

## World No Tobacco Day: more Europeans support smoke-free policies, new Eurobarometer reveals

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The majority of European citizens are in favour of smoke-free policies, according to the results of a new Eurobarometer on Tobacco presented by EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou in the European Parliament to mark World No Tobacco Day on 31 May. An overwhelming majority of 88% support smoke-free offices, indoor workplaces and public spaces – a slight increase compared to last year's survey (86%). The survey also reveals that one in three smokers have tried to give up in the last 12 months. However, over 70% of them have relapsed into the habit in less than two months. Commissioner Kyprianou announced that the EU's anti-smoking campaign, 'HELP – For a Life Without Tobacco', will launch on 31 May an e-mail coaching service to support people as they quit smoking. A European Youth Manifesto "Young People: For a Life Without Tobacco" was also presented to the Commissioner and MEPs in Strasbourg.

EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said: "I am heartened that public support for smoke-free work and public places in Europe remains so high. This can only strengthen the momentum towards making European public and work places smoke-free by 2009."

The prevalence of tobacco consumption and the exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke is a major public health concern in Europe. About 650 thousand people die each year because of smoking. A further 80 thousand adults are killed by second-hand tobacco smoke. The survey shows a clear public support for smoke-free policies".

### Attitudes towards smoke-free policies

A majority of Europeans are also in favour of smoke-free bars (62%) and restaurants (77%). Support for smoke-free policies is highest among citizens in countries where such policies have already been introduced, such as Ireland, Sweden and Italy. Moreover, the majority of smokers themselves favour smoke-free restaurants, offices and other indoor workplaces and indoor public spaces.

The majority of Europeans believe that smoking bans exist (90%) in their country. However, 36% think that they are not respected. 91% of Irish and 86% of Swedish respondents believe that laws exist and are respected in their country while this is the case only for 11% of Bulgarians and 21% of Slovaks.

### Exposure to tobacco smoke

One in three Europeans working in indoor workplaces or offices declare to be exposed to tobacco smoke at work. This percentage of office workers who declare to be never exposed to tobacco smoke at work ranges from 96% in Ireland to 15% in Greece. The largest group of EU citizens who say they are exposed to tobacco smoke on a daily basis work in restaurants, pubs and bars – 7 out of 10 of these respondents state that they are exposed on a daily basis.

Around half of European homes are smoke-free. This varies from 83% in Finland and 69% in Sweden, to 17% in Croatia and 26% in Greece. On average, 22% of respondents say that smoking inside is not allowed for anyone, 19% declare that smoking is only allowed outside and a further 8% say that people voluntarily do not smoke in the house.

### Awareness of harm cause by tobacco smoke

Four out of five Europeans are aware that second-hand smoke can cause health problems. Indeed, only 3% of European citizens believe that second-hand smoking poses no danger at all.

Finally, smokers do have a certain level of consideration for vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. For instance, only 5% of smokers claim to smoke in a car in the company of pregnant women and 9% smoke in a car when they are with children.

### Giving up smoking

Almost one in three smokers have tried to give up at least once in the last 12 months. The highest percentage of quit attempts (46%) has been reported in the UK.

On average, 7 of out 10 quit attempts lasted less than two months. Most smokers see stress (33%) as the main reason for relapse. The youngest respondents are more likely to be tempted by friends or colleagues who smoke (34%).

Less than 2 out of 10 smokers have asked for help from health professional at their last attempt to quit smoking. However, in the UK, this figure reaches 41%. Around a third of Europeans say they used pharmaceutical and other treatments last time they attempted to give up smoking.

### Background

It is estimated that tobacco consumption kills 650,000 people a year in the EU while a further 80,000 are killed by passive smoking.

On 31 January 2007, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper "Towards a Europe free from tobacco smoke: policy options at EU level" <http://ec.europa.eu/health/...htm>, to launch a broad public consultation on the

best way to promote smoke-free environments in the European Union.

The stakeholders are invited to submit their comments to the Green Paper until 1 June 2007. The Commission will then analyse the responses and produce a report with the main findings of the consultation, before considering further steps.

In addition, the Commission is preparing a report on the implementation on the Council Recommendation 2003/54/EC on the prevention of smoking and on initiatives to improve tobacco control <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/...pdf> . The report will include an analysis of national tobacco-control policies and regulations.

The special Eurobarometer on Tobacco is available at:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/health/...htm>

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