



OPEN LETTER

To the EU Health Ministers

Brussels, June 2025

Ahead of the June EPSCO Council: It's Time to Champion Harm Reduction at EU Level

Dear Ministers,

As the Council of the European Union prepares to convene on 19–20 June 2025 for key discussions on health policy, we write to you as consumer advocates and supporters of tobacco harm reduction across Europe to urge your governments to speak up on a public health success story that deserves attention: the measurable, life-saving impact of embracing harm reduction in national tobacco control strategies.

Sweden, Greece, and Czechia have each taken bold, evidence-based steps to integrate tobacco harm reduction into national policy. In doing so, as we explain our [briefing](#), they have not only driven down smoking rates dramatically but also helped reduce the burden of disease and premature death caused by smoking:

- **Sweden is on the brink of becoming the first smoke-free country** in the world, with a national smoking rate of just 5.4%, and only 2.3% among those aged 16–29. This success is the result of decades of pragmatic policy allowing adult access to safer alternatives like snus, nicotine pouches, and e-cigarettes.
- **Greece has made harm reduction a pillar of its National Action Plan Against Smoking**, approved science-based health claims for heated tobacco, and has already seen smoking drop from 42% to 36% between 2021 and 2024.
- **Czechia has embedded harm reduction in its national addiction strategy** and has led the EU in reducing smoking prevalence—from 30% to 23% in just three years—while advocating for balanced policies during its EU Presidency and through the TRIS notification system.

These are not theoretical outcomes. They are the result of national leadership, public health innovation, and a willingness to empower adult smokers to make better choices.

As you prepare to gather at the June EPSCO Council meetings (19 and 20 June), the time is right for your governments to follow these countries' example.

We urge you to:

- **Implement robust harm reduction strategies at the national and EU level**, inspired by the proven successes in Sweden, Greece, and Czechia, and ensure these strategies are central to all future tobacco control policymaking.



- **Introduce risk-based regulation that differentiates between combustible tobacco and less harmful alternatives**, recognising the vastly different health impacts of these products and supporting smokers in making safer choices.
- **Oppose overly restrictive or punitive approaches at EU level** that risk undermining the progress already made, particularly in upcoming debates on the Tobacco Products Directive and the Tobacco Excise Tax Directive, which could inadvertently push consumers back to smoking or the illicit market.
- **Promote a forward-looking EU strategy that puts public health outcomes first** and ensures that less harmful alternatives remain accessible, affordable, and attractive to adult smokers across the continent, while protecting youth through targeted, evidence-based measures.
- **Acknowledge and act on the overwhelming consensus among citizens, NGOs, and scientific institutions** that harm reduction products are effective tools for smoking cessation and should not be treated as threats to public health.

The EU's ambition to become smoke-free by 2040 cannot be met without acknowledging and replicating what is already working in your countries.

For more information, read our [briefing paper](#).

Respectfully,

Michael Landl, Director of the World Vapers' Alliance

Alberto Gómez Hernández, Policy Manager of the World Vapers' Alliance