

Breaking the Cycle of Inequality

How Europe's Working Class Bears the Burden of Failed Tobacco Policy

The mathematics of smoking in Europe tell a story of profound injustice. While affluent neighborhoods see smoking rates plummet, working-class communities remain trapped in a cycle where cigarettes consume up to 10 percent of household income. Traditional tobacco control—built on punitive taxation and prohibition—has created a regressive system that punishes poverty rather than addressing addiction.

Sweden's remarkable transformation offers a different path. By ensuring innovative nicotine products remain affordable through progressive taxation, Swedish policymakers have created what Greece and Czechia are now replicating: genuine pathways out of smoking for those who need them most. When a factory worker in Stockholm can afford to switch from cigarettes to safer alternatives, saving both money and health, we witness public policy serving social justice rather than reinforcing class divisions.

The evidence is clear: nations that make harm reduction accessible to all socioeconomic groups experience the fastest declines in smoking. Those who treat nicotine policy as a revenue source rather than a public health tool condemn their most vulnerable citizens to preventable diseases. Europe faces a choice between perpetuating inequality through prohibition or embracing the progressive potential of harm reduction.

We Are Innovation and Path to Smoke-free's Briefing Paper "[The EU Case for Innovative Nicotine Products](#)" demonstrates how Sweden, Czechia, and Greece have broken free from decades of stagnation by adopting comprehensive approaches that complement traditional measures with accessible alternatives. The evidence shows that innovation can become a powerful tool for social equity rather than continued inequality. We invite you to review the evidence and consider how these proven strategies could transform your own communities and countries.

PATH TO SMOKE-FREE

Path to Smoke-Free is a comprehensive analytical platform developed by We Are Innovation that reveals how countries can harness innovation to defeat smoking and accelerate their journey toward smoke-free status. Drawing from Sweden's remarkable success in dramatically reducing smoking rates far below global averages—we identified three key elements: Accessibility, Acceptability, and Affordability of innovative nicotine products. Our platform combines comprehensive policy data with real insights from Swedish ex-smokers, offering interactive tools to compare how countries are harnessing innovation to defeat smoking. The platform features powerful forecasting charts that project smoking prevalence and when countries will reach smoke-free status under three scenarios: current policy trajectories, outcomes if countries matched Sweden's success rate, or results following the combined pace of leading nations. Policymakers, researchers, and health professionals can explore evidence-based strategies that could help their countries reach smoke-free targets faster, guided by proven success stories. Discover how your country could accelerate its journey to smoke-free status at <https://pathtosmokefree.global/>.

WE ARE INNOVATION

We Are Innovation is a dynamic network of individuals and institutions who deeply believe in innovation's power to drive progress and solve the world's most pressing problems. With 50 think tanks, foundations, and NGOs based worldwide, We Are Innovation represents the diverse voices of a global civil society committed to advancing human creativity, adopting new technologies, and promoting innovative solutions. Through our collaborative approach and cutting-edge expertise, we are driving global transformative change. To learn more about our work, visit us at <https://weareinnovation.global/>.

We Are Innovation
The Future Is Calling. And We Are Ready to Answer

