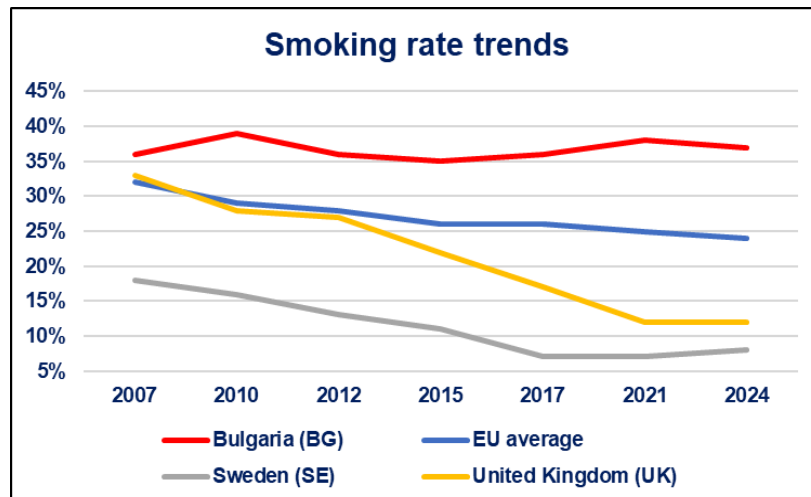


Bulgaria's Vaping Ban: A Public Health Disaster in the Making

Bulgaria, with the highest smoking rate in the EU at 37%, has recently voted to implement a blanket ban on vaping products. This policy brief outlines the potentially catastrophic consequences of such a ban, including increased smoking rates, a thriving black market, public health setbacks, and negative economic impacts. It also provides evidence-based alternatives to address public health concerns while preserving access to less harmful alternatives for adult smokers.

Key Facts

- 37% of Bulgarian adults are current smokers
- Smoking rates have remained stagnant since 2007
- At the same time, pro-vaping countries such as Sweden and the United Kingdom are becoming smoke-free
- E-cigarettes are 95% less harmful than smoking
- Vaping is the most popular method for quitting smoking in Bulgaria
- Only 3% of Bulgarians currently use e-cigarettes
- 24% of children between 13 and 15 years of age smoke cigarettes



Source:

Consequences of a Vaping Ban

1. Increased Smoking Rates: Many vapers will return to smoking or never attempt to quit.
2. Thriving Black Market: Bans fuel illegal trade, leading to:
 - a. Increased youth access to illegal products
 - b. Potential rise in incidents like the Pleven tragedy
3. Public Health Setback: Increase in smoking-related deaths and diseases.
4. Economic Impact: Loss of businesses, tax revenue, and increased healthcare costs.

Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

1. **Risk-based Regulation:** Reflect the reduced harm of vaping compared to smoking.
2. **Flavour Regulation:** Allow variety for adults.
3. **Age Verification:** Strengthen enforcement of age restrictions at the point of sale.
4. **Public Education:** Correct misperceptions about vaping risks compared to smoking.
5. **Support Smoking Cessation:** Integrate vaping into existing programs.



Detailed Analysis

The Smoking Crisis in Bulgaria

Bulgaria's 37% smoking rate represents tens of thousands of lives at risk. Traditional tobacco control policies have failed to make a significant impact since 2007, indicating an urgent need for innovative approaches to reduce smoking-related harm.

Vaping: A Proven Harm Reduction Tool

Extensive research shows vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking. In Bulgaria, e-cigarettes are already popular for quitting smoking, despite low current usage of 3%. This suggests significant potential for vaping to further reduce smoking rates if properly supported and regulated.

Here you find a full overview of the scientific evidence on vaping and harm-reduction:

<https://worldvapersalliance.com/harm-reduction-vaping-fact-sheet/>

The Crucial Role of Flavours

Flavours play a vital role in the effectiveness of vaping as a smoking cessation tool. Banning flavours will deter adult smokers from switching to less harmful alternatives.

Here you can find the scientific evidence on the role of flavours in smoking cessation:

<https://worldvapersalliance.com/harm-reduction-vaping-fact-sheet/#vaping-flavours>

Consequences of a Vaping Ban

The Bulgarian Parliament's unanimous vote to ban vaping products is likely to have severe unintended consequences, including increased smoking rates, a thriving black market, public health setbacks, and negative economic impacts.

Conclusion

Bulgaria stands at a crossroads. Banning vaping would be a regressive step that ignores scientific evidence and global best practices. Instead, Bulgaria has the opportunity to implement smart regulations that could save thousands of lives and significantly reduce the burden of smoking-related illnesses on the healthcare system. The World Vapers' Alliance calls on the Bulgarian government to reconsider this decision and implement evidence-based policies that support smokers in quitting, rather than removing their access to less harmful alternatives.

For further questions, contact:

Alberto Gomez Hernandez

alberto@worldvapersalliance.com