU Member States are invited to simply consider the inclusion of further outdoor spaces, such as event venues, spectator areas, and entrances to public buildings, to create comprehensive smoke-and aerosol-free environments.

We would also like to stress that in addition to the importance of fostering research on the topics covered by the Recommendations, it is also vital to include interventional research focused on developing effective strategies to reduce addiction and facilitate smoking cessation, including to e-cigarettes.

ESMO is particularly pleased with the Recommendations specific focus on preventing young people and children from beginning to use e-cigarettes. This is vital as research shows² that early exposure to tobacco and e-cigarettes can lead to long-term addiction and health issues. To effectively address these concerns, more targeted and impactful campaigns and structured education programmes are needed to raise awareness about the risks associated with using these products, the use of which is particularly widespread³ among younger generations, given the tobacco industry uses its targeted actions to present them as attractive, affordable, easily available and fashionable products.

¹ [Overview - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

² https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/e-cigarettes/pdfs/2016_sgr_entire_report_508.pdf

³ <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/02-12-2020-new-who-report-reveals-that-while-smoking-continues-to-decline-among-european-adolescents-the-use-of-electronic-cigarettes-by-young-people-is-on-the-rise>



With evidence⁴ emerging that new products⁵ like e-cigarettes and HTPs pose serious health risks, and of the 'rapid increase' of vaping amongst adults who had previously never smoked⁶, ESMO believes that the EU must react to these societal changes by expediting its delayed revision of its tobacco legislation, including the Tobacco Products Directive (TPD), the Tobacco Taxation Directive (TTD) and the Tobacco Advertising Directive (TAD) in order to help achieve the Tobacco Free Generation by 20204.

We look forward to hearing from you and would be delighted to elucidate further, either in person or by continued correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Andrés Cervantes
ESMO President

Prof Jean-Yves Blay
ESMO Director of Public Policy

⁴ [Cigarette Smoking and E-cigarette Use Induce Shared DNA Methylation Changes Linked to Carcinogenesis | Cancer Research | American Association for Cancer Research \(aacrjournals.org\)](#)

⁵ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/mar/similar-dna-changes-found-cells-both-smokers-and-e-cigarette-users>

⁶ [Vaping among adults in England who have never regularly smoked: a population-based study, 2016–24 - The Lancet Public Health](#)