

Sovereignty, Security, and Subsidiarity

Why Prohibition Creates Problems Brussels Cannot Solve

When Brussels mandates one-size-fits-all tobacco policies, it does not eliminate nicotine use—it drives it underground. The explosion of illicit trade in countries with the most restrictive policies demonstrates a fundamental truth: prohibition creates black markets that fund organized crime while undermining both public health and member state sovereignty. The Swedish model succeeds precisely because it respects market realities and local conditions.

The principle of subsidiarity suggests that decisions should be made as close to citizens as possible. Sweden's unique snus exemption, negotiated during its EU accession, demonstrates that member states can craft solutions tailored to their populations. When Greece chose to reverse its prohibitionist policies, it exercised sovereign judgment about what works for Greek society. Czechia's multi-ministry approach demonstrates how national governments can coordinate effective responses without relying on Brussels' micromanagement.

Criminal networks thrive where legal markets fail. By maintaining realistic, differentiated policies that provide legal alternatives to cigarettes, successful nations have avoided the enforcement nightmares plaguing prohibitionist states. The question is not whether people will use nicotine—it is whether they will obtain it from regulated businesses contributing to the economy or from criminal enterprises undermining it. Member states deserve the flexibility to choose wisely.

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 successfully exercised national sovereignty to craft policies that respect both subsidiarity principles and local conditions. The evidence shows that member state flexibility can become a powerful tool for effective governance rather than continued reliance on centralized mandates that ignore market realities. We invite you to review how these nations have strengthened both public health outcomes and democratic decision-making by choosing pragmatic solutions over ideological uniformity.

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

