



7-Step Plan to Reduce Smoking Death for the New Italian Government

Tobacco consumption is the single largest avoidable health risk, responsible for nearly [700,000 deaths every year in the European Union, of which more than 90,000 occur in Italy](#). In Italy, this number accounts for 20.6% of the total of all deaths among men and 7.9% of the total of all deaths among women. Moreover, the direct and indirect costs of tobacco-related diseases amount up to more than EUR 26 billion. With a consumer-friendly vaping regime similar to that of the United Kingdom, [2.75 million smokers in Italy and 19 million smokers in Europe could switch to vaping](#). By switching to this [95% less harmful alternative](#), people can substantially improve their lives and public health will greatly benefit.

The upcoming update of the EU Tobacco Products Directive (TPD), along with the policies pursued by national governments in the following years, will determine the future of vaping, threatening possibly the most successful smoking cessation aid and the public's health.

In this document, we present a 7-step strategy to reduce smoking rates in Italy and improve the life of smokers and public health overall.

Steps to be taken by the Italian Government:

- 1. Embrace tobacco harm reduction:** Scientific evidence and facts on vaping, as well as the testimonies from former smokers, prove that vaping is much less harmful than smoking and works as a smoking cessation tool. Without vaping and other nicotine delivery alternatives, the fight against smoking-induced cancer and other illnesses will fail.
The Italian Government should make a clear commitment to the concept of tobacco harm reduction and put practical solutions such as vaping at centre stage. It is key to encourage current smokers to switch to vaping and to guarantee access to vaping products for adults.
- 2. Promote vaping as a smoking cessation tool:** [Vaping is the most successful smoking cessation method](#) and it should be promoted as such. Many smokers are not aware of the existence of safer alternatives to cigarettes, and the same applies to a large number of physicians. Without common awareness about the potential of vaping to help smokers quit cigarettes, it is unlikely that smokers will switch and that doctors will recommend them to try it.
The development of an information campaign by the Italian state on the advantages of vaping compared to smoking, aimed at both the general public and physicians, is essential to reduce smoking. In addition, health personnel should be educated on the potential of vaping for public health and be qualified to prescribe it as an anti-tobacco therapy.
- 3. Allow vaping in non-smoking outdoor areas:** Smoke-free spaces are implemented in order to protect non-smokers from secondhand or passive smoking. Yet, [there is no evidence that secondhand vaping is harmful](#). Therefore, vaping should be excluded from free-smoke areas restrictions and allowed everywhere. This would be yet another incentive for smokers to switch to a safer alternative.

4. **Lower taxation on vaping products and adjust it to its relative risk:** Making vaping less appealing to smokers by increasing prices will discourage current smokers from switching to less harmful alternatives. [Studies show that increased prices on vaping products lead to higher smoking rates](#). Consequently, a higher tax on vaping products will have a detrimental effect on public health. Moreover, increased taxes on vaping products are particularly harmful to the lower-income groups, which make up the most significant proportion of current smokers. Less harmful alternatives must not become luxury products. For these reasons, vaping products mustn't be regulated and taxed the same way as combustible tobacco. Vaping products should be taxed at a level adjusted to its relative risk in comparison to tobacco.
5. **Reject flavour bans:** Vaping has helped millions of smokers quit, and flavour varieties play a big part. More than two-thirds of vapers are using flavours other than tobacco, and [those using flavours are 230% more likely to quit smoking](#) than those who don't vape flavours at all. Without flavour options, adult consumers will have no choice but to turn to the black market or return to smoking. Restricting flavoured liquids makes it more challenging for smokers to quit and risks progress made by consumers who have moved away from cigarettes. Hence, we recommend the Italian Government to reject all proposals to ban flavours as they [can potentially push 5 out of 10 vapers back to smoking or the black market](#), where there is no guarantee of safety or quality.
6. **Keep vaping available while enforcing smart regulations to prevent underage vaping strictly:** Banning vaping products or flavours under the assumption that they lead to youth vaping is not a good strategy. As previously explained, bans will cause more harm than good, leading vapers back to smoking or the black market. Instead, to prevent the uptake of youth vaping, existing laws need to be enforced smartly and more strictly. The use and purchase of vaping products in Italy is already restricted to those over 18 years of age. Meanwhile, it is important that vaping remains available to adults. Measures such as increasing fines for those selling vaping products to minors or simply allocating more resources to law enforcement may be the solution. Policies proposed in other EU Member States such as banning online sales or limiting them to state tobacconists are highly discouraged.
7. **Promote tobacco harm reduction in the EU institutions and legislations:** Many aspects surrounding vaping, such as packaging, advertising or nicotine levels of the liquids are mainly regulated at the EU level. We strongly recommend the Italian Government to promote and defend tobacco harm reduction in the European institutions and to fight legislation reducing consumer choice and restricting vaping.