



## **Public submission from the World Vapers' Alliance to the Finnish Government**

### **About the World Vapers' Alliance**

The World Vapers' Alliance (WVA) amplifies the voices of vapers worldwide and empowers them to make a difference in their communities. Our members are vapers associations and individual vapers from all over the world. More information can be found on [www.worldvapersalliance.com](http://www.worldvapersalliance.com)

### **About this consultation and why the World Vapers' Alliance is responding to it**

The Finnish Government's [draft amendment proposal](#) to the [Tobacco Act](#) proposes extensive regulation of nicotine pouches, including a ban on most flavours, stringent nicotine concentration limits, plain packaging and health warnings requirements, and restrictions on their sale and use. The World Vapers' Alliance is participating in this consultation to present evidence-based arguments against these measures, emphasizing nicotine pouches' role in smoking cessation and public health improvement.

This response addresses the main regulatory changes proposed and provides recommendations for more effective harm reduction policies.

### **How to read this document:**

We respond to the main regulatory changes presented in the draft amendment proposal separately.

**Regulating nicotine pouches in the Tobacco Act:** The draft amendment proposal aims to regulate nicotine pouches within the scope of the Tobacco Act and similarly to tobacco products despite nicotine pouches not including any tobacco.

**WVA's response:**

Nicotine pouches are not tobacco products as they contain no tobacco plant material. Their inclusion in the Tobacco Act misrepresents their nature and risks equating them with more harmful products. By regulating them as tobacco products, the Finnish Government may discourage smokers from switching to this far less harmful alternative, undermining public health goals.

Scientific evidence highlights the reduced risk of nicotine pouches compared to combustible cigarettes. [Azzopardi, Liu, and Murphy \(2022\)](#) concluded that the risk profile of nicotine pouches is comparable to nicotine replacement therapies like gums and patches, which are regulated as medicinal products, not tobacco products. Treating nicotine pouches as a distinct category would allow for regulations that reflect their significantly lower health risks.

**Limiting nicotine concentrations in nicotine pouches:** the draft amendment proposal aims to establish a limit of 16.6 milligrams of nicotine per gram of product.

**WVA's response:**

The proposed nicotine limit of 16.6 mg/g is unnecessarily restrictive. Different smokers require varying levels of nicotine to successfully transition away from combustible cigarettes. Higher nicotine concentrations are essential for some individuals to manage cravings effectively during the switch. Limiting nicotine content risks making nicotine pouches ineffective as a cessation tool for these smokers.

Research by [Lunell et al. \(2020\)](#) demonstrated that higher-dose nicotine pouches deliver nicotine efficiently without significant adverse effects, supporting their use as a smoking cessation aid. Regulatory frameworks should be flexible to accommodate individual needs, enabling a greater number of smokers to quit.

A nicotine pouch weighs around 0.5 grams. Limiting nicotine to 16.6mg/g would mean that each pouch is limited to 8.3 milligrams of nicotine. While this limit will be ok for most users, it is still unnecessary given that nicotine is virtually harmless and risks leaving users that may demand higher concentrations without options for quitting.

**Banning flavoured nicotine pouches:** The draft amendment proposal aims to ban all characteristic smells or flavours in nicotine pouches, except for menthol and mint.

**WVA's response:**

Flavoured nicotine pouches are not intended to attract children or young people to nicotine consumption. Flavours play a crucial role in encouraging adult smokers to try safer nicotine products and maintain their switch from smoking. The proposed flavour ban would

disproportionately impact adult smokers who benefit from the variety of flavours, which helps them disassociate from the taste of tobacco and solidify their transition.

Although there is still insufficient research on the use of flavors in nicotine pouches, scientific evidence on their use in other products such as vaping demonstrates their importance for smoking cessation. [Dr. Colin Mendelsohn \(2017\)](#) summarised their role as follows: “Flavours are an important part of the appeal of vaping for adult smokers and make the products attractive as an alternative to smoking, just as flavours are also used to enhance the appeal of nicotine gum.” Researchers from the Yale School of Public Health [Friedman & Xu \(2020\)](#) associated their use with a 230% increase in the odds of adult smoking cessation. These findings can easily be extended to nicotine pouches, as they work in a similar way to e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool.

The prohibition of flavours will prevent thousands of smokers from switching and would push a share of users back to smoking. Similarly, we can expect a significant proportion of users to try to import flavoured nicotine pouches from third countries or to obtain them from the black market, something the draft amendment proposal states it aims to prevent. Evidence from surveys and vaping flavour bans across the globe (such as in [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Germany](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Slovenia](#), [Sweden](#) and the [United States](#)) has shown that they rather push vapers back to smoking or to the black market.

Moreover, it is estimated that between 80% and 90% of nicotine pouches sold on the market contain flavourings. Their prohibition would effectively end the legal nicotine pouches market in Finland and undermine the Finnish Government’s public health objectives. We therefore urge the Finnish Government to reconsider its approach and reject banning flavoured nicotine pouches.

**Requiring health warnings on retail packaging and harmonizing packaging:** the draft amendment proposal aims to require health warnings on the packaging of the products as well as to establish plain packaging.

**WVA’s response:**

Plain packaging fails to communicate the reduced risks of nicotine pouches compared to smoking, potentially deterring smokers from switching. Health warnings should provide accurate, risk-based information to inform consumers that nicotine pouches are a safer alternative to smoking and an effective cessation tool.

Research by [McNeill et al. \(2021\)](#) emphasized that clear communication about the relative risks of nicotine products is crucial to encouraging smokers to switch. Misleading or overly alarming warnings could perpetuate misinformation and hinder harm reduction efforts.

While it is important to make users aware of the risks of nicotine pouches, it is vital that their risk is presented in relation to that of cigarettes. Nicotine pouches are not just a nicotine product, they are a product to consume nicotine in a less harmful way and to quit smoking and should be promoted as such. It is therefore necessary to allow information on the packaging of the products relative to their low health risks in comparison with smoking and their use as a smoking cessation tool.

**Limiting sales:** the draft amendment proposal aims to make retail sales subject to a permit and to prohibit distance/online selling.

**WVA's response:**

The World Vapers' Alliance supports restricting the sale of nicotine pouches to mechanisms with robust age-verification measures. However, we urge the Finnish Government to allow online sales, provided that strict age-verification systems are in place. Prohibiting online sales limits accessibility for adult smokers, particularly those in rural areas, and may push them back to smoking or illicit markets.

**Restricting the use of nicotine pouches in certain areas:** the draft amendment proposal aims to ban the use of nicotine pouches in certain public areas, such as in the indoor and outdoor areas of daycare centers, educational institutions and playgrounds.

**WVA's response:**

Nicotine pouches do not emit harmful substances or affect bystanders, making usage bans unnecessary. Prohibiting their use in areas like daycare centers or playgrounds sends a misleading message equating nicotine pouches with combustible tobacco products. Policies should reflect the negligible bystander risk associated with nicotine pouches.

**WVA's conclusion remarks:**

Nicotine pouches are a transformative tool for harm reduction, offering smokers a significantly safer way to consume nicotine. Overregulating these products by including them in the Tobacco Act, imposing flavour bans, limiting nicotine content, and mandating plain packaging will hinder their potential to save lives.

We urge the Finnish Government to:

- Regulate nicotine pouches separately from tobacco products.
- Avoid restricting their nicotine concentration to ensure their efficacy as a cessation tool.
- Permit a wide variety of flavours to attract adult smokers away from cigarettes.
- Implement risk-based health warnings to promote accurate understanding of their reduced harm.
- Allow online sales with strict age verification to ensure accessibility for all adults.
- Refrain from imposing usage bans that lack scientific justification.

The World Vapers' Alliance is committed to supporting effective harm reduction policies and is ready to collaborate with the Finnish Government to achieve shared public health goals.



A comprehensive review of the literature can be found in our Vaping and Harm Reduction Fact Sheet here: <https://worldvapersalliance.com/harm-reduction-vaping-fact-sheet/>

For any questions or comments, please contact the submitter of the response.